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The structure and experience of childhood and adolescence: an anthropological approach to socialization

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THE STRUCTURE AND EXPERIENCE
OF CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE:
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO
SOCIALIZATION.

by

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ABSTRACT

Becoming human is becoming social and this thesis explores the nature
of the socialization process through the presentation of material derived
from anthropological fieldwork with adolescents in the north-east of
England. In contrast to more traditional approaches, it suggests that an
adequate understanding of how socialization occurs, rather than merely
what occurs, can only be achieved through focusing directly upon the
experiences of those undergoing the socialization process itself and upon
how they articulate these experiences.

In this respect the adoption of the anthropological fieldwork technique of
participant observation is shown to be critical. It allows access to the
experience of socialization, rather than simply its later effects, through
exploring the temporal rhythms of the socialization process made manifest
in life-cycle categories. These categories, it is argued, structure
the progressive awareness and understanding reached by children as they
mature through providing them with the time and space for the creation of
their own culture - the culture of ' doing nothing '.

With the theoretical insights gained from a semantic approach to the study
of social life this culture is interpreted as a conceptual context whereby
children themselves conduct their own rite de passage to adulthood. Through
analysis of the concepts of time and space; linguistic performance and
nickname usage; the body as an expressive medium and the social construction
of gender, a distinctive cultural style emerges which represents an active
deconstruction and reinterpretation of adult social order by children. This
pervasive style of ' doing nothing ' provides a single underlying form for
a multiplicity of contents : motifs of transformation constantly reappear
in different domains and provide a coherent semantic system through which
children gain knowledge of their own futures. Within this approach, then,
socialization is no passive imitation ; rather, it emerges as an active
and creative learning process in and about the world.

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Preface

The production of this thesis represents far more than
the results of a research project. The fieldwork experience
and subsequent writing has engendered a deep and very personal
commitment to social anthropology and to all those who have
helped and guided me I here acknowledge my debt.

The foundations for my research project were laid as an under-
graduate at Durham University and, in particular, I am
grateful for having had the opportunity to learn about social
anthropology under the tuition of Judith Okely and David Brooks.
Their constant enthusiasm for the subject, their stimulating
teaching and interest in the ideas and thoughts of their
students inspired me to continue with social anthropology
as a post-graduate. I am also grateful to Bill Williamson
of Durham University who first encouraged me to write an
undergraduate dissertation on children's literature. It
was whilst doing this research that I began to develop my
interest in concepts of childhood. It is to David Brooks
that I give my thanks for accepting me as his post-graduate
student in the Department of Anthropology to pursue these
interests and to the Social Science Research Council for
their sponsorship of this project for three years.

In providing me with an entree into the ' field ' I am
indebted to Mrs Joan Ware who expressed such enthusiasm for

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my ideas and prepared the ground for my initial fieldwork as
a helper in the youth club. Thanks are also due to the
Management Committee who gave their approval for my work.
But it is to the children with whom I worked, fought, argued,
played and talked that I am most grateful for without their
active participation the fieldwork would not have happened.
To all the friends and acquaintances I made whilst living in
the community I also express my gratitude for sharing their
lives with me. It was an experience which will remain with
me always and one which confirmed my commitment to social
anthropology.

Working in the context of one's own culture is a relatively
uncommon anthropological experience, one which has both
advantages and disadvantages. Living but a few miles from
Durham University I was continually poised between two cultures,
between departmental activities and the ' field '. From day
to day I moved between the academic world and the children's
culture, an experience which was at times difficult to cope
with. To my supervisor David Brooks and his family I give
my thanks for their unfailing support in moments of crisis.

But despite these problems access to my academic life, whilst
doing fieldwork, was also beneficial. I could present papers,
explore ideas and discuss problems with the knowledge that
they could be verified or augmented, changed or abandoned
through further and immediate immersion in the ' field '.
To my post-graduate contemporaries in the Department of

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and criticisms on my work and to the other members of the Research Group which later provided a much needed supportive atmosphere for the particular problems involved in the production of a thesis. To David Brooks I am now grateful that he never allowed me to compromise and always urged me to explore more fully the possibilities of my field data.

To the many people who have, over the years, invited me to present papers and to publish articles I am also grateful for it allowed me to explore and refine the ideas which now appear in the final draft of this thesis.[1] Everybody has their own thoughts about children and the opportunity to speak mine in such a wide variety of contexts was a creative and constructive experience.

Finally, in the production of this thesis I am thankful to Jan Dillistone for her efficient typing and ability to decipher my writing and to David James for printing the photographs. I am also grateful to Malcolm Young for the colour photographs which he took for me.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents Joan and Hal Rooke for whom it also represents a very personal achievement.

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1. These earlier versions of parts of the thesis which have already been published are listed in the bibliography.

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Notes on the form of presentation

(1) When extracts from field notes are incorporated in
the text these are signified by the use of double
quotation marks.

(2) Throughout the thesis words which are specific to the
children or local dialect terms have been underlined and,
where translation is not given in the text, their
meaning can be sought in the Glossary below. All
spelling is phonetic as such words are rarely written
down and the meaning is that which emerged from the
children's use of the word.

(3) Glossary of terms:

(N.B. (n) - noun; (adj) - adjective; (v) - verb;
(derog) - derogatory.)

Bag (n)	- old woman or ugly female (derog.)
Bas (n)	- bastard
Bray (v)	- to hit
Bog (n)	- toilet, usually plural, 'bogs'
Bug (v)	- to annoy
Chowy(n)	- chewing gum
Clemmy(n)	- (dialect) small stone or pebble
Gadgy (n)	- old man (derog.)
Gemmy (n)	- a glance or look. Also a quick word or short conversation.
Gobby (adj)	- chatty (derog.). From 'gob' meaning mouth.
Hacky (adj)	- dirty

Hag (n)   - old woman or ugly female (derog.)

Knacker (n)   - useless person, from ' to knack', meaning to break or make useless.

Les (n)   - lesbian

Lug (n)   - ear

Manky (adj)   - dirty

Mega (n)   - rage or temper

Mug (n)   - face

Pros (n)   - prostitute

Sissy(n)   - coward

Snacker (n)   - swede

Soz (adj)   - sorry

Spacca/Spac (adj)   - useless person, from ' spastic '

Spuggy (n)   - (dialect) sparrow

Introduction

When is a child not a child ?

The Opies, in their discussion of the verbal lore of school-
children remark that ' a curious feature about riddles is
the way many children, when they hear them, like writing
them down and making collections of them ' (1977:93).
Posing the riddle - when is a child not a child - is, then,
an appropriate starting point for discussing the structure
and experience of childhood and adolescence, representing
as it does one significant feature of the culture of
children. In the following pages this culture is explored,
based upon two years anthropological field experience
amongst a group of young people in an ex-mining community
in County Durham in the north-east of England.

However, the riddle is significant in other ways for it
acts as a useful mnemonic in highlighting the main themes
of this thesis. Firstly, it directs attention to the
conceptual nature of the terms ' child ' and ' adolescent ',
forcing them to be recognized as social constructions, as
categories of cognition grounded in and arising from
particular lived experiences, rather than simply as
labelling devices for biological states. Throughout the
thesis attention is given to the ways in which these
social classifications are made meaningful in everyday
life.

An interrelated theme is also illuminated by the riddle.
Through questioning the universality of terms such as
' child ' and ' adolescent ' a comparative framework is
created which allows the particularity of the culture I
shall describe to be thrown into relief, to be seen as
but one instance of ' childhood ' and ' adolescence ' in
contemporary British society, generated and shaped by the
socializing experiences of life in a northern semi-rural
community.

But the riddle is most important in that it is the one
riddle to which the children themselves continually sought
an answer in their daily lives. Aged between eleven and
seventeen years the children nominally fit the description
' adolescent ' but none of them would use such a term. As
I shall show, it is a semantically empty category for those
to whom it is often applied and, consequently, an ascription
which they have to contend with.

For the children with whom I worked the question - when is
a child not a child - was one continually explored in and
through the context of their own ' adolescent ' culture
but was a riddle with no definitive solution.

That riddling of any kind should be a preoccupation of the
young is not surprising, for riddles act as conceptual
sieves. They are instructive and illuminating through their
articulation and commentary upon the paradoxical: they think
the unthinkable in us and explicate implicit orders. It

is these orders which children must discover for themselves
as they mature and it is through practical experience of
processes of socialization that such knowledge is gained.
As Hamnett suggests, the value of riddles is that they
reveal ' some of the principles that underlie classification
in social action and cognition generally and can, in
particular, indicate the role that ambiguities play in the
classificatory process ' (1967:379). For young people the
main ambiguity to be resolved is their position relative to
others within the life-cycle : it is the classification of
' self ' which is their constant quest.

The riddle - when is a child not a child - leads directly,
therefore, to the central concerns of this thesis through
confronting the question of socialization, the question of
how cultural knowledge is both given to and received by
children in their daily lives. Through discussion of the
field material it is argued that children primarily make
sense of the world through the experiential context of their
own culture, a culture which whilst being largely dependent
for its content on the adult world nevertheless has its own
distinctive form. It is this which provides the mode of
thought and action, the context for learning, which
facilitates the socialization process and positions them
relative to others.

In summary, then, there is a central dialectic to be
explored: the categories of ' child ' and ' adolescent '

are social constructions, their meanings culturally determined by their context of use in the socialization process but it is only through directly confronting the social experience of such category members that these meanings become resonant for it is this which is constitutive of their cognitive form. The riddle - when is a child not a child - enables this constant interplay between form and content to be examined, illustrated by the particular experiences of childhood and adolescence which constitute the body of this thesis.

The problem posed

The process of becoming human is social. It involves not only the biological processes of birth, life and death but, most importantly, the conceptual recognition and cultural perception of these events. Recognition of the humanity of others depends upon social definitions of what constitutes that humanity. In the context of contemporary British society I trace some of the ways in which the humanity of the young is conceptualized and examine the classificatory processes through which childhood and adolescence as conceptual states have been and are structured; most importantly I consider the impact of these processes in the experience of young people themselves for, as Francis Huxley remarks newborn infants are ' merely candidates for life ; they become human only when everyone recognizes them to be so ' (1980:61).

It is, then, through focusing directly upon the paradox laid bare in the riddle that the life-cycle can be examined as one process of social classification, one implicit order, with which young people must daily contend. In contemporary Britain the use of terms such as ' child ', 'adolescent ' and ' adult ' represent an attempt to classify, and thereby conceptually control, the process of physical maturation. Through locating each individual within a specific social category his or her place in society is conceptually ordered : as Burridge (1979) argues, an individual only becomes someone, a person, through their conformity to culturally prescribed sets of attributes cognitively established for that particular category of social beings. What kind of people then are children and adolescents? What expectations do we have of them?

The terms ' child ' and ' adolescent ' are, however, only two amongst many used to categorise the younger members of our society. It is important, therefore, to first consider their effectiveness and import as labelling devices: of whom, by whom and using what criteria are these terms applied? As part of a syntagmatic linguistic chain what relationship do these classificatory terms bear to other category labels; what internal relationship do they have with one another? What logic governs the construction of conceptual boundaries to ideas of childhood and adolescence and from whose perspective is it operative? Are the categories ' child ' and ' adolescent ' fixed and immutable social classifications, amenable to precise and definitive description, or do they

on closer scrutiny elude such rigid containment? These
are some of the issues explored in the following chapters,
themes which have emerged from analysis of the participative
experience of a particular group of children and adolescents
in contemporary Britain.   These questions are not,
therefore, purely academic. Arising as they do from the
analysis of field data they are issues which the young
people themselves constantly explore in their daily lives.
They are questions which reveal a need to examine the
dynamics of one process of social classification as it
affects, and indeed is effected by, the younger members
of our own society.

Problems of definition, then, are central to the thesis.
Once again the riddle - when is a child not a child - is
pertinent. Thesaurus, for example, offers a multitude of
solutions to it but has no definitive answer: a child is
not a child when it is a baby, an infant or a toddler.
Neither is it a child when it is a juvenile, a teenager,
a minor or an adolescent and, yet, a school-child may be
all of these. Why then do we employ such a variety of
alternative terms and what significance does this semantic
profligacy have? When does childhood end and adolescence
begin? When do children stop being babies and what
processes transform children into adults?

Mary Douglas seems to throw some light on the problem in
her suggestion that ' there is energy in (society's)

margins and unstructured areas ' (1969:114). Is it
possible that such terminological confusion symbolises
the insolubility of the riddle, mirroring the very real
ambiguity of becoming adult? Do the numerous labels we
employ to describe children and adolescents in fact reflect
attempts to order and control, to pin down and contain,
that which is perceived to be anomalous and disordered?

Indeed this is, I suggest, implicit in the terms we use.
For example, the term ' nipper ' is often used to refer
to young boys. ' Nipper ' is defined as boy or lad -
especially, a coster-monger's assistant - and, corres-
pondingly , the adjective ' nipping ' means to move hurriedly
and unobserved, to be quick and nimble (Oxford Dictionary).
Used as a category term for boy, 'nipper ' literally embodies
energy and movement.

Other words and phrases commonly used to describe adolescence-
the period of life to which my own informants would seem to
belong - similarly emphasise fluidity of movement,
transition and, in addition, attribute to it a powerful and
potentially dangerous aspect.[1] This is the ' terrible
teens ' the ' difficult years ', the ' awkward age ', a
time of' adolescent crisis ' when the child may experience
and make manifest ' growing pains ' ; it is these qualities
which characterise the ' generation gap ', the conceptual
space between the categories of ' child ' and ' adult '. By

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1. This discussion is extended later, see pp 398 - 400.

labelling the young in such a multitude of ways socialized

adults appear to be attempting to control and order their

overt energy: as I shall argue, being between times and

statuses it is ' adolescents ' who threaten adult order

precisely through becoming adult.

Through focusing upon the totemic quality of labelling devices

the riddle serves a further purpose in directing attention

to the complex interplay between conceptual category and

social group. This is not simply a theoretical debate but

is a problem daily faced by the young themselves: am I

a child or an adult, to which category do we belong? It

is significant that the group I was working with had no

collective term for themselves but merely talked of ' lads '

and ' lasses ', distinguishing according to gender but avoiding

categorising themselves in terms of the life-cycle. This

suggests that they see themselves as displaced or placeless

people belonging nowhere.[1] The riddle, then, pushes the

analysis towards exploring the subjectivity of such

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1. This lack of a collective term points to the central
   issues of this thesis. That the children see themselves
   as being outside the major life-cycle classifications,
   as marginal to the social order, is discussed in detail
   in Chapter 3. That they only distinguish themselves
   according to gender is reflected in their concern with
   the changes in the physical body which accompany their
   transition towards adult status, see Chapter 6. This
   also poses a problem for me. I literally have no
   appropriate language with which to refer to the young
   people I worked with.Ostensibly they belong to the 'adolescent'
   age group but they would never use this description of
   themselves. For clarity,therefore, I have chosen to use
   the term ' children ': when speaking of them in particular,
   rather than the category, I use the definite article-
   viz. ' the child ' or ' the children '.

objectified logic through examining one particular instance
of the ' homology of structure between human thought in
action and the human object to which it is applied '
(Lévi-Strauss, 1969:164).

With this aim in view a parallel can be drawn with some
recent anthropological work on women which ' looks at the
structural, or social position of women, and asks how the
category, ' women ' is defined, and is related to others
in society ' (Ardener. S, 1978:9). Explicit within this
approach is the suggestion that

> 'perceptions of the nature of women
> affect the shape of the categories
> assigned to them, which in turn reflect
> back upon and reinforce or remould
> perceptions of the nature of women, in
> a continuing process. (ibid:9).

A comparable dialectic can be outlined for children and
adolescents.

In this respect Nicholas Tucker's attempts to define
children in his book, What is a Child ? (1977) is instructive.
Although Tucker admits that childhood can be seen largely
as a ' function of adult expectations and practices ' -
which accounts for historical and cross-cultural variations
in child-rearing practices - his aim is to uncover some
definitive criteria of universal application for the
incumbents of this conceptual state (1977:99).[1] His
arguments, however, are unconvincing precisely because

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1. For a discussion of the historical development of the
   concept of childhood and examples of cross-cultural
   variation, see Chapter 1.

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he fails to appreciate the interplay between conceptual

thought and social action outlined by Ardener (op.cit.)

for the position of women.

From the outset Tucker equates the <u>nature</u> of children

with the <u>idea</u> of childhood and the <u>category</u> of child.

His main argument is directed against those who would

argue for the primacy of social factors and, thus, he

states that

> ' <u>children</u> have an undeniable capacity
> to adapt to very different circumstances.
> This adaptability is one key way in which
> universals of childhood become transformed
> by different social conditions ' (ibid:14).

These ' universals ', described later as ' <u>childhood's</u>

basic characteristics ' are, he suggests, to be located in

particular physiological and psychological states of

<u>children</u> (ibid:20). Tucker's confusion stems from a failure

to recognise that such biological facts may themselves be

subject to social perceptions ; that they may be used in a

variety of different ways to shape ideas of the child and

the concept of childhood and therefore, in turn, to recast

perceptions of the nature of children. As in the case of

women, there is a tendency to think of the category of

child ' as some kind of universal, with a place in a

cross-cultural frame of reference ' (Ardener.S, 1978:11).

We need reminding, as Ardener does for women, that

> 'our own cultural model of (children),
> and the adventures of the beings who
> realise that model, are very special
> examples from a wider category called
> ('children') ' (ibid:11).

Through further analysis of Tucker's argument this point
can be elaborated. Our selective perception of the biological
condition of children affects our understanding of the category
of ' children ' and ideas of ' childhood ' which, in turn,
feed back into our perception of the biological nature of
children.

Tucker argues, for example, that ' perhaps the most basic
physical fact about the child is that he is small in a world
where those in authority over him will be tall ' (1977:46).
Indeed, this is often the case ; small size is child-like.
Thus, the middle-aged dwarf is perceived to be an anomalous
creature for small stature contravenes our conception that
adults are tall. The dwarf may therefore often find a niche
as a comical figure amongst circus clowns, or as a freak to
be placed alongside the animal exhibits in fair-ground side
shows. The dwarf provides a referential frame for our
conceptions of humanity, as a disordered creature with no
place amongst humans. And yet, the dwarf is an anomalous
adult and not a child ; his or her ambiguity lies in looking
like a child whilst being of grown-up age. A social classi-
fication, age, outweighs biological conditions.

Lack of height is ,therefore, characteristic of children and
is used as a symbolic marker of our category ' child '.
But it is not, in itself, a definitive boundary for social
perceptions intrude. We cannot say, like the King to Alice,
that all persons more than a mile high should be classed as
adults, that they should have no place in the category of

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' child '. Gulliver experienced similar disturbing
facts about height : little people can rule and wield great
authority.

Similar qualifications apply to Tucker's suggestion that
non-fertility is another ' key-difference ' between adults
and children (1977:45). Besides the most obvious criticism
- the fact that puberty occurs at different times for
different children and that it's onset may itself be
affected by _social_ conditions such as poor nutrition and
living-standards - non-fertility is not a physiological
condition reserved solely for children. It _is_, however,
one of the biological conditions of children that we have
selected out as a symbolic marker for our category 'children'.
Hence , in our society, the infertile adult feels his or
her physiological condition to resemble a child's and,
therefore, seeks urgent medical aid to alter this anomalous
state. He or she may be perceived by others to be on the
periphery of full adult social status but is not classed
as a child. Other symbolic markers, such as age, physical
size or occupation, assert their classificatory power and
a ' normal ' condition of children becomes conceptually
transformed into an adult problem.

Senility is child-like and adults are said to enter a
second childhood during their declining years; but they
are not classed as children. Piaget (1929) has amply
demonstrated the cognitive development of children during

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their early years of life, which mark them off from adults at certain distinctive stages, but those who never fully extend their mental and intellectual capacities are conceptualised as peripheral adults. They are not seen as children. Lunatics and old people may be childish but they are classified on the <u>adult</u> side of the conceptual boundary.

Clearly, therefore, physical and psychological differences between adults and children <u>are</u> used as symbolic markers for social classifications but these ' facts of life ' are selectively perceived. Even in the ' scientific ' mode of thought of Western cultures biological conditions vie with social factors - such as age, occupation or marital status - during the practical process of classification as the above examples have shown. Cross-culturally, as Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) indicate, biological factors receive less attention and, in particular, physical puberty must be marked by a rite of passage (social puberty) before a child conceptually and physically participates in the adult world. As La Fontaine argues, therefore, the facts of life are ' on the contrary, facts of culture ' (1978:2). Their interest for the social anthropologist lies in analysing ' how socially significant distinctions are mapped onto basic biological differences, and vice-versa '. (ibid:2) They are also important for exploring the ways in which these facts ' take on a particular cultural meaning and a specific social signi- ficance in different societies ' (Hastrup, 1978:49).

From such a perspective, then, the terms ' child ' and
' adolescent ' refer to conceptual categories but they are
not categorical. Being of and about particular cultures
the ways in which the process of physical maturation is
perceived and conceptually ordered differs both in time
and space, between and within cultures and historical epochs.
As Geertz writes :

> ' The everyday world in which the members
> of any community move, their taken-for-
> granted field of social action, is
> populated not by anybodies, faceless
> men without qualities, but somebodies,
> concrete classes of determinate persons
> positively characterized and appropriately
> labelled. And the symbol systems which
> define these classes are not given in the
> nature of things - they are historically
> constructed, socially maintained and
> individually applied. ' (1975:363-4)

Rarely, however, has this idea been applied to the study
of children within the social sciences. The majority of
research has fallen within the traditional parameters of
socialization theory.[1] What Hastrup terms the ' semantics
of biology ' has been neglected in the study of children
as it has, until recently, in the study of women (1978:49).

Theoretical themes

The problems and perspectives outlined above reveal a
particular approach to the study of children and stem

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1. Socialization theory is discussed on pp. 115- 137.

from the theoretical framework adopted. It is one which has both structured the analysis of field material and was implicit in the methodology adopted as I later suggest.[1]

Broadly, the analysis follows the tradition of social anthropological thought first begun with L'Anee Sociologique in France before the first World War. Within this approach the analysis of culture is not an experimental science but, largely, ' an interpretive one in search of meaning ' (Geertz, 1975:5). Of considerable importance to the development of this approach was the contribution of Ferdinand de Saussure's work on linguistics.[2] Through his formulation of the sign as both signifier and signified attention was directed towards examining processes of social classification and modes of thought, towards exploring implicit, rather than simply explicit, relationships between social forms.

Within the emerging structuralist tradition though, this adoption of a linguistic model for the analysis of social life, led to the formulation of culture as sign-systems, as codes for communication, interwoven into a logical structure comparable with that of language itself.[3] The task of the analyst adopting this framework has increasingly

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1. The relationship between theory and methodology is discussed on pp. 165 - 168.
2. See Ferdinand de Saussure, (1960).
3. For example, see Leach, (1976a).

become one of reducing ' all social relations to
communicative relations and, more precisely, to decoding
operations ' (Bourdieu, 1977:1).

Although the structuralist movement must be credited with
having fundamentally changed the face of social anthropology,
of creating a 'shift from function to meaning ', in some
respects it has imposed limitations upon analysis (Crick,
1976:2). It has, as Bourdieu writes, condemned the
anthropologist to see ' all practice as spectacle '
(1977:1):

> ' in taking up a point of view on the
> action, withdrawing from it in order
> to observe it from above and from a
> distance (the analyst) constitutes
> practical activity as an <u>object of</u>
> <u>observation and analysis, a</u>
> <u>representation.</u>' (ibid:2)

The creativity which the linguistic metaphor originally
released has become increasingly stifled: a concern to
construct systematic sets of logical relations - in
some cases to reproduce these in mathematical form -,
to rigidify sets of binary oppositions into formalist
classificatory systems has tended to reify the model. It
has certainly done little to bridge the gulf between ' the
learned reconstruction of the native world and the native
experiences of that world ' (ibid:18).

As Wilden remarks, the problem with this kind of structuralism
' lies not in its methodology, but in its application '
(1972:7). It is one thing to reveal that social forms possess
an internal coherence, that they represent a structured

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system : it is quite another to equate the two, to present

a model of reality as that reality.

In his critique of de Saussure Giddens argues that

> ' linguistic signs only come into
> being through the mutual connection
> of signifiers and signifieds in the
> temporal conjunctions effected in
> speaking and hearing, writing and
> reading. ' (1979:13)

The key word here is ' temporal ' for, as Giddens continues:

> ' The basic inadequacy can be simply
> stated: Saussure did not show what
> mediates between the systematic, non-
> contingent social character of <u>langue</u>
> on the one hand, and the specific,
> contingent and individual character
> of <u>parole</u> on the other. <u>What is missing</u>
> <u>is a theory of the competent speaker or</u>
> <u>language user.</u> ' (ibid:17)

In other words, he did not acknowledge the fact that 'sense

of linguistic items can only be sought in the practices which

they express and in which they are expressed. ' (ibid:38).

The inclusion of a temporal dimension in analysis is,

therefore, crucial; although social systems can be said to

have structural properties it must be recognized that this

structure is ' both medium and outcome of the reproduction

of practices ' (ibid:5). I refer again to Bourdieu : if

we are not to risk distorting our accounts of other people's

lives we must situate our analyses within spatial and

temporal parameters :

> ' to restore to practice its
> practical truth, we must therefore
> reintroduce time into the theoretical
> representation of a practice, which
> being temporally structured, is
> intrinsically defined by its <u>tempo</u>.'
> (1977:8)

As he points out the tendency for analysts to detemporalize
social practices - i.e. their failure to account for the
difference between experience and explanations of experience
- is ' never more pernicious ' than when omitted in
discussion of forms of social life in which ' temporal
structure, direction, and rhythm are constitutive of their
meaning ' (ibid:9). The life experiences of children and
adolescents are prime examples of such social practices.

In order to situate my account of the culture of one particular
group of adolescents within spatial and temporal parameters,
to present it as a structured and structuring system rather
than merely to reveal its structural properties, I have
adopted what Geertz terms the art of ' thick description ',
which is a means of sorting out the ' structures of
signification ' which inform people's daily life experiences
(1975:9) :

> ' to uncover the conceptual structures
> that inform our subjects' acts - the
> 'said' of social discourse-and to
> construct a system of analysis in
> whose terms what is generic to those
> structures, what belongs to them
> because they are what they are, will
> stand out against the other determinants
> of human behaviour. ' (ibid:27)

I offer an account of the children's culture, not through
attempting to establish causal connections, but through
revealing the cognitive relations which contextualize
and structure it and through identifying some of the key
generative principles which constantly recreate and
redefine that cultural context. I explore the totality
of their life experiences through the manifestation of
particular parts, a ' whole ' which is only experienced
by children through the practical sequence of events.

Time, then, is central to the analysis. In particular, it
permits an exploration of the impact of the dialectics of
social classification on the categories of ' child ' and
' adolescent ' and, crucially, allows consideration of their
import for children and adolescents themselves. This can
be demonstrated through reference, once again, to the
theoretical model outlined by Ardener (op.cit) for the study
of women.

Although the model is, as I have suggested, important for
its stress on the social construction of gender, the semantics
of biology, the model is only partially applicable to the
study of children. The terms ' child ', ' adolescent ' and
' adult ' refer to life-cycle categories which conceptually
order and control processes of physical and social maturation.
They represent attempts to fix and constrain the rhythm of
life itself but, in doing so, there is an inherent paradox:
an individual's place within any social category is both

defined <u>and</u> negated through this process. Only in
relationship does each discrete category become meaningful:
a child is a child when it is not an adolescent. In
Saussurian terms, then, these categories only have meaning
and ' only acquire identity or continuity in so far as they
are differentiated from one another as oppositions or
differences within the totality that is <u>langue</u> '(Giddens,
1979:11-12).

But, as Giddens points out in his critique of de Saussure,
' the constitution of language as ' meaningful ' is
inseparable from the constitution of forms of social life
as continuing practices ' (ibid:4). For the individual
child, therefore, the process of maturation ensures his or
her inevitable passage <u>between</u> social categories : seen
as a unilinear path stretching from infancy to old age,
the individual is both defined by his or her status as a
category member and by his or her eventual exit from that
category. Processes of physical and social maturation
provide for the child definitions of both what one is and
what one is not; what one will become and what one has
been. Immanent in the act of being is both the past and
the future. Unlike women, therefore, children turn
inevitably into their own opposites.

It is no wonder, therefore, that self-determination is
of paramount importance to the child: who or what am I,
where do I belong? It is through analysis of the form and
structure of socializing practices that this questioning

can continually be seen and it is through examining the culture of children that some solutions to the riddle may be found. Children constantly fight against and also occasionally exploit the restrictions which a selective perception of biological differences have placed upon them through the classificatory process. They recognize that ' becoming adult ' involves the personal loss and dis-investment of ' childish ' attributes and that they must seek to acquire those of adult status. The multitude of ways in which children question, manipulate and circumvent such conceptual controls through social practice context-ualises their ' culture ' and forms the subject matter of this thesis, revealing as it does the ' inevitable interweaving of language and the practical conduct of social life ' (ibid:34).

From this perspective socialization is not merely the replication of social order but the temporal process by which social order is reproduced and it is the young who are the instigators of it. It is a process of transmission and transformation wrought by the experiences of paradox, by what Giddens calls the ' becoming of the possible ' (ibid:4). The culture of children or adolescents is then the context in and through which the paradox of the classification process is daily experienced and daily articulated.

The riddle - when is a child not a child - thus facilitates the unravelling of these conceptual shifts and the exploration of

them in experiential mode. But if, as Cohen suggests,
social scientists ' are increasingly becoming traders in
definitions (who) hawk their versions of reality around
to whoever will buy them ' then I hope my own particular
reappraisal of one particular reality will meet his
conditions : the portrait of the lives of the young people
presented in this volume is the portrait they painted for
me and the one they paint of each other in their everyday
lives (1971:24). It is, hopefully, one which is not only
' intelligible, consistent and aesthetically satisfactory,
but also human ' (ibid:24)

The structuring of a mode of thought

A continual mapping between theory and practice permeates
this thesis, illustrated both by the adoption of the
particular analytical perspectives outlined above and by
the form of the presentation itself. My major concern
throughout is the exposition of a particular mode of thought
- the child's perspective on the world - seen as the social
construction of cognition in and through social action. As
the field material suggests this is refracted through the
children's daily experiences of socializing practices and
thus the emphasis upon the temporal dimension, which the
above theoretical perspectives provide, is crucial.

The structure of the thesis deliberately draws attention to
the temporality of this experience in presenting a
reformulation of traditional approaches to the question of

socialization which incorporates these new theoretical insights. The sequence of chapters illustrates the progressive movement of the children towards adulthood, their increasing knowledge and awareness as they mature. Each discrete chapter explores one small aspect of the culture of children which successive chapters build upon in an attempt to capture the culminating effect of the socializing experience. Knowledge in one domain is augmented by knowledge from another: images and symbols constantly reappear in different guises, apparently transformed but nevertheless recalling previous contexts. The web of knowledge which children construct for themselves during the experience of socialization is by necessity presented in the linear form but it should be understood as an ever increasing spiral of knowledge with which the children accomplish their own transition to adulthood.

In essence, the thesis traces particular kinds of movement over time: the passage of children from one conceptual category to another is illustrated by the changing social practices of one particular group of children as they verge towards adulthood. This is the first movement through time. A second, and qualitatively different kind, is the way in which children themselves attempt to negotiate, to move the boundaries which such category distinctions surround them with: as the field material reveals the children continually try to overcome the limitations which age and maturity place upon them and endeavour to enlarge their arena of social

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action. Time here is seen as an obstacle to be surmounted.
Thirdly, and coincidentally, there is movement in the
opposite direction: walls not only contain but also
prevent access inside. Whilst attempting to shift the
boundaries which contain them the children also continually
deflect perception of their own bounded culture, resisting
any attempts from outsiders to see what lies within.

In many respects, then, this combination of movements
accomplished by the children through their social practices
recalls the structural features of a <u>rite de passage</u>, as
described by Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969);(1974),
for it structures their passage between social categories.
But, <u>rite de passage</u> can only be a metaphor for adolescence
in a contemporary Western society for it is a movement
which children primarily construct for themselves rather
than a formally institutionalized ritual. It is structured
by the moves they make to contain their culture and by the
ways in which others manoeuvre them; it is also structured
by their own attempts to out-manoeuvre those who would wish
to contain and control them through their ability to
overcome the obstacles conceptually placed in their path.
As an approach to understanding the implications and
meanings of this process the metaphor of <u>rite de passage</u>
is, however, a useful guide and is implicit throughout the
thesis.

In Chapter 1 the scene is set for this process. Through
an historical exploration of the development of ideas

of childhood and adolescence, an examination of the ways in
which one particular classificatory order has gradually
become part of the Western collective consciousness, I
suggest that the young are now perceived to be marginal
to the social order. This perception is illustrated through
examining the consequences of this ordering for anthropological
approaches to the study of children. I suggest that, precisely
because of this particular conceptualisation of the young as
being peripheral to mainstream society, the study of children
and adolescents has been largely ignored by anthropologists
in the past. They were just not thought of as important.

Only in one particular and significant area do the young
become primary subjects for research for social scientists:
socialization, that is the ways in which children and
adolescents move from the periphery to the centre, the
process of becoming adult. However, as I suggest in
Chapter 2 this has always been seen as movement from the
outside in. With but a few exceptions no attention has been
given to the movements accomplished by those themselves
undergoing the socialization process. By using the metaphor
of a <u>rite de passage</u> attention can be given, however, to
the adolescent's own cultural experience. Analysis of the
field material reveals this to be an experience akin to
that of liminality through emphasis being placed upon the
participative experience of the young themselves in the
socialization process. Seen in this light socialization
is no longer simply the process by which adults make the

young social; instead, it gives voice to those not usually permitted to speak and the remaining chapters of the thesis articulate their perceptions of this process of being and becoming human through an exploration of the field material.

Chapter 3 develops some of the earlier themes by considering the impact of the classification process on the children themselves, examining in detail the dialectical relationship between category and group. In doing so it further demonstrates that traditional formulations of socialization theory concern the reproduction of social order; however, using the metaphor of rite de passage allows us to see its recreation. Through examining the spatial and temporal boundaries imposed upon the lives of young people during the process of social classification I explore and reveal their experiential effect. Briefly, I suggest that these serve to control and limit the children's spheres of action but that such limitations are not passively accepted. The children constantly evade, manipulate and circumvent such controlling lines.

Their ability to do this is partly facilitated by the very act of ordering itself. Through making discriminations order produces disorder as Douglas (1969) has shown. Structure itself sows the seeds of liminality. Children and adolescents, therefore, also enjoy considerable freedom of movement despite their containment. The conceptual walls which surround them proscribe the arena of their own culture

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and contextualise their own identities. As Turner writes:

> ' The gaps between the positions, the
> interstices, are necessary to the
> structure. If there were no intervals,
> there would be no structure, and it is
> precisely the gaps that are reaffirmed
> in this kind of liminality.' (1969:201)

Adolescence, then, is a non-time, an inbetween phase and it is in this conceptual void that ' doing nothing ' occurs. Chapter 3 concludes with an extensive account of the semantics of ' doing nothing ', a term which the children themselves use to describe their activities. The analysis suggests that ' doing nothing ' represents the process through which young people create their own cultural context.

Throughout the analysis certain key themes repeatedly emerge. All are connected with movement and change and recall the images common in a rite de passage : motifs of transformation, reversal and inversion constantly describe the vibrant adolescent experience. In Chapter 4 one particular motif is explored in depth: transformation. To belong to the adolescent culture - the culture of ' doing nothing ' - one must be able to speak as an adolescent. It is to the structuring of a ' liminal ' language that this chapter is devoted. Analysis shows that the children create their own language through a constant and consistent process of transforming the adult tongue which often literally involves moving letters around, reversing speech forms and inverting word order. It is both a transformed and transforming language.

In Chapter 5 one particular instance of language use is
explored : nicknaming. It is here that the significance
of <u>rite de passage</u> as a metaphor for adolescence begins
to reverberate. As Turner points out, a paradoxical
feature of liminality is the balance between conformity
and individuality. Although structural distinctions are
obliterated in anti-structure, through processes of ritual
levelling, there exists the opportunity for individual
expression : liminality

> ' does not submerge one in the other
> but safeguards their uniqueness in
> the very act of realizing their commoness.
> Communitas does not merge identities ; it
> liberates them from conformity to general
> norms. ' (1974:274)

This is the process of self-realisation, described by
Burridge, where the self acts as mediator between the
individual and the social person: the self is ' that which
integrates the given categories into an identity and which
is also, through the assertion to autonomy, poised to change
them ' (1979:30). Adolescence then is the time for maximum
self expression, through exploring concepts of the individual
and the person. It is through the exchange of nicknames
that this is partially accomplished.

Chapter 6 extends and elaborates upon this theme and explores
one central concern of the growing child. If, as suggested
above, our life-cycle classifications are to a large extent
predicated upon the physical body - upon physiological and
psychological states - then the body and its functioning

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is, not surprisingly, of great significance to the maturing child. In this respect I explore how children themselves perceive their own bodies and the bodies of others and how they constantly explore the relationship between individual and category membership through different modes of bodily expression.

Here again the rite de passage metaphor is pertinent for, as the analysis reveals, although adolescence is a time for questioning and exploring, for ' the analysis of culture into factors and their free recombination in any and every possible pattern ' it is also heavily structured (Turner, 1974:255). Two kinds of structure are visible: firstly in Turnerian terms there is the structuring of anti-structure itself and, secondly, the ' continuous thread of structure through ritualized communitas ' (ibid:254). In the discussion of bodily styles both kinds of order are apparent. The children impose upon each other strict rules and limitations upon social conduct and it is within these rules that the external structures - the socializing practices - can be discerned. A rite of passage is, in essence, a time for learning to become; adolescence, likewise prepares the maturing child for adulthood.

The final chapter is itself a metaphor for adolescence and, continuing the theme of the body, explores three social practices which are performed by the children upon the physical body: the eating of sweets, the smoking of

cigarettes and the drinking of alcohol.

It is suggested that the transition from one of these
activities to another symbolises the movement of children through
adolescence to adulthood for through controlling what they
take inside their bodies at different stages of physical
and social maturity the children are establishing control
over their own socialization. And, at each stage it is
the context of their own culture which structures this
acquisition of self knowledge: eating sweets, smoking
cigarettes and drinking alcohol are practices which recall
many of the features of the culture of ' doing nothing '
previously outlined. The chapter concludes, then, by
returning to some of the initial questions through
asserting that, as Giddens argues, ' socialization is
never anything like a passive imprinting by society upon
each individual ' (1979:129). Rather,it is to be understood
as an active process of learning, a process of self
socialization performed by the children in the context of their
own bounded culture and, only by looking at the ways in which
the children themselves structure this passage to adulthood
can socialization be seen as a way of being and becoming
human.

CHAPTER 1 :   THE STUDY OF CHILDREN

' A child is...well, a child is what you
recognise as a child. ' (Ward, 1977:vii)

Introduction

The study of children has had a chequered history in social

anthropology and, by 1973, Charlotte Hardman was still able

to pose the question: can there be an anthropology of

children? An anthropology of children, she proposes, would

be primarily ' concerned with beliefs, values or inter-

pretations of their viewpoint, their meaning of the world'

(1973:86). Children would be their own informants and, in

contrast to the more usual approaches to the study of

children and young people within the social sciences generally,

would be regarded as ' people to be studied in their own

right, and not just as receptacles of adult teaching '

(ibid:87). Characteristic of traditional socialization

theory Shildkrout criticises this latter approach as

follows :

> ' child culture is seen as a rehearsal
> for adult life and socialization consists
> of the processes through which, by one
> method or another, children are made to
> conform, in cases of " successful"
> socialization or become deviants, in
> cases of " failed" socialization.'
> (1978:109-110)

In itself this does not constitute an anthropology of

children as visualized by Hardman, for it takes as a priori

a correspondence of meanings and values between child and

adult worlds. Moreover, through assuming a unilinear,

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developmental perspective such an approach mitigates

against considering the possibility that the young may

possess and articulate in their actions and language an

alternative cultural perspective or interpretation of

the social world.[1]

That Hardman's suggestion has come so late may seem

remarkable especially considering Evans-Pritchard's comments

on fieldwork.

> ' I have always found that the best way,
> largely unintentional on my part, of
> overcoming my shyness and sometimes my
> hosts' suspicion has been through the
> children who do not have the same
> reserve towards a stranger.' (1973:11)

His experience is certainly not unique and yet few

anthropologists have taken up this obvious advantage. With

some notable exceptions children receive little mention in

ethnographic accounts prior to the 1970's and an anthropology

of children, along the lines visualized by Hardman(op.cit),

has never coalesced from the scattered and diverse accounts

of child-rearing practices and socialization studies.[2]

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1. Elizabeth Munday (1979) criticises Hardman(1973) and
   James (1979a);(1979b) for failing to discuss socialization
   in their analyses of the culture of children. With respect
   to these particular articles her criticism is valid but
   she is incorrect in assuming that this omission is a
   result of the theoretical models adopted. As I discuss
   in Chapter 2 socialization is an important aspect of the
   culture of children and a process which an anthropology
   of children can readily explore through reformulating the
   traditional explanatory frameworks of socialization theory.

2. See below for a discussion of children within social
   anthropology,pp.73-109.It is significant that it is
   amongst those working on ritual and symbolism that the
   most interesting early accounts of child culture can be
   found-see Richards (1956) for example. Their concern was
   primarily with social classification-social categories
   rather than groups-which, as I argue, is the cognitive
   shift necessary for an anthropology of children, see
   below pp. 125-137.

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Its emergent possibility during the 1970's is, as I
discuss below, no historical accident. Rather, it is a
direct response to the opening up of new areas of discourse
within the discipline itself. It is during this period
that the three main changes, begun in anthropology after
the second World War, combine to produce an alternative
and fruitful approach to the study of social life, one which
has allowed for the development of an anthropology of
children .[1]

Firstly, the functionalist orientation, with its emphasis
on the study of social groups, gradually began to wane
within British social anthropology as its primary research
areas - ' primitive cultures ' - were slowly transforming
into the new independent nations and relinquishing their
former colonial status. As Goddard (1972) points out
anthropology had developed in the colonial context; it
had provided both avenues for research and an implicit
analytic frame. Anthropologists

> ' did not perceive that colonialism
> created a colonial people - ' the
> native peoples ' - under the economic,
> political and spiritual domination
> of an alien power which possessed and
> ruthlessly used the means of violence
> against them. Instead, they chose to
> see colonial people in terms of a
> ' primitive' concept denying in effect
> their colonized status.' (Goddard,
> 1972:61)

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1. The insights which these developments gave to an
    anthropology of children are discussed in detail
    in Chapter 2.

The diminution of imperialism in the post-war era removed such conceptual blinkers and created the necessary conditions for a process of self-critical evaluation of theory and method within the discipline. Anthropology could no longer content itself with being the study of ' primitive peoples' ; rather, it had to embrace the fact that its subject was dominated and marginal peoples involved in power relationships on an international scale. This cognitive shift from seeing ' primitive ' peoples as geographic isolates to situating them within a world economy and power structure signalled the end to insular functionalist models and provided a more total, rather than simply totalising, perspective for the analysis of social life. Children, as I will show, form one such marginal group.

Goddard (op.cit) pinpoints the second significant shift within British anthropology which has heralded the advent of an anthropology of children. For him, one of the major limitations of functionalism was its inability to escape empiricism, leading anthropologists to confine themselves to ' the appearance of things, never attempting to analyse the relationship latent in the things themselves ' (ibid: 62). As he argues this form of empiricism rested on a conception of structure as solely <u>social</u> structure, that is as only the 'totality of empirically given social relationships in tribal societies ' (ibid:63). There was no notion of any underlying structures forming a non-observable, yet fundamental, social reality within the functionalist framework.

The irony of this, as Goddard rightly demonstrates, is that although Radcliffe-Brown - the functionalist father - took a Durkheimian model in his scientific charter for social anthropolgy his reading of Durkheim was both ' highly selective and incomplete ' (ibid:74). Durkheim's discussion of religion, of the collective conscience and of systems of collective representations were ' quietly suppressed or conveniently forgotten'; such mystical notions had no place within a rigorous and ' scientific ' system for studying social life (ibid:74).[1] But it was precisely these areas which came to the fore as the functionalist regime was superceded.

It was, then, the gradual growth in awareness of the importance of looking beneath the appearance of things - whether in terms of a Marxist or a French structuralist approach - which radically changed the face of British social anthropology. Much more attention was given to the study of social categories and systems of classification as being integral to and shaping that surface reality so beloved by the previous functionalist school. It is this movement towards the examination of social categories and away from the analysis of social groups which has facilitated the development of an anthropology of children.

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1. During the heyday of functionalism some anthropologists were, however, already beginning to raise these questions, see for example Evans-Pritchard (1956) and Richards(1956).

A third change has also been crucial. It is the development
of what Ardener (1971a) has termed the " new anthropology",
a movement which sees men as ' members of a self-defining
species ' (Crick, 1976:3). It is this which has focused
attention on the necessarily semantic nature of anthropo-
logical enquiry, of seeing language as both a structured
and a structuring system, of social classification as a
process continually reconstituted or reaffirmed through
social action and experience, rather than as merely a
system of order governed by fixed and immutable categories
of constraint. It is this latest shift in the discourse
of anthropology which has at last begun to tackle the
problems raised by Durkheim in his treatise on religion
of the relationship between thought and experience.[1]

The particularity of this focus has, I suggest, done most
to provide a suitable framework for an anthropology of
children. Through its emphasis on the dialectical
relationship between categories of cognition and categories
of experience it has drawn attention to the necessarily
conceptual nature of the term ' children' in relation
to ideas of ' childhood ' and ' adolescence '. No longer
can these be considered culture-free. Rather, questions
must be asked about their meaning in particular social
contexts.[2]

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1. See Durkheim (1914).

2. Although Hardman (1973) does not explicitly develop this
   point I suggest that it is implicit in her view of children
   as belonging to a 'muted' social group who possess an
   alternative world-view which cannot be articulated within
   the terms of the dominant model. She is discussing
   categories rather than social groups. See pp. 219-220
   for further discussion of this point.

With respect to the social anthropological contribution to child -study this latter point is crucial. The majority of anthropological work has stemmed from the West, from an intellectual tradition and social order steeped in particular ideas of childhood: ideas concerning the position and participation of the young in society, their capabilities, their limitations, their rights and duties. All these contribute to a _particular_ understanding of childhood and to the meaning of the category to which we assign our children.

As I suggest below, it is this which has both framed past approaches to the study of children and, unwittingly, led to an implicit bias in the interpretation offered by anthropologists of the form and structure of children's lives in other cultures : a Western idea of childhood has often been the unquestioned base from which to begin a discussion of other peoples' children. That is, a Western ideological construction - conceptions of childhood and adolescence - has been used as _the_ definition of the young. It is a bias which an anthropology of children can begin to examine and overcome.

The history of the study of children within social anthropology must therefore be contextualised through an exploration of the historical development of this particularized idea of the child in Western society and the emergence of the institution of childhood, described by Holt as :

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> ' all those attitudes and feelings,
> and also customs and laws, that put
> a great gulf or barrier between the
> young and their elders, and the world
> of their elders; that make it difficult
> or impossible for young people to make
> contact with the larger society around
> them, and, even more, to play any kind
> of active, responsible useful part in
> it; that lock the young into eighteen
> years or more of subserviency and
> dependency, and make of them... a
> mixture of expensive nuisance, fragile
> treasure, slave and super-pet.' (1975:22) [1]

I   The idea of the child in history

Rather than providing an empirical social history of

children - which has been well documented elsewhere - I

shall trace the emergence of the institution of childhood

over time, noting significant changes in the perception

of and attitudes towards children.[2] Children exist

everywhere; children have always existed but the ways in

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1. John Holt's work is representative of radical approaches
   to the study of children which see children in Western
   capitalist societies as being oppressed by their
   marginal social position and their mental and social
   development as being restricted by the institution of
   childhood. This question of marginality and oppression
   is discussed throughout this thesis through exploring
   the extent to which children themselves experience it
   and through examining the ways in which they endeavour
   to circumvent the restrictions which are placed upon
   them. See also Firestone (1972) and Illich (1973) for
   comparable approaches.

2. The main historical sources referred to in this
   section are:- Ariès (1979); Laslett (1965);
   Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969),(1973); Plumb (1975);
   Stone (1979) and Wardle (1974).

which their existence has been conceptualised and
socially ordered is culturally prescribed, located in
time and space and subject to change. As Phillipe Ariès
writes,

> ' the idea of childhood is not to
> be confused with affection for children:
> it corresponds to an awareness of the
> particular nature of childhood, that
> particular nature which distinguishes
> the child from the adult, even the
> young adult. ' (1979:125)

My discussion of the history of childhood represents,
therefore, an example of a structuralist approach to
history which, as Raphael Samuel has pointed out, draws
attention to the importance of examining ' means of
representation ' over time and shifts the focus from
' the real worldofobjects to the categories of language
and thought though which they are perceived:' (1981:xliii).
The value of adopting this approach is assessed by Samuel
as follows :

> ' By focusing on the forms of knowledge,
> and the ways in which meanings are
> mediated, structuralism necessarily
> makes us more aware of the contingent
> nature of historical representations,
> and forces us to consider them as ideo-
> logical constructions rather than as the
> empirical record of past events.'
> (ibid:xliv)

Through seeing childhood and adolescence as ideological
constructions, historically and culturally determined,
two related themes emerge as characteristic of Western
representations. Firstly, concomittant with the increasing
practical separation of the young from adult spheres of
action there develops a conceptual distance between the
worlds of adults and children which, in turn, further

removes the child from a central position in the social order. Secondly, and as an integral part of this process, there arises a complex of natural symbols around the idea of childhood itself: children become increasingly associated with the world of nature, rather than culture: nature comes to represent both a symbol of and for their pre-social, marginal status.

Such representations are not isolated, however, but can be seen to be both structured by and, to some extent also to structure , some of the more general shifts in intellectual thought occuring during the last four centuries in the West. It was a climate which saw children increasingly becoming a focus for a variety of moral, social and scientific theories as, ironically, they were themselves conceptually made more distant from the centre of the social order.[1]

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1. To trace this development as briefly as possible I shall loosely adopt the periodization model outlined by Bronowski and Mazlish (1963) who identify three major epochs in the Western intellectual tradition:- (1500-1630); (1630-1760) and (1760-1830). The later period, from mid-eighteenth century to the present day, will be explored through the work of social anthropologists. This periodization of history compares favourably with Lawrence Stone's (1979) outline for the history of the Western family:- (1450-1630)- the open-lineage family; (1550-1700) the restricted patriarchal family; (1640-1800)- the closed domesticated nuclear family. As Ariès (1979) argues, the emergence of the idea of childhood is intimately linked to the changing historical role of the family so this periodization of history is, I suggest, satisfactory.

(a) Children - pre-1500-1630

The first epoch which I shall examine, 1500-1630, is what
Bronowski and Mazlish (1963) describe as the " age of an
expanding world ". It is a period of history which
witnesses the transition from the Middle Ages to the
Renaissance and Reformation, to the scientific revolution
and the beginnings of industrial society. It is a time of
dramatic change and revolution in the history of ideas:

>   ' In 1500 educated people in western
> Europe believed themselves living at the
> centre of a finite cosmos, at the mercy of
> (supernatural) forces beyond their control,
> and certainly continually menaced by Satan
> and his allies. By 1700 educated people
> in western Europe for the most part believed
> themselves living in a finite universe on a
> tiny planet in (elliptical) orbit round the
> sun, no longer menaced by Satan, and
> confident that power over the natural world
> lay within their grasp.' (Eastlea, 1980:1)

During this era the world was reversed by Copernicus, the
place of man in relation to God challenged by Luther and his
position in the social order made subject to his own indi-
vidual achievement and effort through adherence to the
Protestant Ethic.

It was also during this period that a fundamental change
occurred in perceptions of children: in the Middle Ages
children were conceived of as but smaller and more dependent
versions of adult members of society and few discriminations
were made to class them apart. By the middle of the
seventeenth century, in contrast, children were beginning

to be conceptually separated from the world of adults;
the institution of childhood was already enclosing them
and children had become the focus for considerable
religious, moral and pedagogical thought.

In the medieval world-view, as Ariès writes, ' the idea
of childhood did not exist ' although , as he insists,
this is not to say that ' children were neglected, forsaken
or despised ' (1979:125). Children were just thought of
differently. They were ' in society as proto-adults, and
not separated from it in distinctly child-oriented
institutions ' (Wardle, 1974:28). They did not inhabit
a world apart.[1]

This idea is symbolised in a number of ways. The word
' child ' for example, was not an age-specific term.[2] Rather

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1. This thesis has recently been challenged by Ladurie (1978)
   who argues that ' there was not such an enormous gap, as has
   sometimes been claimed, between our attitude to children
   and the attitude of the people of fourteenth century
   Montaillou ' (1978:212). But his arguments are based on
   affective relations which, as Ariès insists, have little
   to do with processes of social classification. For
   example in Ladurie's Montaillou children were conceived
   to have reached the age of reason at 12 years old and were
   responsible members of society. Children began to participate
   in the economy long before this age. Both these cases
   illustrate the centrality, rather than the peripherality,
   of children in the fourteenth century to the social order
   c.f. twentieth century categorisations.

2. The compulsory registration of births (1836) finally
   formalized age as a boundary marker for social status,
   institutionalizing a process which began in 1538 with the
   keeping of Parish Registers. For a discussion of the symbols
   of age as a boundary to category membership, see below
   pp. 176- 188.

it was used to denote _any_ position of social dependency,
often synonymous with terms for young servant or feudal
lackey. Children, servants and apprentices formed a
category of dependent creatures. Not until the end of the
seventeenth century was the term ' child ' to become
restricted to its modern,age-related meaning applicable to
only one particular group of people.

Indeed, in the medieval world-view age was not a numerical
quantity: ' the ages of life did not correspond simply to
biological phases but also to social functions ' (Aries,
1979:21). Each ' age ' was perceived to be characterised
by particular _social_, rather than physical, attributes:
the negativity or social irrelevance of childhood, puerility
and adolescence, gave way to the prized age of youth and
was followed by the decay of senility and old age. The
seven ages of man and the great chain of being linked
' the destiny of man to that of the planets' forming a
coherent conceptual universe (ibid:19). It was essentially
a fatalistic perspective which,

> ' fostered the idea of a life cut into
> clearly defined sections corresponding
> to certain modes of activity, physical
> types, social functions and styles of
> dress. The division of life into periods
> had the same fixity as the cycle of Nature
> or the organization of society.' (ibid:22)

The ages of life were fixed. It was a ' continuity
inscribed in the general and abstract order of things rather
than in real experience ' (ibid:21).

This representation of man's progress through life had
certain practical consequences for the position of the
young in medieval society which, in turn, shaped perceptions
of them. Once past infancy, children participated in
society as best they could alongside their elders; youth
was the privileged age and small children were not
separated off as a distinct social group, requiring special
consideration. It was an attitude which persisted well
into the 16th century: and as Wardle comments childhood
was conceptually ' a state of incomplete adulthood, an
inevitable but unfortunate period of weakness to be crossed
as quickly as possible ' (1974:29).

Undoubtedly high infant mortality fostered this perception.
As Stone wrily observes, ' it was very rash for parents to
get too emotionally concerned about creatures whose
expectation of life was so very low ' (1979:57). The
common practice of giving the same name to two living
children symbolises this low expectation of their children's
chances of survival.[1]

Indeed, the history of the institution of childhood is
intimately linked with the changing historical role of the
family. According to Stone, the wealthy medieval family
was ' no more than a loose core at the centre of a dense
network of lineage and kin relationships ' (1979 :69). The
social unit reigned supreme over its individual members:

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1. See pp.47-48 for Ariès's discussion of this relationship
   between demography and the development of the idea of
   childhood.

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> ' Children were no different from the
> adult members of the family in that they
> were all conceived as component parts of
> a far larger unit, the extended family,
> to whose interests those of the inter-
> related nuclear families of parents and
> children were subordinated. ' (Pinchbeck
> and Hewitt, 1969:13)

This is apparent in many areas. For example, amongst the

wealthy, infants were often sent away to be wet-nursed and

when ' childhood effectively ended at the age of seven '

they might be sent to court in order that they could learn

the accoutrements of their class and status (ibid:42).

Child marriage, although not common amongst the wealthy,

did continue up until the 16th century. Its main purpose

seems to have been to establish political alliances between

families and some were contracted at very early ages:[1]

> ' Robert Parre, who was married to
> Elizabeth Rogerson at Backford in
> Cheshire at the age of three " was hired
> for an apple bie his uncle to go to church"
> where his uncle had to hold the child in his
> arms during the ceremony. John Rigmarden,
> also married at the age of three,was held
> in the arms of the priest who tried to coax
> him to repeat the words of matrimony.'
> (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969:45)

Amongst the poor, children were also seen as active and able

members of the community and were expected to participate

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1. For a comparison of relative marriage ages between
   different social classes see Stone(1979) who argues that
   the upper classes tended to contract marriages earlier
   than the lower classes. Many of the early paintings of
   children, where children were represented as miniature
   adults were, as Fuller argues, ' used as bargaining
   factors in the negotiation of political marriages..They
   were designed to express what the parents of the child
   hoped he or she would become' (1979:78).Their present
   condition was a social and political irrelevance. For
   a discussion of the representation of children in art,
   see pp. 46 - 47.

in adult activities. Many children were sent away from
their natal families to serve as apprentices or servants
in other houses at an early age. They lived as part of
their master's household where they learnt their craft
as adults:

> ' The apprentices were learning an adult
> activity. Their success was measured
> against adult standards, and the culminating
> point was their achievement of full adult
> status as a member of the guild.' (Wardle,
> 1974:28)

In such households ' apprentices, therefore, were workers
who were also children, extra sons and daughters ' (Laslett,
1965:3).   There was no notion that ' childhood might have
been a stage of life with interests and activities which
had their own value ' (Wardle, 1974:28). Childhood
frivolities were actively discouraged; they were considered
to be but a   hindrance to the rapid achievement of social
maturity - adulthood.

It was,then, from this historic background that modern
ideas of childhood sprung and the seeds of change were
sown during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a
movement clearly imaged in the changing representation
of children in art.[1]

Up until the end of the thirteenth century there were no
pictures of children but ' only men on a reduced scale'
(Aries,1979:32). The Italian Renaissance, with its emphasis

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1.   For further discussion and a critique of Aries (1979),
     see Fuller (1979).

on classical forms, introduced realistic representations
of children into the religious iconography of the
fourteenth century in the form of cherubs, putti and cupids;
they symbolised the innocence of children through their
glorification of the Mother and Child. Not until the
seventeenth century, however, did it become commonplace
to depict ordinary children with the touching tenderness
previously reserved for the Infant Jesus and other Holy
children. Breugel's painting, Children At Play (1560),
for example, depicts myriads of small-scale adult figures
playing the games of children.

The sixteenth century, however, saw the beginnings of
realism in the representation of children in art. Child
portraiture became increasingly common and, as Ariès notes,
the popularity of portraits of dead children during this
period ' marked a very important moment in the history of
feelings ' (ibid:38). It symbolised a new concern and
sensibility for the child; no longer was the death of a
child accepted with resignation and fatalism. By the
seventeenth century the genre of child portraiture was
well established indicating that ' children were emerging
from the anonymity in which their slender chance of survival
had maintained them ' (ibid:38). For Ariès this is a
surprising development in the growth of the concept of
childhood for it was at a time which ' preceded by more
than a century the change in demographic conditions which

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can be roughly dated from Jenner's great discovery '
(ibid:41).[1]

What then accounts for this revolution in ideas about
children and the emergence of the concept of childhood
during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Two reasons
are apparent. Firstly, the scientific revolution represented
a radical reappraisal of the old order. The Copernican
revolution turned the system of Ptolemy upside down and
challenged the fatalistic world-view of man at the mercy of
the natural (and supernatural) world. Change and
revolution replaced stasis and hierarchy:

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1. An argument cited by Stone (1979), Pinchbeck and Hewitt
   (1969) and Ariès (1979) is that the plague and small-
   pox mitigated against the early development of the
   concept of childhood, due to children's short life
   expectancy. Up until 1640, Stone suggests, the mortality
   rate during the first year of life was approximately 21%
   but, due to the high number of unrecorded births of
   children dying in the first few weeks this figure is
   likely to have been much higher. The mortality rate
   for one year olds was about 18%. By 1640 the average
   life-span was still short, about thirty-two years, which
   was possibly another contributory factor to the early
   assumption of adult responsibilities by children. It
   was not until 1770 that the child mortality rate began
   to drop, probably due to ' effectiveness of innoculation
   against small-pox, which became normal among the elite
   in the latter half of the eighteenth century ' (Stone,
   1979:59). E.P. Thompson, however, points out that such
   beneficial effects did not apply to the poor. In the
   1850's the mortality rate he quotes for poor children
   in their first year of life is 250/1000 i.e. 25 %
   ' in the high-wage industrial centres generations after
   generation of children were bred, more than half of whom
   died before they could scarcely speak; while in the
   low-wage countryside children were kept alive by the
   poor-rates to supplement, by migration, the heavy adult
   labour force of the towns ' (1972:361). Such differences
   serve to illustrate that childhood came first to the rich;
   the poor could not afford the luxury of such a concept.

' the new science saw revolution as
the natural movement of events, in which
the old is constantly turned over and
replaced by the new. The long allegiance
of the Middle Ages to established authority
was over. ' (Bronowski and Mazlish,1963:152)

Secondly, and intimately linked to these ideas, there was

another cognitive shift: the free thinking of the Renaissance

and Reformation represented a challenge to the established

hierarchical order of medieval society and paved the way for

the emergence of modern individualism. The Humanist tradition,

as Bronowski and Mazlish describe it, was primarily an

' intellectual movement, shifting of values and a new self-

consciousness of the human spirit ' (ibid:85). It liberated

man from the weight of tradition and offered a new vision

of man's place in the world and a new freedom of thought:

reason took the place of chance and fate, and the individual

assumed a hitherto unknown importance. Following Erasmus's

attack on monasticism and the corruption of the Church,

Luther pinned his ninety-five theses on the door of the church

at Wittenberg which proclaimed a new conception of man's

relationship with God. It symbolised the culmination of

the Renaissance spirit: salvation was not dependent upon good

works or the purchase of surplus grace from the treasury of

merit through the sale of indulgences but rested, instead, upon an

individual's own faith and contrition in the sight of God.

It was left to Calvin to push these arguments to their

logical conclusion along the path of Puritanism: salvation

was predestined for the elect and would reveal itself in

the virtues of thrift and abstinence. As Thomas argues

this was ' a conscientious attempt to impose order on

the apparent randomness of the human fortunes by proving

that, in the long run, virtue was rewarded and vice did

not go unpunished ' (1973:125-6). Salvation was in man's

own hands and was no longer a matter of luck.

The period (1500-1630) was, as Stone puts it, an era which

witnessed a ' fundamental shift in human values and in the

social arrangements that went with them ' (1979:100)[1]. The

conception and position of children is one such case. The

liberation of man from the wheel of fortune and the new

emphasis upon man as master of his own destiny focused attention

on individual mental and bodily control for future grace;

newborn children were therefore, not surprisingly, feared

in their apparent helplessness and lack of physical and

mental control. The doctrine of Original Sin preached by the

Puritans maintained that a child, although born sinful,

could through strict discipline of the body and rigorous

training of the mind have its will broken for the salvation

of its soul. The practical and intellectual effects of

such a doctrine created a fundamental transformation in

conceptions of the child :

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1. During this period there was a tremendous expansion in
   state institutions, a factor which Stone(1979) sees as
   integral to the rise of the nuclear family. The emergence
   of the Protestant Ethic and the increase in business and
   manufacturing interests are discussed by Tawney (1938)
   in relationship to Max Weber's thesis of the relationship
   between the Protestant Ethic and the development of
   capitalism in the West.

' So long as no one cared about them
very much, they could be left to run
wild, or in the hands of nurses, servants
and tutors. But the Reformation -and in
Catholic Europe the Counter-Reformation-
drive for moral regeneration brought with
it an increasing concern to supress the
sinfulness of children. A pedagogic
movement, which had begun a century
earlier with the Italian Renaissance as a
glorification of the purity and innocence
of the child was twisted in its late sixteenth
- and early seventeenth - century northern
religious transplantation into a deadly fear
of the liability of children to corruption
and sin, particularly those cardinal sins
of pride and disobedience.' (Stone,1979:124)

By the seventeenth century, then, the characteristics of

modern ' childhood ' were already begining to be defined.

The child's nature was thought by the Puritans to be

altogether different from that of adult rational man:

children- the literal manifestation of the sins of the flesh-

represented uncontrolled and irrational beings, qualities

in direct antithesis to Puritan morality. For them rational

thought, and hence salvation, was only possible through

control of the physical body, man's animal nature, and

children were more animal than human. The doctrine of

Original Sin provided, therefore, both an explanation

for their disordered state and a pretext for its remedy.

An explicit parallel was drawn by the Puritans between

the nature of children and that of animals which in practice

led to distinctions being made between adults and children

in terms of social action. As Stone points out :

> '... the early training of children was
> directly equated with the beating of hawks
> or the breaking-in of young horses or
> hunting dogs. These were all animals which
> were highly valued and cherished in the
> society of that period, and it was only
> natural that exactly the same principle
> should be applied to the education of
> children. ' (ibid:116)

Part of this accelerated interest in the training of
children was undoubtedly attributable to the demands of the
faith itself for, as Stone suggests, ' it was only by the
mass conversion of the younger generation that they could hope
to create or perpetuate the godly society to which they
aspired. ' (ibid:125)[1]

In practice, therefore, there was ' strict subordination
of children to parents and a high degree of severity in
their upbringing ', a process which as Stone argues laid
the foundation for the nuclear family through, for the
first time, placing responsibility for child-rearing
firmly in parental hands (ibid:124). Children were made,
for example, to kneel before their parents to receive their
blessing; it was a sign that their stubborn will was under
control, that their animal nature was becoming socialized.
They were continually exorted to lead pure and chaste
lives through being introduced to the exemplary and goodly

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1. A comparable example is cited by E.P.Thompson (1972)
   for the eighteenth century. He suggests that the
   Methodists were the main apologists for.child labour
   and the subsequent reforms for, through focusing upon
   the future generations, they could recruit more success-
   fully from the ranks of the poor.

children in Janeway's book, <u>A Token for Children</u> (1671),
an extremely popular publication of the time. These
children, too good to live, achieved deliverance rather
than damnation when they died. And for parents the
Puritans produced the first child-training manuals which
discussed methods of child-rearing to encourage righteous
behaviour.

The age of the expanding world saw, then, a dramatic
revolution in attitudes towards children and the perception
of the place of the child in society. The characteristics
of childhood were becoming firmly established : children
were thought of as essentially different from adult members
of society, requiring special attention and training.
Moreover, the nature of the child was pre-social, akin to
the animal world; this nature needed to be broken, disciplined
and socially controlled, an education which was to be carried
out through the subordination of children to their parents'
control within the emerging nuclear family.

The gradual separation of children from other members of
society, implicit in these perceptions, parallels the
wider cognitive shifts of the era: the separation of the body
and spirit, of nature and reason, imaged in the Puritan world-
view set man free from the great chain of being, placing
responsibility upon the self, upon the individual. Children,
in their apparent helplessness, belonged more to the ir-
rational , non-social realm of nature and were subject to
the whims of fortune; they were not the rational, indi-
vidualistic members of the newly conceived social order. The

emergence of the idea of childhood, then, stems from and
forms part of this new perception of man's relationship
with himself and with his own natural condition; only
through strict discipline and control could children be
made into responsible human beings.

(b) Children: 1630-1760

With the wind of change blowing through the Puritan era
the second major epoch in the Western intellectual tradition
witnessed further developments in ideas about the child and an
entrenchment of its position as apart from, rather than
part of, adult society. Bronowski and Mazlish (1963)
have described this period as the age of reasoned dissent.
It is an apt nomenclature: during this time children became
the focus for considerable intellectual thought and debate,
as exemplified primarily in the writings of John Locke,
and as evidenced in the new social attitudes towards
children in everyday life.

By the middle of the seventeenth century the conception of
children as being essentially different from adult members
of society had become firmly established and, as the
century progressed, was to become grounded in a number of
social practices. In particular, it was at this time that
there occurred a tremendous spurt in educational develop-
ments: for the rich, and even for some of the poor,
schooling was beginning to separate children off from the
adult world and to isolate them as a group apart,

requiring special attention and consideration. The

century was fertile with a variety of educational schemes.

For children of the poor commercial classes were introduced,

charity schools funded and industrial schools established

for the learning of the technical skills. But the greatest

surge in educational provision occurred with the opening

up of numerous private schools and academies for the children

of the wealthy.[1] Education was seen as a method of equipping

' the child with accomplishments that would secure for it

gainful employment ' and as a way of teaching the ideas of

' sobriety, obedience, industry, thrift, benevolence, and

compassion - that educationalists regarded as the virtues of

a successful man ' (Plumb, 1975:69). As Wardle comments,

1700 marks the date when ' childhood was becoming established

as a stage in life which presented peculiar problems, but

also, for the educator and propogandist, peculiar opportu-

nities ' (1974:31).

The pattern of separation and difference being created

through the act of schooling was mirrored in other spheres:

children were becoming increasingly recognized as a group

apart and, as Plumb points out, this ' new world became

a market that could be exploited ' (1975:71). A whole

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1. There is insufficient room to detail the rise of schooling
   in Britain. For a comprehensive account, see Wardle (1974).
   One important point to note is that schooling did not
   have this divisive effect for the majority of the population
   until the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1876.
   Childhood remained a luxury for the working-population
   well into the nineteenth century.

new range of specialised commodities were introduced for
this new consuming public.

For example, towards the end of the seventeenth century
children, for the first time, began to be dressed in special
' children's 'clothing, attire which replaced the scaled
down version of the adult costume which had previously
been worn: ' the customs distinguishing between children's
clothing and adult clothing reveal a new desire to put
children on one side, to separate them by a sort of
uniform ' (Ariès,1979:53). At first introduced for boys
alone, ' as if childhood separated girls from adult life
less than it did for boys', the introduction of children's
clothing symbolised the new perception of children as a
distinct category of humans [1] (ibid:56).

Other market possibilities developed. The stress on the
importance of education stimulated a growth in the production
of books for children, books which would be used by parents
to encourage children to read, and it was in 1745 that the
Newbury publishing house first began producing books
specifically for the child.[2] By the mid-eighteenth century
also the toy industry was rapidly developing : in 1760
the first jig - saws appeared along with board - games

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1. This gender differentiation is reinforced in other
   areas. For example, schooling was first of all only
   considered important for boys. Only later did it
   become common for girls to be sent to school.
   Childhood, therefore, is variously conceived: gender
   and social class are both important boundaries in
   shaping ideas of childhood.

2. For the history of children's literature, see J.R.
   Townsend (1976) and Ellis (1968).

and card-games designed for the child market. As Plumb
comments, this was a time of rapid commercial expansion:

> ' In 1730 there were no specialised
> toy-shops of any kind whereas by 1780
> toy-shops everywhere abounded and by
> 1820 the trade in toys, as in children's
> literature, had become very large
> indeed. ' (1975:90)

During the eighteenth century, therefore, children had
become established as a distinct consumer group, requiring
specific commodities. But it was not children who were
buying these goods, or paying the educational fees; it was
their parents. This suggests that parents were beginning to
regard their offspring in a new and particular light:

> ' Children had become counters in the
> parents' social aspirations; their
> sons' and daughters' education
> reflected status. And the image of
> the child which the schools, as
> well as children's literature projected
> was the image of an ideal parent's child
> - industrious, obedient, constantly
> respectful and indeed a pet, never too
> spoilt, but occasionally indulged as
> a reward for virtue. ' (ibid:80)

There was, then, a conceptual shift in ideas about the
child from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. The
Puritans had seen children as the medium for promoting their
faith, of carrying the Puritan message into the future and
had argued for the necessity of moral control of the child.
Through appealing to the doctrine of Original Sin they
justified their strict regime of discipline and control.
By the eighteenth century children were still seen as the
representatives of the future generation but education and

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learning had replaced moral control as the method of
ensuring future prosperity. The change in emphasis
can be located in the wider shifts in conceptual thought
about human nature which were being debated during this
period.

In contrast to the Puritan emphasis on Original Sin the
period 1630-1760 saw a new attitude towards children.
There was, as Thomas (1973) notes, a significant emphasis
placed upon the special qualities of children, but it was
a reversal of the old morality. Cases were cited of children
who could, through their innocence and chastity of body and
mind, divine the face of a thief in acrystal ball. Examples
of child-prophets were held up as symbols of the innocence
of children, and, on account of their tender age, as
evidence for the inherent neutrality, rather than sinfulness,
of human nature. One such case is the wonderful child of
Manchester who came to public notice towards the end of the
seventeenth century.

Four tracts, published in 1679, related in verse and prose
the achievements of one Charles Bennet, aged three of Manchester:

> ' Strange and Wonderful News or the
> Full and True Relation of the Miraculous
> Inspiration of Charles Bennet born at
> Manchester in Lancashire Who being but
> Three Years of Age, Speaks without the
> Least Instruction English, Latine, Greek
> and Hewbrew; So Perfect and Authentickly
> the like thereof hath not been heard in
> any Age ' (Axon, 1901:5)

The tracts relate how the child corrected his father's reading of the Bible and thus revealed his knowledge of the Scriptures and foreign tongues. The child wished fervently to speak to the King for ' he had some business of Importance to declare to his Sacred Self ' : it was ' to speak only Three Words, and after the deliverance of which, he Prophetically fortells his Dissolution as to this life' as being nine days after his pronouncement.   (ibid:9)

That such an event was thought to be divinely inspired is clearly stated:

> ' His Parents were but mean People, getting
> their Livings by their daily labours and
> Imployments. This is no fallacy nor
> premeditated Instruction taught by device
> nor Art of men, for was it so, the Child
> could not be perfect in every cross
> question, the which amongst the learnedest
> of men requires some deliberation, then
> what we can imagine less than that those
> parts and early Docilities proceeded by
> Divine Inspiration: and who can tell
> what Mysteries Omnipotence may veile that
> tender Form, the which in time may shine
> more perfect to the World,till when let
> us admire and with the Prophet say, It
> is the Lords doing and is Marvellous in
> our Eyes, etc. ' (ibid:10)

It is through the writings of John Locke that this changed perception of human nature can be best explored and, significantly, it was the education of children which Locke stressed as important in the fulfillment of man's potential. For him, all knowledge was to be gained from experience of the world; it was experience which, with age, produced reason among men. In contrast to the Puritan world-view Locke argued that the mind of the newborn child was a tabula rasa , a blank sheet upon which sensations were

imprinted. These experiences were gradually accumulated
and ordered in the mind of each individual so that reason
was achieved as maturity was reached. The social and
moral education of the child were therefore crucial to
the realisation of man's potential. For Locke human
nature was not innately sinful: rather, each child was
born with a capacity to learn, to receive and order
experiences. The ways in which learning occurred was
therefore of paramount importance.

It is in his essay, <u>Some Thoughts Concerning Education</u>
(1693) that Locke proposes his philosophy of education, one
which ' encapsulates what was clearly a new and growing
attitude towards child-rearing and education ' which paved
the way for the increasing institutionalization of child-
hood in the eighteenth century (Plumb,1975:67). Locke
stressed the importance of a liberal attitude towards
children in his educational writings which stood in
stark contrast to the previous emphasis upon corporal
punishment and authoritarianism as child-training methods.
The child, he reasoned, should be encouraged rather than
forced to learn.

More generally, Locke's writings reflect the continuing
growth of interest within the intellectual community of
scientific investigation of the natural world, a world
no longer beset by chance and fortune but one subject
to physical laws. Locke adopted an empirical approach

to epistemology which attempted, in a scientific manner, to explore the mechanisms by which knowledge is acquired through an examination of its simplest form. The newborn child was, therefore, a useful focus for these concerns, and it is in this respect that Locke's philosophical discussions fore-shadow many of the later accounts of the form and process of socialization.[1]

In summary, therefore, the period 1630-1760 witnessed a two-fold development in ideas of children. Firstly, childhood became recognized as a distinct phase in the life-cycle, although for the great majority it was a concept which, as yet , could not be socially practised. Only the wealthy could afford to conceptually categorise children in a world of their own through sending their children to school and participating in the new child-oriented consumer market. But a secondary development during this period was already laying the foundations for the institutionalisation of childhood for all social classes, for male and female alike. The special quality of the child's nature was no longer simply a matter of religious dogma, linked to moral issues, but was becoming to be seen as a ' scientific ' fact and something which could be directed and channelled, trained and

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1. For a discussion of socialization, see pp. 115 - 137. Here for the first time the child is used as a resource for study and Locke's work heralds the later use of the child by social scientists in socialization research.

conditioned by social experience. An individual's destiny

was, in part, becoming a function of childhood itself, rather

than solely a matter of divine intervention.

(c)   Children: 1760-1880

1760 signals the start of the industrial revolution in

England, described by Bronowski and Mazlish as an 'explosive

moment in European and world history in which the central

features of contemporary life were created in a remarkably

short time ' (1963:349). For children of all social classes

it is a time which sees their progressive marginalisation

from mainstream society, secured through continued

intellectual interest in the particularity of the child's

nature and realised in practice through the reforming

activities of 'a variety of philanthropic movements which

worked towards protecting the child from the harsh

realities of the adult world. As Musgrove points out such

well intentioned activities have hidden effects:

> ' Protective measures are a two-edged
> device: while they may signify concern
> for the welfare of the young they also
> define them as a separate, non-adult
> population, inhabiting a less than adult
> world. ' (1964:58)

The onslaught of industrialisation signalled the death-

knell to cottage industry through the introduction of

the factory system and paved the way for the later removal

of the child from the sphere of work. Prior to the

development of large-scale factory systems the domestic

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economy had made considerable use of child labour as

E.P. Thompson describes for the textile industry:

> ' Weaving had offered employment to
> the whole family, even when spinning
> was withdrawn from the home. The
> young children winding bobbins, older
> children watching for faults, picking
> over the cloth, or helping to throw
> the shuttle in the broad-loom; the wife
> taking a turn at weaving in and among
> her domestic employments. ' (1972:339)

With the change to the factory system a new method of

working was imposed upon the family, one which led to the

exploitation of child-labour and eventually stimulated

pressure for social reform, leading to the removal of the

child from the sphere of wage-work. It was not the

employment of children _per se_ which was exploitative for,

as E.P. Thompson shows, children had always worked; rather

it was the fact that the factory system inherited ' the

worst features of the domestic system in a context which

had none of the domestic compensations ' (ibid:370). The

child's labour was still an essential part of a family's

income but its conditions of work had been dramatically

altered: for children, labour in the home ' would follow

a cycle of tasks and even regular jobs like winding bobbins

would not be required all day ' ;'no infant had to tread

cotton in a tub for eight hours a day and for six days a

week ' as became necessary under the factory system

(ibid:368).

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The imposition of such working conditions upon children became the focus for a variety of humanitarian reforms during the nineteenth century. A series of Factory Acts were implemented from 1819 onwards as a protection for the child against the worst excesses of the factory system and, by 1876, Sandon's Education Act finally removed children from regular wage-work through the introduction of compulsory schooling. As Pinchbeck and Hewitt suggest,

> ' the institutional development and acceptance of formal education in schools with the consequent isolation of the child from adult society, was a prerequisite of the emergence of modern sociological and psychological concepts of childhood. '
> (1969:306-7)

The conceptual marginalisation of the child from the adult world was therefore practically reinforced by the removal of the child from the sphere of wage-labour, itself a function of changing patterns of work, and the very freedom from wage-work came to represent and form a boundary to the idea of childhood.

It is significant that, as E.P.Thompson notes, ' the Factory Movement, in its early stages, represented less a growth of middle-class humanitarianism than an affirmation of human rights by workers themselves ' (1972:374). As he points out ' in the eyes of the rich between 1790 and 1830 factory children were ' busy ', ' industrious ', ' useful '; they were kept out of their parks and orchards and they were cheap ' (ibid:377). Only later was their cause taken up by middle-class reformers. Change, therefore, came from below, rather than above, an indication that the idea

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of childhood was begining to become part of the conceptual
map of all social classes.

Further protective legislation soon followed in other social
spheres. For example, a series of laws were passed concerning
cruelty and neglect of children. In 1839 the Custody of
Infant's Act dramatically reduced the rights of the father
over his children and paved the way for the Equal Guardianship
Act of 1925. The Infant Life Protection Act was passed in
1872 and, in 1889, it was supplemented by the Prevention of
Cruelty to Children Act which allowed the courts to deprive
irresponsible parents of their children. The 1891 Custody
of Children's Act made it impossible for parents who had
abandoned their children to reclaim them and in 1895 the
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
received its Royal Charter.[1]

This mass of legislation for the protection of children which
was introduced during the nineteenth century symbolises the
final practical realisation of the concept of childhood; it
images a perception of children as being a distinct social
group with special needs and requiring particular kinds
of legal protection and attention. It fixed in law the
rights of children , thereby suggesting that they were
themselves unable to claim them and established clear lines
of separation between the worlds of adults and children.
Childhood was legally proclaimed for all classes and the

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1. For a comprehensive history of these social reforms,
    see Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1973).

awareness of the particularity of the child's nature, an
idea first mooted in the seventeenth century, was fixed
in the statute book.   As Pinchbeck and Hewitt write,

> ' in effect, nineteenth century legislation
> gradually imposed on the working-class
> family a pattern of child-dependence which
> the middle and upper classes had developed
> several generations before.' (1973:651)

It was not only in the sphere of practical reforms that
this new awareness of childhood was becoming more visible
for the particular nature of children was also a matter of
more general concern. Foucault (1979), for example, dates
the historical repression of the sexuality of children as
far back as the eighteenth century. He suggests that from
this period on the sexuality of the young became ' an
important area of contention ' and a matter of social
concern (1979:30). By the nineteenth century, child
sexuality had become represented as an ' epidemic that
needed to be eradicated ' and children were forced to do
in private what adults publicly forbade (ibid:42). The
cognitive recognition of the sexuality of the child further
conceptually marginalised the young through the social
denial of its existence.[1]

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1. It is Foucault's contention that the repression of
    sexuality is not a function of silence. On the contrary,
    sexuality became repressed precisely through being talked
    about. It became a topic of discourse, rather than simply
    a fact of life; a source of scientific interest and
    something to be looked out for amongst children and
    guarded against. Sex, therefore, was a constant feature of
    discourse and not absent from it. A good illustration of
    this ambivalent attitude is cited by Fuller (1979). He
    argues that the popular contemporary print, Playmates,-
    which was introduced to advertise Pears soap- represents,
    at one and the same time, the innocent little girl and
    adult female sexuality. The little girl reclines on a sofa,
    her nightdress dishevelled, and coyly peeps at the observer.
    Fuller comments that 'the cult of innocence was a defence
    against this real advance in awareness of the sexual life
    of the child' which occurred during the nineteenth
    century   (1979:96).

But perhaps the greatest stimulus to an increased interest
in the child's nature stems from the writings of Rousseau.
His ideas became widespread and influenced many of the
contemporary attitudes towards children, clearing the path
for the realisation of practical social reforms. Following
on from Locke's seventeenth century speculations upon the
particular quality of the child's mind Rousseau also
sought to demonstrate that the child possessed a nature
quite distinctive and innately different from that of
adults.

Discounting, like Locke, earlier puritanical suggestions
of the inborn sinfulness of the child Rousseau argued for
its original innocence. For him,the mind/body of the child
was inherently good; it was not, as Locke argued, neutral
and, again in disagreement with Locke, Rousseau suggested
that it was through contact with the natural, rather than
the social world, that this primeval nature could be
protected. For him, it was Society which was to blame for
any departure of the child from its natural state of
innocence: ' god makes all things good; man meddles with
them and they become evil ' (Emile, 1969:5). Social
experience for Locke was a positive force; for Rousseau,
on the contrary, it was fraught with danger. As he saw
it from the moment of birth the child's original virtuous
nature was subject to and threatened by the corrupting
influence of society and thus, in Emile (1762), Rousseau
proposed a system of education which would allow the
child to develop naturally, according to its own nature,

rather than society's whims.

The importance of Rousseau's philosophical contribution lies not in its practical application - Emile had little direct influence upon educational developments, unlike Locke's thoughts on education - but in its ideological import. Rousseau stressed that the child could retain its innate innocence if allowed to grow up in harmony with the laws of nature, rather than those of men. The child would be Nature 's pupil. According to Rousseau, the child matures ' not by a gradual unbroken process of accretion ' - Locke's philosophy - ' but by a periodic movement through certain distinct stages ' (Wardle,1974: 33).[1] The child passed from a stage of sensual experience, through a period of intellectual and analytical thinking, before reaching the time when it could appreciate moral and aesthetic issues. So that the child might mature in this natural and orderly manner Rousseau was opposed to formal schooling. Books were banned at an age when a child was experiencing sensual pleasures; only later were they to be allowed. The child was to live and learn from Nature's tuition so that, for example, if he broke the window the child would, through sleeping in a cold room, know for himself the consequences of his actions:

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1. The idea of sequential stages finds a parallel later in Piaget's work. Piaget argues that development occurs through three main stages: (1)sensorimotor stage; (2) concrete operations; (3) formal operations. See Piaget (1929).

> 'Nature would have them children
> before they are men. If we try and
> invert this order we shall produce
> a forced fruit immature and flavourless,
> fruit which will be rotten before it is
> ripe; we shall have young doctors and
> old children. Childhood has its own ways
> of seeing, thinking and feeling; nothing
> is more foolish than to try and substitute
> our ways. ' (Emile, (1969:54)

The corrupting influence of society,according to Rousseau,

was the only source of evil in children so that through

allowing the child to learn naturally, according to its

own stage of development, maximum protection from social

pressures would be achieved: the child should do ' only

what nature asks of him; then he will never do wrong'

(ibid:57).

This image of the child was a true product of the age.
During the late eighteenth century the New World discoveries
had begun to broaden the social vision of Western intellectuals
who saw in the ' noble savage ' an alternative mode of thought
and life-style. The appeal of a simple life, untrammelled
by the complexities of industrial society, a life lived
according to instinct and in harmony with nature, was
widespread for it appeared to offer a solution to the
problems of contemporary society. In an age characterized
by ruthless individualism, rational rather than instinctive
thought, rapid industrialisation and social change, the
' noble savage ' presented an ideal of happiness,a utopia.
Rousseau's child was akin to this natural man, an image
which inspired the Romantic poets of the late eighteenth

and early nineteenth centuries. Wordsworth. for example,
in <u>Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections
of Early Childhood</u> (1802-6) portrays the child as being
an integral part of nature. As Coveney argues, this poem
is ' a <u>locus classicus</u> indeed for the whole literature of
childhood in the nineteenth century ' (1957:39). The Ode
portrays the increasing social pressures upon the child,
' shades of the prison house ' which ' begin to close/upon
the growing boy '. Blake, too had his central theme as
the symbol of innocent childhood:

> ' The <u>Songs of Innocence</u> are, then,
> the affirmation of human life in
> children: the <u>Songs of Experience</u>
> the comparative denunciation of
> the forces in society which deny
> to both child and adult the expression
> of their imaginative joy '.
> (ibid:18-19)

But it was not only in the literary sphere that this idea
was propounded. Social reformers, such as Robert Owen,
began to seriously consider the effect of social experience
upon the development of man. For Owen human character was
moulded in early childhood and was due entirely to the
social environment. It is an idea which harps back to Locke
but one which also combines Rousseanian elements for,
stemming from this initial premis, Owen deduced two
propositions: firstly, that blame cannot be attached to
the individual for misdemeanours since it is society,
rather than nature, which is at fault; secondly, that in
order to avoid people becoming evil society has a
responsibility to provide for them a decent environment
within which they can endeavour to lead good and honest
lives. The care and protection of children became,
therefore, of paramount importance by the end of the

nineteenth century; it was children who represented an
insurance for the future well being of society.

(d)   Children: 1880 to the present day

In conclusion, then, the institutionalization of childhood
was effectively concluded by the end of the nineteenth
century and the nature/nurture debate, begun with
sixteenth century Puritanism, was in full flood.   It
centred upon the needs and conditions of childhood and
the philosophical debates found practical realization
in the continuation of social reforms and legislation on
behalf of the child.   Children had become the symbols of
a new world view: change was no longer regarded with the
hostility and dread of earlier times but was instead
popularly regarded as ' being something likely to be good
in itself ' (Wardle, 1970:11).   The rapid social develop-
ments, incurred through increase in scientific and
technological knowledge and its practical applications, had
made progress both inevitable and acceptable.   It was
children who were seen to be the vehicles of the future,
those who would change and carry prosperity forwards.   By
1936 Sir Percy Alden was to remark that ' the child is the
foundation of the State and the first line of defence. We
cannot lay too much stress upon the importance of the
child if the state is to endure.' (Pinchbeck and Hewitt,
1973:347-8).

This vision of the child as the vehicle of the cultural order into the next generation continued to flourish and was increasingly refined, a process which is reflected in the present day wealth of legislation which has been introduced for the protection of children. As John Holt describes it, the twentieth century institution of childhood is visualised as

> ' a kind of walled garden in which children, being small and weak, are protected from the harshness of the world outside until they become strong and clever enough to cope with it.' (1975:22)

Moreover, it is an image which, since the second World War, has been expanded to include more and more human subjects through its conceptual prolongation to include a new childhood period - adolescence - whilst, at the same time, continuing to deny their humanity through processes of conceptual separation, exclusion and social control.[1] That ' most young people, and at earlier and earlier ages, begin to experience childhood not as a garden but as a prison'is the logical outcome of their continued marginalisation from the social order (ibid:22-3)[2].

This twentieth century image of childhood, as the analysis reveals, has been both historically and culturally

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1. More detailed discussion of this development is given later, see pp. 400 - 402.

2. This experience is documented through the analysis of the field material. Chapter 3, in particular, explores in detail the ' prison walls ' which children feel themselves to be surrounded with and examines the ways in which they attempt to break through the barriers.

constructed ; it is an image which has been progressively

framed by particular concepts of the social, moral and

political order. 1979 was the International Year of the

Child and that the United Nations felt the need to reaffirm

their Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 high-

lights the cultural construction of concepts of childhood

and bears witness to the particularity of our own ideas

about children. As Holt reminds us ' Childhood, as in

Happy, Safe, Protected, Innocent Childhood, does not exist

for many children ' (ibid:23). One achievement of the

International Year of the Child was the revelation of

the fact that images of childhood reflect images of

particular cultural orders.

II <u>Children : the contribution of the social sciences</u>

In the light of the foregoing historical analysis of the

development of the concept of childhood I shall now return

to an examination of the contribution from the social sciences

to the study of children for,as suggested earlier, it is

against this background that social scientific research into

children must be contextualised. The new scientific rationality

which emerged during the nineteenth century had led to an

increased concern and scientific interest in the nature of

children which, in turn, had further refined and institut-

ionalised the idea of childhood. But, by the turn of the

century, children had become an important focus for another

discipline; the rapidly growing social sciences were

becoming established as a discipline distinct from the physical sciences and were devoted to the exploration and understanding of society.

In particular, anthropology was beginning to develop its own approach to the study of social life and it is this with which I shall be mainly concerned through a consideration of the historical contribution of anthropology to our understanding of children. It is a contribution which, I suggest, is marked by two major assumptions derived from the historically specific and particularised Western conception of the child outlined above which, by 1900, was firmly embedded in the Western intellectual tradition and which had found practical realisation in social life. As I document below it was not until anthropologists began to question the universality of concepts of childhood that these assumptions were recognized, and this recognition was itself dependent upon certain fundamental shifts in areas of theoretical discourse.

Firstly, the child is assumed to be marginal to society, as having no position of consequence in the social order. In the past, therefore, anthropologists have usually approached children as peripheral subjects or as epiphenomena to other issues. Rarely have children been made the focus for study in their own right. Thus, the study of children has not often been seen as important

in itself but rather as forming a part of some more over-
riding concern. Indeed, the very paucity of studies on
children within social anthropology bears adequate
testimony to this, when comparisons are made with the
wealth of material written about communities of adults.

A second, more pervasive theme is also apparent. Crucial
in the past, it remains influential today: it is assumed
that the child possesses a distinctive nature which is the
prime determinant of and explanation for its actions,the
cause and effect of its marginal position in the social
order. The ' naturalness ' of children is deemed to be
their prime motivating force. Metaphors of nature abound
in our everyday language for the child: children are kids,
fledglings who leave the nest, pests and little mites.
It is thought natural for children to display certain
kinds of behaviour for, brought as they are from nature by
the stork, hatched beneath the gooseberry bush, children
are as yet unsocial.

In academic discourse this metaphor is no less persuasive
and pervasive: like woman-kind the child is often
portrayed as being at the mercy of its own biology. The
child's nature, constituted by the physiological and
psychological aspects of growth and development, is seen
as ultimately delineating its capabilities, as accounting
for its achievements, as excusing its limitations. Rarely
has any attempt been made to explore beyond these natural

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boundaries in the past; it is only in the 1970's that such

an approach has become feasible. The shifts in thinking

which have made this possible are charted below.

The   Child And Nature

Boas (1966) suggests that a characteristic feature of

Western industrial society is the ' cult of childhood'

and the early ethnographers reflect this in their writings.

Their work, as a whole, demonstrates the ' association of

childhood with primitivism and irrationalism or pre-

logicalism ' which Ariès sees as a characteristic feature

of modern conceptions of the child (1979:116). Implicit

in Rousseau's eighteenth century philosophy, it became

fully developed during the nineteenth century and still

remains influential:

> ' If adults are urged to retain their
> youth, to think young, to act and dress
> like youngsters, it is because the Child
> has been held up to them as a paradigm
> of the Ideal Man. ' (Boas, 1966:9)

In the early ethnographic reports, the 'primitive' child

is portrayed as the ideal child of Nature, a creature which

lives and learns according to innate forces rather than

social rules. Chamberlain, for example, makes the point

explicit through his comparison of children with the animal

world:

> 'The comparison sometimes made of children
> with various of the lower animals, such
> as monkeys, bears, pigs etc. come more
> naturally to some primitive peoples who..
> (suckle) at the breast the young of

certain animals simultaneously
with their own offspring. ' (1895:171)

In addition, the frequent use of animal metaphors for
the 'primitive' child recalls Rousseau's suggestion that
the child is not like the adult but, ' on the contrary,
closer to the animal and should be allowed to live as
his animal nature demands ' (_Emile_,1969:31). Kidd
exemplifies this in his description of Kafir childhood:

> ' The children do not "show off" before
> Europeans and so it is as necessary to
> stalk them at play as it is to stalk
> wild animals in order to discover their
> habits '. (1906:ix)

Or similarly :

> ' No one can look at a number of little
> naked Kafir children sprawling on the
> ground, playing games, setting bird
> traps, tumbling over one another like
> so many little puppies, without
> laughing and saying beneath his breath,
> " What delightful little animals." '
> (ibid:3)

As late as the 1920's, in a neat paraphrase of the main
threads of Rousseau's _Emile_, Miller describes the education
of the child in primitive societies as follows: ' he is
left to secure his own experience much as the chick learns
to scratch and get its own food unaided' (1928:133).
Rousseau could not have wished for more: the primitive child
is portrayed as ' Nature's pupil ' (_Emile_,1969:83).

In stressing the unique character of the child's thought
and sequential development Rousseau had therefore

inadvertently prepared the ground for the early theories
of the nineteenth century social evolutionists. Rousseau
had in fact argued against those who were ' looking for
the man in the child ' but, through endorsing the concept
of what Boas (op.cit) has called " cultural primitivism ",
Rousseau ironically provided the vehicle for that search
through the theory of recapitulation (Emile, 1969:1.).
An anti-intellectual tradition, cultural primitivism
valued the qualities attributable to the Noble savage -
intuitive wisdom, appreciation of natural beauty and a
sensitivity to moral values - higher than those of a
Western industrial society. These were the qualities
which Rousseau had emphasised as peculiar to the child
and, thus, taking Wordsworth's theme early social theorists
saw the child as ' father of the man ': cultural primitivism
endorsed the theory of recapitulation.[1]

The proximity of both the savage and the child to Nature
led to parallels being drawn between them. Like the child,
the primitive was held to possess a distinctive mentality;
like the child, the primitive was not thought to be able to
reason in an abstract manner; like the child,the primitive
represented an early form of man, a stage in his evolution.
As Boas argues it was 'easy to substitute the Child for the
chronologically primitive, for childhood is the obvious

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1. This quotation is taken from Wordsworth's Ode on
   Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of
   Early Childhood and also appears in his poem,
   My Heart Leaps up when I behold.

first stage in any individual's biography ' (1966:11).

The theory of recapitulation can be situated within the broad framework of the nineteenth century intellectual tradition. It incorporates what Honigman (1976) calls the concept of ' cultural integration ' which was highly influential in the work of social theorists such as Morgan, Spencer and Tylor. Following on from Comte's theory of social evolution, the theory of recapitulation had as its basic tenet, ' ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny': in suggesting that ' human embryos went through all the stages from fertilized egg to primate ' it asserted a psychological equivalence between the mind of the child and the primitive, for both represented early evolutionary states (Boas, 1966:61). Children were seen as a pre-figuration of the adult world; savages were the precursors of civilised man.[1]

The child was, therefore, often an apt metaphor for the

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1. The theory of recapitulation still appears to have some adherents. In an article published in the Sunday Times Colour Magazine,(10th May,1981), Margaret Wallace describes Glen Doman's 'Better Baby Course' in Phila- delphia, U.S.A. Doman believes that through training babies along an evolutionary path maximisation of their intelligence can be achieved. Crawling, he suggests, represents the amphibian stage of human evolution and is to be encouraged:'certain tribes,believes Doman, have never been able to develop writing or to progress beyond cave-culture because their babies have never been placed on the ground, but are always carried on the hips of their mothers' (1981:38). Brachiation, the stage of the monkey, is also reenacted and Doman recommends 'swinging by the arms from rung to rung of a horizontal ladder ' (ibid:38). This he believes encourages better co-ordination of the eye and hand, a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of higher grade skills such as reading or writing.

savage. Chamberlain, in his book <u>The Child</u>: <u>A Study in the</u>
<u>Evolution of Man</u> (1900), makes this correspondence explicit
in the title. In an earlier publication Chamberlain also
reminds us of Wordsworth's poem and states: ' in brief,
the child is the father of the man and the brother of the
race ' (1895:3). The savage and the child were both pieces
of history frozen in time. Chamberlain writes:

> ' In the growth of the child from
> helpless infancy to adolescence, and
> through the strong and trying
> development of manhood to the idio-
> syncracies of disease and senescence,
> we have an epitome in miniature of the
> life of the race. ' (ibid:3)

This aspect of cultural primitivism was influential in
framing early ethnographic accounts of primitive childhood
and adolescence. Kidd, for example, implicitly acknowledges
the theory of recapitulation in his otherwise fascinating
account of Kafir children. He says that ' we cannot
understand the life of the savage until we study the child-
hood of the savage ' and argues that mental stagnation sets
in among savages around puberty which accounts for their
primitive condition:

> ' When puberty is drawing close, a degener-
> ative process seems to set in, and the
> previous efflorescence of the faculties
> leads to no adequate fruitage in later
> life. ' (1906:viii)

The theory of recapitulation provided a holistic account
of man's social evolution, a characteristic feature of the
nineteenth century intellectual tradition.[1] Its influence

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1. Marx,Weber and Durkheim were also concerned with providing
   holistic accounts of social change but their importance lies
   in their theoretical contribution to the social sciences
   as a whole, rather than any explanation of social evolution
   as such.

can also be detected in the work of those social theorists who were not directly concerned with the study of children, but for whom explaining the evolution of social forms was of primary interest.

For example, the theory was implicitly supported by Tylor in Primitive Culture (1871). For Tylor the process of civilisation was seen as a progressive movement: the various grades of civilisation to be found in the world were regarded by him as ' stages of development or evolution, each the outcome of previous evolution, and about to do its proper part in shaping the history of the future ' (1903:1). Dismissing the degenerative theory of evolution - an idea that originally a semi-civilised society existed which spawned two opposing movements, one backwards to savage society , the other forwards to the civilised world - Tylor suggested that there were many survivals of a former primitive state in the civilised world. These survivals were cultural elements or artifacts which, although they no longer possessed their original use or meaning, were still to be found in civilised society. For Tylor, it was primarily in the language and games of the young that these survivals were to be found. Implicit, therefore, in Tylor's thesis is a correspondence between the savage and the child: they shared, in part a common culture:

'English children delighting in the
imitations of cries of animals and so
forth, and New Zealanders playing their
favourite game of imitating in chorus
the saw hissing, the adze chipping, the
musket roaring , and the other instruments
making their proper noises, are alike in
showing at its source the imitative
element so important in the formation
of language.'(ibid:74) 1

Of the bow and arrow he writes :

' Ancient and widespread in savage culture,
we trace this instrument through barbaric
and classic life and onward to a high
medieval level. But now, when we look at
an archery meeting or go by country lanes
at the season when toy bows and arrows are
'in' among the children, we see, reduced
to a more sportive survival, the ancient
weapon which among a few savage tribes
still keeps its deadly place in the hunt
and the battle. ' (ibid:73)

Tylor concludes :

' As games thus keep up the record of
primitive warlike acts, so they reproduce,
in what are at once sports and little
children's lessons, early stages in the
history of childlike tribes of mankind.'
(ibid:73-74)

It is, however, in Tylor's work on animism that the

concept of recapitulation is most explicit. The correspondence

between the moral and intellectual life of savages and children

finds support from Tylor :

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1. The idea that children's culture is conservative,
    in the sense that it retains many games and rhymes of
    the past, is put forward by the Opies, (1969);(1977).
    However, these do not represent survivals in Tylor's
    sense. For a discussion of childhood traditions,
    see pp. 233-249, 292-303.

> ' We may, I think, apply the often-
> repeated comparison of savages to
> children as fairly to their moral as to
> their intellectual condition. The better
> savage social life seems in but unstable
> equilibrium, liable to be easily upset by
> a touch of distress, temptation, or
> violence, and then it becomes the worst
> savage life, which we know by so many
> dismal and hideous examples. ' (ibid:31)

The theory of animism proposed by Tylor suggested that

the primitive animated the universe. For him, this

represented an early form of religion. Children, likewise,

were said to animate their worlds and thus the primitive

mind was considered to be at a retarded stage of development,

a stage comparable to that reached by children. Kidd

attempted to demonstrate this in his account of the Kafirs,

but it was largely unsuccessful:

> ' Kidd is obviously far too anxious to
> show in the mental development of the
> Kafir child the emergence of those
> logical confusions between the self
> and its environment which formed part
> of the then prevailing theory of
> animism.' (Raum,1940:27)

As Honigman writes,'a concern with cultural development

predominated during the greatest part of the nineteenth

century ', inspired perhaps by Darwin's outline of the process

of biological evolution in the <u>Origin of Species</u> published

in 1859 (1976:114). Social evolution was seen to progress

through various stages of civilisation. Morgan, for example,

in <u>Ancient Society</u> (1877) identified three main stages:

savagery, barbarism and civilisation. Each stage was

characterised by the acquisition of some new cultural element:

middle savagery, for instance, was suggested by Morgan to

be the time when the use of fire was discovered, upper

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barbarism the period when iron tools were developed. According to Morgan social evolution occurred because 'each cultural breakthrough gave human society a powerful impulse to further advancement ' (ibid:118). Social evolution was the survival of the fittest.

For Spencer, however, ' survival of the fittest', represented the survival of those who were innately more capable of advancement and he argued that there should be no interference in this process of natural selection for it would weaken the process of evolution.[1] The rise of civilised society would be hampered.

The theory of recapitulation, then, reflects the general intellectual concerns of the age, recounting as it does

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1. That these ideas were widespread can be seen from the fact that they appear as the main themes in many contemporary children's books. Most have as their story line the triumph of virtue over evil, the progression from a brutish condition to civilised society. The child's world is portrayed as a microcosm of adult society, as if children recapitulated the evolutionary path of their elders. For authors, such as MacDonald, Kingston and Henty, the hero's life from birth to adulthood is a series of natural and inevitable stages of advancement. The Spencerian theory can be seen in terms of social class as being an innate and in- heritable property, ensuring ultimate survival; for example, in MacDonald's Sir Gibbie (1878) the story recounts the rise in prosperity of a dumb street urchin who from these miserable beginnings manages to restore the family fortunes and his own title. Kingston's Heir of Kilfinnan (1870's) shows the rise in fortunes of a poor fisher-boy who turns out to be the heir to the Kilfinnan estates. For further discussion see James. A, (1976) Childhood: Fact and Fiction (unpublished).

the path of social evolution and the early ethnographic
accounts of childhood and adolescence provide documentary
evidence in support of this overarching thesis. These
analyses reveal, therefore, the influence of predominantly
Western cultural constructs. Both Kidd and Chamberlain,
although they provide fascinating documentation of
children's games and their social life up until adulthood -
often more detailed and well observed than many contemporary
accounts - begin from a specific and particular conception.
The theory of recapitulation incorporates and systematises
the glorification of the child in Nature originally
proposed by Rousseau and the period from childhood to
adolescence in primitive society is represented as a piece
of living history through which the study of the evolution
of mankind itself could be pursued. The twin themes of
marginality and naturalism run throughout these early
accounts : the child was a medium for research into social
evolution, rather than an object of that research directly
and the particularity of its nature supported the comparison
with primitive man for both were seen to belong to nature,
and both were peripheral to the Western ideals of social
order.

The child's nature

The idea of the child as a prefiguration of adult society
did not disappear altogether after a waning of enthusiasm
in the search for man's social and biological origins. It

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emerged, although in a different form, in the writings of the psychoanalytic school of anthropology in America, (1920-40), now collectively known as culture and personality studies. Divested of the largely racist perspectives characteristic of earlier European studies the child was, nevertheless, still used as a resource for tracing the continuity and modification of cultures over time. Again, interest was not so much in children themselves, but in the child as the raw material of a future adult society; as such, any analysis of the child's perspective on the world or interpretation of it was secondary to this more overriding concern. It reflected more the projection of a growing interest in social psychology - in particular, the work of Sigmund Freud - rather than illuminating ideas about children as such.

As a whole, the culture and personality studies concentrate on exploring the effect of man's social environment on his personality and behaviour, an interest which reflects Locke's concerns in the seventeenth century. For the culture and personality writers the most important question was to determine the ' environmental and psychological factors shaping culture ' and it was through examining child-rearing practices that they sought to discover the basic personality patterns of particular cultures (Honigman, 1976:193). Underlying this approach to the study of culture was an evolutionary perspective, stemming from

Franz Boas, which argued that the total culture pattern

in any particular society governs what new aspects of

material culture or social forms will be incorporated,

and also how they will be reshaped and reinterpreted by

that society in cases of culture contact:

> ' from a psychological perspective, the
> culture pattern was metaphorically
> described as an inexplicit code enabling
> people to recognize what is right and
> meaningful in behaviour.' (ibid:203)

The culture-pattern concept appears primarily in the works

of Mead, (1928),(1930),(1935), Bateson, (1936) and Benedict,

(1935). Their underlying assumption was that,

> ' the life-history of the individual
> is first and foremost an accomodation
> to the patterns and standards
> traditionally handed down in his
> community. From the moment of his
> birth the customs into which he is born
> shape his experience and behaviour.'
> (Benedict, 1935:2-3).

Continuing Boas's critique of the speculative history of the

early European anthropologists which, as Benedict described

it, consisted of ' constructing a history of human culture

based on bits of evidence, torn out of their natural

contacts ', these works represent a systematic attempt to

explore culture as a totality (ibid:xi).

Using the comparative method combined with intensive

fieldwork , their aim was to explore the nature/nurture

debate and to demonstrate the cultural conditioning of

nature. Mead expressed this hope through the following

questions :

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> ' How much of the child's equipment
> does it bring with it at birth.....
> How much or how little and in what
> ways is it dependent upon early
> training, upon the personality of its
> parents, its teachers, its playmates,
> the age into which it is born. ' (1968:
> 9).

In short, ' what we wish to test is no less than the effect of civilisation upon a developing human being. ' (Mead, 1963:12).

These studies represented a considerable advance on the earlier accounts of the child in primitive society and argued against the existence of a universal morality. Instead, they suggested that the cultural effects of early childhood experiences accounted for differences in cultural attitudes and behaviour. They demonstrated that ' culture is not a biologically transmitted complex ' passing through prescribed stages of civilisation, for ' what is lost in Nature's guarantee of safety is made up in the advantage of greater plasticity' in human nature itself (Benedict, 1935:14).

And yet, Rousseau's ghost still lurks beneath the surface. The child's nature was still visualised as being changed and moulded by contact with the social world. For Rousseau this act was primarily brutish; it represented a blemishing of the child's original nature. For the culture and personality writers, on the other hand, it represented the

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infinite flexibility of human nature itself, an explanation

for the great diversity of cultures in the world. However,

contained within the writings of this school there remains

some notion of an original primeval nature belonging to

the child :

> 'The original nature of the child is
> so subject to environmental influences
> that the only way to arrive at any
> conception of original nature is to
> study it as modified by different
> environmental conditions.' (Mead,
> 1968:211) (my emphasis)

This is comparable with Rousseau's comments in Emile:

> ' We are born sensitive and from our
> birth onwards we are affected in various ways
> by our environment. As soon as we become
> conscious of our sensations we tend to seek
> or shun the things that cause them, at
> first because they are pleasant, or un-
> pleasant, then because they suit us or not,
> and at last because of judgements formed
> by means of the ideas of happiness and
> goodness which reason gives us. These
> tendencies gain strength and permanence
> with the growth of reason, but hindered
> by our habits they are more or less
> warped by our prejudices. Before this
> change they are what I call Nature
> within us. ' (Emile, 1969:7)

The period 1920-40 in the American anthropological tradition

paid considerable attention to the study of children. As

Honigman says,

> ' growing interest in psycho-analysis
> and child-rearing,both in the universities
> and more popularly, were reflected in
> anthropological studies of socialization,
> and in the founding of a new subfield
> involving the relationship between
> culture and personality' (1976:223)

That these studies did not, however, immediately open up

a path for an anthropology of children is not surprising.

Their overall aim was not to explore the culture of

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children _per se_ but to examine how children were trained
or socialized in different cultures as a contribution to
the larger nature/nurture debate. Their quarrel lay with
those who argued for a universal human morality, and
with those who equated the child with the savage from a
misguided evolutionary premise . But, in one respect,
their work did significantly pave the way for an anthropology
of children: the culture and personality writers were
insistent that childhood and adolescence were predominantly
social , rather than scientific classifications.

Mead, for example, took issue with the psychologist Stanley
Hall who had characterised adolescence as ' the period in
which idealism flowered and rebellion against authority
waxed strong, a period during which difficulties and conflicts
were absolutely inevitable'(1963:10). Through her work
among adolescent girls in Samoa in 1928 Mead demonstrated
quite conclusively that this was not the case. As Benedict
comments, adolescence

> 'is in our tradition a physiological
> state as definitely characterised by
> domestic explosions and rebellion as
> typhoid is marked by fever. There
> is no question of the facts. They
> are common in America. The question
> is rather of their inevitability'.
> (1935:25)

What is important, she insists, is not the biological fact
of puberty itself, but the cultural perception of this
phase of the life-cycle in relation to behavioural
expectations.[1]

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1. This idea had been explored earlier by Van Gennep
   (op.cit.) in his analysis of _rites de passage,_where
   he distinguishes between physical and social puberty.
   For further discussion see pp.395-403.

In her own work, Benedict explored this idea further. In the United States, she suggested, great emphasis is placed in child-rearing practices on the differences between children and adults in terms of their status roles and physical capabilities. This conceptual dichotomy - child: adult - is reinforced by and mapped on to other sets of binary oppositions related to behaviourial expectations :- non-responsibility: responsibility, submissiveness: dominance, sexlessness: sexuality. By contrast, other cultures underplay this dichotomy among the Amazonian Indians a child ' is continuously conditioned to responsible social participation while at the same time the tasks that are expected of it are adapted to its capacity' (1955:24). An American child is, on the other hand, often praised just ' because the parent feels well disposed, regardless of whether the task is done well by adult standards ' (ibid:24). For this reason, the American child ' acquires no sensible standard by which to measure its achievements' (ibid:24).

As a whole, however, the contribution of the culture and personality school to an anthropology of children, as outlined by Hardman (1973), was minimal. It was their reliance on social psychology as a theoretical and methodological frame which hindered its development. Through prescribing the kinds of questions which were asked attention was directed primarily towards the child's potential future as a carrier of his or her culture. Little attention was given to the study of children as children. Moreover, the frequent use of psychological tests contained

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a particular bias: these tests were based on certain
assumptions concerning the abilities of man, abilities
which were specifically applicable to a Western culture.
Ironically, therefore, in attempting to demonstrate
the cultural conditioning of nature and personality the
researchers used tests based upon a Western conception
of man as if they were culture free.

Mead, for example, administered ' colour naming, rote
memory, opposites, substitution, ball and field and
picture interpretation ' tests to assess the relative
intelligence of adolescent Samoan girls (1963:209). It is
to her credit that she realized that the information
gleaned from such tests was of ' no value for comparative
purposes ' (ibid:209). As she admits, the majority of
her insights derived from more qualitative data such as

> ' the attitudes of the children towards
> their families and toward each other,
> their religious interests ∝ lack of
> them, and the details of their sex
> lives. ' (ibid:210)

Betty Friedan, writing about the development of women's
studies,argues that the culture and personality writers
were forced ultimately to retreat to explanations based
on woman's nature due to their reliance on social
psychology :

> ' Instead of translating, sifting the
> cultural bias out of Freudian theories
> Margaret Mead and the others who
> pioneered in the fields of culture and
> personality, compounded the error by
> fitting their own anthropological
> observation into Freudian rubric.' (1965:112)

This she argues, led to the ' glorification of women in the female role as defined by their sexual biological function, ' thereby contradicting their own hypotheses concerning the malleability of human nature (ibid:121). This contradiction is also in evidence in the work on children.

Freudian psychology, in particular, has remained influential in the later work on culture and personality (see Whiting (1963); Erikson (1965) - and the possibility of an anthropology of children, which was simmering in the work of Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, has been squashed. For example, Whiting's six cultures project examined selected variables in six different cultures with respect to the development of certain personality traits: succorance, achievement-oriented behaviour, self-reliance, obedience, nurturance, responsibility, sociability and dominance. Nowhere in his field-guide manual is there any suggestion that children should be studied in their own social environment. Child-rearing practices are the predominant focus; attention is directed towards adults as controllers of children and children as the receptacles for adult culture.

In the section on child-observation - and how to go about it - the following passage occurs in the training manual. (it is concerned with measuring the frequency of certain behaviour patterns among children):

' In order to obtain this sample,
the fieldworker should make 12 five-
minute observations on each child.
These observations should be scattered
as widely as possible over time and
setting. The field-worker should describe
all instances of the situations in which
we are interested that occur in each of
these five-minute observations. The
timing of the five-minute intervals
should be accurate to within 30
seconds. If an episode continues beyond
five minutes the fieldworker should mark
the end of the five minute interval and
continue taking notes. ' (Whiting.J.W.M,
et.al. : 1966:94)

Charlotte Hardman's approach to fieldwork was radically
different :

'... when I sat secretively with Debbie
and Sara playing with old lipsticks
and (stinking) eau de cologne, one said,
'You won't tell, will you? We'll go and
play with Caroline if you do...' (1974:174)

Indeed it is difficult to imagine what significance the

six cultures project had for the study of children, when

a letter to the fieldworkers is examined:

' Do not be discouraged if the answers
to the child interviews are cryptic. This
seems to be true of both Khalapur and
Orchard Town. On the other hand, there
are differences between children and I
think between cultures, which is what we
hoped for. The greatest problem ....
seems to be getting the children off by
themselves. I would suggest bribery....'
(Whiting.J.W.M. et.al.1966:121)

It is precisely such cryptic answers which an anthropology

of children seeks   and is capable of exploring. The

six cultures project is a long way from Hardman's

wish to examine children's meanings and interpretations of the world.

As a whole, the period 1920-40 of the culture and personality school in America does, however, represent an improvement in anthropological approaches to the study of children. Much of their work was directed towards correcting earlier assumptions concerning the universal nature of childhood, an idea derived largely from Western perceptions of the child. Mead, for example, in her New Guinea fieldwork demonstrated that ' animism is not a spontaneous aspect of child-thinking nor does it spring from any type of thought characteristic of immature mental development ' (1968:217)[1].

And, as Hardman herself acknowledges, this school of anthropology did greatly enhance our knowledge of children in other societies. It was Mead who, perhaps for the first time, saw children ' as informants and saw child-thinking as interesting in its own right ' (1973:96). Their mistake was to retreat too far into cultural

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1. In a discussion of Mead's work Raum (1940) criticises her for using ink-blot tests. He says, ' she does not take the least trouble to adapt them to the cultural milieu of the Manus child ' (1940:241). On the question of animism he argues that Mead only received " rationalisations " of the children's beliefs as she would if she asked adults the same question. Raum argues that Mead is wrong to suggest that children do not animate the universe for animation is a part of make-believe. For Raum, ' without this tendency to make-believe no child would ever become an adult ' (ibid:242).

determinism. In arguing that culture was the supreme

determinant of the behaviour of individuals they were

forced to ignore the process of social life which emerges

in and through the activities of people. In doing so,

they could give little weight to the idea of the child

as a thinking and acting agent of his or her own destiny. In

the face of that power called culture, passed on through

methods of rearing, there was little room for the child

to be the subject, rather than the object, of his or

her own socialization. The child, in the end, became

almost peripheral to the more central task of establishing

the cultural patterning of personality as a social fact.

Their emphasis lay on the cultural whole and the child

was seen as a prefiguration of that totality :

> ' I watched the Manus baby, the Manus child,
> the Manus adolescent, in an attempt to
> understand the way in which each of these
> was becoming a Manus adult.' (Mead, 1968:16)

An anthropology of children can and should be more

than this.

The nature of culture

As the foregoing discussion illustrates, the history of

child-study in social anthropology is not only bound

to the historical development of the idea of the child

and childhood in the West, but it is also inextricably

linked to conceptualizations of culture and of social

explanation within the discourse of the discipline and,

more generally, to the conception of human nature

itself. The culture and personality school had
emphasised the importance of psychological conditioning
on man's social life; across the water the British
school of anthropology reacted in horror to such
suggestions, placing human nature strictly under the
control of social rather than psychological factors.
As Leach (1976a) argues there are many types of
explanation: what constitutes an adequate explanation
depends upon the conceptual and theoretical framework
within which it is offered. It is in this light that
the study of children within social anthropology
must be considered.

During the heyday of culture and personality studies in
America, and up until the 1940's, functionalist anthrop-
ology was at its height in Britain. Its main architect,
Bronislaw Malinowski, had made an impact upon British
social anthropology which had amounted to the virtual
recreation of ethnographic fieldwork in reaction to the
speculative " armchair " anthropology of the previous
generations. Through his detailed descriptions of
Trobriand Islanders and his outline of the methods and
procedures for systematic data-collection in the field,
Malinowski set an example for other British social
anthropologists of that period, a legacy which survives
to the present day.[1]

1. Malinowski's outline for field-work methods appears
   in his monograph Argonauts of the Western Pacific
   (1922).

Prior to Malinowski's work it had become commonplace to
use the life-cycle as a 'method of presenting a large
section of the ethnographer's field-data ' in monographs
(Richards, 1970:1). It provided a holistic account of
the society under study. Malinowski's critical
contribution was to see the life-cycle, not just as a
useful structure for ethnographic description, but as
integral to an analysis of the functioning of society
itself. For example, his 'genetic approach to kinship'
involved exploring ' the child's extension of the
primary terms for Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, Son
and Daughter to groups of relatives of the same generation,
sex and descent ' (ibid:1-2). The observation of
generational kinship attitudes,therefore, came to be seen
as one essential part of social analysis and the study of
child-rearing practices are common in many of the
contemporary monographs, (see, for example, Firth(1936);
Fortes (1938); and (1949); Richards (1932) and (1939).)
Specific texts on children also appeared at this time;
for example Grinnel (1923), Miller (1928) and Raum (1940).

But although such work contributed to the study of
socialization practices, little attention was given directly
to the study of the child's culture. The British
anthropological school, as did the American, saw children
as important primarily in their role as the objects
of socialization, as the next generation. In The Sexual
Life of Savages (1929), for example, Malinowski does
provide some quite detailed descriptions of children's

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social life but these are submerged within his more
overriding aim of focusing upon the development of
sexual attitudes in tribal society. The games of children
are interpreted by Malinowski as purely indicative of
the growth of sexual awareness in youth:

> ' they give each other a coconut, a small
> piece of betel-nut, a few beads or some
> fruits from the bush and then they go and
> hide and kayta (have sexual intercourse).
> But it is not considered proper for the
> children to carry on their affairs in the
> house. It has always to be done in the
> bush . ' (1932:48)

Similarly, the house-building games of children are seen
by Malinowski as merely the construction of places within
which they could safely perform or imitate the sexual
act. He makes no attempt to contextualise these activities
within the wider social life of the children, although
he himself acknowledges its existence: soon ' emancipated
from parental tutelage ' children form their own ' little
community , an independent group, into which they drop
naturally from the age of four or five and continue till
puberty ' (ibid:45).

After this period (1920-40), only fleeting references
to children are made in tribal monographs; they appear
only by default. Reviewing the study of socialization
in British social anthropology Mayer was forced to
conclude in 1968 that ,

> ' not only has there been a dearth
> of theoretically interesting work on
> socialization here since 1940, but
> ethnographic documentation has been
> rather neglected too, considering the
> prevailing British emphasis on
> thoroughgoing fieldwork. ' (1970:xiv)

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Detailed research had continued to be indirectly carried
out on socialization post 1940 - through work on age-set
systems, initiation ceremonies and kinship - but little
attempt had been made to situate these in terms of the
child's perspective or interpretation of the world.[1]

Commenting on this state of affairs Audrey Richards
explained it as being partly due to the ' traditional
British fear of psychology ', but mostly because
British anthropology became involved with its own
concerns at the time when culture and personality studies
were popular in America (1970:7). British anthropologists
were involved with ' studies of social structure and
the making of kinship and political typologies ' (ibid:
8). Reflecting further on this disjunction, Richards
points out the irony of the omission of socialization
studies from British social anthropology, considering
the central concerns of the structural functionalist
approach which replaced Malinowskian functionalism.
She argues that their interest in the analysis of
social institutions as functional to the maintenance
of social order could have incorporated discussion
of socialization processes, if not the study of children,
as an integral part :

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1. In most of the major monographs, written from 1940
   onwards, there are few references in the index to
   children. Occasionally, there is a reference to
   child-birth, but no mention is made of the lives
   of children, or indeed of their training.

' A people described as neat, prudish,
meticulous over appearance,secretive,
distrustful, treacherous, touchy over
status, aggressive, competitive, lively,
adaptable, quick, polite and far-seeing
may fall into the anal-erotic or some other
psychological type, but their behaviour
can also be accounted for in terms of
the jealousies due to the absence of
primo-geniture, the concentration of
authority in the father's hands, the
highly competitive nature of this
society and a particular system of
clientship, chieftainship and landowner-
ship'. (ibid:19)

As she says, the analysis of institutional socialization
' falls into the traditional sphere of British social
anthropology ' (ibid:18).

Undoubtedly Richards is correct in her reasoning but I
would add that the lack of interest shown by the British
anthropologists since 1940 in socialization is due also to
their particular conception of the nature of the social
reality and the explanatory models they used to analyse
the structure and functioning of it. Logically, this
perspective could not encompass the model of sociali-
zation as traditionally formulated; neither could it
accomodate an anthropology of children as outlined by
Hardman (1973). As Leach points out ' structural
functionalism was in a large measure the personal
invention of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown ' and came to dominate
British anthropology from 1945-55 (1976b:7). The
discussion will therefore be centred upon his work.

Radcliffe-Brown reacted strongly against the speculative
anthropology of his predecessors and also rejected the
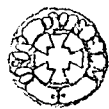
implicit biological determinism in Malinowski's theory

of culture. He dismissed the idea that culture was

primarily a

> ' goal-oriented instrumental apparatus
> through which people satisfy the organic
> and learned needs on which their existence
> and psychological well-being depends. '
> (Honigman, 1976:238)

Indeed, he viewed the use of the term ' culture ' as highly

unscientific

> ' We do not observe a "culture" since
> that word denotes not any concrete reality,
> but an abstraction, and as it is commonly
> used a vague abstraction. ' (1952:190)

Rather, for Radcliffe-Brown, society was to be explained

through reference to its social structure, seen as a

functional system of interrelated parts analogous to

a biological organism. In an exposition of his particular

perspective in 1940 Radcliffe-Brown states that the term

' social structure ' refers to the ' set of actually

existing relations at a given moment of time, which link

together certain human beings ' (1952:193). Following

Durkheim's insistence on treating social facts as things

Radcliffe-Brown viewed social relations as 'empirical

facts out there in the world not ideas in the mind '.

(Leach, 1976b:15).[1]

The empiricist base to Radcliffe-Brown's structural

functionalism is rooted in his view of anthropology as

a natural science of society and in his insistence

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1. See also, pp.33-36 above for further discussion of
   these ideas.

on the value to be gained from adopting the research
methods of the natural sciences. The task of the
anthropologist, as Radcliffe-Brown saw it, is ' the
systematic investigation of the structure of the universe
as it is revealed to us through our senses ' (1952:
190). Only by direct observation of a concrete reality
could social anthropology be a scientific discipline.

Central to Radcliffe-Brown's approach is the distinction
he makes between social structure and structural form;
it is the latter which is the subject of analysis.
Taking another analogy from the natural sciences
Radcliffe-Brown argued that the actual structure of an
organism is constantly being renewed but its form remains
relatively constant. It is the form of the species,
rather than any individual example of it, which is of
theoretical importance for the natural scientist.
Similarly, for the social anthropologist, it is the
particular patterning of social relations in a particular
society which is the object of study, not the individual
incumbents of the social roles which go to make up the
system of relationships. Individuals pass on but the form
remains. For Radcliffe-Brown, social anthropology was
' an inductive, generalising science, anti-historical
and anti-psychological ' (Goddard, 1972:66). This
had certain consequences for the study of children.

Firstly, his refusal to give any credence to an underlying,
non-observable reality meant that in the analysis of social
structure only those social roles which appeared, by

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direct observation, to compose sets of social relations
were credited with any significance. Considerable
research during the 1950's was therefore focused upon
the analysis of political and kinship systems, seen as
sets of social relations, which formed the social
structure. Through direct observation these social
groups presented themselves to the researcher as
socially significant. Such roles are rarely allotted
to children. As phenomena primarily of the adult
world children could not therefore form part of the
observable social reality. This perspective appears
early on in Radcliffe-Brown's work. For him children
were only significant as they entered the adult world,
that is when they appeared to participate in the
structured social order. Writing of childhood among
the Andaman Islanders Radcliffe-Brown dismisses it
simply as the ' time when the child is almost entirely
unrestrained and acts with comparative freedom '
(1948:277). One page later, children reappear in his
analysis of initiation ceremonies. Only on the point
of entry into the adult world are children seen to
assume any significant social role: ' the growing
boy or girl is made to feel very strongly the importance
of conforming to the customs of the community ' (ibid:
278). The intervening period between birth and adult-
hood, it seems, has no social significance.

In uncritically accepting the Andaman Islanders own
comments on the nature of childhood- that the child

has no social personality - Radcliffe Brown finds

confirmation of his own Western view of children as

peripheral to the social order. [1] He says that the child

is not an ' immediate social value ' and ' has no direct

effect on the general social life ' (ibid:284). And

yet suddenly the initiation ceremony becomes crucial:

it is this which provides ' the passage from childhood

to manhood or womanhood ' and it is through this that

the 'society endows the child with an adult social

personality ' (ibid:284).

In that children seemed to be external to the sets of

significant social relations of the Andaman Islanders

they were regarded as an irrelevance by Radcliffe-Brown

for whom the analysis of social structure was _the_ goal

of social anthropology. Nowhere in the writings of the

British anthropological school during the 1950's is

there a discussion of childrens' social life comparable

with the vivid portraits painted by Kidd (1906), Grinnel

(1923) or Raum (1940).

The irrelevance of children for Radcliffe-Brown is

linked also to his concept of function. Function was

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1. Writing in 1928 Miller notes the frequency of such
   a conception of the child and remarks that it is also
   common in more advanced societies: ' in a social
   sense the child does not 'belong'. Before official
   ceremonial induction into the group (which comes
   usually with maturity) the child is a non-entity'
   (1928:11). And yet, as Miller's own work shows, the
   child is nevertheless part of the observable social
   reality.

seen as the dynamic which ensured the continuity

of structural form:

> ' The function of any recurrent activity,
> such as the punishment of a crime, or a
> funeral ceremony, is the part it plays in
> the social life as a whole and therefore
> the contribution it makes to the maintenance
> of the structural continuity.' (1952:180)

The activities of children only became significant to

Radcliffe-Brown when he could perceive some function in

them: at initiation, for example, children became

important for it was this ceremony which ensured the

functional continuity of tradition through passing on

the sense of conformity necessary for the maintenance

of structural form.

In this respect it is indeed remarkable that the structural

functionalists did not focus upon socialization. In its

traditional formulation socialization theory sets out

to explore the methods through which society ensures

the conformity of its younger members. It assumes the

existence of an ' ongoing , pre-existing society '

(Radcliffe-Brown's structural form); it explores the

' process by which someone learns the ways of a given

society or social group so that he can function within

it ' (my emphasis) (Radcliffe-Brown's structural

continuity), (Elkin, 1960:4). However, in most

analyses of socialization the precise workings of this

process remain obscure: for Elkin it involves ' the

learning and internalization of appropriate patterns ,

values and feelings ' and it is for this reason that

structural-functionalism finally could not include a
study of socialization (ibid:4) .

Traditional socialization theory seems to place undue
emphasis upon the individual and, for Radcliffe-Brown,
anthropology was not concerned with the study of individuals,
but persons : ' human beings as individuals are objects
of study for physiologists and psychologists ' for
the term ' individual ' refers to the biological organism
(1952:194). The proper subject of study for the social
anthropologist, on the other hand, is the person, the
human being seen as 'a complex of social relationships',
the human being fulfilling his or her social roles
(ibid:194). He says :

> ' We cannot study persons except in terms
> of social structure, nor can we study
> social structure except in terms of persons
> who are the units of which it is composed.'
> (ibid:194).

Socialization theory, with its vaguely psychological
explanation of the transmission of values, feelings
and behaviour patterns seems to place more emphasis upon
the individual than the person.

This weighting, therefore, presupposes in the structural
-functionalist framework some non-observable event,
comparable with Malinowskian functionalism: Malinowski,
for example, saw the function of social forms in terms
of social needs and desires. In Radcliffe-Brown's
formulation such needs could not be scientifically

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observed and validated; they were not amenable to direct

observation and it was in refuting this kind of

explanation that Radcliffe-Brown conceived of function in

terms of a self-regulating organic system. For him,

social anthropology need not have recourse to psychological

explanations. Any discussion of the process of socialization

in Radcliffe-Brown's work, therefore, is framed in terms

of his concept of function:

> ' The social function of the ceremonial
> customs of the Andaman Islanders is to
> maintain and to transmit from one
> generation to another the emotional
> dispositions on which the society (as
> it is constituted) depends for its
> existence. ' (1948:234)

Socialization, of which ceremonial was a functional form,

could only be discussed as an objective fact of the

concrete reality; on the other hand, ceremonial which

appeared to have no other function could only in fact

be explained by Radcliffe-Brown in terms of the processes

of socialization or education. For Radcliffe-Brown the

way out of this dilemma was to see the process in terms

of the person as a social being, rather than the individual

as a biological organism.

> ' The restraints on the action of the
> individual are not imposed by one person,
> but by the whole of society backed by the
> whole force of tradition. ' (ibid:377)

It is clear, therefore, that structural functionalism,

in terms of its conceptualization of the nature of social

life, its methods of research and its explanatory framework,

could not have accomodated detailed study of the process

of socialization nor, indeed, an anthropology of children

despite the fact that implicit within the theory there is the

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assumption of an ongoing process of socialization[1].

And it is significant that many traditional formulations of

socialization theory bear a marked resemblance to

structural functionalist perceptions of social reality.

Many discussions of socialization are themselves supremely

" functionalist ".

> ' A temporary equilibrium or level
> of development is reached, then new
> elements are introduced which lead
> to readjustments and new equilibria.'
> (Elkin, 1960:21)

Remarkably similar is Gluckman's discussion of political

processes in Africa :

> ' If a system is in equilibrium,
> adjustive processes will occur to
> absorb any disturbance so that the
> system will after the working of
> these processes be in the same
> condition as before.'   (1971:
> 279-80).

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1. Even more significant is the fact that this tradition
   spawned considerable work on rites of passage, see
   Richards (1956); Turner (1969). In contrast to the
   American work on socialization which sees culture
   as communication, the British school was forced to
   examine rites de passage as observable and empirical
   instances of socialization. This work has been of
   considerable influence in the later development of
   anthropology generally and in particular for the
   possibility of an anthropology of children. The work
   on rites of passage provided the bridge between a
   focus on social groups to that of social categories.
   See pp.125-137 for a discussion of this fundamental
   shift in anthropology.

Conclusion

The history of child study within social anthropology is
significant in its paucity. From the earliest accounts of
'other cultures ' through to the enthusiasm for structural
functionalism children are significant by their relative
absence. Only recently has the study of children in their
own right become a possibility, a state of affairs which,
as I have shown, can be explained through reference to the
areas of theoretical and ideological discourse prevailing
at each stage in the history of the discipline.

Three themes emerge as dominant. Firstly, and of prime
importance, has been the uncritical assumption by anthropo-
logists of a particularized Western conception of childhood
in their studies of other peoples. This has conditioned them
to see all children as but marginal to the social order and,
therefore, of peripheral interest for research. As more
recent studies have shown, however, children often play
important roles in central social institutions; Shildkrout
(1978), for example, reveals the critical contribution of
children to the domestic economy in Hausa society.

Related to this point is a second reason for the virtual
absence of children from the anthropological record: the
assumption of the universality of the category ' children',
rather than a questioning of it. Until anthropology turned
from the analysis of social groups to the study of social
categories an anthropology of children, as visualised by

Hardman,could not develop, a conceptual shift which finds parallels with the study of women in social anthropology.

Finally, and again interlinked, a third theme consistently emerges throughout the history of the discipline: studies of children which are available reflect and indeed contribute to the philosophy of human nature. Children, the newest recruits to society, are used as the focus for nature/nurture debates, resources for the discussion of other issues rather than of interest in themselves. From discussions of social evolution through to those of socialization children have been the objects of research more often than its subjects. In summary, then,the history of child study within social anthropology is one of continual domestication and conceptual control.

Children have been seen as marginal to the social world by reason of their distinctive nature and categorized as part of Nature itself. It is a history which reflects the intellectual traditions of the period itself: children resemble ' primitives ' for both are disorderly categories in need of control and subjuguation. The later cognitive domination of the ' savage ' in terms of economic and political controls achieved through colonialism,which relegated those cultures to a position of dependence and marginality, parallels the process of conceptual ordering which gradually removed children from the social order, containing and confining them in a similar position of moral, social and economic dependence.

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CHAPTER 2 :   TOWARDS AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF CHILDREN

' Societies like lives, contain their own
interpretations. One has only to learn how
to gain access to them.' (Geertz, 1975:453)

Introduction

The structural functionalist era could have signalled the
death knell to the study of children within British social
anthropology; not only were children perceived to be marginal
social beings of little interest for research but the question
of socialization was also neglected for it threatened to
meddle in the province of psychology. By the 1960's then,
as Shildkrout (1978) notes, most child study had been
carried out by sociologists and psychologists under the
auspices of socialization research. This state of affairs
was, however, to change. The gradual coalescence of a set
of ideas which had been quietly developing since the first
World War began to shake the base of the structural
functionalist school and, as I shall show, this paved the way
for the emergence of an anthropology of children during the
1970's. This new approach to the study of children not only
allows children a voice and gives them a place within the
discourse of social anthropology but is one which can also
begin to tackle the thorny question of socialization so long
ignored by social anthropologists.

Reviewing the literature Shildkrout agrees that child study
can have an important place within social anthropology once

traditional approaches are recast:

> ' if we....look at children as children
> and not as the next generation's adults,
> we open up the possibility of finding a
> great deal about the society in question.'
> (1978:111-12)

Not least, we create the opportunity to explore the social worlds of children and adolescents from their perspective, worlds which, as I shall argue, can be seen to be partly dependent upon the form and process of socialization itself.

An anthropology of children, then, opens up a number of possibilities for research and in this chapter I draw attention to them. Briefly, it seeks to explain not only how children become adults, how they learn or are taught their future place in society, but also the structure and meaning of their present condition.

A great deal of this experience <u>can</u> be understood in terms of socializing practices but unless emphasis is placed first of all upon studying children on their own terms, taking into account their own perceptions of this process, our comprehension of socialization as both practice <u>and</u> experience is liable to remain partial and distorted.

In this chapter, then, the history of child study within the social sciences is continued through a critical examination of past approaches to the question of socialization. The traditional model of socialization has a

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functionalist base and, in a following section, I suggest
how anthropology can make a valuable contribution to
socialization theory through a reformulation of it. Taking
into account the theoretical advances within social anthropo-
logy since the functionalist era I show how an anthropology
of children can both overcome the limitations of the
traditional approach to socialization, through questioning
its premises, and enlarge its sphere of interest by taking
up the child's point of view. This new perspective considers,
therefore, that ' children are competent interpreters of the
social world ', that they actively participate in their own
socialization and that they may possess their own culture
or succession of cultures through which they make sense of
this experience (MacKay, 1973:31). It does not just assume,
as in the traditional model, that the child is ' like a
sponge that sops up the social environment all in all '
(Miller, 1928:140).

Elizabeth Tonkin (1982) has recently called for a rethinking
of socialization and argues that anthropology has much to
offer . An anthropology of children can, I suggest, contribute
effectively to this debate through its emphasis upon ' turning
from structures to people who structure, the makers and
processors of knowledge who live and die in historical time '
(Tonkin, 1982:254). Such people, as I shall argue, can
be children. The chapter concludes, then, with an account of
the ethnographic setting and fieldwork methodology used
in the research which has enabled me to begin to work towards
such an anthropology of children.

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Socialization :   the traditional model

Traditional formulations of socialization theory have not

escaped the influences noted previously governing

anthropological approaches to the study of children.[1]

Indeed, the same assumptions frame the model: children

are percieved to be peripheral to the social order and are   X

thought to possess a distinctive nature which is, in part,

what makes them children, what relegates them to this

marginal position. I suggest, therefore, that traditional

accounts of the process of socialization start from a

predominantly Western conception of the child and that the

model succeeds in confirming this initial implicit assumption.

It is, in essence, a circular argument, the logic of which

is outlined below.[2]

A useful starting point is Danziger's (1970) analysis of

the presuppositions of traditional socialization theory.

He identifies three main influences. Firstly, he suggests

that British empiricist philosophy led to an assumption of

the ' infinite plasticity of man ' which succeeded in

reducing the concept of socialization to an ' essentially

technical problem, one of manipulating conditions to produce

predictable results ' (1970:1). This led, therefore, to the

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1. See pp.73 - 76.

2. As an example of the ' traditional ' approaches to
    socialization I concentrate the discussion on Elkin's
    book, The Child and Society (1960), which neatly
    summarises the major issues and can, therefore, be
    taken as representative.

conception of the child as a passive recipient of the models of others, as responding automatically, like a Pavlovian dog, to external stimuli.

Secondly, Danziger analyses the impact of Freudian psychology on the Western intellectual tradition. With its stress on the importance of early childhood experiences for later psychological and social development Freudian theory encouraged an ' overwhelming emphasis on parent-child relationships in socialization research ' (ibid:4). Combined with an ' unproductive concern with infant care practices like weaning and toilet training ' socialization theory developed an implicit cultural bias which, as Danziger argues, was of minimal use for comparative purposes (ibid:4).

Lastly, within sociology itself, the positivist view of society as a system composed of a network of functional interlocking social roles working harmoniously together was crucial. Against this background, socialization became the process by which social roles were filled in successive generations. In effect, this reduced the study of socialization to the study of the production of conformity. It created what Wrong (1961) has described as an oversocialized conception of man.[1]

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1. It will be noted that Danziger's criticisms are comparable with those noted in Chapter 1 as governing anthropological approaches to the study of children. This adds further weight to the suggestion that the study of children has primarily been the study of socialization practices within social anthropology.

But this uncritical importation of ' a great deal of
intellectual baggage in the form of implicit bias ' into
socialization theory is, I suggest, also attributable
to the assumption of a particularized Western conception
of the child and ideas of childhood (Danziger, 1970:2).
Due , as MacKay has shown, to ' sociology's reliance on
the common sense world as both topic and resource ' the
Western, and culturally specific, social classification
of child and adult as discrete and natural categories
involved in a particular power relation has been used
as an unquestioned theoretical construction (1973:28).
What an anthropology of children demonstrates is that
this classification _itself_ should be the problematic
under consideration and not its initial premise, for the
child is socialized by ' belonging to a particular culture
at a certain stage in its history '   (Danziger, 1970:18).
The meaning of the category child or adolescent is culturally
specific.

Through taking over a specific conceptual category as if it
were a culture - free theoretical construct socialization
theory, therefore, contains a particular bias. As MacKay
points out, it is assumed that ' children are incomplete
beings ' and that socialization is _the_ process whereby their
completion is ensured (1973:27). Children are regarded as
' immature, irrational, incompetent, asocial (and) acultural '
whereas adults are their precise opposites: complete ' mature,

rational, competent, social and autonomous ' human beings '
(ibid:28). The transformation of the one into the other is
termed socialization. A logical consequence of this binary
model is that socialization can only be seen as a one-way
process, despite Elkin's (1960) claim that this is strictly
nct so.[1] In terms of the model, children are by nature in
need of denaturising. Children must be socialized and, there-
fore, it can only be adults, their binary opposites, who are
capable of performing this act, for the adult world is seen
to represent that which is social. That the initial premise
of the traditional model of socialization is based upon some
conception of the distinctiveness of the child's nature is
shown by MacKay:

> ' to suggest theoretically that there are
> adults and children is to imply that to
> pass from one stage to the other is to pass
> from one ontological order to another.' (1973:
> 29).

In terms of the model children are assumed to be essentially
different from adults; they must therefore remain peripheral
to the social world until socialization is complete, that is
until they themselves become adults.

That in the end this model is unproductive is particularly
apparent in discussions of the function of socialization.
According to Elkin the function of socialization is,

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1. Elkin does briefly mention the question of peer group
   influence and the possibility that children may occasionally
   influence their parents but he gives this little weight.

>...to transmit the culture and
>motivation to participate in established
>social relationships to new members'.
>(1960:7)

This is seen to be achieved primarily through mechanisms

of behavioural modelling and imitation. Elkin describes

the relation of this function as follows : ' significant

others define the world for the child and serve as models

for his attitudes and behaviour ' (ibid:26).

Through example , it is suggested,the child begins to

participate in a series of pre-established social roles.

Logically, therefore, the child's nature must be conceived

of as quite different from that of an adult. For the model

to work children must be seen as both passive and conforming;

they cannot be viewed as being able to select and choose

from the blue-prints of culture handed down to them by the adult

world. In not being able to initiate, only capable of

receiving , children must therefore be in need of socialization

and be different from adults. Without this ability children

cannot participate in social life and, consequently, must

remain peripheral to society until they acquire it, i.e.

until they become socialized adults. In this way traditional

formulations of socialization theory succeed in proving their

initial premises. Graham White neatly summarises the

traditional model as follows :

>' Sociology tended to view socialization
>as a function performed upon the individual
>during childhood, designed to ensure the
>harmonious continuity of society. The
>judgement of the end product of sociali-
>zation was, therefore, the performance
>of the individual as an adult in society.'
>(1977:80)

According to the traditional model, therefore, socialization is the mechanism whereby social roles come to be replicated in successive generations. It offers, in effect, an explanation for the persistence of society itself. Following Talcott Parsons (1951) social structure is realised through a set of social roles interwoven into a system of social relationships which function together to maintain the unity of society. Socialization involves learning these role-relationships and thus, in terms of the model, socialization must surely end when the child is able to fulfill his or her expected social roles, that is when childhood turns adulthood. And the cycle begins again.

In terms of this perspective socialization is seen as a self-sustaining system which admits no dysfunction; logically dysfunction can only occur when socialization has failed. This is described as deviancy from the norm, for it is the role of the agents of socialization precisely to prevent such system's collapse:

> ' The socializing agents teach, serve as models, and invite participation. Through their ability to offer gratification and deprivations they induce cooperation and learning and prevent disrupting deviance.'
> (Elkin, 1960:101).

Such a model is based upon an economistic, rational view of man. Human beings are seen to calculate the risks or benefits to be accrued through adopting a particular course of action and of choosing to act in a predominantly self-interested manner, in this case the path of conformity. Moreover, the model presupposes a homogeneous world-view through

assuming that those who do not conform must necessarily be deviant for they are acting against their own interests; in this model no consideration is given to the possibility that the ' deviant ' may possess an alternative world-view, within which his or her actions become significant and can be explained.[1]

The inadequacies of the traditional approach to socialization stem ultimately from its theoretical framework and one of the more crucial and poignant consequences of this positivistic approach has been that the views and perceptions of young people themselves have been almost totally ignored. As MacKay puts it,

> ' the conception of children as essentially
> deficient vis-a-vis adults has, in practice,
> led to no research into children qua
> children. ' (1973:28)

In seeing socialization as a purely mechanistic and functional process, carried out by adults, emphasis has been placed predominantly upon those seen to have the power to effect and change, that is, upon adult socializers.

Although Elkin (op.cit.), for example, describes socialization as a process of ' learning and assimilation ', indicating an active role for the pupil, the inherent positivism

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1. The growth of deviancy studies within the social sciences
   is a result of this model. However, later work on deviancy
   rejects the functionalist base and argues that supposed
   ' deviance ' contains its own internal order, within which
   such apparent disorderly behaviour can be understood as
   logical and consistent within the ' deviant ' world view.
   See, for example Cohen, ed. (1971) and Corrigan, (1979).

of the traditional framework which he adopts inevitably
centres the greater part of his discussion around the role
of the teacher, the provider of models (1960:4). Agents
of socialization - such as the family or the school - are
studied for their effects upon the child's performance,
but the child's own participation in this process is
credited with little significance. It is ignored precisely
because it is assumed that the response will be more or
less congruent with the stimulus provided. In terms of the
theoretical framework logically there can be no other
response.

Ultimately, this functionalist model of socialization cannot
be sustained, for it rests essentially upon a ' formulation
of the world as static ' (MacKay,1973:28). An approach
which sees all differences as deviancy cannot consider
processes of social change and yet, if socialization is
concerned with exploring the transmission of culture between
generations, then it must surely be able to account for the
passage of time. It must recognize that societies do change.
But, in assuming a largely cause and effect relationship,
a process of shaping and conditioning by example, the
logic of the model omits this possibility. It is a closed
system. The irony here is that the transition from childhood
to adulthood is one of the most fundamental examples of
social change and the process which socialization theory
is attempting to capture.

Finally, in ignoring the processual nature of social life,
through failing to adequately account for socio-structural

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change over time, the model cannot consider the proposition
that socialization is a process which continues throughout
life. It cannot explain adult socialization. It is of
little use to argue, as Landy does through recourse to
Talcott Parsons (op.cit.), that socialization continues
throughout life and that ' the case of the development
of the child is only so dramatic because he has so far to
go ' when the logic of the model cannot fully substantiate
this claim (Landy, 1965:7).

Elkin (op.cit.) attempts to overcome this limitation but
does not succeed. The traditional theory presupposes that
it is primarily adults who provide the models, for adults
are the representatives of that which is social, and that
it is children who copy them. Consequently, Elkin has to
introduce a new variable into the equation - ' character
structure ' - in order to explain adult socialization. He
argues that adult socialization, whilst being almost the
same as that of the child, differs in one significant respect:
' the adult has a more or less established character structure'
(1960:101). Children it would seem have no stable character
structure; indeed, if they did, this would presumably subvert
the process of socialization as it is said to do in the
adult case. In terms of the model the adult who initiates
socialization cannot, at the same time, be the passive
receiver of models from others; hence, the necessary
introduction of the theoretical joker - ' character structure '.
By a sleight of hand a new card is played and the system

is closed once more. This is part of what Rafky has
condemned as the ' vague , somewhat muddled...excess of
" psychologising " ' characteristic of traditional
socialization theory (1973:44). However, as Mayer points
out, this trick becomes redundant once an alternative approach
is adopted :

> ' Socialization is more than the training
> of children and the immature...social mobility
> and/or major social changes, such as ongoing
> urbanization or industrialization involve the
> resocialization of people of all ages. '
> (1970:xiii)

The failure of traditional socialization theory to adequately
tackle the <u>process</u>, rather than simply the effect, of
socialization experiences stems ultimately from the assumptions
made about the nature of society and the individual. As
Elizabeth Tonkin has recently argued, the functionalist base
of most socialization research rests on the following
implicit dichotomy: ' that the individual is a species instance
and the person is an instance of society ' (1982:245). In
this way ' socialization then is the grafting process by
which the individual acquires personhood ' through slotting
into the roles available (ibid:245). Only by thinking of
socialization in a different light can this dichotomy be
overcome and, in agreement with Tonkin, I suggest that
anthropology has a role to play:

> ' the whole anthropological enterprise is,
> potentially, relevant. Since so much attention
> has been paid to the structures of cosmology
> and its interrelation with social organization,
> to rites of passage, to conditions which seem
> to cause change and to forces and relations
> which act to make people think as they do, it
> does not seem a great leap to ask <u>how</u> these
> effects operate through people.' (<u>ibid</u>:254).

An anthropology of children directly confronts the question
of _how_ socialization occurs rather than merely describing
its effects. But as Tonkin rightly notes, ' there is not
one ' _how_ ' any more than there is ' the individual ' or
' the society ' ; there are many forms of socialization
differently exercised and enacted ' (ibid:254). The account
I shall present is merely one set of experiences which may
lead to a rethinking of the question of socialization.

Socialization :   the approach within an anthropology of children

In his critique of traditional accounts of socialization theory
Giddens has recently pointed out the two primary pitfalls:

> ' We have to avoid any account of socialization
> which presumes either that the subject is
> determined by the social object (the individual
> as simply moulded by society); or, by contrast,
> which takes subjectivity for granted as an
> inherent characteristic of human beings, not
> in need of explication.' (1979:120)

As he suggests, both kinds of account ' lack a theory of the
subject '; the ' first reduces subjectivity to the determined
outcome of social forces ' and the second ' assumes the
subjective is not open to any kind of social analysis '
(ibid:120). What is needed, then, is a middle path. In
this section I shall show how the culmination of certain
progressive shifts in thinking within social anthropology,
since the structural functionalist's reign, has opened up
this theoretical space and reveal in what ways an anthropo-
logy of children , as proposed by Hardman in 1973, has
allowed for a reconsideration of the question of socialization
along the lines suggested by Giddens (op.cit.).

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Hardman's proposals are indeed radical in the light of past
approaches to the study of children. Firstly she argues
that ' children have much to offer ' the researcher and
should be regarded as informants in their own right
(1973:98). This proposition, in itself, is new. It suggests
that children are no longer to be consigned to a peripheral
place in the research interests of the discipline. Secondly,
she suggests that children <u>can</u> assume this central place
in the discourse of anthropologists for they, like other
marginal categories, have their own perspective on the world,
one which may differ sharply from, or indeed comment upon,
the dominant world view. It is no longer possible,
therefore, to assume a correspondence of world views between
different sections of society. Both these propositions have
certain consequences for the traditional model of socialization.

To illustrate her ideas Hardman refers to Mary Goodman's
article of 1957 as seeming to offer the kind of approach she
envisages:

> ' children can serve as anthropological-
> style informants, being qualified like their
> elders by membership in a society and in
> command of a limited part of that society's
> culture... Children not only can but should
> be solicited to act as informants since their
> very naivete offers advantages. They can tell
> us first-hand and without retrospection what
> their society and culture look like through
> their eyes, or what childhood is like with
> respect to its perception of society and
> culture.' (Goodman,1957:979)

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However, as Hardman herself remarks, the appearance of Goodman's book in 1970 was most disappointing : it ' relies on statistical results using formal experiments which hardly fit the culture she is dealing with ' (1973:87). This is perhaps not surprising for a real anthropology of children has only become possible with the insights offered by the new developments in areas of theoretical discourse within social anthropology, developments which Goodman does not take into account. [1]

One of the most important insights informing Hardman's approach, but one which she does not explicitly discuss, is the shift from the study of social groups - the observable reality - to that of social categories - underlying structures - which shape that reality. This change in emphasis has forced attention to be given to the structuring of modes of thought through systems of social classification. With respect to the study of children it has enabled the conceptual nature of terms such as ' child ', ' adolescent ' and ' adult ' to be revealed, for these terms to be seen as collective representations which categorise and order separate phases in the life-cycle, itself a conceptualization of the physical transition from birth to death. Here, then, is the reason why work on rites de passage, exemplified in Richards (1956), represents some of the better past research into children for emphasis was already being given to the role of cognition in the structuring of social action.[2]

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1. These are discussed on pp. 14-22 and pp 31-38. Here I shall only recap on those which, in my view, have been particularly crucial for an anthropology of children.

2. See footnote on p. 109.

This conceptual shift has been crucial for the development of an anthropology of children. The activities of children can now be understood as modes of symbolic expression, as the practical presentation of a particular world-view. It is no longer necessary to explain children's behaviour as purely or irrevocably determined by physiological or psychological aspects of their growth and development. The language used by children, their games and other social activities can be understood as the ways in which children create for themselves a particular social reality, a particular interpretation of the social world in which they find themselves and a particular ordering of that world which has meaning for them as marginal participants in it. It is possible , now , to speak of the culture of children, a culture which may or may not reflect that of their elders. Culture, in this new theoretical perspective is not a thing to be dissected but a context for creation. [1]

> ' Culture is not a power, something
> to which social events, behaviours,
> institutions, or processes can be
> causally attributed; it is a context,
> something within which they can be
> intelligibly - that is, thickly -
> described.' (Geertz, 1975:14)

That it is now no longer necessary to assume a congruence between the worlds of adults and children as a priori has certain consequences for theories of socialization. If the activities and language of children are logical, consistent

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1. For further discussion of definitions of ' culture ',
    see pp. 171-174.

and meaningful in terms of the children's own cultural space then any differences between their culture and that of adults cannot any longer be regarded as simply deviant or less sophisticated versions of an adult model. Such differences must be accounted for and explained which means directly investigating the ways in which socialization is both _practised_ and _experienced_.

Since the mid-sixties, however, traditional socialization theory has been increasingly under attack within sociology itself and a new perspective has emerged, one which is incorporated within the orbit of an anthropology of children.[1] This new approach focuses upon socialization as an experiential learning process, rather than simply a causal sequence of actions performed upon one group by another. Through abandoning a view of the social world as static it is no longer necessary to explain socialization in terms of the production of conformity, the replication of social order. Rather it can be seen as the process through which social forms are created and retained or altered over time and the process through which meanings are exchanged, abandoned or renewed.

For instance, the insights of George Herbert Mead (1934) have begun to be incorporated and developed within socialization theory. This means attention being given

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1. See footnote, p. 32 above.

not just to <u>what</u> children learn - in terms of role
behaviour, social norms and values - but also <u>how</u> children
learn.   Through seeing socialization as a process of active
participation and self reflection it is no longer necessary
to disguise the ' <u>how</u> ' of socialization in woolly
psychological explanations whereby the child ' just picks up
appropriate patterns and values ' and files them away
uncritically as bits of his or her own cultural experience'
(Elkin, 1960:51). The obfuscation of the <u>process</u> of
socialization inherent in traditional explanations such as
Elkin's (op.cit.) - variously blanketed by mysterious terms
such as ' assimilation ', ' internalization ' or ' imaginative
participation ' - is no longer requisite.   Through focusing
directly on the young as subjects, rather than just objects,
of socialization attention can be given to the question of
exactly <u>how</u> they do come to learn about the social order.

As MacKay argues what interpretive sociology, such as that
of Mead (op.cit.), has achieved is a view of children
' as beings who interpret the world as adults do ' but not
necessarily coming to the same conclusions ; through seeing
children as articulate informants of their own cultural
experience interpetive sociology has transformed a ' theory
of deficiency into a theory of competency ' (1973:30-31).
Graham White echoes this appraisal of the more recent advances
in socialization research:

/..

> ' it is no longer enough to focus on
> the malleability and passivity of the
> individual in the face of all powerful
> social influences. Without some idea
> about the individual's own activity in
> shaping his social experience our
> perspective of socialization becomes
> distorted. ' (1977:5)

However, it is not sufficient to merely shift the focus of

study. As Tonkin suggests, although such action based

theories of society have avoided the first pitfall indicated by

Giddens (op.cit.) - a view of socialization as a moulding

process - they may not contribute towards a radical re-

thinking of the theory itself. As she points out, through

their tendency to ' reduce the complexity of social

experience ' they run the risk of substituting ' an

undifferentiated ability to create social forms for the

functionalists ' inculcation of roles ' (1982:249).[1] They

fall into the second trap discussed by Giddens (op.cit.) where

the question of subjectivity is taken for granted, rather

than as a problematic to be considered. The insights gained

from recent developments in anthropological theory do,

however, suggest an alternative path for socialization research

through emphasis being given to the social structuring of

cognition, a direction which can be fruitfully followed

within an anthropology of children.

Seen through the eyes of a child socialization is the

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1. In particular, Tonkin is critical of network analysis
   which she suggests ' hides the imbalanced pressures and
   the different kinds of relationship which actually occur '
   in everyday life (1982:248). She continues: ' to treat
   society essentially as a network of dyadic relationships -
   the dyad writ large - is to ignore those non-dyadic
   relationships into which humans universally enter'
   (ibid:248).

/..

experience and art of growing up ; no child would talk of
his or her own ' socialization '. Within an anthropology
of children questions must therefore be asked about the
meaning of this experience to them, how they interpret and
synthesise it into a coherent world view and give it form
in everyday life. As Geertz has forcibly argued, any
analysis of social life

> ' must be cast in terms of the
> interpretations to which persons of a
> particular denomination subject their
> experiences because that is what they
> profess to be descriptions of.' (1975:15)

Within an anthropology of children, then, socialization is
not the process of being taught - for teaching is what
goes on in school - but it is the process of acquiring social
knowledge, of learning to conform and learning to disobey.
The task of the analyst is to sort out and explore the
' informal logic of actual life ' within and through which
the child or adolescent understands the experience of
socialization (ibid:17).

The semiotic concept of culture which frames this new approach
towards the study of children forces consideration of a
number of questions with respect to the process of socialization:
how is social knowledge received and utilised by children, what
parts of it are transmitted directly, what parts given implicitly;
what areas of knowledge are accepted without question by children,
which rejected or challenged, which perceived to be of signi-
ficance, which dismissed as irrelevant. Knowledge is a form
of power and the recipient may use it at will. It is an
anthropology of children which can begin to tackle this issue

through its insistence upon working from the child's point
of view.

In this respect traditional accounts fail to provide an
adequate explanation of the process, the how , of
socialization because their emphasis lies primarily on the
adult world - parents, teachers and media figures as agents
of conformity. The peer group usually receives attention in
explanations for the failure of socializing practices, as a
source of and context for the emergence and consolidation of
deviant, sub-cultural forms. This imbalance is rectified
within an anthropology of children:the peer group becomes
a positive, rather than a negative ' agent '. Geertz
has argued that it is through the ' flow of behaviour -
or, more precisely, social action ' - that cultural forms
find their articulation, so it must be through examining
the daily experiences of children and adolescents that the
form and process of socialization can most adequately be
explained (ibid:17).

The historical institutionalization of childhood has created
a social context within which children pool, swop and comment
upon knowledge obtained from the outside adult world. Changed
or unchanged, this becomes formulated into a coherent and
meaningful symbolic system, a world-view particular to the
children themselves.   It is through interaction with one
another that children primarily make sense of the world and
it is in this manner that transformations can occur,

transformations of the knowledge obtained from the adult

world and transformations of those transformations:

> '....although children conform to their
> own group as an essential source of
> standards for judgements, values and
> expectations, they create these
> standards and also change them if the
> group agrees ' (Shimahara, 1970,146).

These controls which children exert over one another are

a crucial aspect of the socialization process and an anthropology

of children explores the creation of such ' socially established

structures of meaning ' by children themselves, which

represent a way of coming to know and learn the meaningful

order of the adult world (Geertz,1975:12).

By seeing socialization as the learning and the creation of

social orders, rather than simply the imposition and acceptance

of them, the question of power and social control can be

directly confronted for no initial assumption is made

concerning the effectiveness of, or necessity for, the

replication of any one particular social order. That the

experience of adults may often be that of controller and that

of children as being controlled is not the issue. What is

in dispute is the necessary success of the former over the

latter, the passivity of the prisoner in the hands of his

captor. By removing the normative, positivistic framework

surrounding traditional socialization theory an anthropology

of children can approach the problem as an active process

of constructing, rather than merely accepting, systems of

social meanings. Such a perspective in no way denies access

to exploring the role of the school, the home and the

community in the socializing experiences of the young, but it does not award them any priority.

This semiological approach to the question of socialization must, however, be used with caution. As Geertz has argued, ' nothing has done more...to discredit cultural analysis than the construction of impeccable depictions of formal order in whose existence nobody can quite believe ' (ibid: 18). As he advises ' we gain access to symbol systems by inspecting events not by arranging abstracted entities into unified patterns ' (ibid:17). For anthropologists then,

> ' our double task is to uncover the
> conceptual structures that inform our
> subjects ' acts, the ' said ' of social
> discourse, and to construct a system of
> analysis in whose terms what is generic
> to those structures, what belongs to
> them because they are what they are,
> will stand out against the other
> determinants of human behaviour. ' (ibid:
> 27).

Finally, then, it is here that anthropology has such a crucial role to play in socialization research. Through its commitment to fieldwork by participant observation, rather than laboratory investigations, anthropology can begin to develop a'theory of the subject' which Giddens has identified as the missing element in traditional accounts of socialization (1979:120). Participant observation allows the researcher to work with children in a wide variety of social settings over a prolonged period of time, to see children with adults, to be with them in the context of their own culture. Only through such continual and varied social interaction can an adequate approach to socialization be developed for

as Giddens has argued, ' socialization should be understood
as an element of the continuity of social reproduction, of
the inherent temporality of the social process ' (1979:128).

An anthropology of children, with its emphasis on participant
observation, offers a real alternative to traditional approaches
to the question of socialization. As Geertz argues,

> ' it is with the kind of material
> produced by long-term, mainly (though
> not exclusively) qualitative, highly
> participative, and almost obsessively
> fine-comb field study in confined
> contexts that the mega-concepts with
> which contemporary social science is
> afflicted - legitimacy, modernization,
> integration, conflict, charisma,
> structure, meaning...can be given the
> sort of sensible actuality that makes
> it possible to think not only realisti-
> cally and concretely about them, but
> what is more important, creatively and
> imaginatively with them.' (1975:23)

'Socialization' is another concept which similarly benefits
from a creative reworking through qualitative field study
and it is an anthropology of children which gives the
opportunity for this.

To summarise : an anthropology of children explores the
culture of the young through focusing directly upon the
ways in which social order is created and recreated through
that context. It reveals the symbolic systems which structure
the culture of children by exploring the ways in which they
are made manifest in everyday life through the process of
socialization. To socialize is to make a conception of order
acceptable; to order is to make discriminations, to divide

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up and separate ; to order the social world is thus an attempt
to control it through the control of perception, that is to
make sense in a particular social context. As Geertz argues,
' man is an animal suspended in the webs of significance
that he himself has spun ' (1975:5). The task for the child is
to unravel the webs, which adults have created for him or
her, through a process of cognitive reconstruction. And in
the following sections the scene is set for the exploration
of one particular reconstruction performed by one particular
group of children.

The ethnographic background:

Few anthropologists comment upon their reasons for choosing
a particular location for fieldwork but I suspect that,
for most, it is a long standing interest in a particular
people or cultural region that prompts the decision. Of
recent years, though, there has been a shift in research
interests from the study of ' other cultures ' as ethno-
graphic totalities towards the study of particular problems
or categories within a specific setting. My own fieldwork
falls within this group for I wished to study ' children ';
the possible choice of location for such a project was
immense. That I chose to work in a north-eastern mining
village is related to my interest in certain key theoretical
issues.

Firstly, the debates outlined in the previous chapters
framed my initial interest in the research project. If, as
suggested, anthropology could provide an alternative approach
to child study and the question of socialization then it was

by applying anthropological techniques in the context of a Western culture that this could best be carried out for the majority of socialization research has been undertaken in such a context. A second consideration was prompted by a wider view of the subject itself: a commitment to the methods and theories of anthropology as applicable in all settings, rather than just those of the ' primitive ' or ' other ' which has, historically, led to a populist view of the subject as being exclusively concerned with exoticism. There has been a strange reluctance for anthropologists to look to themselves and their own society as an object of study but, as Mary Douglas argues, ' if we cannot bring the argument back from tribal ethnography to ourselves, there is little point in starting it at all ' (1973:15). I wished to take up her challenge to break through the ' spiky, verbal hedges that arbitrarily insulate one set of human experiences (ours) from another set (theirs) ' (ibid:26).

Although research into one's own culture is not a totally new direction for anthropology, and in recent years is a trend which seems to be growing, the majority of the earlier work falls within the domain of community studies. In this sense it follows closely the anthropological tradition of studying social groups, groups often bound by named terri-tories into seemingly small-scale isolable communities.[1] My own interest in studying a social category - children -

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1.   See Bell and Newby eds. (1974).

rather than a social group has led my research along a different
path. I have concentrated upon one particular section of the
society, exploring their perception of their place within it,
rather than the totality of the community experiences
available. As the analysis reveals the context was crucial
in framing the particularity of the children's social
experiences but it is only in this sense that the question
of community is explored. I do not present a traditional
ethnography of the village: the ethnographic background
provided below is the back drop out of which the ' field'
was to emerge and against which the field material is
interpreted.

Fieldwork was carried out during the period 1977-9 when
I lived as a participant observer in an ex-mining village
in the north-east of England. It is nowadays relatively
large, having a population of approximately 7,500 in 1977
and is one of a long chain of small towns and villages
situated on a ridge following the course of a river. Together
these form a valley district which stretches inland into the
more rural parts of County Durham.

Over recent years the district has suffered a general
population decline, largely due to the unemployment resulting
from the closure of many coal mines in the area. During
the 1850's there had been a spurt in the growth of coal-
mining in the region which stimulated a considerable increase
in population : 1801-1841 saw a three-fold increase in the

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population which, during the next ten years, 1841-51,
again trebled, rising to a peak in 1921 by which time the
district had a population of approximately 34,500.

However, since 1921 there has been a reverse in these
demographic trends concomitant with the declining coal-
industry in the region, a situation which continues to the
present day. In 1951 coal-mining had provided 4,700 jobs
in the region; by 1961 the figure had fallen to 3,500 and
by 1971 only 150 jobs were locally available in the coal-
industry. In 1971 the population of the district had
dropped to 21,500.[1]

Accompanying the closing off of opportunities for male
employment in the area there has been a rise, however, in
female employment largely in the textile manufacturing and
the service industries: in 1951 the proportion of jobs taken
by women was 17% but by 1971 this had risen to 34%. However,
unemployment remains generally high in the district and well
above the county average. Increasingly, work opportunities
are being sought outside the district: in 1966 40% of the
working population were travelling to jobs outside the local
area compared with only 17% in 1951. For many of the young
people I was working with during the period 1977-9 the prospect
of unemployment after leaving school was therefore seen as

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1. These statistics refer to the administrative district
   which includes a number of towns and villages. No
   discrete figures were available for the community itself.

almost inevitable, despite the provision of short-term
ameliorative measures by the government through the introduction
of Youth Opportunity Programmes and Job Creation Schemes.
Although plans were drawn up in 1971 for the establishment
of an industrial site in the town, to counter these trends
in unemployment, by 1977 only one new factory had been built
and by the end of my period of fieldwork this factory was
itself being threatened with closure. [1]

One consequence of these trends in regional demographic factors
and employment opportunities has been the collapsing of
communities into one another. Many of the smaller hamlets
were classed as Category 'D' and left to decline through the
introduction of compulsory re-housing programmes. As the
young people left these villages to seek employment elsewhere
the remaining inhabitants were moved to other larger towns
and villages in the area. The community where I carried
out my fieldwork had itself incorporated an influx of new
inhabitants during the previous ten years as a consequence
of such programmes.

The people themselves register these changes in their
articulation of conceptual boundaries between different parts
of the town which, to the outsider, has the physical appearance

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1. These statistics have been extracted from a county council
   planning document (1971) for the district and from the
   1971 census records. More detailed figures for the town
   itself are unavailable due to its incorporation with
   figures for the urban district council as a whole.

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of any small mining community: one long shopping street
with straggling terraces and sprawling council estates
fanning off on either side of a central roadway which
is one of the main routes into the more rural parts of
the County, a place to travel through rather than to visit
built, as it was, for the utilitarian purposes of the coal
industry rather than those of tourism .

The original hamlet, from which the town takes its name, now
lies at the ' bottom ' of the street and has been largely
submerged by one council estate. This estate is regarded
as the source of most ' trouble ' in the town and is said to
be the home-ground of the local burglars and people of
disrepute who were moved into the town from one particularly
infamous hamlet some seven miles away.

Moving ' up ' the street two large council estates, together
with the main shopping area and some rows of terraced houses,
form the town centre leading to the ' posh ' houses at the
top end. This large circle of houses centred on the main
road forms the heart of the town and is rigidly distinguished
from an adjoining hamlet which, due to a building programme,
now butts directly onto one of the council estates. The
boundary between the town and the hamlet is cited as a row
of garages and inhabitants of the hamlet are quick to point

out their status as hamlet rather than town dwellers.[1]

One further area of the town is also conceptually distinguished: this is the original ' slum ' area, now largely demolished , which had been rapidly thrown up by the coal-owners to house their workers. Only a few terraces remain of those which, at one time, literally hugged the bottom of the pit spoil heap. The rows of cottages had the pit railways running between them and the local branch line was to one side. The majority of these cottages were both insanitary and badly constructed and, after the closure of the pit in 1968, a process of demolition and reclamation began. An elderly woman, whose father had lived in one terrace, described how the wood in many of these pit cottages was " red with the blood of cockroaches " which were squashed as the houses were torn down. As the process of demolition proceeeded the town became overrun by rats which retreated before the path of the bulldozer.

By 1977, when I took up residence in one of these cottages, only a few terraces remained. The houses had all been

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1.As part of my fieldwork I worked in a local youth club which, two years previously, had been started by the parents of children living in the hamlet. The money raised had been insufficient to build a youth centre so the club was housed in the Miners Welfare Hall in the town. Throughout the period of fieldwork disputes arose within the management committee of the club over the fact that the hamlet youth club was situated in the town. Although only one member of the committee resided in the 'hamlet' and the majority of the children came from the town the conceptual distinction was always used as a political lever, despite the fact that only a row of garages separated the two places. Indeed, the youth club would not have been viable without the support it received from town-dwellers.

modernized and cherry trees planted along the grass plots in front of the houses. The pit spoil heap, which it is said " used to block out the sun ", had been removed and grassed over forming a pleasant open aspect for the remaining terraced cottages. Memories, however, linger on and I was always spoken of as " living up there ", away from the town, in a place which, in many ways, was conceptually seen to lie beyond its boundaries and in some strange way linked with a neighbouring hamlet, regarded with a degree of suspicion by the towns people themselves. It was, however, but a few minutes walk from my house to the main shopping street.[1]

Although by 1977 some pit-cottages were still rented by ex-miners from the National Coal Board, many had been sold off to miners, at substantially reduced prices, or to other buyers. There had been, therefore, a slight influx of ' foreigners ' (non-local people) into the community but it was not, as yet, significant in its impact. The people, then, feel themselves to live in a somewhat enclosed community, a conception which is apparent in their articulation of its boundaries. The terms ' up ' and ' down ', ' top ' and ' bottom ' bear no relationship to geographical features. Rather,

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1. The position of my house in relation to these conceptuali-
   zations of space within the town was decisive for the
   success of the project. By the children, and by adults in
   the town, I was acceptable, despite my 'foreigness' for I
   lived in the old 'slum' area and not in the ' posh ' end of
   town, a conceptualization apparent in the disparity between
   house-prices in these two areas. Although there was little
   significant difference in the types of houses those in the
   'posh ' part were always more expensive. For further
   discussion of this point see below pp. 154-156.

they represent the conceptual limits of the town itself.
In their conceptualizations of physical space the people
bear witness to the history of the town as a mining community
bound tightly together by a common work structure and life-
style.

The pit itself has long since disappeared but the focus it
provided for a sense of community still lingers on in a
number of ways. The long rows of terraced houses, each with
their own backyard, are separated by back-lanes across which
washing is still strung. Many places are still identified
through reference to the now absent pit: Railway Terrace,
so called because it followed the course of the local branch
line, is still referred to as ' Colliery Row ' for it was
this particular terrace which, at one time, led to the pit-
head. The place where the mine railway used to run is known
as the " tracks " although its rails and sleepers have been
removed and it now forms a grassy walk-way. Many of the
older inhabitants refer to the " place where the pit-baths
used to be " or " where the bridge was ", despite the fact
that the only functioning reminder of their working lives
in the pit is the coal-crushing plant.

In the social life of its inhabitants memories of a ' pit-
village community ' are evoked and echoed in its activities.
The Miners Welfare Hall is still largely run by ex-miners
and offers a wide variety of indoor and outdoor recreational
facilities for the town's inhabitants such as old-time
dancing, snooker and bowls; the Labour Party holds its

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meetings there and now the Welfare Committee has opened
up its doors to the young people in the community. The
youth club and the local cadet force both use its facilities.

The town has three working-men's clubs, traditionally the
source of social life in a pit-community, which continue to
provide the main places of entertainment on a Friday and Saturday
night. The clubs still run day-trips to local seaside resorts,
such as Whitley Bay and Blackpool, and organise the collection
of money for children's parties at Christmas. The annual
Leek Show, sponsored by the Club, is also enthusiastically
supported,for allotments in the town remain an important
part of the territory of men. They take great pride in the
vegetables they produce and the pigeons they breed and other
live-stock, such as goats and hens, continue to be housed in
roughly constructed ' crees ' on the allotments. Waiting
lists for these ' gardens ' are always long.

Together, therefore, the Miners Welfare and the working-
men's clubs continue to provide the focal point for the
social life of the community. An attempt to create a
Community Association at the local comprehensive school,
begun in the summer of 1977, was greeted with a mixed
response. By 1979 it had gathered a few supporters but was
still not considered to be a viable proposition. Many people
saw it as being run by non-local people, members of the
middle-class such as school-teachers and recent incomers.
Others viewed it with suspicion and hinted darkly that it

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was but another attempt by the local councillors to accrue
glory for themselves.

Although there have been significant changes in the community
and many of the older inhabitants regret that ' neighbour-
liness' is declining - that people no longer bring their
chairs out into the back-lane to sit and chat - the sense
of a tight-knit community remains.[1] Back-lanes do still
provide the arena for gossip; people stand at their yard-
gates and exchange news up and down the street. Tradesmen,
friends and acquaintances come to the back-door; a knock on
the front-door signals the arrival of an outsider or an
official visitor. The close physical proximity of the houses
to one another encourages interest in the affairs of others;
arguments and disputes are not contained by house-walls.
Visitors to my house were always noted and commented upon
and knowledge of the latest scandal quickly related to me.[2]

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1. For this reason I find it hard to describe the community
   as a'town' , despite its large population. As the
   following examples reveal it has many of the characteristics
   of traditional ' village life ' and the people themselves
   remark upon the close-knit texture of community life.

2. On going away for a few days during the bad winter of
   1978 I was, on my return, given an account of who had
   been to the house during my absence. I was told when
   the telephone wire had been torn down by the heavy snow-
   fall and given full descriptions of two friends who had
   been to check that the cat was being looked after.

Rumours and gossip circulated within the community with, what was to me, an astonishing rapidity. When the local scout company had its tents stolen it was not long before the culprits were discovered and pressure brought to bear for them to be returned; as one man remarked,"it's not right to steal from the young'uns when they earned the money" for the tents. He was the instigator of their return through challenging the culprit in a pub one night. News of the success of the youth-club dart's team in the County Finals yielded, in a very short space of time,£100 from the local pubs' teams to finance their trip to take part in the national competition.

Kinship remains a strong feature uniting the community. In the street where I lived, for example, three houses were linked by kin ties, and it is not infrequent that ' mam ' lives up the road or but a few streets away. Conversations frequently reveal many family members residing in the community or neighbouring villages and many, who have left the area to work, eventually return. This close-knit texture is further exemplified through the fact that houses are rarely referred to by their number; instead they are located through reference to a personal tie, the assumption being that ' everyone knows everyone else '.

Such a feeling is generated by a sense of limited geographical mobility and through the fine discriminations of space and place wrought upon the locality by its inhabitants. Talking

to an old man who lived a few doors from me he remarked
that he didn't like '" living up here " and that he preferred
it " down there ". Thinking in terms of miles rather than
yards I asked which part of the country he came from. He
replied that he used to live " down there,in Pine Street"
and was longing to return. My next-door neighbour had two
sisters who lived in neighbouring villages and towns, about
two to five miles distant. When he was admitted to hospital
they came to visit him; one sister he had not seen for 42
years, the other for 30 years, but it was not on account of
any animosity between them.

It was, then, within such a community that I began my field-
work in 1977 and the progressive understanding I achieved
of the lives of the young people I encountered was framed by
this context. The analysis presented therefore reflects the
particularity of their experiences of living in a working-
class, semi-rural northern town whilst, at the same time,
providing the basis for exploring the wider culture of
children which, as the following section suggests, can be
largely understood as the creation of a cultural space
within the limits of that setting. It is this which
permitted my fieldwork to take on what Geertz has termed as
its own ' inward conceptual rhythm', its own contextual
dialogue (1976a:235). For the children their personal space,
like that of their parents, was signified by relatives and
friends , populated by those with whom they were in daily
contact, with whom they shared their lives. The thesis is a
result of their willingness to include me within this social
space.

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Fieldwork methodology: the creation of a conceptual space

Ever since Malinowski's insistence that ethnographers should provide an ' absolutely candid and above board ' account of research methodologies employed in the collection of field data, so as to bridge the gulf ' between the brute material of information ....and the final authoritative account ' it has become commonplace to fulfill this requirement by devoting at least one chapter of their monographs to a discussion of methodology (1922:2-4).   , Others, such as Powdermaker (1966) and Smith-Bowen (1964) have taken his advice a step further and written more personal accounts of research experiences in separate volumes, although the admission of such subjectivity led the latter to use a pseudonym, perhaps fearing its detrimental effect on her more objective presentations.

It was not surprising, therefore, that on the posthumous publication of Malinowski's field-diary in 1967 a minor scandal shook the anthropological world for the diary revealed that Malinowski ' was not to put it delicately, an unmitigated nice guy ' (Geertz, 1976a:222). As Geertz suggests,

> 'the myth of the chameleon fieldworker,
> perfectly self tuned to his exotic
> surroundings, a walking miracle of
> empathy, tact, patience, and cosmopolitan,
> was demolished by the man who had perhaps
> done most to create it. ' (ibid:222)

Malinowski ' had rude things to say about the natives he was living with, and rude words to say it in ' (ibid:222).

But the real issue raised by the diary was not a moral one but rather, as Geertz points out, an epistemological one of 'how to see things from the native's point of view.... when we can no longer claim some unique form of psychological closeness' (ibid:222). The publication of the diary brought to the fore the central methodological problem of the experiential inside versus the observational external view of culture, an issue already beginning to be explored by anthropologists. In 1964 Riseman argued, in the foreword to the second edition of Smith-Bowen's book, that the ' assumption that an autobiography of affective experience is an ethnographic irrelevancy would... be setting a wrong model for what is truly scientific ' and he commented that he was ' glad that the author now is willing to have her own name on the book ' (1964:xvi). In 1975 Pocock called for the necessity of a ' personal anthropology ' for all researchers, a challenge most recently taken up by anthropologists such as Wikan (1980) and Belmonte (1979) who provide frank accounts of their personal experiences of research, detailing the difficulties they encountered, the mistakes they made, their feelings towards their subjects and the effect upon the self that these experiences had, alongside their analysis of field material. These accounts are the ' absolutely candid and above board ' reports which Malinowski called for but, in 1922, was unable to publish himself (1922:2).

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In the following discussion of my own fieldwork experiences
this question of methodology is crucial for, as I shall
demonstrate, the particular way in which the fieldwork was
conducted was integral to the understanding of the child's
world that I reached and, from the benefit of hindsight and
reflection, it is apparent that the <u>actual process and progress</u>
of the research was central to this; it was not merely a
method of collecting ' data '. The <u>process</u> was itself
' data '. Adoption of alternative research strategies
would have been less fruitful and would have obscured the
fact that the fieldwork was done <u>to</u> me rather than <u>by</u> me, a
fact which is central to the analysis as a whole.

I began my fieldwork shortly after moving into a small pit-
cottage with my husband in August 1977, two months after we
were married. My aim was to ' study children ' but how to
study them remained a problem; children were everywhere but
nowhere that I could meet them without risking the project
from the start which aimed to explore their world-view, their
culture. A pushy adult intruding upon their world would not,
I felt, have endeared me to them.

A chance meeting with the youth leader of one of the three
local youth clubs, who expressed her interest in my project,
gave me my first entree into the child's world. She obtained
permission from the Management Committee of the youth club
for me to assist her in the running of the club as an
' unofficial ' youth worker.

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The club, held in two rooms of the Miner's Welfare
Hall, met for three hours, twice a week. All the members
lived locally, most of them on the council estates which
were situated close by. The permitted age range for
membership was between 11 and 21, but the majority of the
members were aged between 12 and 17. The club had a
fluctuating membership - about 150 on the register - but
there was an approximate nightly attendance of 40 children,
most of whom were regular attenders. It was this group of
children who were to form the central core of my fieldwork.

From the outset fieldwork was conducted on their terms rather
than mine. It was the children themselves who defined the
context, the content and the course of the research, whose
willingness to include me in their activities and also to
make use of me in their daily lives allowed me entry into
a conceptual space of their own creation. It is the creation,
maintenance and destruction of this conceptual space which
forms the subject matter of this thesis and the ways in which
this was achieved constitutes my fieldwork methodology. In
all honesty I did not choose a ' field ' ; I merely chose
a location. It was the children who created my ' field ',
literally and metaphorically; it was they who defined my
sphere of interest and, ultimately, who proscribed it's
theoretical frame, through making me focus upon particular
kinds of questions.

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The creation of a ' field '

I had been living in the community for three months - the
latter two had seen my entry into the youth club - when
the first real breakthrough occurred in October 1977. It
was initiated by the children themselves. The youth club
had introduced me to the children but it was their movement
out of this structured setting which introduced them to me
through initiating me into their conceptual world.

' Visiting ' was an activity which certain children did
on nights when the youth club was not open for it was
important for them to ' go out ' each night.[1] ' Visiting '
consists of calling in to see adults who welcome, or at
least bear, their intrusion; it is a viable alternative to
sitting in the bus-shelter on cold winter nights or roaming
the streets. ' Visiting ' represents an opportunity to sit
and chat amongst themselves in a place largely defined and
controlled by them, away from their own domestic contexts
at home or in the homes of friends. After two months at
the youth club I was mentally included on the ' visiting
list '.

During the half-term school holidays a group of four children
knocked on my back-door : two were youth club members and
the others their younger siblings. They stayed for half an
hour then left, promising to call again. A formal move had

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1. For further discussion of this, see pp.210-212 and
    pp. 234-235.

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been made ; an exploratory visit accomplished. I had been

' sounded out ' and, from this moment on, my home was to

be invaded by the children. During the following weeks

other children would say to me at the youth club: " I know

where you live " or " I saw you going into your house " or

" you live'up there' in May Street, don't you ?". The children

had, as it were, found themselves another suitable context

and, for the next eighteen months, there was a continual

flow of children in and out of my home.

Their choice of my home as their field of action was largely

due to three interconnected factors: its location, its physical

appearance and, lastly, its occupants. These combined

together, in the children's eyes, to create a rather

anomalous space, one suitable for their purposes.[1]

Firstly, as mentioned above, my house was situated in a

row of pit cottages in the original slum area of the town.

Although a bathroom had been added in the 1960's the house

was in a state of decay and my husband and I had begun a

massive . renovation programme. When the children first

began to visit plaster dust and brick dust filled the air

and gaping holes decorated the walls, a situation which

continued for most of the fieldwork period. In the eyes

of the children, therefore, we were not ' posh ': we lived

in the wrong area of town to be ' posh ' and the concrete

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1. For extension of this argument see p.233-249 below and
    the footnote on p.156.

floors and unpapered walls, the chipped paint and continual
filth confirmed them in this belief. ' Posh ' people, as
I quickly discovered, were always hated by the children and,
although we ' talked posh ' - that is, we did not speak with
local accents -, given our physical surroundings, we were
forgiven for this failure. We passed the first test.

A further unwitting bonus was that the house was not situated
in the ' town proper '; it was conceptually, though not
geographically , distant from their own homes on the council
estates. It was in an ambiguous and marginal zone, the
kinds of spaces which, as I was to learn, the children
constantly appropriate and redefine as their own.[1] It lay
on a bus route to a small hamlet on top of the hill, infamous
for housing ' hippies ', ' students ', ' communists ' and
' foreigners ', people very much marginal to the children's
familiar world. It was as if ambiguity seeped down the hill
side to infect the area in which we lived; for the children
our house was ripe for invasion; for me it was crucial to the
progress of my fieldwork.

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1. A recurring theme of this thesis is that adolescents in
    contemporary Britain are seen as and feel themselves to
    be marginal creatures, excluded from many central social
    spheres. It is highly significant, therefore, that it
    is to ambiguous physical spaces that these children
    retreat. They constantly exploit such spaces in their
    everyday activities: rubbish tips, disused buildings,
    bus shelters, woods and fields. All these places appear
    to be minimally controlled by adults and, hence, can be
    maximally controlled by the children; they become their
    private spaces. See pp.233-249for discussion of the
    processes through which children reinterpret and
    appropriate physical space.

In that the house was one of the original pit properties it was of further benefit to my research. In its physical structure the house was familiar to the children, reminding them of their grand-parent's homes, or houses they themselves had lived in prior to moving to modern council accomodation. The house had a back-kitchen and a front-room - known as ' the room ' - which was rarely used by the family except on formal occasions. The back-kitchen opened onto a concrete yard which, in turn, led directly into the back lane, the domestic environment of neighbours and friends, tradesmen and callers. Here women stand and gossip, men mend their cars and chat to their friends and young children play. In striking contrast, ' the room ' had a front door which opened directly onto the front street, the public world. The front door was rarely used and a knock on the front door signalled the arrival of strangers or official visitors. It is significant that when one particular group of children <u>first</u> visited me it was to the front door, rather than the back, that they arrived; thereafter they used the back-door.

In the back-kitchen there was an old coal-fired range around which the children loved to sit and chat, poking the coals and playing games. It was a feature missing from the council houses they themselves lived in and something upon which every child gleefully commented. Again it revived memories of their grand-parent's homes and such memories are, for children, usually fond.

And yet, for the children it was a house which was also strange and intriguing. Its half-finished appearance gave it a chaotic air ; cigarette ash would be flicked indiscrimately on the floor merging with the plaster dust. Spilled coffee and biscuit crumbs dropped on that surface did not cause the uproar it did at home. As we gradually wrought some kind of order upon the house wierd and wonderful decorations appeared: bead curtains and hand-woven blankets hung from the walls, pans were displayed rather than languishing in the cupboards, ' funny ' drawings and pictures and ' old ' furniture were placed in ' the room ' which was used all the time and not just on special occasions. Indeed, it housed the television - a rare event in the children's eyes. All this made our house anomalous and made it a place which the children could exploit, and turn it into my ' field '.

Finally, in another sense, the children literally created the ' field '. Throughout our stay there the children continually offered their assistance in the renovation work: painting walls, chipping off plaster, sanding down wooden doors, jobs which they rarely got a chance to perform at home and which they all enjoyed. They often brought us presents salvaged from scrap heaps, of pieces of wood, bits of wire and screws and nails as their contribution to the house. By the end of my period of fieldwork, therefore, the children felt that they had taken an active part in the actual construction of - what was to them - partly their own environment. " It's coming on " they would say and make

an inspection of recent work. As time progressed they
would comment: " we're getting it nice now " and, finally
when the house was finished, they all agreed it was " very
posh ". Had it been ' posh ' prior to their arrival I doubt
whether the fieldwork would have followed the path it did.

The physical setting of the ' field ' was, therefore, chosen
by the children themselves on their terms; they literally
created it for me through reading its symbolic aspect as an
ambiguous space. In this respect I too was not immune for
their perceptions.

The children, from the outset, regarded both me and my husband
as decidedly odd. We ' talked posh ' but did not live up to
that image. We were married but had no children and yet only
my husband appeared to work.[1] Moreover, he wore a suit to
work and worked in an office, rather than on the factory
floor or in a labouring job. I, they knew, was attached to
' the university ' but their only point of comparison was a
vague knowledge of elder siblings who went to the ' tech '.
They usually talked of me being at ' college '.

My ' work ' was of little interest to them and was not, in

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1. For a discussion of female roles see pp.426 - 472.
   Young married women usually go out to work. Work,
   for them, is seen as a transitory phase prior to marriage
   and child rearing. It was seen as strange, even in a
   time of high unemployment, for a young, childless, married
   woman not to have some kind of job.

any case, real ' work ' for it lay totally outside their
experiential field.[1] I was some kind of teacher but did
not fit the models they faced daily across the classroom.
Alternatively, I was some kind of student but not like those
people who lived on the hill; I helped at the Youth Club
but was not a real ' youth leader ' ; I studied anthropology,
described by them as " people and that - we heard about that
at school ", a topic which was summarily dismissed. I could
have been a ' social worker ' but many of them had their own
social workers and, again, I did not fit the category.

Other factors contributed to our anomalous status in the eyes
of the children. Firstly, my husband and I did not appear
to fulfill the gender roles commonly articulated within the
community: we carried out most activities jointly, rather
than apart, he helping with the shopping and cooking, I taking
my turn digging the allotment, mixing concrete and building
walls. Many of the children commented on these seemingly
bizarre activities.

My presence on the allotment which we rented was initially
regarded as quite a spectacle. Usually a male preserve
rarely intruded upon by women, men would sceptically lean
on the fence and watch my progress, offering advice and
comment but never any assistance. My allotment neighbour -

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1. For discussion of the meaning of ' work ' for adolescents,
   see pp.221 - 233.

a man of 70 who could hardly lift his spade - watched me

plant a whole row of potatoes before commenting that I'd

" put them too close together ". He kept an eye on me to

see that I dug them all up and replanted them properly.

Over time, however, I proved my ability and the men began to

incorporate us in their networks of exchange of vegetable

produce and garden equipment . Indeed, eventually, I

accrued some prestige as a " good worker " , often toiling

in the allotment whilst my husband and the men watched on

admiringly. We did, however, grow strange vegetables and

our courgettes were regarded with a great deal of amusement,

appearing as they did to be puny marrows.

Many remarked that I was " more like a Geordie lass " than

the middle-class female I at first appeared. I was tough

rather than tender. Others regarded me as more ' butch '

than feminine, often remarking on the ' jeans ' and thick

sweaters which I tended to wear, rather than the close-

fitting tops and trousers worn by other women in the community.

On seeing me in a boiler suit whilst I was decorating one

day one man roared with laughter, unable to believe his

eyes. All this, combined with my extremely short hair,

masked my feminine appearance: on three separate occasions

I was mistaken for a ' young lad ' by both men and women and

little comment was made when the mistake was pointed out by

others, so visibly did I appear to contradict, in my

appearance and actions, the local perceptions of female gender.[1]

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1. For further discussion of perception of gender, see
   pp. 426 - 441.

For the children such misperceptions merely served to enhance my status as an anomalous being which reflected back onto my husband as well. We were unlike most other adults they knew; we could, therefore, be permitted some access to their world. Indeed, they often criticised my clothing but not in terms of my adult status; rather , they asked why I did not dress like them and two boys gave me advice as to where to purchase my own pair of Dr.Marten's boots.[1]

In many other ways our life-style facilitated the creation of my ' field ' by the children. My willingness to sit and talk to them, to listen to their tales, to be the butt of their practical jokes and to suffer insults in silence weighed greatly in my favour. Other adults did not bear such intrusion on their free time. Often I was seen as a soft touch - someone to make use of and exploit for lifts in the car or for free cigarettes - and yet, at the same time, I was someone who obviously appreciated their company, who would welcome them in.[2]

This double perception was always present and took great care in handling. I had no wish to be seen merely as a sponge

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1. The importance of 'boots' and footwear in general for boys is discussed on p.438.
2. The children also visited regularly two other 'anomalous' adults. One was an elderly spinster who, aged 60, was doing a youth-worker's course and, having lived for a while in the South - a foreign land - was seen as rather 'peculiar ', although she had been born in the community. The other was a young man, aged 21, who had a wife and two year old child who befriended many of the youngsters, allowing them to use his house as their own. He was local, but in allowing the children considerable freedom, was considered suitable by the children. Adults in the neighbourhood regarded his laxity, however, with great suspicion, and he became the focus of considerable gossip.

by the children, someone who could be maximally exploited but minimally included; on the other hand, I did not wish to appear too restrictive, a controlling adult, which similarly would have denied me access to their world. Throughout the period of fieldwork I, like them, occasionally erected barriers between us; sometimes giving them cigarettes and coffee; other times not letting them into the house. Gradually, the children knew that ' rules ' existed even amongst the apparent disorder. Two cardinal rules they knew well: no drink was allowed in the house for their consumption and truanting from school could not take place in my home. If truants arrived I would always send them away. Aside from the legal protection that this gave me - for, as I knew well, a glass of cider drunk in my company could easily be magnified in their tales to a bottle of whisky - such rules and barriers worked effectively towards building my self-respect in their eyes. Children themselves vi ciously employ whole sets of sanctions on each other's behaviour and, as I did likewise, they treated me much as they would one another.[1]

But this inclusion into their social world was partial and precarious. I was always subject to reclassification as an adult. Often, for example, I would be called on to act as an arbiter in their disputes, to play the adult role and settle disagreements between friends. This I always avoided,

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1. See, for example pp. 272-292, pp.403-419,pp.426-441.

except in serious confrontations, not wishing to act as
ultimate controller. At other times my objective status
as an adult cut short communication; a lurid tale of
sexual encounters or an obscence joke would be started upon
and then abruptly terminated for my adult status made them
cautious in displaying knowledge of such matters. The public
display of knowledge must always be in an appropriate context
and until I demonstrated my willingness to collude in its
creation - through supplying an appropriate swear word or
suitable obscentity of my own - and until they were sure no
sanctions would be incurred I was distanced from their culture.
The joke would be left untold, the tale unfinished.

Ultimately, like any anthropologist poised between two
cultures, my entry into their social world was both inter-
mittent and inevitably incomplete. My adult status remained
however much they usually ignored it; I could never become
a child. Like the problem of gender in research total access
was, in the end, impossible and certain social contexts were
never open to me. I could not, for example, sit with the
children in the bus-shelter on a winter's night or play ' Tiggy'
in and out of the public toilets; I could not join them on
the pin-ball machines in the local cafe; I could not enter
the private world, of the girls' bedroom culture of make-up
and pop-stars; I could not join in the football games of the
boys. My physical appearance and objective status made such
actions impossible despite my otherwise anomalous position.
Rather a bridge was built between us which allowed me to

partially explore these areas through translation into other contexts: the girls would discuss boyfriends and marriage, pop-stars and make-up with me whilst sitting round the fire in my home; the boys would ask me to come and watch the football game, and pop in on their milk and newspaper rounds to give me the local gossip, information usually exchanged in the cafe. Such indirect participation was necessary and critical to the success of the project; to barge unwelcomed into the children's private spaces would have quickly discouraged friendship between us.

Conclusion

It was, therefore, crucial that the children chose my home as part of their own cultural context. Without their onslaught on my personal territory the ' field ' would have been largely inaccessible to me and my aim to understand their perspective on the world would not have been fulfilled. Without experiencing this process of creating a context my understanding of the structure of their lives would also have been severely diminished. My home was theirs too and, as I lived there, I was included in conversations and games. Often, however, I was ignored so intent were they upon their own aims; I remained on the side-lines watching and listening and, occasionally, being made to feel an intruder upon their private lives so complete was their appropriation of my home at times.

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It was, however, an appropriation which I welcomed for
it guaranteed the success of the project, guiding and
directing me through the complexities of a culture in the
making. Hardman (1973) argues that an anthropology of
children should see children as their own informants and
not just as the receivers of adult wisdom. Adopting such
an approach to the study of children and socialization is
indeed highly rewarding; not only does it yield a more
insightful perspective on such theoretical questions but
in order to understand what it means to be a child involves,
for the researcher, an instructive personal ' resocialization '.
It was the children who taught me how to be a ' child ' again;
I had to receive their wisdom and instruction, suffer their
discipline and control before I was able to comprehend their
viewpoint and interpretation of the world. Only then could
I see the world through the eyes of a child.

When I first encountered the children they were aged between
11 and 16 years; some children had just begun to participate
in the collective adolescent culture whilst others verged on
leaving it and were moving into more adult spheres of activity.
This span of different experiences provided the initial frame
for my research, the bounded context. More interesting,
however, was the fact that a two year period of fieldwork
enabled me to witness the movement of particular individuals
into and through this cultural space; I could plot the path
of growing maturity and social experience as individual
children approached an adult world and began to withdraw

from their previous collective culture. Two kinds of
temporal frameworks, then, presented themselves for analysis:
the conceptual time between childhood and adulthood and the
real experiential time of those participating in it.

But paralleling these structures was another: my own
knowledge and perception of their lives increased as they
themselves matured. As the younger children began to
participate more fully in the adolescent culture I, too,
learnt to appreciate its complex structure and subtle
relationships; as the older children started to withdraw
from it I was able , like them, to learn what prospects adult
life holds, and as we got to know one another better I was
introduced to some of the more private concerns of the growing
child.

One of the major criticisms of the traditional model of
socialization is, as argued earlier, its failure to account
for change over time, its emphasis upon the reproduction
of social order rather than its recreation. Adopting the
approach envisaged by Hardman (op.cit.) overcomes this
limitation for time becomes central to the analysis. Indeed,
the pace and rhythm of my own research was ultimately dictated
by the temporal rhythm of the children's own experiences and
illustrates the movement of children towards adulthood,
their increase in knowledge and awareness as they mature.

At first the data I collected mostly concerned language for, like the eleven year old child, I had to learn to speak in a new tongue before I gained access to other areas of this alternative world. Learning the language of children taught me about their verbal lore, their nicknaming practices, their games and social activities. But it was time itself which allowed me knowledge of their more secret and esoteric practices: the implicit rules of social conduct, the prescribed attributes of gender roles, the corpus of sexual knowledge, and their understanding of their own position within the human order. Like the young child my understanding of these deeper issues was progressive; it paralleled the children's own growing awareness over time. My transition into their cultural sphere mirrored their own rite of passage through adolescence to adulthood, an experience which is documented in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3 :   ' <u>DOING NOTHING</u> '   :   <u>THE CULTURE OF CHILDREN</u>

' A child may never have dreamed of
sticking peas up its nose, but forbid
it to do so and it will promptly
experiment to discover why it shouldn't.'
(Huxley, 1980:16)

<u>Introduction</u>

From the start working with the children was an unnerving

experience. Having been trained to participate and observe,

to ask questions, to record answers fieldwork with children ⅄
)

presented a problem. My questions were frequently ignored;

their answers were vague and non-committal and any probing

on my part was often greeted with an air of hostility or

deep suspicion. In response to the most cautious enquiry

about what they had been doing their answers were invariably

monosyllabic - " nowt ". Being a keen researcher this was

gravely noted down following Crick's valuable advice that

' just as an occurrence may be a non-event so a non-

occurrence may well be an event ' (1976:95). Corrigan

(1979) encountered a similarly perplexing phenomenon

amongst adolescent boys in Sunderland in the north-east

of England. Alternatively described by his informants

as 'hanging around ', ' knocking about 'and ' having

wierd ideas ' he was also led to the paradoxical

conclusion that their main activity consisted in doing

nothing. My own informants were less forthcoming: they

merely did nothing.

It soon became obvious that in order to make sense of an activity described as not occurring I had likewise to do nothing, to ask nothing, but just to be where ' nothing ' happened. It was the observation of and participation in ' doing nothing ' which contexualised most of my fieldwork and which, ultimately, allowed me to make sense of it. ' Doing nothing' is not a literal description of the children's social life for they were constantly engaged in a wide variety of activities; they were always doing something.[1] Rather, ' doing nothing' is a figurative expression which resonates throughout their culture, shaping its form and content. In their seemingly unhelpful replies the children were teaching me to see with the eyes of a child, to come to understand ' doing nothing ' as a root metaphor for their own adolescent culture.

Several questions immediately present themselves for analysis:

Why did the children themselves dismiss these activities with such an apparently negative label? Indeed, did they themselves see ' doing nothing ' in this qualitative light or had they an alternative interpretation for this seemingly nihilistic activity? To answer these questions involved unravelling the semantic structure of the concept

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1. Each of the following chapters details particular aspects of the culture of ' doing nothing '. Here I am concerned to demonstrate the creation of the conceptual space within which these discrete activities are articulated.

of ' doing nothing ' translating it from its commonsense
meaning of an inconsequential and purposeless activity
into the language of children.

' Doing nothing ' in fact encompasses a whole range of
activities: it refers to the so-called potentially
delinquent activities of roaming the streets in gangs
at night, of hanging around the bus shelters or skulking
in shop-doorways; it also includes more acceptable past-
times such as bike-riding, football and disco dancing
and covers work, paid and unpaid employment. Why then
do they call it ' doing nothing '? The short answer is
that they perceive that there is nothing for them to do.
It is through exploring the symbolic structuring of action
that the logic of this is revealed as both fitting and
comprehensible.

Briefly, within the semantic frame of the children's own
culture ' doing nothing ', as I detail below, refers
primarily to a context for action. It symbolises a
way of being and becoming and is a qualitative statement
by the children themselves of the form and content of their
own socialization. It images their position within the
social order and is expressive of their perception of that
order. In this sense, ' doing nothing ' can be said to
be a metaphor for the children's culture.

What then is this culture? In their extensive and detailed
accounts of children's language and games the Opies
suggest that,

' the folklorist and anthropologist can,
without travelling a mile from his door,
examine a thriving unselfconscious culture
.... which is as unnoticed by the sophist-
icated world and quite as little affected
by it, as is the culture of some dwindling
aboriginal tribe '. (1977:22)

They describe how this culture - the lore and language

of children , their games of street and playground -

' circulates simply from child to child ' without the

aid of adult intermediaries (ibid:21). Undoubtedly

they are correct. However, the Opies are wrong to

therefore assume that this mode of transmission

necessarily means that children live in some sublime

isolation. As I shall outline below, the culture of children

whilst being peculiar to them is,nevertheless , still an

integral part of that sophisticated world of adults; it is

both process and product of systems of social classification

which the child is presented with through sets of socializing

practices.

The Opies' mistake is that they treat the culture of children

as an objective entity, something ' out there ' which contains

their activities, a sort of cultural bag into which generations

of children have poured their games, linguistic expressions

and ritual lore. Such an approach to the concept of culture

runs the risk, as Wagner argues, of creating a ' wax museum

of curiosities ', of denying the creativity of social life

through regarding its forms as ' real ' rather than symbolic

acts (1975:27). The objectification of culture, as

exemplified in the work of the Opies (op.cit), can ' only

be useful as a sort of " prop " to aid the anthropologist

in his own invention and understanding ' of other people's

lives; it is not a container for those lives (ibid:8).

The Opies (1969), (1977) provide mere catalogues rather

than interpretations of the culture of children.

A more useful and perceptive approach is suggested by

Geertz. I quote once more his definition of culture:

> ' culture is not a power, something to
> which social events, behaviours,
> institutions, or processes can be
> causally attributed; it is a context,
> something within which they can be
> intelligibly - that is, thickly -
> described. ' (1975:14)

In this sense culture is the processual form of social

life itself, what Crick has termed as the ' creation

and negotiation of meaning ' (1976:88). And meaning, as

Wagner has shown, is a ' function of the ways in which we

create and otherwise experience contexts (1975:37).[1]

The culture of children, therefore, is the context of their

everyday life experiences. Through a series of cameos I

present a picture, from the children's point of view, of

the socialization process as it is daily experienced through

an examination of some of the structuring effects of the

legal system, the school and the home on their lives and

the ways in which children understand this ordering

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1. For further discussion of these theoretical issues
    see pp. 14-22.

process. Analysis suggests that the culture of children

emerges as a social and conceptual space defined and

delineated by sets of prescriptive and proscriptive

boundaries emanating from the adult world and made

manifest through socializing acts. It is within and

between these boundaries that ' nothing ' happens; it

is in this context that the children create their own

culture. The chapter concludes with an extended unpacking

of the semantics of ' doing nothing '.

Adolescent nobodies : the spatial and temporal limits for ' doing nothing '

That the children describe their social activities as

' doing nothing ' is, I suggest, a function of socializing

practices which condemn them to the category of nobodies.

Socialization is, in essence, the teaching and learning

of social order and part of that order is the classification

of ' self ' in relation to others. The process of physical

ageing is conceptually controlled through the use of terms

such as children, adolescents and adults, and it is the

experience of socialization which gives these categories

concrete form in everyday life. In this respect socialization

is concerned with the learning of category membership.

However in a Western industrial society such as Britain,

which lacks any institutionalized <u>rite de passage</u> to

ritually mark and conceptually order movement between

categories over time, the boundaries and limits to these

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conceptual classifications remain relatively fluid and illdefined. Knowledge of one's own position in the social order is implicitly gained, rather than explicitly stated. In particular, the transitory phase between childhood and adulthood is highly ambiguous: adolescence in contemporary Western society is an in-between state perceptually uncontrolled and potentially disordered. Adolescents resemble other marginal beings who have, as Mary Douglas suggests, been ' left out in the patterning of society ' (1969:95). They exist by default rather than design.[1]

The consequences of such conceptualisation for the adolescent are important; they become placeless people, belonging nowhere and inhabiting the fringes of mainstream order. They are a category of nobodies and perceive themselves to be separated and contained on the peripheries of society. It is in this no-man's land that ' nothing ' happens and it is the very lines of discrimination established and maintained through acts of socialization

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1. This argument is elaborated on pp.395-403, where it is suggested that ' youth ' and ' adolescence ' are relatively recent collective representations of phases in the life cycle. This reinforces the suggestion that adolescents are indeed marginal to the social order; as yet, they have no institutiona- lized position within it. This anomalous and transitory phase is I suggest, comparable with that identified as a ' liminal ' social position by Turner (1969). Many of the perceived qualities of ' adolescence ' are similar to those discussed by Turner as characteristic of the ritual liminar undergoing transition. This again suggests that ' adolescence ' might be fruitfully explored as a metaphorical rite de passage.

which bound and contexualise this adolescent culture.

' Doing nothing ' is, in effect, process and product of
' being nothing '. It is a logical outcome of the real
and conceptual boundaries which, through separating
adolescents off from both child and adult worlds, leave
them with conceptually ' nothing ' to do and ' nobody'
to be. [1]

The effects of such ordering processes are daily experienced
by the children through the spatial and temporal co-ordinates
of the process of social classification itself. For the
children with whom I was working the temporal boundary was
seen as the most powerful and potent for it is time which
primarily defines their access to social space.

Time is distinguishable into two kinds : calendrical time,
the yearly cycle, and clocktime, the daily temporal flow
of events. Both kinds of time are seen by children
to delimit and restrict their activities; both kinds of
time define who and what they are, that is nobodies.
But is is calendrical time which they perceive to be the
more immutable, not least because it is used for the
calculation of age and it is physical age, measured in
years passed, which is most frequently used as a criterion

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1. Adolescents, therefore, work at being ' no one' and
   they achieve personhood through the style of their own
   culture; for example, through their use of the body
   as a medium of expression the children confer person-
   hood on one another, see Chapter 6.

of category status. And, it is category status which
permits or prohibits access to social spaces.

This interrelationship between time and space is, for
example, institutionalized within the British legal system.
Definitions of category status are based on age in relation
to space; the young are excluded from many social arenas
precisely because they are too young. They are legally
classed as a non-adult population and not permitted access
to ' adult ' activities. And yet, only a cursory glance
at the relevant statutes reveal but minimum consensus:
the boundaries between ' child ', ' adolescent ' and
' adult ' are ambiguous and ill-defined.

For example, at five children can legally drink alcohol
in private but they cannot buy drinks in public places
until eighteen years old. At sixteen, on the other hand,
they can be bought beer, cider, wine or sherry to be drunk
in public as an accompaniment to a meal. At seven a
child may withdraw money from his or her Post Office
savings account but cannot earn money until thirteen and
then he or she can only work for two hours a day and
one on a Sunday. From birth a child may have a Premium
Bond in his or her name but cannot buy one until sixteen.
At fourteen a child may play dominoes or cribbage in a
public house but cannot go into a betting shop until
seventeen; even then a bet cannot be placed.

Moreover, classifications vary according to gender. A girl is legally permitted to consent to sexual intercourse at sixteen but a boy can be charged with rape at fourteen years old. A girl can join the armed forces with parental consent at seventeen; boys can do so at sixteen. Only at twenty-one can males legally consent to homosexual activity in private; girls have no such restrictions placed upon them.[1]

What emerges from this legal morass is the fact that ' the law is certainly not consistent in accepting a fixed age for minority in all circumstances'and, in attempting to order the process of ageing, marginal and disordered spheres are created (T.E. James,1962:1). The age at which childhood ends and adolescence begins, when adolescence turns into adulthood, is both fluid and context specific.

The emphasis placed upon the exact measurement of the passage of calendrical time as a criterion of category status in post-industrial societies is one of the consequences of literacy and stands in stark contrast to the negative value placed upon such precise accounting both cross-culturally and historically.[2] In all societies the process of ageing is conceptually ordered, whether through an explicit rite de passage, the creation of age-set systems or through more tacit symbolic marking of changes in social status, but the quantification and calculation of

1. These examples are taken from Rae, Hewitt and Hugill eds. (1979).
2. See historical account, pp. 38-73.

age as a numerical definition of category status is specific

to Western industrial societies.

As Aries remarks,

> ' in the African bush age is still
> quite an obscure notion, something which
> is not so important that one cannot
> forget it. But in our technical
> civilisation, how could anyone forget
> the exact date of his birth, when he has
> to remember it for almost every appli-
> cation he makes, every document he signs,
> every form he fills in. ' (1979:13)

Indeed, only in such societies does this exactitude serve

any purpose: through the possession of implicit, rather

than ritually explicit, conceptions of life-cycle

transitions the precise measurement of age represents one

attempt to define, limit and control the categories we

use. It is , however, relatively ineffective. It

represents , what Baxter and Almagor describe as,'unsucessful

attempts to tame time by chopping it up into manageable

slices ', creating confusion rather than clarity in

definitions of category status (1978:163).

The concept of maturity leads to further definitional

problems. In tribal societies, as Van Gennep (1960) has

shown, physiological and social puberty only rarely co-

incide in puberty rituals; such rites de passage are,

first and foremost, collective representations of the

social status of individuals undergoing transition rather

than celebrations of any physical changes. But, in a

society where qualitative judgements are made about the

necessary conjunction of age with physical and social

maturity for definitions of category status, any

discrepancy becomes problematic:

> ' In societies in which 'age' is
> determined by social and/or bio-
> logical maturation late or early
> developers are not anomalous and do
> not create difficulties. But where
> 'age' is determined by the calendar
> .... age and maturity are bound
> sometimes not to coincide '.
> (Baxter & Almagor 1978:163).

In a Western industrial society people must act their age.

That the children recognize the complex role age plays in

the process of category definition, and therefore in

definitions of the self by others, finds expression in many

of their activities; not least, they try to challenge the

immutability of age itself by circumventing the restrictions

imposed upon them by the calendar. They experience calendrical

time as a control system which defines who and what they are

and adopt a variety of strategies to undermine this attempt

to separate them off as a group apart.

Their peripheral social position, institutionalized through

their lack of 'age', makes age an obsession. When asked

their age, for example, the children would usually reply with

an exactitude beyond the requirements of the question. They

often gave their age in years and months or fractions of

years, as fifteen and three quarters or twelve years and

seven months for implicit within the question they perceived

another: eligibility ? The concept of being ' old enough'

/..

to perform certain activities , to have access to

particular social spaces, is an integral part; the question

is never phrased as ' how young are you ' ?

The positive value placed on maturity, upon being ' grown

up ' and hence socialized, negates the children's perception

of their own age; life, for many of them, is the endurance

of years until they are ' old enough '. Hence, they

endeavour to maximise their age through arguing that they

are ' nearly fifteen ' or ' sixteen next October'.

For the children, the power of calendrical time to restrict

their access to social space is a daily experience. They

feel themselves to be in a marginal social position, legally

prohibited from participation in certain social spheres

and personally excluded by adults from many other activities.

They understand that it is the measurement and quantification

of calendrical time as a basis for category definition which

is leaving them with nothing to do:

> ' Q. What is there for you to do here...?
>
>   A. The youth club and the disco - that's all
> there is for us. If we go down to Spenny
> we get beaten up. From 15 year old up to
> 18 it's a total bore. When you are 18 you
> can go into the pubs every night. From
> 15 to 17 there's nowt to do. Under 15 you
> can get into all the discos. There are
> discos up Micky... but they are for under
> 15s. We cannot get in. They say its too
> much trouble to do one for over 15s! ' 1

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1. Extract taken from an interview with a group of lads
aged fifteen, reported in the local parish magazine,
Crossways, January 1981.

For this reason, therefore, the children attempt to elude the classificatory restrictions which age places upon them. Age becomes something to circumvent and disguise; to short-circuit calendrical time through verbal mystification of numerical age is one strategy employed to gain an earlier entry to these forbidden zones.

For example, when asked their age the children may avoid using numbers. Without figures definitive classifications cannot be placed upon them. They reply, instead, with standard formulae from their own verbal lore: " I'm as young as my tongue but older than my teeth". As one girl explained, " you are born with your tongue but not with your teeth "; the age of the tongue is thus the age of the self. To say, as another did, " I'm as young as my tongue but older than my hair " was seen as inaccurate, for some babies are born with hair. In this manner children detail their age correctly, but elude the restrictions which a numerical answer might place upon them.

The one-to-one relationship between numerical age and category status is a perception held by the younger children especially. They see adulthood as somehow magically appearing overnight when a particular age is reached. A twelve year old boy ponders this subject:

> "M: (After weighing himself on the bathroom scales) I'm getting fatter.
> A: (regarding this small thin boy) You're getting bigger.... It's a good job you're putting on weight.

"M: I'll soon be an adult.

A: When?

M: I divvn't kna..(pause) maybe when
   I'm fifteen..no, when I'm fourteen
   ... (confidently) yes, when I'm
   fourteen... (hesitantly)... I expect.
   When are you an adult? "

Changes in category status, then, are conceived in

relation to time and space: a movement of the temporal

boundary extends access to social space and increasing

age symbolises potential transition into another social

category. But as the older children realise, reaching

the age of adulthood might not, in itself, be a sufficient

basis for a change in social category status. They are

aware that the interrelationship between physical and

social maturity is more subtle. A fifteen year old girl

reflects on this subject:

> " You stop being a child at 13 because
> then you are a teenager and at 18 you
> become an adult because then you are
> allowed to drink alcohol. I pointed
> out that she, at 15, already drank
> alcohol and she replied that until 18
> you couldn't do it legally in a pub.
> When asked why you were no longer a
> ' teenager ' at eighteen and nineteen
> she could offer no explanation, and
> made no comment when I asked if marriage,
> at the age of 16, made one an adult. The
> conversation then turned to deciding who
> were adults: Valerie (20) is an adult
> but doesn't act like one; Hooky (17) is
> an adult, but Brett (18) and Latch (18)
> are lads and not adults; they don't act
> like adults."

Being an adult is not simply a matter of numerical or

legalistic definitions.

As the above examples illustrate, acquiring adult status is seen by many of the children to be particularly bound up with the penetration of restricted areas of action. That movement into such forbidden places as clubs or public houses is perceived to be both inevitable and desirable is a function of the ideological power which the centre exerts over its margins: in the north-east of England the traditional focus for adult social life is centred here and, for males in particular, the ability to consume alcohol is a sign of maturity.[1] Moreover, asking children what they want to be or want to do when they are grown up implies that, until adulthood is reached, they are nothing and can do nothing. From the centrality of their own culture the children perceive these restricted areas, those tabooed and prohibited to them, as locii of potential power and as offering the kinds of freedom and experiences presently denied to them.

However, perceptions of this process do vary according to age. For example, one seventeen -year old boy announced that he would no longer be attending the youth-club the following year as, by that time, he would be eighteen; at this age he saw himself frequenting pubs, adult spaces, rather than youth clubs, children's places. Although he

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1. See pp.514-549, for a discussion of the importance of the consumption of cigarettes and alcohol as rituals of the life-cycle transition to adulthood.

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had been drinking in ' safe ' pubs for a number of years already, his eligibility at eighteen to perform previously restricted activities in previously restricted spaces was seen as crucially important.[1] Reaching the legal age becomes a form of life-cycle transition, legitimation means that control of one's actions is at last achieved.

> " Pat tells me that it is her birthday
> soon. She will be 16 and ' everything
> will be legal'. She can smoke and has
> told her mother that she is not going to
> babysit for her brother anymore and,
> instead, she is going to stay at the
> youth-club until it finishes at 9.00pm.
> Up to now she has had to leave at 8.30pm
> to go home and look after her brother
> whilst her parents go out to the club" [2]

For the younger children, on the other hand, it is the opportunity to perform these ' taboo ' activities which is seen as crucial in itself; through the performance of actions such as drinking and smoking, they extend their penetration of the adult world and challenge the controls which lack of age exerts over them. But, as the legal age approaches legitimation, rather than mere performance, becomes a more important issue for, most probably, the

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1. ' Safe ' pubs are those which permit under-age drinking and were on several occasions during my period of field work raided by the police. All such pubs are well known by the children.

2. By implication she suggested that sexual intercourse was also now legal for her. Her verbal silence is, I suggest part of the symbolic ignorance of the female, discussed on pp. 441-458.

activity has already become part of their everyday
experience.

However, the children are also aware that legal definitions
of eligibility, based on age, are subject to reinterpretation
and transformation within different social contexts. On
reaching her sixteenth birthday, a few days after her
initial declaration of intent, Pat realised that the freedom
defined for her in law, to buy cigarettes and by implication
to smoke them, could not be exercised within her family:

> " Delly remarks that Pat can smoke
> in front of her dad now she is 16.
> She agrees that this is true but
> says that she doesn't 'want to'. That
> is, she doesn't dare to."

However, when a police-man told her off for smoking in the
street she was most indignant for, at sixteen, she was
legally entitled to do so.

Through exploiting these lacunae between alternative systems
of classification used by different sections of the adult
world, the children do therefore often manage to gain access
to restricted areas of activity. In the youth club, for
example, it was forbidden to smoke under the age of sixteen.
The children realised that the youth club had no real
executive power, except that of direct confrontation, and
some managed to usurp this through producing badly forged
notes from their parents which stated that consent was
to be given. Through assessing the relative amounts of
effective power wielded by each party the children were able

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to exploit the gap between them. More commonly, the children would insist that they were " nearly sixteen" or that " at home me mam lets me smoke", endeavouring through such persuasive techniques to get the sanction lifted.

In one respect the children do perceive some benefit in being ' under age '. They can claim half-fare on buses and pay half-price entry into ice-rinks and other places of entertainment, thereby profiting from their marginality. However, there are draw-backs: it is not possible to get into an ' x ' film at half price nor is it possible to drink in the ice-rink bar having paid a child's entrance fee. To enter these forbidden zones means paying the necessary price.

The significance of calendrical time as a control system is symbolised in the children's own birthday rituals. The birthday cake provided by the adult world is decorated with candles, one for each year lived through; it fixes age through reference to the past. In contrast, the ' bumps ' given by the children to one another looks forward to the future: the birthday child is held by the arms and legs and tossed up into the air, each ' bump ' records their number of years plus one for luck in the year to come. The adult symbol, the birthday cake, is a static confirmation of their present status; it fixes the child within a particular category. The children's ritual is one which,

instead, prefigures their future. It looks forward to increasing age and towards the diminution of restrictions upon their activities.[1]

The ordering of calendrical time through the numerical definition of age, and hence category status, is therefore experienced by the children as a control system. It is one which contextualizes their culture and separates them off as a group apart but, as the above examples have shown, the children achieve some freedom from its power through adopting certain evasive strategies. Whether endeavouring to maximise or minimise their age they use a particular manipulatory style: quantified measurement is transformed into a qualitative statement about the passage of time.

But time is not only experienced as a control system in its yearly-cycle : clock-time extends this power through imposing further and more incisive prohibitions upon the children's sphere of action. The children's days are divided up into units of time based upon adult conceptions of order and, as I demonstrate, it is only in the times

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1. Other birthday rituals are equally volatile and fluid. For example, children spray each other with water on their birthdays. Significantly, they also pelt the initiate with eggs and flour, the ingredients of the birthday cake: the adult symbol is literally taken apart and destroyed by the children and used for their own purposes, through ritual inversion: the cooked food is transformed into the raw. For further discussion of food as a medium of symbolic expression in the culture of children, see pp.477-514.

<u>left over</u> from this classificatory process that children

gain access to the control of time itself. Once again it

is through playing with adult conceptions of time that this

is achieved.

The imposition of clock-time as an ordering system which

restricts the children's activities is largely facilitated

through schooling.[1] Schooling physically removes the

children from adult spheres of activity for a large part

of the day; it separates them off from the adult work-place

and the home, conceptually therefore limiting their

activities to non-adult occupations. For specific times of

day, for specific months of the year and for specific years

of life children are controlled and defined as a separate

and marginal group through the act of schooling.[2]

On a daily basis this external control of time is constantly

experienced by the children as something to be subverted.

In school the children are issued with time tables

which visually display how their time is to be regulated

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1. It is interesting to note the comparable use of the
    term ' schooling' for the training of horses. A well
    - schooled horse is one whose movements are controlled
    and ordered; it is a horse which responds to the orders
    of its rider, rather than its own wishes.

2. This separation is particularly irksome to older
    children who see schooling as denying them the
    opportunity to earn money. See pp.221-233 for a discussion
    of the employment of children whilst still at school
    where it is suggested that in fact it is precisely
    because of their <u>lack</u> of control of time that the
    children can in <u>fact</u> become wage-workers whilst still
    at school.

in relation to space and further prescribes the kinds of
activities to be performed in those spaces. That control
of time is fundamental to the control of space in the
creation and maintenance of social order is seen in
Douglas Holly's vivid portrait of children's movement
around the school during the day as they go from lesson
to lesson:

> ' In a large glass-walled,multi-storey
> comprehensive school this periodic
> migration can take on awe inspiring
> dimensions with myriads of uniformly
> attired ants moving purposefully and
> apparently instinctually at the buzzing
> of a bell. The problems of traffic-
> flow occasioned by this system have kept
> many a senior master busy for considerable
> spaces of time. At lunch-times and breaks
> the ordered purposefulness of the ant's
> progress tends to be replaced by frenetic
> activity with consequent calls on the staff
> and prefecture for policing duties. A student
> of animal behaviour would no doubt be
> intrigued by this variation in pace and
> orderliness between school time and the
> pupil's time. ' (1974:14-15)

Interspersed between these controlled and ordered learning
periods are play-times, times during which the children
gain some release from close adult supervision. But even
these times are subtly controlled : the place where the
time is to be spent is delineated by walls and fences, and
the activities to be performed within these physical
boundaries circumscribed by its label. The play-ground is
for playing in.

The difference in control over these two kinds of time
during the school-day is symbolically reinforced through

this spatial variation.   The time under adult control

takes place within the confines of the class-room, behind

walls which control and contain the inmates.   In contrast,

the time which is maximally controlled by the children

is outside these physical barriers, in the marginal areas.

The children are herded into their peripheral space at

break-time for disorder, from the perspective of the structured

school world, must be kept in its place.   Children must not

interfere with adult order; they are forced to use the

external environment in the times over which they have some

degree of control, a structural relationship which finds

a parallel in the domestic context.[1]   And it is in this

external world that ' nothing ' is done in the times

between.   For example, smoking in school is forbidden and

therefore takes place in the spaces perceived by the

children to be minimally controlled by the staff: toilets,

bicycle sheds and the playing fields represent such marginal

spaces.   In'Lung Tree' and at 'Cancer Corner' the power of

teachers to enforce school rules is thought to be diminished,

for these places are peripheral to the school-building and

conceptually, therefore, to the central symbol of power.

'Doing nothing' is done in non-places by non-persons.

That control of time and space is fundamental to the

authority of the school in subordinating children to its

structure of power is demonstrated by one occasion when

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1.   For further discussion of this see pp.206-212.

the system collapsed.   During a teacher's pay dispute

supervision of lunch-time - the children's time - was

not carried out by the staff. The children, therefore,

were inside the school building at a time which was

maximally under their control. The chaos which followed

this breakdown in the normal school order caused many

thousands of pounds worth of damage as the culture of

children physically penetrated the structured fabric of the

school.[1]

Corrigan (1979) underlines this point in his analysis of

schooling. He argues that the major confrontations which take

place between staff and pupils are rarely over specific

issues - although this may be their form of expression- but,

instead, over the right to self-assertion in the face of

an externally derived and externally controlled conception

of order : it is the right to be articulate which children

assert through confrontation with teachers:

> ' Violence on the part of the teacher is
> carried out mainly for behaviour in the
> class-room which is a continuation of normal
> behaviour outside of that class-room. It is
> THIS which threatens the teacher. ' (Corrigan,
> 1979:63).

Disorder threatens to intrude upon order.

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1.   See pp.242-262 for an alternative approach to understanding
     such acts of vandalism.

The fun derived from ragging teachers is one such symbolic
challenge, for it tests the boundaries and limits of
adult control. Through, for example, drawing funny pictures
on the hidden side of a revolving blackboard which appears
in the course of a lesson as the board is slowly turned, there
is an interruption of adult time by the children. A funny
face materialises in the midst of a mathematical formula
and the lesson is momentarily transformed and thwarted in its
relentless progress by the intrusion of the children's social
world. To write on the board, usually the prerogative of the
teacher is, in itself, a symbolic challenge to their authority.

That the school, rather than education, is cited by
traditional theorists as an agent of socialization is not
surprising.[1] Socialization is concerned with the imposition
and learning of social order and, as Holly describes, the
temporal and spatial co-ordinates of order are visually
displayed in the physical structure of the school-room. It
is a condensed symbol of the differential access of pupil and
teacher to that control system:

> ' Serried rows of desks face the teacher's
> table which, in really venerable institutions
> is on a higher plane with a supporting dais.
> Behind the teacher is the black-board on which
> information directly confronts the pupils.
> Spatially the arrangement neatly symbolises
> the conventional relationship of pupils
> and teacher to education; education in this
> perspective is a unilinear process in which
> knowledge is communicated to pupils via the
> mediation of the teacher. (1974:16)

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1. See for example Elkin 1960.

What children learn, besides the formal content of lessons,
is the underlying order of the school itself and, by
extension , their place within it. This ' hidden curriculum'
teaches where the external lines of control are drawn and
who has the power to construct them.[1] Children, therefore,
do not only learn their lessons; they also receive
confirmation of their present marginal status. They learn
what it <u>means</u> to submit and conform through having to submit
and conform to the structured authority of the school;but,
having been made to acquiesce they also learn to revolt, and
begin to exploit the gaps created by this ordering process.

Nowhere is this more visible than in connection with school
attendance. The structured spatial and temporal order of
the school is symbolised in its emphasis upon attendance.
Physical presence is the formal requirement and becomes almost
synonymous with ' education ' and ' learning ' for only can
physical presence be strictly registered ; learning is not
so easily controlled.[2] Attitudes towards truancy and
lateness provide a condensed symbol of this perception.

Lateness is an offence against order and the tardy child
is registered as having failed to fulfill his or her quota

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1. The idea of a ' hidden curriculum ' is developed by
   Illich (1973).
2. Testing the results of schooling is the only method
   available to assess learning and this is similarly
   ordered within spatial and temporal boundaries: exams
   require that an ordered answer be produced within a
   prescribed time period in a particular social
   setting.

/..

of time at school. Teachers, in <u>loco parentis</u>, continue
the imposition of time-limits upon the children's activities
which they meet within the domestic context.[1] Lateness
is a disordered act - out of time and space - for only
certain absences are perceived to be legitimate: illness,
hospital appointments and job interviews. Lateness cannot
be explained through recourse to these excuses, unlike
truancy. One boy, therefore, in explaining why he was
truanting, told me that he had been late for school and
that " you get knacked (punished) worse for being late"
than for missing the whole day.

Children who are late may truant rather than risk the
sanctions imposed upon them for an illegitimate absence
for they have many standard strategies for truanting and
these evasive actions reflect their understanding of the
school order. ' Nicking off ' (truanting) takes two
forms : one is legitimate, the other illegitimate, from
the children's point of view. Legitimate ' nicking off'
places the authority of the home above that of the school.
As they told me, " If your mam knows then it's alright"
i.e. if parental consent has been obtained then truanting
is no longer seen by the children to be an offence.
An act of disorder is conceptually re-ordered through
exploiting an alternative classificatory frame.

1, See pp.206-212.

Illegitimate ' nicking off ' is when " your mam doesn't know"[1]

To truant in this manner the children take refuge in the

culture of ' doing nothing '. The truant usually spends

the day in marginal spaces away from the route of the kiddy-

catcher (the school attendance officer). Stealing time

from the adult world means exploiting those spaces conceptually

beyond the sphere of adult control, that is, those

appropriated by children.[2]

They may, therefore, pass the day in the woods and fields, the

local playground or in friends' houses if both parents are

out at work. They may also visit the houses of 'marginal'

adults, that is adults who, through accepting them in,

tacitly legitimate their truancy.[3]

Returning to school after this kind of truanting is more

difficult for the children require a legitimating excuse.

It must be one which falls within the school's definition of

' absence '. The children say, therefore, that they have

' forgotten ' their letters of explanation in the hope

that no further action will be required; they may forge

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1. Here again children are exploiting the gaps between adult
   order. They recognise that their mothers often permit
   them to do things which their fathers have forbidden.
   Hence, legitimation of smoking and truancy were often
   expressed in terms of the mother's rather than the father's
   authority, although they knew that often, if their fathers
   discovered this secret, punishment would still be inflicted.

2. See pp.233 - 262.

3. It was a constant ethical problem of my research that the
   children perceived me to be such a 'marginal' creature
   and would come to visit during   school hours. To
   avoid this problem I often invented an excuse for
   leaving the house shortly after their arrival, thereby
   quickly evicting them.

197.

a note or use one written by parents on a previous occasion.
A more elaborate plan was thought out well in advance by
one boy. After telling his mother that he felt unwell he
went to the doctor's surgery but omitted to have an
examination. He returned home telling his mother that the
doctor had advised a couple of days at home. Through playing
one adult off against another legitimation of this absence
was achieved. If no other strategy is available ' nicking
off ' after the register is a possibility but perceived
to be more risky.

That many of the children complain of boredom when they
truant highlights the symbolism of the act. Rarely do
children ' nick off ' to do something.[1] Indeed, some
children, ' nick off ' precisely to avoid doing something:
to miss a particular lesson or to evade a teacher. For
others, however, it is merely the fact of missing school
which is significant: they have asserted what they perceive
to be their right to choose. To ' nick off ' means precisely
what it says : to nick , to steal time from the adult world,
time which has previously been beyond their control, to
appropriate this time and to choose what activities can be
done in it and where that time is to be spent. The crime
of ' nicking off ' is not so much a crime of missed
opportunity ; rather , it is an offence against order

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1.   They may truant to earn money, for example during the
     potato harvest.

/..

itself. To the adult world it represents the questioning
of control over time by those deemed to have no power to
question.

This rigid control of time imposed by schooling becomes
immediately apparent to the school leaver who has yet to
find a full-time job. One girl who had recently left school
described her day as being empty: she was still operating
on school-time. Her best friend was at school, controlled
by its time-table, so they could only meet at lunch-time
or at the end of the school-day. Similarly, the boredom
expressed by many of the children during the school
holidays is not the result of a lack of initiative on their
part; rather it is the effect of a sudden expansion in the
amount of time they find at _their_ disposal, a literally
disordering experience. Being unused to organizing their
days themselves many children complain of needing something
to do to " pass the time away" until the evening, the
time they normally have under their control: the time for
' doing nothing.'

In contrast, the prospect of an unforseen respite from
school is greeted with unremitted delight: time which
officially should have been structured by the school is
transformed into free time, time without limits, unstructured
time:

/..

" I meet Gench and Mog who wave and
whistle at me to join them. They tell
me that the school is closed today as
the central heating boiler has broken
down. The possibility of an oil strike
fills them with delight and Mog tells
me that there is a rumour that they might
have three months off school. A wonderful
prospect which, unfortunately for them,
did not come to fruition. "

Similarly, when the village was filled with noxious chemical

fumes one evening the children fervently debated whether

they would have to go to school the following day.

Even accidents, such as a sprained ankle or black eye, have

their compensations : physical pain is relieved by the

prospect of time off school. Such gifts of time are greeted

with much more delight than proper school-holidays for they

interrupt and disorder the normal flow of time.

The power and authority of the school to order spatial

and temporal boundaries permeates many of the children's daily

lives. Uniform is a case in point. Within the confines

of the school only adults may choose what they wear; the

children must be uniformly attired, thereby visually

separating them off and classifying them apart. Although

many of the children do not object to wearing the basic

uniform they often take issue over their right to assert

their individuality within the limits of that uniform.

For example, the wearing of badges other than those symbols

of school office is forbidden and one girl was exceedingly

/..

angry when told to remove her Fonz badge.[1] From her
perspective this badge belonged to the general category
of badges; she insisted on her right to wear it. For the
teacher, however, the very particularity of this badge
represented the intrusion of external activities into the
school. She insisted on its removal. The confiscation of
other personal items from the children-for example, cigarettes
and knives - represents a similar ordering process: the
reinforcement of temporal boundaries between the school
world and the children's own culture.

These structuring principles are recognized and can be
exploited by the children for their own gain. Two boys
arrived at school one day wearing very tight denim jeans,
rolled high up their legs, revealing huge laced boots and
completed the picture with equally tight-fitting denim
jackets, festooned with badges. This spectacle produced
an immediate and predictable response from the staff: the
boys were sent home to change their clothes. In this way
the boys realised their initial intention : to gain time
off school by courtesy of the school.

The staff were ensnared by their own rules. It is not
without significance that during my period of fieldwork it
became fashionable for girls to wear the boy's uniform -

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1. During the period 1977-9 'Happy Days' was a popular
   American programme shown on British television. Its
   central character, the Fonz, was a hero for both girls
   and boys and most of the children wore Fonz badges.

/..

cap, blazer and tie - to the local disco. This highly
disordering act involved a whole series of symbolic
reversals which challenged the power of the school: the
boy's uniform was worn by girls in a context external to
the school.

In that the school is perceived by the children to represent
a complex of structures concerned with order and control
any relaxation of this system is seen by them to be both
suspicious and potentially dangerous, representing as it
does the breakdown of structure and the possible release of
anti-structural powers. The Christmas disco, which was held
yearly at the local comprehensive, was a case in point. It
provides a neat illustration of Turner's (1969) thesis
concerning the potential of anti-structural forms.

The children themselves saw the disco as a highly ambiguous
event, a perception which can be explained through reference
to the structures of control discussed above. It appeared
to them to be anomalous because it represented the legitimate
intrusion of an external activity into the school. Temporal
and spatial boundaries were relaxed and what was to the
children most poignant of all, the very structures of control
normally operative inside the school appeared to give way to
and be replaced by those external to it.

Firstly, the disco was held in the evening. The school was
open at a time when it normally closed and the children were
to spend this time - time usually under their control - in

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a place where normally they had no control over time.

Secondly, at the disco the children were permitted to

wear their own clothes ; uniforms were abolished for this

interval of time and they could wear clothes usually worn

outside the school inside its walls. As Turner (op.cit.)

has noted clothing is often the focus of liminal symbols:

ritual liminars adopt a uniform which submerges their

structural identities. The symbolism of clothing at the

disco is but a transformation of this ritual act: the

children who in structured times are forced to wear a

uniform to suppress their individuality were allowed in

this inbetween time to express it through the clothes

they chose to wear. That the significance of this was noted

by the children is illustrated by the fact that many of them

would have early Christmas presents of new clothes,

requested specifically to wear to the school disco.

Clothing is important in other respects. For Turner (op.cit.)

the adoption of uniform attire during the liminal period

symbolises communitas and this quality is also expressed

through bodily attire at the school disco. Once again it

is a transformation: teachers and pupils wear <u>similar</u>

clothes at the disco and no longer does uniform act as a

visual signifier to separate off children from the staff.

The visible symbols of power and authority are temporarily

obliterated in this liminoid period.[1]

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1. Turner(1978) suggests that the term 'liminal' should be
   reserved for institutionalized periods of anti-structure
   such as those of rites of transition. He prefers the use
   of the term 'liminoid' for those social situations which
   possess liminal-like qualities but are not themselves
   institutionalized rites of passage.

The question as to whether other of the children's external
activities could for this moment in time be performed inside
the school was hotly debated by the children prior to the
disco. In particular, smoking and drinking were important
subjects for discussion. Some children argued that both
activities would be allowed,that " you wouldn't get wrong"
for doing them at the disco, for it was not really " school".
Others reasoned that although it was a disco " they'd
(the teachers) know you smoke and be on the look out
for you smoking in school ". Such comments recall Turner's
(op.cit.) discussion of the liminal period when structural
rules are for this moment out of time and out of place
temporarily suspended and replaced by new sets of rules.

The children finally reached a compromise through recourse
to the temporal and spatial boundaries of this anomalous
event. Drinks were kept <u>outside</u> the building in the
undergrowth and, undercover of the darkness of the disco,
were handed into the hall through the window. Alternatively
the children temporarily left the disco to go outside to
drink and smoke and moved, once again, away from the centre
towards the margins.

As one girl put it, " there's nothing like the Christmas
disco ". The liminoid quality of this event, expressed
through symbols of reversal and inversion, the removal
of structural distinctions, the conflation of spatial and
temporal boundaries between the children's and the school

/..

world, serve, for the children, to highlight the symbolic

processes of separation and opposition which permeate

the structure of the school in everyday life; the children,

like ritual liminars, gained knowledge of structure through

anti-structure.[1]

The power and authority of the school as an agent of order

is, then, seen by the children to be limited within specific

temporal and spatial boundaries. They perceive the teacher's

authority to be similarly bounded. One girl, for example,

complained bitterly of a teacher who had reprimanded her

for smoking in the street one weekend: being out of time

and out of space she considered the teacher to have no right

to control her activities and verbally abused her.

By contrast, teachers who remain within these structured

limits are respected by the children. Halfway through my

period of fieldwork the running of the youth club passed

into the hands of a teacher from the local comprehensive.

The children expressed no fear that this would restrict their

activities, that it would disorder their social life:

" Mr.Spencer" would be known as " Bob " on club nights. He,

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1. A similar, but less dramatic occasion was the school
   play. Both staff and pupils took part and the children
   were noticeably disconcerted by the changed relationship
   they had with the staff during rehearsals and performances.
   The power structure which they experienced daily in the
   class-room underwent a massive transformation when the play
   was being produced.

in turn, respected the conceptual distinction between school and
club and never used his role as teacher to further his
position as Youth Leader. The parents, on the other hand,
were concerned about his reputation as a tough disciplinarian
at school. They were unable to be flexible in their concept-
ualization of time and space; they could not manipulate
the two conceptual orders.

The explicit and implicit order of the school is not, however,
seen by the children as a total restraint upon their actions.
They perceive a particular positive value in these lines
of control. Whilst they recognize their activites to be
constrained and limited by the boundaries of control
operative within the school, they also see these as limits
which restrict the teacher's penetration of their own world.

For example, the children differentiate between ' hard '
and ' soft ' teachers, with the former being given more
respect and favour. ' Hard ' teachers conform to the
comic-strip stereo-type; they are strict law-enforcers,
unbending and tough; they rigidly define and maintain the
boundaries between staff and pupil. In doing so they there-
by allow the children to manoeuvre within these prescribed
limits. ' Hard ' teachers take practical jokes in good
fun; they are a " good laugh " ; they do not threaten to
intrude upon the children's world.

' Soft ' teachers, on the other hand, are those who attempt
to befriend, to be like the children. They try to extend

their traditional role. In doing so they confuse and fuzz
the boundaries of control; the children regard such
teachers with great suspicion. Their friendliness and
laxity is perceived to be a weakness and they soon become
the object of abuse. They cannot live up to the stereo-
type. ' Soft ' teachers threaten to over-step the
boundaries and to infiltrate the children's culture, whilst
still having recourse to the structure of the school in order
to mete out discipline. ' Soft ' teachers are representa-
tives of the power structure but ineffective wielders of
power. As the children often remarked, at least " you
know where you are with ' hard ' teachers "; you know
where the lines are drawn and your position within those
lines. ' Hard ' teachers are real teachers; ' soft ' teachers
are not. 1

The context for ' doing nothing ' is, as the above discussion
reveals, bounded by the temporal order of the school day,
but it is not only the school which controls and contains
the child between temporal limits. Children are also
subject to controls upon their time emanating from the
domestic sphere. The issuing of time-limits by parents is
another significant control upon the children's use

1. In this respect it is significant that when I told the
   children that I did some teaching they looked at me in
   surprise: I did not wear the right clothes; they
   liked me ; I didn't tell them off for smoking; I didn't
   chastise them for swearing. But most important of all
   I wasn't old enough and I did not have the haggard face
   of a traditional school ma'am.

of time and, hence, upon the culture of ' doing nothing '.

The period between the end of the school-day and the time-
limits imposed by parents is the time over which the
children have maximum control and, therefore, these domestic
time-limits are perceived by the children to represent a
considerable and significant curb. on their activities.
Through endeavouring to limit the children's control of
time adults force children to re-enter their : sphere of
control , to relinquish their control of time once again into
adult hands. Domestic time-limits are, therefore, often
the focus for serious confrontations within the home.

> " Mog said he would ' get wrong' if he
> was late home and symbolically slit
> his throat and collapsed groaning on the
> floor, suggesting that this was the
> inevitable fate of any infringement of
> this rule. Noz also said that she
> would ' get wrong ' and that if she didn't
> appear the next day we could look for her
> in a coffin. "

The metaphors of death used by these children are instructive.
They do not merely reflect the possibility (and probability)
of corporal punishment being inflicted by parents, but also
symbolise their own social deaths. One of the most common
threats used by parents to enforce their children's adherence
to time-limits is a further restriction of their control
of time, that is, to prohibit the child going out in the
evening <u>at all</u>. Through doing this parents are restricting
their offspring's access to the culture of children:
children are " kept in " and " not let out " by their

/..

parents. They are controlled, contained and rendered immobile.

Throughout the analysis motifs of movement have appeared and it is this very mobility of the children which characterises the culture of ' doing nothing '. Movement is its source, movement within and between the lines of separation established by the adult world. The images of control, of centreing, fixity of place, containment and confinement used by the children to describe their parent's actions symbolises their social death through stasis.

The children, therefore, endeavour to avoid being controlled through inventing excuses for over-stepping the time-boundary. They argue, for example, that " the bus didn't come", that " the bus was early and I missed it ", that " the watch stopped ", that " the watch was slow ", in an attempt to deflect the cause of their offence to an external agent. The majority , however, seemed to adhere to their parents' ruling: the possibility of a prohibition against going out was perceived as a most severe form of punishment, one which threatened to remove what little control over time, and hence over their own activities, they already possessed.

For the children, therefore, the day is conceptually structured according to temporal boundaries set up by the adult world. It is primarily an adult conception of order, an order which classifies them as a separate social group and which gives them but minimal power to alter it. The only occasion when children gain some degree of control over time is the residue left over from this process of ordering itself. This is the time when ' nothing ' happens. (see Fig. 1.).

Fig.1.   The temporal boundaries of the culture of
          ' doing nothing '
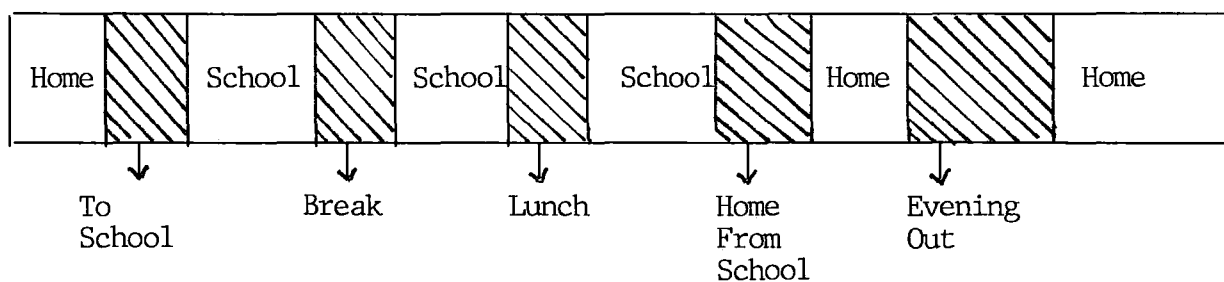
It is,therefore, in the spaces and times between adult orders
that the culture of ' doing nothing ' thrives. As Turner
argues with respect to the emergence of liminal forms,
' structure depends on distance and discontinuity between
its units, and these interstitial spaces provide homes
for anti-structural visions, thoughts and ultimately
behaviours ' (1974:293). Through attempting to increasingly
rigidify the spatial and temporal boundaries of order adults
are attempting to control the disruptive potentiality of
the children's culture.

Implicit throughout the analysis is the suggestion that
control of time is intimately linked to the access to
social space; indeed , these are the co-ordinates of order
itself as Mary Douglas (1969) has shown. For the children,
therefore, in order to extend their control over time, and
hence to increase their access to social space, they must
endeavour to circumvent or move the boundaries which
conceptually contain them. They may truant or ignore time-
limits, for example, but such actions incur further
restrictions being placed upon them. To gain access to
different times and spaces outside adult control the

children, therefore, have to move between different spheres
of adult domination: for example, freedom is obtained in
the times and spaces between home and school and home again.
In order to shift the balance of power the children must
initiate movement within time itself and move out of and
away from the times and spaces primarily controlled by
the adult world. To ' do nothing ' they must do something.

With respect to the passage of calendrical time this relation-
ship is given visual form in the real and symbolic distance
achieved between private and public space as the child matures.
The physical structure of a typical north-eastern back-lane
community visibly bears witness to the effect of this socia-
lizing process. Little two or three year old children
play mainly in the house or the back yard; their access to
space is limited, restricted by the walls and locked yard-
gates. They cannot, as yet, participate in the life of
the older children on the other side of the gate. At about
four years old children begin to stray beyond the walls which
enclose the private domestic sphere: they are permitted to
play on the pavement, at first clinging to the yard entrance,
then later extending their control of space two or three
houses down the street. As they grow older the whole back-
lane becomes their play-ground: its walls and pavements, its
telegraph poles and drains become objects of play. The
public street becomes their private domain. Finally, they
become ' old enough ' to leave this space; they move beyond
the boundaries of their own back-lane and roam outside the

domestic sphere of control. And, once having left the
containing walls of the yard and street behind them, the
children enter their own separate social world which is
contained by its own symbolic walls. They have moved the
boundaries of parental control through negotiating the
physical walls which contained them.It is their increase
in age which has largely facilitated this movement.

The further the child moves into the transitional period
of adolescence the further he or she moves away from adult
order and the more fluid that movement becomes; through
playing truant, through staying out all evening the
adolescent unstructures the structures which adult time
creates. ' Going out ' is seen as important in itself;
one boy remarked with a good deal of pride that " I go out
every night of the week " and another said that now I had
come to the village he had " somewhere to go every night ".
Significantly, " going out " is also a euphemism for sexual
relationships or boy-friend/girl-friend social encounters;
" going out " symbolises the departure of children from
their natal homes which such relationships will eventually
bring as they establish their own domestic spheres as
adults. And, it is not without significance that the symbol
of adulthood is the key to the door, that which allows free
movement between inner and outer spaces, between the private
and public domains. The passage of calendrical time literally
increases the child's access to space.

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<u>Plate 1.</u> " .... being between the polar categories
               of child and adult, being between the worlds
               of play and work there is conceptually
               nothing for them to do. "

' Doing ' and ' doing nothing '

The culture of the children - that which they describe as
' doing nothing ' - is, as the above examples have shown,
bounded by the spatial and temporal lines drawn by the
adult world, lines which classify the children apart.
The culture of children emerges, then, through the
imposition of order during the socialization process; its
form is structured by that order but its content results
from the creativity of the children themselves. In the
following section I begin to explore the semantics of ' doing
nothing '. To explain why the children use this term and
what they mean when they say they have been ' doing nothing'
involves an extended unpacking of concepts of action. Only
then does the logic of the children's metaphor for their own
culture begin to resonate; only then can their interpretation
of the socialization process begin to make sense.

In a Western industrial society all activities are perceived
to fall within two broad conceptual categories; play and work.
Although some forms of work have ludic qualities, and some
kinds of play take on the characteristics of work, the
dominant classificatory frame remains the binary opposition
between work and play. Playing football for leisure, as
a respite from work, is to the professional player the work
from which respite must be sought. Play and work are always
strictly demarcated within spatial and temporal boundaries;
the playground is separated from the school-room, the rest-

room from the office, working hours from leisure hours,

play-time from lessons. Children, whose prerogative it

is to play, can nevertheless be chastised for 'playing the

teacher up' through transgressing these spatial and

temporal limits. The cultural specificity of this

relationship is noted by Norbeck who points out that many

other cultures ' lack a generic term for play and lack

a concept of work and play in binary opposition ' (1976:5).

This cultural construct bears, I suggest, an implicit

structural relationship to another binary classification

fundamental to Western industrial society: child and adult.

Entering the adult world of work entails leaving the child's

play world. Something which is easy for an adult to

perform is ' child's play ', rather than hard work. That

adolescents define their activities as ' doing nothing ' is,

therefore, quite logical: being between the polar categories

of child and adult, being between the worlds of play and work,

there is conceptually nothing for them to do.

The persistent and persuasive power of this mapping between

conceptual domains is historically determined. It is a

result of the dialectics of social classification: the

separation of the child from the adult world can be seen to have

been partly effected and facilitated by the removal of the

child from the sphere of wage-work, a process itself

instigated by the changing nature of work patterns and

conditions of employment with the increase in industriali-

zation. Ironically, it was this very freedom from wage-

work which, in turn, later came to represent and form a
boundary to the idea of childhood itself, finally reified
through the provision and institutionalization of schooling
and the introduction of welfare legislation on behalf of
the child. Participation in the world of work became a
boundary to adulthood : the opposition between play and
work was transposed upon the social categories of child
and adult.[1]

In contemporary British society this structural homology
has certain logical consequences for the position of the
adolescent. Children and adults both achieve legitimation
of their actions through reference to the concepts of play
and work; they represent frames of self-justification, built
upon the structural correspondence between conceptual domains
of person and action. Children are sent ' out to play ' by
their parents; ' play ' is perceived to be their legitimate
sphere of activity. Adults work, they participate in a
specific action sphere; hence, the stigma of unemployment.
When asked what they have been doing children reply, ' play-
ing ', adults reply, ' working ' ; adolescents can only
reply, ' doing nothing '.

It is through recourse, then, to this patterning between
conceptual domains that children and adults can legitimate

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1. See pp.71- 73   above for further discussion of these
   points.

their actions through such blanket terms.An adult who says he or she has been doing nothing is assumed to be speaking metaphorically; there is an implicit understanding that adults will have fulfilled the structural requirements of their social roles in the domestic and public spheres. In this case ' doing nothing ' is translated as ' nothing out of the ordinary '. Adolescents, on the other hand,have conceptually nothing <u>ordinarily</u> to do; they are extra - ordinary. ' Doing nothing ' might mean ' nothing at all'.

That ' nothing at all ' is negatively perceived is a consequence of the paradigm surrounding the concept of action itself: to act is to produce an effect and action is the process of producing or doing something. Action is not doing nothing. It is this very lack of purpose, the seemingly directionless quality of ' doing nothing ' which, I suggest, gives to this activity its negative attributes offending, as it does, the Protestant Ethic.

Play is doing; work is producing. Both are means-ends related activities. Justifications of play as the primary activity of children is variously documented in both classical and contemporary texts on child development.[1] Work, on the other hand,in a Western capitalist society is defined

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1. See for example- Caillois,(1962); Roberts & Sutton-smith
          (eds.) (1962)
          Craig (ed.) 1976 for various justifications
          of the usefulness of play for small
          children.

as purposeful and justified in terms of the rewards it
produces. But adult play - leisure - is also seen as
purposeful: sports are promoted in terms of health, physical
and mental fitness; hobbies justified in relation to their
end-product. Leisure, although engaged in voluntarily and
lacking the compulsion of work, tends in fact often to
resemble it. As Sack has shown, ' the more that one pursues
an activity for extrinsic rewards, or is subject to pressures
and demands from outside the play world, the more the activity
becomes work ' (1977:188). D.I.Y. and jogging, for example,
bear adequate testimony to this; both are now big business,
representing work for the shop-keeper and consumer alike.

Within such terms of reference ' doing nothing ' is
anomalous. Its very purposelessness threatens these collective
representations. For this reason there exists a whole range
of benevolent institutions in our society, set up precisely
to give young people something to do. Scouts, Girl Guides,
Boy's Clubs, Youth Clubs and Sports Clubs are all designed
to occupy the time of those who, in structural terms, are
seen as having nothing to do. As Colin Ward remarks many
of them fail through misunderstanding the meaning of ' doing
nothing ':

> ' For thirty years or more the world
> of the youth club has been torn by
> dilemmas and doubts. The evangelical
> or didactic message, the assumption
> of single-sex institutions, the
> emphasis on physical fitness, have all
> been rejected by the clientelle. In
> the 1960's the concept arose of the
> 'unclubbables ', the assumption being
> that it was normal for adolescents to
> belong to a club and that there was
> something abnormal about those who
> did not '. (1977:113-114).

' Doing nothing ' defies institutional settings for it is not a discrete activity; rather, it is a mode of acting in and upon the world for adolescents. ' Doing nothing ' is the context of their social experience , the arena within which many things are done, a fluid metaphor for the transitional experience of adolescence itself. In other words, it is a qualitative description of their position between the binary social categories of child and adult, one which expresses their feelings of being on the peripheries of the social order, placeless people. ' Doing nothing ' acts as a conceptual mask for many activities, deflecting external perception of them, for a group of people who find themselves with conceptually nothing legitimate to do.

' Doing nothing ' is, therefore, not to be regarded as a negative evaluation by the children of their own activities nor as the passive internalization of an external and dominant definition. Rather, as the following discussion reveals, it is precisely through articulating their actions in these terms that the children create for themselves a quasi-legitimated sphere of action. In this resepct ' doing nothing ' may represent what Shirley Ardener has termed a ' muted ' perspective, a world-view which does not find expression except in terms of the dominant language,that is in a language external to the group itself:

> ' The implications are that a society
> may be dominated or overdetermined by
> the model (or models) generated by one
> dominant group within the system. This
> dominant model may impede free expression
> of alternative models of their world which
> subdominant groups may possess,and perhaps
> even inhibit the very generation of such
> models. Groups dominated in this sense
> find it necessary to structure their world
> through the model (or models) of the
> dominant group, transforming their own
> models as best they can in terms of the
> received ones. ' (1975:xii)

Being between the major classificatory categories, and yet at the same time hedged in by them, I suggest that the concept of ' doing nothing ' allows the children some freedom. Through an internal restructuring of the dominant order they distance themselves from it. Through using a description which adults understand, as an external definition of themselves, the children are able to create their own meaningful order, maintaining and protecting it by the very boundaries which are used to contain them.

I suggested above that ' doing nothing ' encompasses a whole range of activities including both play and work and it is to the latter that I first turn. The work done by children provides a highly condensed and evocative image of the context of the children's culture. It demonstrates quite conclusively the children's ability to move between the spatial and temporal boundaries of an externally derived order, and their capacity to deflect external perception of that culture they call ' doing nothing '.

' Doing nothing ': the structure of work experience

' Work ', as Sandra Wallman (1979) argues, has no precise definition; rather, definitions of work are culturally specific, varying both between and within societies. In any particular social context, therefore,

> ' we need not only ask what activities
> are called work and how their economic
> value is computed in that setting; we
> need also to know what forms of work are,
> in that setting, thought to be socially
> worthy and personally fulfilling.'
> (1979:2)

The following account details the meaning of work for the children.

It is ironic that the historical processes which separated children off from the adult world of work have made their very peripherality from the work sphere a condition of their entry into it. The majority of the children with whom I worked engaged in some form of labour whilst still at school, prior to their entry into the mainstream labour force. In such a community, therefore, work experience is gained long before adolescents enter the unemployment figures. Kinds of work vary, ranging from traditional child labour within the home, such as helping with domestic chores and baby-sitting younger brothers and sisters (unpaid work) to specific employment within the domestic sphere for monetary reward: for example, regular baby-sitting jobs for other families, digging gardens, shoe-cleaning and car-washing. It includes occasional one-off jobs and seasonal labour as

well as regular part-time employment in the service
industries: shops, market stalls, newspaper and milk rounds.
The major structuring principle governing such work experience
is the marginal social position of the school-child to the
main labour force.

Firstly, the very marginality of adolescents allows them
to fill certain economic niches left empty by the adult
world. For example, potato picking is seen as a particularly
lucrative outlet by the children. It takes place during the
autumn half-term holidays from school - known as Blackberry
Week in the north-east - when children, traditionally,
picked blackberries to sell. Nowadays, gaining employment
as a potato picker on one of the local farms is seen as a
far more profitable occupation and, during the period 1977-9,
children could earn between £2.60 and £5.00 per day. One
week's work was seen as a good wage by the children and
often , as in the past, school was rejected in favour of
work if the pickings extended beyond the holiday week.[1]

Potato picking, then, is done by children precisely because
they are the ones most often free to perform it. Being
between the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of adult order
they literally have the time; such seasonal labour cannot
be usually undertaken by adults in full-time employment.
Similarly, baby-sitting is another job created specifically
because adults are unable to undertake the task themselves.

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1. See Kitteringham (1973) for comparative historical
examples.

223.

This ability of adolescents to fill up the gaps created
within adult order is a consistent structural feature of
their participation in the economy and also gives them
primary access to particular kinds of wage-work. For
example, the daily newspaper rounds are staffed by a whole
army of school-children who maintain its efficiency
precisely because they are available for work in the early
morning and evening and on Sundays, times when adults cannot
or would not normally wish to work. Similarly, milkmen
employ milk-boys (and, during my period of fieldwork, one
milk-girl) to assist them in their early morning deliveries.
Indeed, the milk and newspaper rounds are regarded by
children as their primary job-market; jobs are closely
protected and often passed between generations of siblings.
Vacancies are always quickly filled as these jobs are highly
valued amongst the children.

Other regular part-time jobs are also found by children
within the service sector of the economy. Once they have
reached the age of sixteen the children can legally get
Saturday jobs as shop assistants, evening jobs in the fish
and chip shop or working as a cloak room attendant in the
local night club. Younger children, forbidden by law to
serve in shops, may be engaged in a variety of back-room
work: cleaning and tidying shelves in the super-market
store-room, cleaning the freezer cabinets, washing bottles
and glasses in the working-men's club. Market stalls
employ children on Saturdays and, during my period of

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fieldwork, the vegetable stall in the local market was a continual source of employment for many of the children. It still continues to be so.

All these jobs, then, are structured by particular temporal limits which allow children , rather than adults , to be employed; weekend working, early mornings- starting at 5.00am or 6.00am - early afternoons between 4.00pm and 6.00pm, evenings from 7.00pm onwards. At these times adults are usually involved in other activities: domestic responsibilities, working themselves or having leisure time. It is children, then, who complete and complement the adult labour force.

A further feature of this temporal structure is that work is often irregular. For the school-child who is not dependent upon a weekly wage this is a positive advantage for they can exploit such outlets unlike adults. Indeed, work is often sporadic for the school child. For example, two boys were employed one Sunday afternoon by a lady who, on seeing them in the street, stopped her car and asked them to deliver some leaflets, giving them £1 each to do the job. As she was a stranger in the district the boys delivered a few, chucked the rest in the bin and pocketed the money. They delighted in her naivety in paying the wage before the job was done. The marginal status of adolescents to the labour force means that they can take up the opportunity for work whenever it arises. The jobs, usually only for a few hours a day, or one day a week, or even the chance occasion for work,

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yield an average wage of between £5 and £6 per week, an insufficient income for an adult but an acceptable wage for the child.

Another example echoes these themes. Robert, aged 11, was in hospital for a considerable period of time and during his convalescence set up in business. His father had encouraged him to occupy his time by making models from lollipop sticks and Robert developed his skill quite quickly. Soon he began selling the models he made to the hospital staff thereby making quite a profit as his father purchased the materials.

However, referring back to Wallman, it is not only the form and economic value of work which needs to be considered but also its social aspect. For adolescents it is this which is perhaps most important. To be working, to be employed rather than unemployed, is a sign of their growing maturity, a signal for later independence as adults. Children attach great symbolic significance to having part-time jobs or to having gained any kind of employment.

On a purely practical level employment, for the child, represents a considerable boost in income whilst still at school but - and this is seen as particularly important by children - it is an income which is truly their own. Pocket money was rarely discussed; some children had regular weekly amounts given to them by their parents, whilst others were given money to spend only on specific occasions - when they

went to school, to the youth club or disco. Wages earned by working were, on the other hand, always a topic of conversation. They signified a degree of economic, and ultimately social , independence from their parents. Indeed, for some children, it was their only regular source of income and, consequently, their only freedom in market choices.

The symbolic significance of ' having a job ' is revealed in the tales told about successful entrepreneurs within the school-child's culture. Gench was a milk-boy and a good one, popular with the customers and an employee of long-standing. At Christmas he received tips from customers and for many months rumours abounded concerning how much Gench had made on tips alone. Some said that he had made as much as £50. It became legendary amongst the children and Gench himself accrued much prestige.

However, the social significance of wage-work is further symbolised in the ways in which the money is spent. Money earned from wage-work is spent on things parents will not finance, that is on the commercial aspects of the adolescent culture. Gench bought himself a bike for £55 from his milk-money ; others spent their wages on cigarettes, records and on clothes. Wages received represent freedom in market choices and the expenditure of a large part of them on records, clothes and badges symbolises adolescents' freedom to participate in their own commercial culture. Significantly, this is precisely the manner in which first wage-packets are

spent when children leave school, after money has been
deducted for board and given to their parents. An
independent income, then, represents for the children
freedom from parental control; work, in this respect, is
therefore seen as ' socially and personally fulfilling '
(Wallman, 1979,2).

Money earned is but one aspect of the total work experience;
other aspects of working are equally valuable to the adolescent
and may be seen to lie over and above pure monetary gain. In
particular, girls' access to this informal labour market is
often more restricted than boys'; girls are often expected
to assist with domestic chores at home such as baby-sitting
their younger brothers and sisters, although boys do indeed
also take on this task. Here reward is not given financially,
but time is exchanged for other benefits: for example, extra
clothes or the possibility of staying out late another night
in the week. Such exchanges are as equally valuable as
monetary reward. Moreover, the absence of adults in the home
whilst baby-sitting has its own positive advantages: girls
babysit together and pass the time with their friends talking
and occasionally having illicit bottles of cider. Their
social life at home is, for once, free from parental gaze
and control.

Boys, whose possibilities for employment seem to be greater,
also value the experience that working gives them; whilst
still at school they can participate in an adult environment
within which they quickly assume the role of ' worker '.
Conscientious milk-boys, who have to get up at 6.00am, tend

to go to bed early so that they can " do the milk " the following morning. They acquire the vocabulary of the trade, demonstrating their skill at working. The one girl who managed to penetrate the male dominated milk-rounds quickly made herself familiar with the language of milk-men, thereby proving her competence. Within a couple of days she was talking of a ' twenty crate ' and ' half-bottles'.

The tales told by children of their work experience image their own futures, recalling as they do, in style and content, many of the stories told by adults of working. They are tales of cheating, swindling, nepotism and unfair dismissal:

(1) " Paul tells me that he used to clean his aunt's windows for 10p. She was rather stupid and couldn't tell the difference between a 10p and 50p coin so he and his mate always did well out of it." (Aged 12)

(2) " Kirby says he went potato picking for £3 per day and that if we want some potatoes he'll throw a bag over the hedge. Today he threw over three bags for a mate of his. " (Aged 14)

(3) " Dicky said that at one time he used to deliver newspapers but when the Northern Echo went on strike he went on strike in sympathy. Jimmy complains that some 11 year olds are working on the newspaper rounds and says that this is illegal and unfair. Now there are fewer jobs for older kids as the newsagents pay the younger ones less." (Both aged 15)

(4) " John says that the newsagent swindles him. He always says that John is short of money after the Sunday selling round. John complains that he always has to make up the difference and has a good mind to start up on his own. Someone suggested that that would be a good idea. " (Aged 14).

Whether or not such tales are true, their significance lies in the ways in which these stories mirror adult work

experiences and, thereby, prefigure the adolescent's own participation in the labour market.

In this respect it is significant that, for many, the work they do whilst still at school <u>does</u>, in fact, represent experience in future employment. Most of the children with whom I worked left school with no qualifications at all; some had a few C.S.E.'s and one girl achieved four 'O' levels. For the majority, life after school meant joining the unemployment register - doing nothing - or gaining work primarily in the service industries, that is in the sector in which many of them had been employed whilst still at school. Of those whose post-school careers I was able to follow many of the boys gained employment in shops, painting and decorating, the armed services and the police force, with a few getting jobs in industry. For the girls, employment was usually found in the clothing industry, a job which was seen as a temporary occupation prior to marriage and the birth of their children.[1] Even those whose later participation in the economic system was as criminals - usually petty burglaries - gained a lot of their experience through rehearsing this role whilst still at school.

Adolescents' participation in the adult world of work is, therefore, a function of their marginality to the social structure. They exploit to the full the gaps and lacunae

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1. For a discussion of these issues see, pp.441-472.

created within the economic order by the structure of adult work patterns. Walking through the village in the early morning this principle was given visual form: the village appeared to be populated almost entirely by children going about their business. The newspaper shop was crowded with boys and girls clutching their sacks of papers; the local cafe , from where the milk business operated, alive with boys playing pin-ball and drinking tea after their deliveries were finished, filling in time before the start of school.

In this respect it is significant to compare the employment of children with other ' marginal ' workers, such as women and those operating within the ' black ' or informal economy. Both these groups also provide the additional pools of labour necessary for seasonal, part-time and irregular employment upon which mainstream economic activity is partially dependent.

Women's work outside the home is often structured by the temporal and spatial exigencies of her domestic responsibilities as wife and mother. Wage-work, for many of the women in the community, could only be undertaken when household commitments were at a minimum. Like children's, women's work, is by necessity often in-between work. For example, some of the women in the community did cleaning jobs in the pubs and clubs, starting at 7.00 am; at that time of day their husbands could supervise the children at home and, on returning at 10.00 am, the women would then take up their domestic work at home.

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Other married women too had to fit their wage-work
around domestic responsibilities. They worked in the
evenings at the club or fish and chip shop whilst their
children were cared for by elder siblings, husbands or
relations. Others did door-to-door selling, held jewellery
or pottery parties in their homes, thereby combining wage-
work with unpaid domestic labour for part of the day. With
the demands and limitations upon their time, incurred through
their roles as wives and mothers, most women could not
otherwise gain employment. Both women and children, therefore,
form a pool of occasional and part-time labour which props
up the mainstream economic order. On the whole they both
provide a cheap source of labour and, as Ward remarks, ' indeed,
it is one of the tragedies of ' women's work ' in the British
economy that her children can do it just as well as she can,
without feeling the stifling boredom of the task '. (1977:
145).

In an area characterised by high unemployment and a long
history of poverty a further parallel can be drawn in the
structural patterning of work. The ' black ' economy
utilises labour, following the pattern already established
for children's and women's work. Men often do jobs ' on the
side ', marginal jobs, which are fitted in between their
regular work, done at evenings and weekends or whilst
drawing state benefits. All these groups have in common
their peripheral position relative to the spatial and
temporal co-ordinates of the main economic order.

Jobs done by men within the ' black ' economy are, like
those of women and children, characterized by low wages
and lack of job security but are attractive to both
employer and employee. For the employer, the use of labour
from the informal economy represents a cut in overheads and
allows the input of occasional labour at times of high
productivity or large work-load; for the employee the wage
is fixed and not subject to deductions for tax or national
insurance.

' Cash in hand ' , the money earned ' on the side ' has great
symbolic significance ; it parallels the importance given by
children to their earning capacity. Wages from the'black'
economy are seen to be in direct proportion to effort;
money is not deducted and a man keeps all that he earns. The
price for a job- for example, brick-laying - is agreed prior
to the work being done; the time it takes is, therefore,
directly under the worker's control and the roll of bank-notes
accrued at the end is seen as a symbol of a man's ability
and self-respect. Time and effort are in direct proportion.

Money earned on the side - from odd - jobbing - is thought
by men to be their ' pocket-money '. It is kept by men
for themselves and not included in the general household
budget. It is money which, like the money the children
earn, can be spent freely: on beer at the club, on bait
for fishing trips or, indeed, on special treats for their
wives. Like children's work , work within the ' black '
economy is not only rewarded by money. Men operate a

number of exchange systems whereby one man will use his
skill as a brick-layer to help another, in return for
him erecting a fence or doing some car repairs.

In conclusion then for any workers within the informal
economy - women, children or men doing jobs on the side -
it is their ability to perceive the gaps in the economic
structure and to utilise them which signals success. Indeed,
many of the jobs traditionally done by the children in a
community characterized by high unemployment may be taken
over by adult workers drifting away from the main labour
force. During the period 1977-9 this process was already
beginning with men and boys both employed to break cars in
the local scrap yard.

Learning to do nothing

The structured patterning of activity described in the case-
study above finds repetition in other aspects of ' doing
nothing '. I turn now to an examination of this wider
context, tracing the general features, the creative potential
and conceptual structuring of the culture of ' doing nothing'.
Children ' do nothing' anywhere and everywhere: in the street,
outside the fish shop, inside the telephone box. ' Doing nothing'
is not a discrete activity but is expressive of a context for
action; it is a mode of thought which is of and about the
culture of children.

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In this section I examine how the concept of ' doing
nothing ' frames the activities of the children through
looking at the ways in which they appropriate and re-
interpret their external environment in a largely invisible
manner. The physical world is transformed in terms of the
children's own symbolic system. As I show this represents
the continuation of a mode of thought and action learnt
through the play of early childhood and, as such, reveals
the socializing practices which children perform for each
other in the context of their own culture.

It was suggested earlier that ' play ' is the prerogative
of small children, their legitimate action sphere. Indeed,
this seems to be so. Small children invite their friends
' out to play ' ; adolescents merely ask each other ' out '.
They go ' out ' to ' do nowt ' but ' doing nothing ' is, for
them, a similarly purposeful activity. A fourteen year old
girl who had moved to the south of England returned to the
north for a short visit. She complains of her life in the
south :

> " Joanna says that she hates it down there;
> its not like it is up here. There's nothing
> to do and nowhere to go. There are parties
> every Saturday and badminton during the week.
> The youth club is all religious. Parties
> are boring. When I asked her what there is
> better to do up here she replied: " Well,
> you can go and see people and go round the
> streets and down there the girls don't
> fight like they do here. "

The conventional activities of badminton and clubs are classed
by her as 'nothing to do and nowhere to go'; 'doing nothing',

235.

on the other hand, involves ' going round the streets, visiting people and fighting ! These latter activities are the most rewarding but they are activities that have no name, unclassified and unclassifiable, performed by a group which is itself set apart.[1] Learning to create and participate in ' doing nothing ' begins in the play of early childhood but it is play of a particular kind.

An analytical distinction is often made between play and games. The Newsons, for example, stress that the ' essence of play is that it has no rules '; games, in contrast, ' involve a formal confrontation between the player and his opponent.... in which all activity takes place within an agreed system of rules ' (1979:11). The Opies too rely on this dichotomy: pretending games - those with no written or verbally elaborated rules - are dismissed as,

> '...little more than reflections (often
> distorted reflections) of how they themselves
> live and of how their mothers and fathers
> live, and of the books they read and the TV
> programmes they watch.' (1969:330)

Play in adult terms must have content: if rules do not frame the activity then content must be provided to fill it. Play involves playing with ' things '; children are bought toys to play with.

However, as Ward points out, children do not heed these

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1. Further discussion of this ' nameless ' quality of
   ' doing nothing ' is given on pp.259 - 262.

distinctions and they will ' play everywhere and with anything ' (1977:86). The provision of toys as play-content and the designation of play-areas represent an attempt by the adult world to control what the Newsons describe as children's'most determined onslaught of their environment ' (1979:49). This characteristic of small children's play is apparent in their continual experimentation, a process through which children gain knowledge of the world as Sutton - Smith has noted :

> ' We have in games behaviour in which conventional roles are mocked (the games of order and disorder). We have in games an unconventional access to roles; and we have in games access to novelty within the role. ' (Sutton-Smith, 1977a:228).

As he points out play is not merely the rehearsal for adult roles through passive imitation as traditional socialization theory suggests; rather, it is a creative learning process,

> ' children who play schools, play at nonsense as much as they play at school ....disorder is as relevant to play imitation as is order. And most social-ization theories do not account for that as well as they should.' (1977b:235)

Children play with play itself and it is the continuation of this experimental mode into adolescence which gives to ' doing nothing ' its potentially subversive aspect. Play and ' doing nothing ' both represent the creative restructuring of social order but it is adolescents who are criticised for ,

in adult eyes, they should no longer indulge in such questioning.[1]

Writing of play Huizinga argues that it involves the construction of ' temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart ' and suggests that ' inside the playground an absolute and peculiar order reigns (1955:25). Play, therefore, involves the creation of a conceptually separate arena within and between the spatial boundaries of the physical environment and it is often through the rules of play that this place apart is created. The rules define both how and where to play; for the duration of the game the environment is re-interpreted and transformed. A similar reconstruction is effected in the course of ' doing nothing '. The continuity of this form can be demonstrated through comparing the street games of small children and the adolescent's use of the street as a context for action.

A distinctive feature of north-eastern mining villages and many inner city areas is the rows of houses with back-lanes threaded between them. Commonplace in the past, today these spaces are still those in which children play and the peculiarity of this architectural feature is utilised by

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1. Here I am concerned to demonstrate how the children transform physical space and the objects within that environment. A comparable process of conceptual reconstruction occurs through the transformation of the physical body. This is discussed below, see pp.403-419.

children in many of their games.[1] For example, the
boundaries of the space necessary for games such as
' Piney ' and ' Oxo ' are formed by the walls on either
side of the street:

"Piney.

All the children choose a code, often
colours or numbers, and each child has
a specific example. One child is
chosen to be ' on ' (e.g. yellow). All
the children line up against one wall
while ' yellow ' throws the ball against
the opposite wall. On doing this
' yellow ' names a child to catch the ball,
e.g. ' red '. Whilst, ' red ' tries to
catch the ball all the others run to the
opposite wall and back again. If ' red '
fails to catch it ' yellow ' starts the
game again.

If ' red ' catches the ball he or she tries
to hit one of the runners before they have
returned to the starting position and
touched the wall and shouted ' piney '.

If ' red ' succeeds in hitting ' blue ',
' blue ' must pick up the ball and throw
it back at ' red ' before ' red ' reaches
the wall touches it and shouts ' piney '.
If ' blue ' misses, he or she throws the
ball three times in the air and tries to
catch it before anyone else. If ' blue '
fails then he is out of the game. The one
who has caught the ball starts the game
again. "

"Oxo.

One child is on and he stands against one
wall facing the others. The one who is on
chooses a code, e.g. boots. The others choose
a particular kind of ' boot ' e.g. yellow
boots and these choices are told to the child
who is on. This child then chooses one of the
selection and calls it out. The two children
must then race each other three times between
the walls and on arriving they must touch the
wall and shout ' oxo '. The first to reach the
finish then starts the game again." [2]

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1. See Gamble (1979) for comparative historical examples.

2. The idea of 'touch' and 'touching' is a constant theme in
   many of these street games. The symbolic power of touching
   transforms the physical environment. For further discussion
   of the idea of ' touch ' see pp.409-410.

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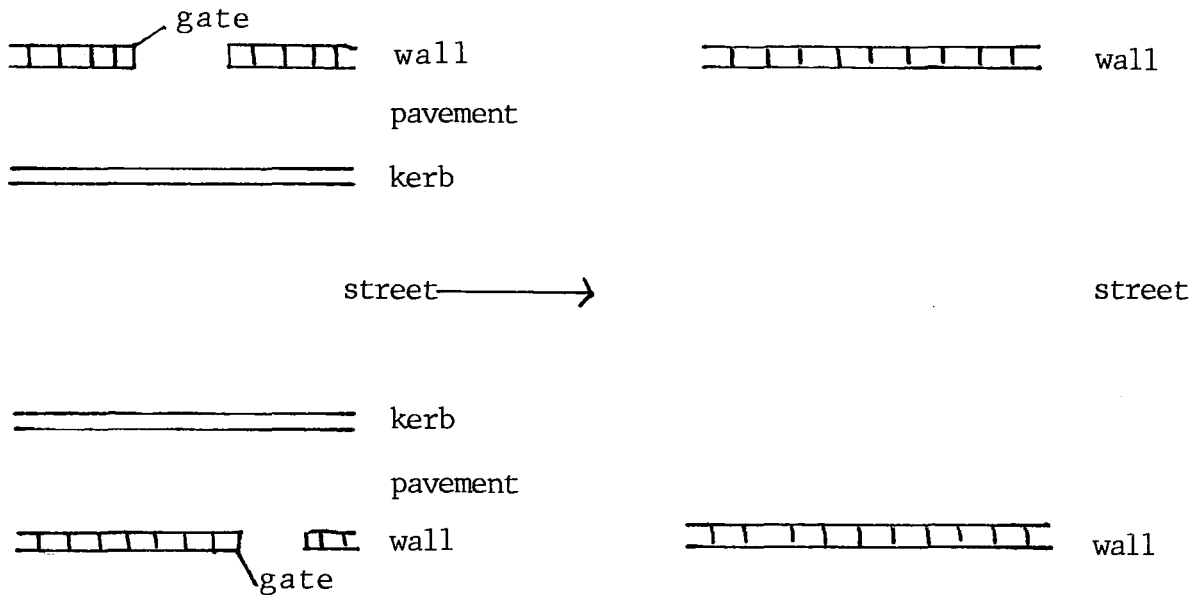
Fig.2.   The conceptual reconstruction of the physical environment through streetgames.

In other street games of younger children street- furniture forms a significant element. In particular the idea of a ' den ' - a place where children can temporarily withdraw from the rules of the game - uses objects in the physical environment such as lamposts, drains or benches. ' Tiggy' for example, requires a place which can be sat on, stood on or touched; here the child is safe from being ' tug '. ' Tiggy on high ' extends this into the vertical plane; walls, lamposts, roof tops and benches which raise the feet off the ground provide refuge from being caught by the chaser. The game, Blocky, also illustrates this use of street-furniture in children's games:

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"Blocky.

> The second lampost in the street is the
> Block from where the game starts. The
> person who is on stands at the block and
> counts to 100. Everyone goes and hides
> and then if the person looking for you
> spots you, you both race back to the
> lampost and shout " Block, 1,2,3," followed
> by the person's name. If the hider gets
> there first he is "off" (i.e. not on) and
> the game continues. If the seeker has made
> a mistake over the person he is still on.
> The game continues till all have been challenged,
> if the seeker does not " block " someone,and
> everyone else has got their own block ".

In contrast, the game Itchy Bay - a variation of Hopscotch

- requires only a pavement or yard upon which the layout can

be chalked.

In the process of creating these separate play worlds the

physical environment and objects within it become transformed

and reinterpreted ; it acquires a new significance and is

invested with meanings peculiar to the culture of children.

Ward (1977) endorses this viewpoint through reference to

Jeff Bishop's work on spatial conceptualization. Adults

and children were asked to draw maps of their locality

in Harwich and remarkably different responses were achieved:

> 'In the middle of the port there is a
> lighthouse featured as a significant landmark
> in all the maps drawn by adults. But none of
> Harwich children showed the lighthouse on
> their maps, though many showed the public
> lavatory which stands at its base. ....One
> item that frequently recurred in their maps
> (and was totally ignored in those of adults)
> was a telephone connection box..Obviously,as
> a feature for hiding behind or climbing on,
> this kind of obstruction has a value for
> children in their use of the street.'
> (Ward, 1977:27-8).

Plate 2.   "....Itchy Bay - a variation of Hopscotch -
            requires only a pavement or yard upon which
            the layout can be chalked. "

Children are what planners call ' non-conforming users'
of the environment; they create their own order through
the reinterpretation and re-representation of physical
space, one which challenges the dominant order (ibid:28).
As Colin Ward writes ' one of the things play is about,
intermingled with all the others, is conflict with the
adult world ' and it is the continuation of this into
adolescence which gives to ' doing nothing ' its
potentially subversive characteristics (ibid:91).

As children mature they may no longer play ' Blocky ' or
' Piney ' but the street and its furniture are still subject
to infinite permutations of use. Amongst the children with
whom I worked some of this was traditional entertainment at
the expense of the adult world; for example, ' Knocky Nine
Doors ' and ' Tappy Windows '[1]. A particular favourite was
' Bugger the Cat ': the children would rush into someone's
back yard, knock over the dustbin and run off yelling,
" Bugger the cat ". Such activity was usually regarded as
' pranks ' by adults with little retribution to follow.

Older children may play informal games of football using
a wall in the back-street as the goal area. In one game
I saw being played the goal posts were delineated
horizontally by a line of rotten mortar in the wall and

1. Both these activities are catalogued by the Opies (1977).
   'Knocky Nine Doors ' involves knocking on someone's door
   and quickly absconding to a hiding place a short distance
   away where the children can see the inhabitant opening
   the door to no-one. ' Tappy Windows ' provides a
   similar amusement: a button is tied on a thread so that
   it can be tapped on the window by manipulation at a
   distance; once again, the occupant is bemused by the
   mysterious knocking.

vertically between a gate-post and an orange rust stain
from a defective drain pipe. In another game goal posts
were demarcated by a pile of clothes and lumps of wood
spaced apart in the field.

The changing seasons bring their own transformations upon
the physical environment and further opportunities for
' doing nothing '. Puddles become lethal slides on the
pavement in winter and places to jump in and splash others
in the autumn; woods are places to build dens in in the
summer to hide from the ' kiddy catcher ' and become places
to construct igloos in the winter. In autumn Guy Fawkes
and Halloween celebrations bring the opportunity for lighting
fires, for stealing ' snackers ' (swedes) and potatoes from
farmer's fields and apples from people's gardens.

All such activities, not named or bound by rules, nevertheless
represent the reinterpretation and transformation of the
physical environment in a manner comparable with the
construction of separate play-worlds in the games of smaller
children. Space is redefined and taken over. In the above
examples conflict with the adult world is rare or at a
minimum; adults look on indulgently or with grudging
acceptance, reflecting back upon their own youthful activities.
But, when this mode of thought and action begins to be
extended into other domains, when it begins to seriously
challenge adult order, the activities are reclassified in
terms of vandalism, the exponents classed as delinquent

Plate 3. "....children continue their creative
reinterpretation of the physical environment,
which they learnt in early childhood during
their adolescence. "

or disaffectd youth.[1] The following examples demonstrate
this changed external perception as the children continue
their creative reinterpretation of the physical environment,
which they learnt in early childhood, during their adolescence.

In the centre of the village at the cross roads there is a
concrete bus shelter which forms the focus for much of the
children's social life. The bus shelter, inhabited by old men
during the day, becomes the children's own meeting place at
night. The "Old Man's Shed", as it is called by them, is the
equivalent of the dens and camps constructed during play by
small children. Moreover, just as little children ' own '
sledge runs or chalked lay-outs of ' Itchy Bay ' and
permission must be sought before other children can use
them, the ' Old Man's Shed ' is ' owned ' by a particular
group of adolescents. Both represent the privatisation of
the public world by children but it is the latter which is
perceived to be subversive.

This concept of ownership is illustrated in the following
incident, related to me by Sue who was not a regular
occupant of the shed:

> " Sue comes to see me. She says she is
> ' sick ' (fed up). She tells me that
> last night while she was waiting for
> the bus in the old man's shed she got
> set on by 7 girls including Kay, Sandra
> and Noreen. They said that it was their

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1. It is significant that the term ' delinquent ' is
    reserved solely for the adolescent age-group. It
    is a description never used about small children
    or adults.

/..

shed. They pummelled her. She has a
cut on her leg and lots of bruises
on her stomach and head. They locked
her in the toilet (at the back of
shed) and she had to bash a hole in
the roof to get out. Then they came
and opened it and let her out. Sue
says that was because her sister and
a group of older lads were coming by.
She didn't tell anyone but ends by
exclaiming: ' They think its their
shed or something." (aged 16)

The fight which took place appears to the adult world to be

but another confirmation of the disruptive adolescent community

but it was a fight about ownership comparable with the

squabbles of young children.

The symbols of ownership of the ' Old Man's Shed ' are

the nicknames daubed on the inside walls of the shed and

carved in the wooden benches. These symbols are read

by the adult world as further signs of disaffected youth,

as the marks of rebellion left by aimless adolescents. In

contrast, the transformatory acts wrought by younger

children on the environment, whereby a window gets accidentally

broken or chalk marks decorate the pavement, are seen as

legitimate changes for they are part of ' play '.

Adolescents who similarly designate their own areas of

activity by marking the environment in particular ways pose

a threat to society for they have no legitimate action sphere

and, being older, are no longer supposed to question or

challenge the accepted and dominant order.

Colin Ward recognises the structural similarity between these two kinds of transformations in his assessment of the meaning of graffiti:

> ' the writing is not a reaction to
> environmental givens, it is an inter-
> pretation of them, a statement about
> the origins and relative immutability
> of this bit of the physical world.'
> (1973:63)

The inscribing of nicknames, the presentation of love affairs through the words" Jos loves Maz " represents a freedom to reinterpret and challenge the accepted order, that which adults do not question. It is this which, I suggest, threatens adult order over and above the physical damage or change incurred. Adults only write on paper or blackboards; the children write anywhere and with anything. Names can be written on clothes, walls, tables, pavements, books, hands, telephone kiosks and on cars. Writing is done through scratching, carving or painting on hard surfaces or through imprinting on soft surfaces such as snow, soot, or wet cement. The children continually explore these different possibilities, and it is a mode of thought which is lost as adulthood encroaches; the rigidity of adult categories is exposed through the children's constant experimentation.

Another reason why graffiti is particularly offensive to the adult world lies in its deflective aspect. Unlike ideological graffiti or slogans daubed on walls, the nicknames are, to adults, an indecipherable series of faceless names. They do not draw the onlooker's attention to any message but, on the contrary, appear to be totally

Plates 4 & 5.   " The symbols of ownership of the ' Old
                 Man's Shed ' are the nicknames daubed on
                 the walls.

meaningless. The love affairs etched in the bus shelter walls and nicknames sprayed on doors record and document the culture of ' doing nothing '. They reveal little to those who are not participants. As such they represent an insidious attack on adult order through the symbolic privatisation of public space.

Conclusion :   ' Doing nothing ' as a conflict model

' Doing nothing ', it was suggested earlier, is a root metaphor for the adolescent culture. It describes a context for action rather than discrete activities, a way of thinking about and acting in the world. It is a creative process whose origins lie in the ' play ' of early childhood but when translated into the adolescent age group ' doing nothing ' appears to be subversive of the dominant ideology surrounding concepts of action. Throughout the analysis attention has been given to the ways in which the children create this context betwixt and between the boundaries erected by the adult world during the socialization process, experienced as an ordering system. That adolescents continue to question and experiment with that order contributes to the negativity with which the idea of ' doing nothing ' is received by the adult world.

To further illustrate this misperception I shall end with an extended case-study of another fieldwork example of the process of transformation wrought by the children on their

environment which created conflicts with the adult world.
Finally, I shall discuss why ' doing nothing ', despite
its nihilistic appearance, is, for the children, the most
appropriate description of their own cultural context.

The youth club, which most of the children attended, means
different things to different sections of the community and
throughout my period of fieldwork there was always an inherent
tension between the children's, the youth leader's the
Welfare Committee's and the local population's conception
of it. Such differences of opinion were constantly exploited
by the children and, by doing so, they created for themselves
considerable freedom of movement between the boundaries laid
down by different sections of the adult community.

The youth club meets twice weekly in the Miners Welfare
Hall in the village, a building situated on the edge of a
large council estate where most of the children reside.
It utilises two rooms in this building on the ground floor,
one of which is the club room, the other leased from the
Welfare Committee only for the two nights. The two rooms
are connected by a passage which also gives access to the
snooker room, the male and female toilets and the cadet
room /social security temporary office. (Fig.   3   ).
This physical structure is, however, subject to frequent
reinterpretations by different sections of the community
when the youth club is under discussion. The building
itself is run by the Welfare Committee, a body composed of
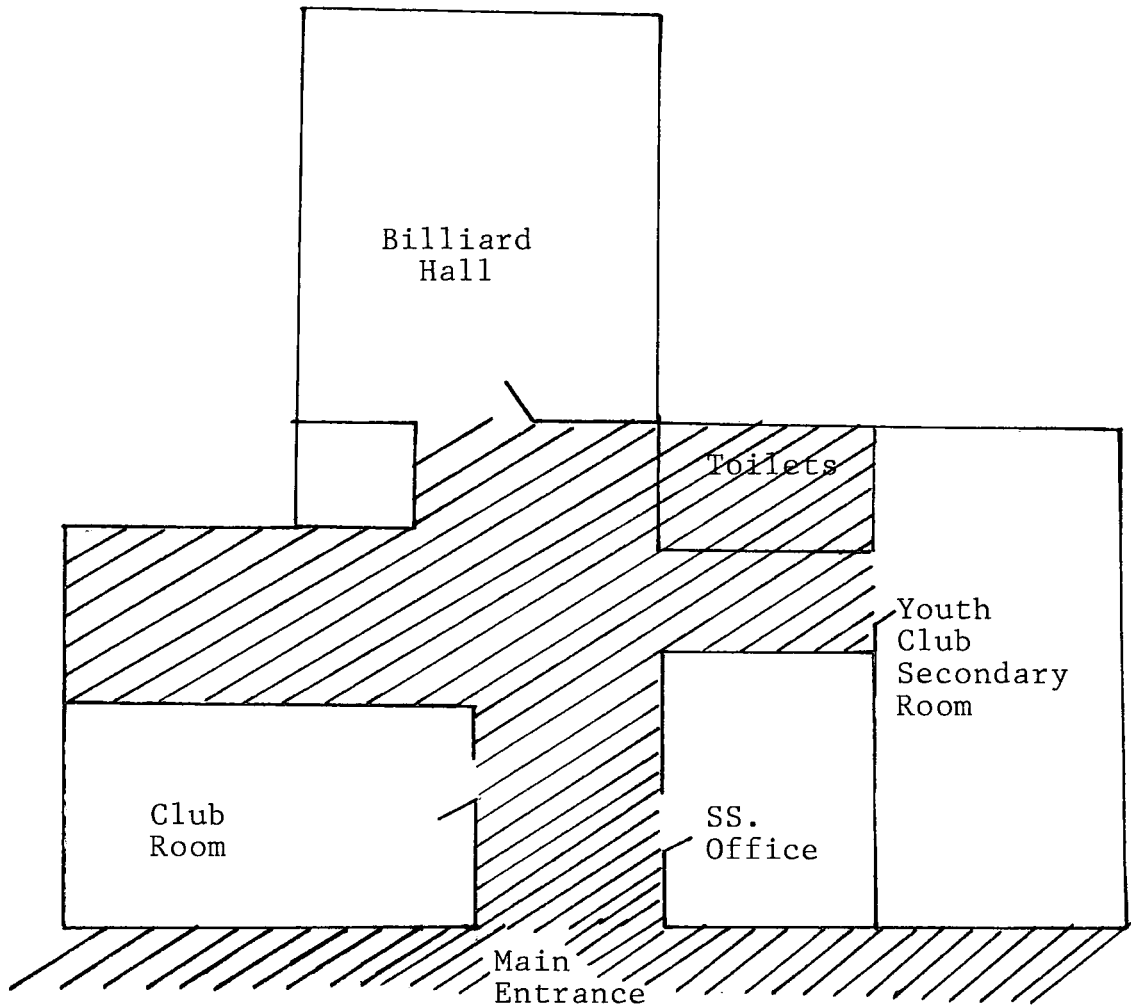
Fig.3. **Plan of Miners Welfare**

N.B. Shaded areas indicate the ambiguous zones exploited by the children. Again, the children can be seen to make maximal use of the spaces between adult conceptions of order.

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elderly men who are mostly retired miners. Its job is to
organize the running of the Welfare Hall, including the
allocation of rooms for social functions. Relations
between the Welfare Committee and the Youth Club Management
Committee - a body which supervises the financial and
administrative affairs of the club - were frequently
strained and disputes often broke out which hinged upon
different conceptions of ' youth club '. It was a situation
which the children exploited to the full.

From the point of view of the officers of the Welfare
Committee the concept of ' youth club ' was structured
primarily in spatial terms and, as they had overall charge
of the building, they considered themselves to have the
right to enforce these conceptual limits and to restrict
and bound the youth club between them. For them the youth
club was only to have access to the two rooms; the
connecting passage was merely a right of way allowing passage
between and access to the toilets. Other parts of the
building they considered to be strictly out of bounds for
youth club members.

This ordering of physical space created a number of problems.
If the children congregated in the corridor they were
summarily evicted by the caretaker or chased into one of
the club rooms. If any damage occurred in the toilets ,
the passage or the secondary room the blame was always
laid on the children although other children who were not
youth club members came into the Welfare Hall to play

snooker.

It was not only the physical presence of the children in restricted areas which caused friction. If the Welfare Committee considered there to be too much noise emanating from the club they complained; the noise was, as it were, overreaching the spatial boundaries they themselves had set and the record player had to be turned down.

On the other hand, the Welfare Committee considered the temporal boundaries of the club to extend beyond its two nights a week. When some damage occurred in the garden of a nearby house, after the end of the youth club at 9.00pm the children were blamed for causing it and a complaint was lodged with the Youth Club Management Committee. Similarly, when a car was damaged outside the hall on a non-youth club night blame again was laid at the children's feet. Moreover, the Welfare Committee considered the youth club committee to be responsible for the actions of any children in the vicinity whether they were members of the club or not.

These spatial and temporal boundaries were recognized by the children and often manipulated by them to their advantage. They were able to use adult conceptions of order to circumvent the restrictions of that order itself. For example, the youth leader insisted that smoking for children under 16 was forbidden in the club. If arguments broke out about this rule the children would go out of the club-room and smoke in the corridor. They stepped over the invisible line of the doorway between the youth club and the welfare. Alternatively, they

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would open the window and lean outside to smoke, arguing
that they were literally smoking outside the boundary walls
of the club.

Payment of 5p subscription entitled a child for a night's
membership of the youth club, but a register of members
who had joined the club was also kept. However, those who
wished to continue their social life at the club and yet
wanted to retain their 5p would stand in the corridor and
chat to their friends who were allowed to use that passage
as a right of way. The caretaker could not evict the non-
members of the club and could only attempt to dissuade the
members from joining in the conversation. If this occurred
conversations would continue between club members and non-
members through the open doorway, across the boundary line.

One of the youth club nights coincided with the Cadet Force
meeting. Boys, who were attending the Cadets, rather than
the youth club, might come first to the club before later
going to the Cadets. Then, during the evening the boys
would enter the club-room smoking, arguing that they were for
that night at the Cadets and therefore not subject to club
rules. However, when they wanted to purchase kets from the
tuck-shop they would, temporarily, become club members again.
Similarly, those who were playing snooker would come in to buy
kets on the basis of club membership, although for that night
they were non-participatory members.[1] In this way the
children managed to circumvent and manipulate the lines of
control drawn by two different sections of the adult world.

1. Kets is the children's term of sweets. See pp.477-514
    for a discussion of Kets.

With reference to the above case-study it is significant
that the appropriation of public space for personal domains,
as in the children's use of the ' Old Man's Shed ', was one
of the underlying reasons for the creation of youth clubs.
Special buildings were created to house and confine young
people, to control their manipulation of adult spaces. But
these ' clubs ' were of and about the adult world, officially
sanctioned spaces whose boundaries and limits were controlled
by that adult world. They stifled the creative potential which
is characteristic of ' doing nothing '. It should therefore
be of no surprise that children will always continue to
construct their own personal domains. An adult member of the
community reminisces back to his time as a skin-head:

> " M. talks of how there used to be a
> strong identification with place.. Each
> gang had its own colour of tartan strips
> for their clothes...white, blue, black.
> The gang ranged from about 15 years old
> to 20 years old. The youngsters used to
> have to wait about in the market place
> near the telephone box and wait to recieve
> a call from another gang leader. They
> would then go into the pub to get their
> leader out to answer the call. It was like
> their "office" and the leaders would arrange
> to meet." (aged 20)

But it is not only physical space which is subject to
appropriation, reinterpretation and transformation whilst
' doing nothing '; objects within that space are similarly
treated. Just as lamposts form ' safe ' places in the
games of early childhood, adolescents find alternative
uses for them. The structural similarity between these two kinds
of activity lies in the conception children and adolescents

/..

have of them: like the spaces, the objects used seem to be public property or to be unwanted and abandoned by the adult world. In the culture of ' doing nothing ' they are non-things suitable for the nobodies they feel themselves to be.

Rarely in the course of my fieldwork did I come across deliberate vandalism. Rather, the children found different uses for things which appeared to have been cast out as useless : old tyres were kicked and thrown about, old radios dismantled and their bits used for other purposes; butterflies were chased as 'shuttlecocks' in games of badminton. Performed by younger children such activity receives little comment; when adolescents perform them the perception changes to one of destructive action. And, to conceptually control such activity it is classed by the adult world as vandalism. That the intention to damage may not have been there, that the object itself was useless to the adult world passes unrecognized.[1]

Things appear to be done during the course of ' doing nothing'; whilst roaming the streets things present themselves to the children as potential for experimentation. For example, derelict buildings - those places which seem to belong to no one   - are suitable for conversion to the children's

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1. My comments on ' vandalism ' are not offered as an excuse for deliberate attacks on property but I suggest that the explanation of ' doing nothing ' in terms of the children's own interpretation of the world and their place within it may lead to more comprehension of the meaning of this action.

own private property.   During the course of my fieldwork

an old cinema was due to be demolished and, as soon as the

order was served on it, its walls were daubed in graffiti.

Prior to this it had been untouched by the children although

it had been empty for two years.

Telephone boxes can be transformed into objects of amusement

rather than communication :

> " In the telephone box you pick any
> number out of the book and dial it.
> When someone answers you say: " Is
> Mr.Wall there ?" They say no. You
> ask: " Is Mrs.Wall there?" Again,they
> say no. Then you say: " Are there any
> walls there?" When they say no, you
> say: " Well, what's holding up the
> bloody roof then? You slam the phone
> down and run".

Coal-fired ranges may be used to play ' soldiers ' : bits

of paper are placed in the grate and these ' soldiers ' are

shot down - by pulling the back-boiler flue to make the flames

consume them.   Bunches of keys can be transformed into footballs,

coke tins made into sprays by shaking them up and puncturing

them with a pin: models can be sculpted with the putty stolen

from new window frames; ants can be made to fry under the

glare of a magnifying glass in the sun; pictures of nude ladies

can be placed on the dart-board and the bodily parts used to

differentiate between scores; trees can be climbed, walls can

be sat on, garages can be clambered over.

' Doing nothing ' is, then, both structure and event;it is

both form and content, each transforms into the other. Things

appear to be done in the temporal and spatial flow of everyday

life as the following description of one short walk with a
group of boys amply demonstrates.

" Tucker, Kirby and Hutch arrive, Kirby is
carrying a transistor and cracks a joke about
music as you walk. Hutch does an Elvis imitation
to one of the songs. Kirby and Tucker do " jerky
walks " - walking so as to appear having one leg
longer than the other. They swipe at some
butterflies with some badminton rackets they have
borrowed from me after losing the shuttlecock.
Tucker misses a hit and Kirby shouts: Mr. and Mrs.
making a pun and referring to the television
programme . They invent a new penalty for missing
- knickerbocker and a double knickerbocker. They
all then break into song and sing Nobby Hall at
the tops of their voices. Tucker and Hutch then
imitate each other, copying what each other does
as they walk along. An argument breaks out as to who
has the most televisions and Tucker swears that they
have 4 at home and that Hutch has only 3. Tucker
tells me of the camp they went to with the cadets
and the pillow fight they had. We reach the
allotment and they immediately ask if there are any
pea pods to suck. They haven't seen courgettes
before and Kirby suggests that they are water melons.
Later we walk down the ' lines ' (disused railway
line) and Hutch finds an old tyre which he hurls
in the air. They then find some bricks and throw
them at the gate, betting each other that they can
hit it. Kirby finds some long grass and they all
blow through it, composing tunes out of the sounds
they make. They leave to go to visit Mary."

' Doing nothing ' is the creative context of the children's
own culture constructed between the socializing boundaries
imposed upon their actions by an adult world in which they
have yet to find a place.

Why then do children use the term ' doing nothing ' ? The series of cameos presented and discussed throughout the analysis yield some clues. Firstly, ' doing nothing ' reflects the adolescent's perception of the dominant ideology surrounding concepts of action: play and work are transposed onto the categories of child and adult. Through the socializing experiences of the school, the home and the legal system the adolescent sees him or herself to be between these major classifications, in a no man's land with nothing to do. ' Doing nothing ' is a response in accordance with the terms of the dominant order which leaves them with no legitimated action sphere.

But, as the analysis reveals, the negativity of this description has some positive benefits for, by using the term ' doing nothing ', the children deflect external perception of the discrete activities in which they have been engaged. The description ' doing nothing ' effectively cuts off communication with the adult world: no questions can be asked about non-events, no controls can be applied. It can mean ' doing nothing you would be interested in' or ' doing nothing I want you to know about ' but the questioner cannot tell. As such ' doing nothing ' allows the children some freedom of movement between the lines which control them.

In essence, ' doing nothing ' is a response within the discourse available. Many of the children had hobbies which

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would fall into a legitimated sphere of action: swimming, football, stamp collecting and horse riding. Many of the children worked legitimately in shops or doing milk rounds. But to answer questions about ' doing ' in these terms would invite adult participation in and knowledge of their own collective culture, possibly leading to a lessening of the freedom and self respect which these activities bring to the children. To actually detail other aspects of ' doing nothing ', such as throwing bricks at tin cans or participating in the black economy, would be negatively perceived by the adult world and would invite controls upon these actions. To respond with the reply ' doing nothing ' is therefore the most satisfactory answer, one which serves to exclude rather than include adults from their activities. It is the one answer which allows the growing child maximum freedom of movement during the socializing process and maximum self control over that experience. The logic of this conflict model is outlined in Fig.4.

For the growing child it is the freedom to be one's self, to be in control of one's own actions which is perceived to be of greatest importance, a perception which parallels the experience of 'play' for the younger child as Sutton-smith describes:

> ' It is not just that the freedom to
> be irrational gives one the greatest
> possible freedom to be oneself (exploring
> all personal permutations), the freedom
> to indulge the opposite as one can in play
> or in rites of reversal is itself a
> cognitive activity which liberates thought. '
> (1977b:235)

Child's Response	Evaluation	Adult's Response	Effect Produced	
hobbies and sports	+	further questions and interest	interaction	))))) literal))))
smashing windows roaming streets playing in the toilets	-	criticism and restriction of activities	interaction	
' doing nothing'	+/-	mystification and frustration	no interaction	)) metaphoric

Fig.4   Doing Nothing : A Conflict Model

Diagram   illustrates the deflective aspect of the children's culture through the metaphoric use of ' doing nothing ' as a description of their everyday activities.

The continuation of this ' play ' mode into adolescence
as the experience of ' doing nothing ' reflects the process
of social maturation which the children are undergoing. It
is an experience which they actively participate in, rather
than passively accept, and it is through using ' doing
nothing ' as a metaphor for the culture which they create
that this self socialization is best protected.

CHAPTER 4 : THE LANGUAGE OF ' DOING NOTHING'

"
    T : Jeremine...... Jeremine..... say what.
    J : What
    T : What's your name (whispers)
    A : Name ?
    T : What's yer last name?
    A : James
    T : Jeremine James?
    K : That's what they call him J J for.
    T : Jeremine..... Jeremine ..... Jeremine...... Jeremine man.
    J : What?
    T : James....(laughs).... Lets all have a good laugh shall we
        (laughs) "

Introduction

What goes zzub zzub is a bee flying backwards and what
is significant about this event is that adults rarely find
it amusing. Children, on the other hand, invariably do.
This suggests that they possess an alternative conception
of the world, one which is lost or transformed as adulthood
encroaches. It indicates the existence of an alternative
linguistic mode within which ' zzubing ' bees are perceived
as humorous, a use of language which contrasts with that of
the adult world. If, as Crick suggests, ' language is the
most social of all institutions ' then an exploration of
these linguistic differences should reveal, in part, the
process of socialization, the process whereby children
learn about social order (1976:7).

Undoubtedly, one of the most crucial elements in the post-
1960 revolution in social anthropological theory was the
belated recognition of the importance of Ferdinand de
Saussure's (1960) contribution to the structural study
of language. It was his work which, through demonstrating

the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, stimulated

structuralist approaches to the study of social forms.

Through de Saussure's formulation of the sign as both

signifier and signified this new perspective explored

the idea that ' language is not simply a labelling device

for elements of the real world ' but, what was more

important for the study of social life, that ' there is

some relationship between the categories through which

the world is experienced and the language used to express

them ' (Ardener, 1971b:xx).

However, although structuralism owes a considerable debt

to this linguistic tradition, there has been a tendency,

as Crick points out, to ignore the study of language as

a means of symbolic expression :

> ' for all the modern use of language
> and linguistic models to investigate
> classificatory systems, it seems to
> have been overlooked that language
> itself is a social fact and that one
> might reasonably expect verbal activity
> to form such a symbolic structure'.
> (1976:66) 1

The duality of the Saussurian model has focused attention

upon the division between language and discourse, disguising

the fact that ' language really only exists when a speaker

takes it in his possession and actualises it ' (Ricouer ,

1978:70). To include this possibility within a structuralist

---

1. For further discussion of these debates see pp.14-22.

frame necessitates conflating the artificial distinction
between <u>la langue</u> and <u>la parole</u> : it involves combining
a semiotic approach to culture - the analysis of ' intra-
linguistic relationships ' - with a semantic focus, that
is a recognition of the ' relationship between language
and the world ' (ibid:74). Only then can verbal activity
be seen to form a symbolic structure.

Within such a perspective language is not understood to
contain meanings but rather the potentiality to mean:
it is a means of meaning, not the source of them. Meaning
arises from use. To explore the act and art of using
language ' one must begin from speaking as a mode of action
not from language as an unmotivated mechanism ' (Hymes,
1971:67). Such an approach focuses on the performative
aspects of language as a structuring and creative linguistic
mode. It is, then, through moving away from an analysis of
language and other modes of symbolic expression as purely
' an investigation of signs in abstraction toward an investi-
gation of them in their natural habitat - the common world in
which men look, name, listen and make ' that a more incisive
and penetrating description, and hence explanation, of social
life is achieved (Geertz, 1976:1498). It demonstrates the
ways in which ' individuals and groups of individuals try to
make sense of the profusion of things that happen to them '
and endeavours to capture and portray the form and context
of this creative process (ibid:1498).

In the following analysis of the language of children
these ideas are explored. Through emphasising the
performative aspects of language the process and forms
through which the children acquire and demonstrate their
knowledge of the social world are displayed and the context
within which ' zzubing ' bees are humorous is revealed to
be a social space between adult orders:

> ' Becoming social cannot be understood
> in ' monological ' terms: as a series
> of competencies simply ' stored ' in
> the learner. Rather becoming social
> involves, on the level of cognition,
> mastery of the ' dialogical ' contexts
> of communication. Such mastery is by
> no means wholly discursive, but involves
> the accumulation of practical knowledge
> of the conventions drawn upon in the
> production and reproduction of social
> interaction. ' (Giddens, 1979:129-30)

The language of ' doing nothing ' images this socializing
experience; it is a language of and about the children's
culture and reveals the ways in which children actively
participate in their own socialization. As the analysis
suggests children create their own language by appropriating
and transforming the adult tongue, a performative mode which
reflects the children's construction of their own cultural
space, the context for ' doing nothing '.[1]

Talking of language.....

The significance of tracing the process and form of language
use was brought home to me by the comments of one child.
Remarking upon his frequent visits to see me with his friends

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1. These ideas of appropriation and transformation of the
   adult world appear in the children's use of space,
   see pp.233-249.

he said: " It's nice coming here - to sit and talk ".

Talking, as I soon became aware, is a crucial part of

' doing nothing ' ; ' doing nothing ' involves learning how

to talk ; talking involves knowing how and when to use. language.

In outlining his approach towards an ethnography of speaking

Hymes points out that,

> ' rules of appropriateness beyond grammar
> govern speech and are acquired as part of
> conceptions of the self, and of meanings
> associated both with particular forms of
> speech and with the act of speaking
> itself. ' (1971:56)

To be able to talk involves more than grammatical competence:

it requires knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate forms

and contexts of speaking. But such rules are never made

explicit; children have only a ' practical mastery '

over their language (Bourdieu, 1977:2). To discover these

implicit procedures involves, therefore, analysis of their

manifestation in performance.

An important feature of talking is telling tales, tales

about their experiences in and of the adult world, of

confrontations with particular adults, of incidents which

have happened. Telling tales, in adult eyes, is something

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1. In his discussion Bourdieu distinguishes between practical
    and symbolic mastery. The children have ' practical
    mastery ' with language only; they do not and cannot
    discourse about speech rules, their grammatical forms or
    the correctness of particular phrases or words.   But,
    those who cannot ' talk ' are ridiculed and laughed at;
    they are easily marked out, c.f. Bourdieu (1977)
    pp16-22.

not to be done; children must not inform <u>on</u> one another.

But, tale telling is critical in ' doing nothing '. Children

inform each other through telling tales; this is one of the

ways in which they gain knowledge of the social world. Phil

Corrigan also notes the significance of tale telling:

> 'standing around talking amongst
> themselves seems to have a real
> importance to the boys which mirrors
> the importance of talking in school and
> the importance of silence to the teacher
> ..... They stand around and exchange
> stories, which need never be true or real,
> but which are as interesting as possible.'
> (1979:127)1

All tales are told in a particular style and the following

are representative of this oral tradition:

(1)   " One night some lads broke into the undertakers
      and two coppers came in. Two of the lads escaped
      but the third was left behind and had to hide in
      a coffin. When he thought the cops had gone he
      began to get out of the coffin and as he raised
      the lid one of the coppers saw him in the light
      of his flash lamp and fainted. "

(2)   " My cousin had a shop and one day someone stole
      a pair of knickers. The cops came and my cousin
      told them he hadn't chased the man as he didn't
      like to ask the man for a pair of ladies knickers."

(3)   " There was this milk depot and one night two lads
      broke in to steal some milk bottles but the man who
      owned it had put mousetraps on top of all the bottles
      to catch them. "

(4)   " Tom and his mates broke into a butchers shop one
      night and tried to take the safe away. They got it
      as far as the door but it was too big to get it
      through. "   2

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1. Talking in school- particularly in lessons- is a disorderly
   act: it represents the intrusion of the children's external
   world inside the school. It is matter out of place and
   out of time, see p.448.
2. Similar series of tales are told about sexual exploits,
   see p. 523   about the consumption of cigarettes and alcohol,
   see p.534 and about work experience, see p.228.

As far as I was able to ascertain none of these events ever
took place in the manner in which they were told. But the
reality or non-reality of these fictions is a secondary
consideration. The details of the tale are subservient to
its stylistic form as is demonstrated by a comparison with
an event which did take place:

> " Hawky tells me how his brother stole
> fags from the shop down the street and
> naturally the police came to their house
> to look for them. They were all sitting
> around puffing away on the fags and the
> police came and asked if they had any
> cigarettes (Hawky laughs at the stupidity
> of their comments.) " We were throwing
> packets of twenty onto the fire to get
> rid of them " he says, aghast at the
> waste, but tells me that he shoved 120
> inside a cushion for later."

The brothers were all persistent petty thieves, well known
in the neighbourhood, but the telling of this tale was
comparable with the tales of non-events.

That the precise details of a tale are irrelevant to its
overall structure is apparent in another story told to me
at frequent intervals throughout my period of fieldwork.
On first arriving in the village I was told that one of the
boys had smashed a shop window and had been fined. Later,
the story was repeated but this time it was said that the boy
paid the fine of £30 himself. Another account stated that
his father paid it and yet another related how his father
refused to pay it and went to prison. A final version told
that a policeman paid the fine on the boy's behalf. Over
the two year fieldwork period the amount of the fine increased
from £30 to £150 to £153. This particular tale was always

told in company and no one ever questioned its validity
or disputed the facts. The details were irrelevant; it
was a good story. It is the style and subject matter of
a tale which is more important than its factual base for
tale telling is about performance and artistry, about
skill in language use.[1]

A tale to be told whilst ' doing nothing ' must,then, be
structured in particular ways to be effective: it must be
expressive of the children's own linguistic style and the
overall subject matter must be of significance to the everyday
concerns and interests of the listeners. The above examples
all refer to incidents which ' occurred ' with the police.
Another group of tales are told about events at school,
particularly about confrontations with or jokes played upon
their teachers. Both groups of tales concern figures of
authority, policemen and the teachers, who have some power
to control and order the activities of the children; they
represent two kinds of law enforcers with whom the children
have daily to contend. In these stories this experience
is laid bare and the potentiality of conflict neutralised
through its representation in a humorous frame. The children
symbolically liberate events from adult control through the
ritualised telling of tales, transforming a possibly serious
confrontation in their everyday lives into a laughing matter.
They are tales of the unexpected about very real expectations.

---

1. Facts only become important in competitive tale telling;
   for example, in tales about sexual exploits, among boys
   in particular, the facts become central rather than
   peripheral. In such cases tales told are sources of
   knowledge, see pp.444-449 for further discussion.

Another set of tales endlessly related by the children echo
this transformatory mode; ghost and spook stories are good
stories precisely through an assurance on behalf of the story
teller that these ' unreal ' events actually took place. As
such they represent an inversion of the previous group of
stories:

(1)   " The junior school is haunted by a man who sits
        in a wheel chair. One girl saw it and fell
        downstairs and broke her leg ."

(2)   " Steven said that in the factory where his father
        works there is a ghost. He was walking through his
        room and he went cold all over. He went into the
        office and there was a wellington boot in the corner
        which rocked back and forth and spoke to him. Once
        the wellington boot jumped out at his dad. His dad
        was furious when they got rid of it as it was his
        father's friend."

(3)   " We often go to the spiritualist hut. There's an
        old woman in there. Once Steven talked to his
        grandfather. One girl talked to her grandmother who
        said that somewhere there was a photograph and a
        bracelet which she should find before someone else
        got it who looked exactly like her."

(4)   " In the Chinese take away there are alsation dogs
        hanging up in the back of the shop as meat. Peter
        once saw a dog hanging in the wood with its throat
        slit. Another time a policeman's dog was strung up
        on the bridge with barbed wire."

Through reference to a personal tie - a family member or
someone at school- these fictional tales become factual.
To tell a good tale is to transform reality through
performance ; a good performance requires a particular
facility with the language of children.

The tales told by children illustrate that, for them,
talking is doing. In the adult world this is not the case

which serves to further reinforce the dominant negative

perception of ' doing nothing ', the children's culture.

Through the tales the children tell one another events

and non-events are conflated in the performance. They

are expressive of the children's own world and are part

of its creation.[1] As such these tales are mythical stories,

stories which are about knowledge more than containers of

it. A myth, as Wagner has argued, ' is not a passive

message about things but an active operator in setting

up or bringing about certain conceptual conditions ' (1978:

256). For the children, these conditions are the conditions

of becoming social; they demonstrate through performance how

to experience and how to perceive the world. Through

analysis, therefore, they reveal the world through the eyes

of children. The ways in which this is achieved are

documented below through discussion of linguistic style in

performance.

Language as classifier : 'them' and 'us'

The precis of the tales told by the children used above do

not reveal the style in which such stories are told and style

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1. The current succes of the north-eastern comedian Bobby
   Thompson parallels this in the adult world. Bobby
   Thompson's performance in working men's clubs consists
   of series of tales about working-class life in the
   north-east of England. The stories merge into one
   another in a conversational style and are quite
   distinctive in their presentation of a way of life and
   a mode of thought. To those who are not familiar with
   the north-eastern culture his brand of comedy is
   impenetrable.

is crucial to this performative art. Tales must be told in
a particular manner, have a distinctive patterning of
language and a particular rhythm to be a good story, as the
following tape transcript reveals.[1]

> " G : Allison we were geet teasing Kirby's
>   sister last night.
> GL : Right, she runs up behind us with a
>   funny run yer kna...
> G : He's chucking bricks at her yer kna.
> GL : She picks one up and goes " I'm going to
>   tell me dad of you. He'll come over and
>   beat you." I says: " Fetch him over to our
>   house and our Stephen 'll plant him six foot
>   under." She goes : " Me dad'll knack him."
> A : Is that his eldest sister? Catherine?
> G : She's the one with the funny walk.
> A : Catherine's the one with the ginger hair -
>   isn't she?
> GL : Music box.
> G : Radio 1.
> A : She's the one who always walks round with a
>   radio on. Is she the one who was a waitress?
> GL : No that's the other one - the funny walk one.
> A : I've never met her. "

As Phil Corrigan has suggested children place importance on
talking ' not to communicate ideas, but to communicate the
experience of talking ' (1979:128).

But Corrigan touches on only one feature of children's
talking. As I reveal below, the performative style and
experience of talking represents, for the children, the
exchange of ideas <u>in itself</u> : the language of ' doing nothing'

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1.   I was unable to get many tapes of such stories for,
     as I show later, tales are not set aside from more
     general ' talking ' ; they appear in the midst of
     conversation - as part of the experience of talking
     rather than a particular and separate mode.

/..

involves the manipulation and transformation of a
language initially derived by them from the adult world.
Through the creation of their own exclusive language the
children, then, take control over this part of the sociali-
zation process. It is this movement towards increased self
control which is fundamental to the culture of ' doing
nothing ' and the children's use of language images this
process.

Labov , for example, has shown that whilst children originally
learn to speak, learn how to use language, through contact
with their immediate family circle, their language becomes
increasingly ' reconstructed to fit the rules used by their
peer groups ' as they grow older (1969:208). These ' rules '
are implicit rules of pattern, style and cadence; they
structure a way of speaking through use of a particular and
particularised vocabulary, a distinct syntax, a peculiar
rhythm, accent and pronounciation. To be able to speak in
this language requires more than the art of translation. It
necessitates knowing how to use language. It is this which
is the mark of a good story teller, it is this which is
important in performance.

The Opies point out that any child, new to an area, must
learn the local words and expressions for ' unless he does
this, he will not merely be thought peculiar, he will not
be understood ' (1977:35). I, too, had to learn a new
language. The children,for example, have their own words for
parts of the body, to differentiate between kinds of footwear,
to insult those they hate; local landmarks are renamed,local

/..

characters identified by specific epithets. They also
use particular adjectives and specialised verbs, employ
heavily patterned and ritualised forms of speech which
gives a distinctive stamp to their conversational style.
It is this which structures their linguistic performances.

Firstly, the children's vocabulary is characterised by a
preference for ' short, sharp words ' (Opies,1977:175).
This economy of length creates a harshness of sound, a
staccato rhythm, which itself facilitates a particular
conversational style: a fast, punchy metre which allows
for quick verbal exchanges. The parts of the body, for
example, are renamed mostly with mono-syllabic terms; none
are longer than two syllables: gob, rattle, trap, hole, and
hooter all mean the mouth ; sneck and beak refer to the nose ;
lugs are ears and lid means head.

Secondly, the potential musicality of language is recognised
and utilised. A considerable uniformity of sound is produced
through the use of particular word endings: hag, bag, bog,
lug,mug and bug;clemmy, spuggy, chowy, gadgy, gobby, sissy,
manky and hacky. Words with the suffix ' er ' and ' a ' are
pronounced with a hard ' a ' sound, as in ' crack ' : spacca,
snacker, knacker, mega. Others ending in ' z ' or ' s ' are
pronounced like the ' z ' in buzz: soz, bas, les, pros.[1] In
this manner the children transform their mother tongue, that
taught to them as tiny children, in a highly ordered fashion

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1. See Glossary.

/..

and create their own uniform language.[1]

The Opies point to ' two apparently conflicting emotions

.... active in schoolchild language ', namely, a ' respect

for tradition and a desire for fun ' (ibid:174). This

latter theme reveals itself in the ' slangy superficial

lore of comic songs, jokes, catch phrases, fashionable

adjectives, slick nicknames and crazes ' that instantly

spread, like wildfire, throughout a particular group

(ibid:34). During my period of fieldwork this tradition

was apparent. The adjective <u>cool</u> and the noun <u>nurd</u> both

became current, words taken from the American television

programme <u>Happy Days</u>.[2] Similarly, the adjective <u>rare</u>

can be traced to the popularity of such <u>rare beings</u> as

The Hulk and Spider Man. Invented for children by the

adult world and introduced to them through the media, it

is ironic that many adults find such references obscure.

The creation of specialized consumer products for children

increases their marginality from the social order and, as

the above examples show, it ensures, at the same time, the

very exclusiveness of that marginality.

The second strand in the language of school children is what

the Opies refer to as dialectal lore ' the language of

children's darker doings ', a language which ' belongs to

all time, but is limited in locality ' (ibid:35). This

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1. Comparable processes of transformation occur in the
    formation of nicknames, see p.381.

2. For a discussion of <u>Happy Days</u> see footnote 1, p.314
    and also p.359.

is passed between generations of children, preserved through their games and rhymes, a language which is truly their peculiar property. It includes words for ' playing truant, giving warning, sneaking, swearing, snivelling, tormenting and fighting ' (ibid:65). It is the property and propensity of particular groups of children, closely guarded and inherited by the succeeding generations.

Many of these words are transformations of words in the adult language. This suggests that the mode of transmission is not only from child to child but also one which actively incorporates and manipulates adult language. Only after this process does it become their own. As I suggested previously, the process of socialization is two-fold, involving both transmission and transformation and often transformation occurs in the very act of transmission.[1] This process is exemplified in the patterning of the children's vocabulary: soz , meaning sorry, has been shortened and the end syllable replaced with a single ' z '. The adult word has been reconstructed; a new word is produced in the child's style. Similarly, the word spastic is transformed into spacca and chewing-gum into chowy.

Other words reveal a somewhat different process of trans-formation through transmission : these are old dialect words which have become obsolete in the adult tongue but are still

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1. See discussion, p p. 21 - 24 , pp. 131 - 137.

to be found in the children's vocabulary. Over time they
have become symbols of exclusiveness. In each of the
following examples the original meaning of the word has been
changed through a significant semantic shift.[1]

For example, the word dump means cigarette end. Originally
dump was a small coin or sum of money and was obsolete by
1895. As a verb dump (from Middle English domp) meant
to throw or set down heavily, becoming standard English by
1900 as dump to set aside, to throw away, found for example
in the word rubbish-dump. The use of dump as a noun,
meaning cigarette end, encapsulates all these meanings: a
cigarette end is that which has been dumped, thrown away,
left as worthless by the adult world. A cigarette end,
useless in the adult world, is highly prized by children.
A further interesting sequence of semantic shifts can also
be traced. Dump also was used to mean button (1895);
derived from the meaning of dump (as small coin), it was
used in dump-fencer, a button-seller. Thus, the shortened
cigarette becomes a dump (fencer), equivalent to a butt
(on-seller).[2]

Similarly, stots means testicles. Coming from the Northumber-
land and Durham dialect the verb stot means to strike any

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1. For another more detailed example, see Chapter 7,pp.477-514.
2. Adults occasionally use the world ' dump ' but it is
   considered somewhat impolite. Men may use it in
   male company, but would be rebuked for using it to
   a woman.

/..

elastic article. Traced from the Dutch, <u>stuiten</u>, meaning
to bounce or rebound, <u>stot</u> was also used to describe a
bull-ox. <u>Stots</u>, as testicles, contains all these meanings:
something elastic, bouncy as in balls (also used for
testicles). Furthermore, <u>to stot</u> someone is to hit them
hard, to literally make them rebound (c.f. <u>stoter</u> (1750)
to fall heavily, hit hard from the Dutch <u>stooten</u> to push
or knock). <u>Stottin</u> ', used as an adjective by the children
means to be livid, literally bouncing with rage as in the
expression " I was stottin ' ".

The words <u>trap</u> and <u>rattle</u>, used for mouth, have a more
complex etymology. <u>Trap</u>, meaning a carriage, stems from
<u>rattle-trap</u>, a carriage, itself derived from <u>rattler</u>, a
coach, so called because it rattled along(1750). <u>Potato
trap</u> or <u>potato jaw</u> were both slang terms for mouth from
1780 and <u>potato box</u> meant mouth from 1870. <u>Rattletrap</u>
(1820) became used for mouth, and also for <u>chatter-box</u> .
In the child's vocabulary of the twentieth century <u>rattle</u>
and <u>trap</u> both mean mouth and chatter: " Shut yer mouth "
is the same as " shut yer trap " or " haad yer rattle.[1]

Certain other words used by the children are words which
adults attempt to retain for <u>their</u> exclusive use. These
are words which refer to taboo subjects, particularly those

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1. Etymological references taken from Dobson (1974);
   Geeson (1969) and Partridge (1972).

of a sexual nature. In contrast to the foregoing examples these words - swear words or technical terms for sexual matters - do <u>not</u> undergo any linguistic transformation when used by the children. Indeed, the children endeavour to use these words <u>precisely</u> as adults do. One boy, for example, suffered acute embarrassment when he said that the acronym V.D. meant <u>venerical</u> disease; another was ridiculed when he announced importantly that someone he knew had cancer of the <u>crevix</u>.[1] The transformation here is one of the social context of use, rather than of form or meaning as in the earlier examples and it is the transformation of context which makes such taboo words valuable to the children. Only when such words are to be uttered outside the children's own social world do they undergo any linguistic change. For example, in the company of adults or other outsiders ' bastard ' becomes <u>bas</u>, ' lesbian ' changes to <u>les</u> , ' prostitute ' to <u>proz</u> and the expression ' sweet bugger all ' becomes the acronym <u>S.B.A.</u> . It will be noted that the transformations which such words undergo in this context are consistent with the styles noted above.

Talking, however, requires more than mere mastery over vocabulary; knowing <u>how</u> to use it and <u>when</u> to use it is equally crucial. Those who fail to heed the unwritten rules of syntax and style are ruthlessly ridiculed and inability in this sphere may lead to exclusion from the

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1. Further discussion of this point is given on pp.443-449.

group. Accents and speech defects are impediments to participation, for ways of speaking are used as significant indicators of category membership. The children, for example, rigidly differentiated between those who " talk posh " and those who do not. To be included in the group a child who " talks posh " would have to adjust his or her accent, switching ways of talking between the domestic context of the home and his or her own social world. Throughout my period of fieldwork I was constantly reprimanded for the way I spoke through the accusing question : " why don't you talk like us ? " Those who stutter or lisp are taught the true art of speaking through mockery:

> " The others begin to tease Stephen
> because he gets his words mixed up
> and cannot maintain the pace of the
> conversation. They jeer at him and
> despise him because " he can't even
> swear properly ". Stephen says " hell
> bells " instead of " hells bells" and
> they continue to tease him as he
> attempts to say it. "

To be able to speak the language of the children, as this example shows, means being able to use such improper language properly.[1] " Talking proper" is a prerequisite for group membership.

To be able to talk means maintaining and participating in the conversational flow, joking and teasing, knowing how

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1. This is important for both girls and boys but only boys should swear in public. Girls are not supposed to swear. Boys must not, however, swear in front of girls they respect. For further discussion of this gender difference, see pp.441-458.

to answer back the verbal jibes of others. The following conversations reveal this rhythmic style as some boys played around with the tape-recorder:

(1) " T : It's not taping.
      K : It is taping you idiot.
      T : Is it?
      K : Aye.
      T : Well, say something then.
      K : Tucker is a nutter.
      T : Shut yer trap now, son.
          (Pause)
          (Laughs)
      K : Tucker is a nutter.
      T : Shut yer trap Kirby now... or I'll
          beat yer brains out (laughs).
      K : Go back to Sandby where you belong, Tucker.
      T. What's that... Is it taping?
      K : Why, Aye.... Tucker is a nutter, Tucker is
          a nutter.
      T : Shut yer mouth Kirby now, you stupid idiot...
          Oh, shut up.   "

(2) " T : It's on now isn't it?
      K : Why Aye.
      T : It's not on man.
      K : It is on.
      T : It's not on.
      K : Switch it on the mike.
          (blows a raspberry and laughs)
      T : It's on (warningly)
      K : You little git.
      T : Kirby is a bummer.
      K : Shut yer face Tucker.
      T : Shut yer trap.
      K : Took 'er down the woods and got nowt.
      T : Alright... Kirby's not capable.
          (pause)
      T : Oh lad..oh lad..oh lad.. (getting louder)
      K : Baldy bonk.. baldy bonk.. baldy bonk. "

(3) " T : Can I have a fag ?
      A : Yes
      T : Are these open?
      A : They look open to me.
      T : Can I have one?
      A : Yes.
      T : (to A) you can have one of my fags. (referring
          to K) He can't have one can he?
      K : (replying to the insult) You can knack off then.
      T : Where's the light...Is it (the tape) on ?
      A : Mmm
      T : How long's that been on?

/..

K : (delighted) since you wanted a fag, Tucker...
    wait till I tell yer mother you Smokey Joe.
T : Alright, Kirby... wait till I tell yer father
    <u>you</u> smoke.
K : It doesn't matter.
T : It does though...he'll beat yer brains out.
K : Me father thinks yer big.
T : Who?
K : You...look at the size of him and the size of
    me and me father won't even let me smoke. Tucker
    walks in, a geet fag in his gob: " Here Mr.Kirby,
    here's a cigar for your " (imitating Tucker).
T : So what.   "

In all three conversations the following characteristics

of talking, of performance, are to be found: the nicknames,

' Tucker ' and ' Kirby ' are used throughout; insults -

<u>idiot</u>, <u>git</u>, <u>bummer</u>, <u>nutter</u> - are exchanged quickly between

them and the insulting nicknames ' Baldy Bonk ' and ' Smokey

Joe ' used temporarily as alternatives to permanent nicknames

in the exchange of verbal blows. <u>Face</u>, <u>trap</u> and <u>gob</u> are all

used for mouth, <u>fag</u> for cigarette, <u>geet</u> for great. In

conversation (1) the reference to Sandby is to the local

lunatic asylum. In conversation (2) there is a developing

battle of verbal skill finally culminating in a word-play

upon the nickname ' Tucker ' which is transformed into

' took ' er down to the woods and got nowt ', that is, took

her down to the woods (place for sex) and did not manage to

have sex. This insult is diffused by T, through his

suggestion that K. is not capable at all. K. responds with

the nickname ' Baldy bonk ', literally bald testicles, that

is a further derogatory comment on T's inability.

In conversation (3) a verbal battle develops over the

subject of smoking, an illicit activity, through appeal
first to the authority of the opponent's mother by K. To
this T. invokes the greater authority of K's father. Also
in conversation C. the idea of the relationship between
increasing size and the approach of adulthood is raised.
The bigger you are K. suggests, the more mature you are
and therefore you should be allowed to smoke but, in
terms of age,T. is older than K. and therefore it is he
who is permitted.[1]

As a whole these three conversations,which occurred whilst
'doing nothing', reveal that the use of language, talking, is
an activity in itself. Fast rhythmic speech and short snappy
sentences produce a conversational style which can itself be
played with. Talking is punctuated by mimicing accents, by
outbursts of laughter and the introduction of non-verbal
forms of expression through blowing raspberrys or feigning
a raised fist.[2] Although it would appear that these
conversations are arguments, through a glance at their
content, the form and tone of all three was far from
acrimonious. Talking in this style is merely something to
do, a form of entertainment in itself, a performance.

1. The relationship between physical size and maturity
    is discussed further on pp.426-441. See also conceptualizations
    of age in relation to social maturity, pp.174-213.

2. See,pp.419-426 for discussion of the body as a medium of
    expression for the children.

The use of more ritualised verbal ripostes is also traditional
to this style of talking and knowing how to use these speech
forms is crucial for participation in conversations. It is
a process of verbal duelling similar to the practice of
' playing the dozens ' among Negro youths.[1] Both involve
demonstrating mastery over language itself and hence, for
the children,establishing their places within the group
through verbal skill. Those who are proficient in the art
gain considerable respect. Some standard response couplets
are as follows:

```
A :  Do you mind ?           A : Well !
B :  No, I baby sit.         B : That's what you get
                                 water from.


A : I don't find you funny   A : Aye.
B : I'm not lost funny.      B : Comes before J.


            A : See....
            B : Comes after B.
```

That these formulas are traditional among school children
is demonstrated through reference to the Opies:

```
A : Why
B : Y is a letter you ought to know better.

A : What ?
B : Watt made the steam engine. ( Opies, 1977:71 )
```

All such couplets again depend upon processes of transformation.
The original meaning of the statement is deliberately mis-
construed through performance; its content mocked and

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1. See, for example, Abrahams (1962).

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distorted. This wordsmanship is an important skill for the children and once again represents the creation of nonsense out of adult sense. Throughout the foregoing examples the sense of the first line is transformed into nonsense through a deft switch of contextual meaning and a play upon homonyms. The language of 'doing nothing' gains its characteristics, then, through performance and, through the creative restructuring of both form and content, talking becomes a game in itself. Many of the verbal games played by children are pure art forms; they reveal the speed and dexterity with which language can be manipulated and transformed into something other than that which it first appears to be. For example:

A : Are you alright ?   A : Are you alright?
B : No, I'm half left.   B : No, I'm centre
                                   down the middle.

These standard couplets turn into a game through leading the unwary into unknowing participation:

A : How are you?
B : I'm alright.
A : No you're not you're half left/centre down the middle.

A : How are you?
B : I'm sick.
A : No, you're not you're Paul.

This stylistic structure is considerably flexible:

A : Are your shoes wet ?
B : No/Yes.
A : Well, they should be. There's a big drip in them.

A : Did you get the number?
B : What of?
A : The bus that run over you.

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A : When did you have the operation?
B : What operation?
A : Do you mean you've always looked like that?
```

What is significant about these couplets is that the
majority of them are composed of common speech conventions,
insignificant comments or courtesy forms of speech which
are ritualised in the adult world. They are the conventional
remarks used by adults in establishing social relationships
or the continuation of them: the questions " How are you ? ",
" Do you mind ? " , or " Are you alright ? " are ritualised,
requiring similarly ritualised responses. They are not
those provided by the children. The children's responses
poke fun at such conventional usage and, through performance,
challenge the structure of adult order. Conformity is replaced
by originality ; one's own verbal skill is demonstrated
at the expense of another's banality. Through recourse to
the language of'doing nothing'children deconstruct the
rituals of language etiquette in the adult world, replacing
it with their own.

One particular sequence of questions and answers is
constructed by the children around the subject of smoking,
highlighting the ritualised aspect of linguistic performance
whilst'doing nothing.'

```
A : Have you got a match ?
B : Yes, your face and my arse.
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/..

This standard riposte is transformed through the addition
of a third line.

    A : Have you got a match ?
    B : Yes your face and my arse.
    C : Well, try and strike it then.

This additional third line reveals the subtly and complexity
of language use among children through the device of punning.
An initial pun is made of the word match, exploiting both
its meaning as matchstick and pair. This double entendre
is capitalised upon by matching, pairing, the questioner's
face with the respondent's arse, thereby delivering an
insult. Through the addition of the third line, however,
the challenge is returned and the power balance upset:
through again using the pun it is proposed that the
insulter (B) should strike the match (that is, light the
match) and at the same time strike the match (ed pair),
(that, is, A's face). The concealed threat in the third
line potentially moves the battle from the purely verbal
plane to direct physical confrontation. Therefore, to
avoid this possibility A, the insulted party, may give an
alternative rejoinder:

    A : Have you got a match?
    B : Yes, your face and my arse.
    A : Reverse the charges and no back answers.

This version effectively concludes the battle but avoids
the possibility of a fight. The initially insulted turns
the accusation back upon his or her opponent; the insult
rebounds on its originator. If all else fails such verbal

battles can be ended through recourse to another standard
response:

> Twinkle, twinkle little star,
> What you say is what you are. [1]

Such rhymes and verbal games contain their own internal
energy, a dynamic which impels a riposte and leads onwards
to further transformatory acts until one party fails to
meet the challenge. They reveal the considerable dexterity
with which the children play with language, a skill which
is often highlighted by adults failing to perform as well.
The inability of many adults to perceive the double meanings-
I was often caught out - stems from their reliance on the
conventionality of speech, their unwillingness to go beyond
normal speech patterning. Adults rarely think outside the
normal linguistic structures; the children often do and it
is the source of their enjoyment. Simple ritual statements,
polite questions, linguistic space fillers are rituals of
normal social intercourse for the adult. The children
seize upon these and reveal them as such, through deliberately
giving meaning to essentially hollow comments. It is an
act which ' intentionally deconventionalises the conventional
(and unintentionally conventionalises the unconventional);
a new meaning has been formed (and an old meaning has been
extended)' (Wagner, 1978:28). In effect, the children's
verbal performances demonstrate de Saussure's (op.cit.)
comments on the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign:

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1. See,pp.292-303 for a discussion of the transformation
    of traditional songs and rhymes by children.

they reveal that meaning is contextual and not, as adults
appear to think, an intrinsic property of words themselves.

Bound up as they are with a particularly ordered conception
of language adults are suitable targets for verbal trickery;
they are not as quick as children to perceive hidden
ambiguities, possible puns and the potential slipperiness
of language. The children on the other hand are; living
between the orders of the adult world they are nimble and
experienced in the art of disordering adult perception.

> " Mog decides to play a trick on me.
> He says; " I bet I can make you say
> red." He then points to various items
> in the room, including red things, and
> asks me the colour of each. I give the
> answer to all of them, except those
> which are red. He then points to a blue
> jumper and asks me what colour it is.
> I say; " Its blue." He replies, with
> obvious delight; " I said I could make
> you say blue." I begin to correct him
> but then realise the catch in the game,
> which would inevitably lead me to say
> the word red. I stop short. He is
> amazed, and annoyed, that I managed to
> catch on. He goes off to try it out on
> some girls. They are not so easily
> trapped and getthe point of the joke
> earlier. "

Ordinary language in the mouths of the children becomes
distorted and disordered. Its symbolic structure is
exploited. It is this use of language which separates the
' them ' from the ' us ', which distances adults from the
children's culture of ' doing nothing '. Through reordering
adult language the children create for themselves a manner
of conversing which adults cannot easily use and, more
importantly, can literally ' do nothing ' about.

Occasionally this process is carried to its logical conclusion.
Not only can adults not use it, they also cannot approximate
to any comprehension of it. Like the use of back-slang
among Cockney street-hawkers and barrow-boys, the children
may so totally transform language, through inverting a word
or introducing extra letters into it, that a new language
is created. This foreign language is totally impenetrable
to outsiders. Two girls of my acquaintance conversed in a
manner which involved inserting an ' h ' into words after
the first letter ; if the word began with a vowel the
' h ' was placed in front. The result was a highly
distinctive, breathless and jerky style of talking, difficult
and sometimes impossible to understand. The Opies (1977)
note some comparable examples: the introduction of the
syllable 'eg' before vowels or 'arag' after the first letter
in a word.[1]

It is interesting that this transformation of language was,
itself, originally an adult device:

> ' This secret juvenile patter is
> another item which is not only old
> but adult in origin, for, by an
> ironic twist, it seems formerly to
> have been used when adults did not
> want children to know what they
> were talking about. ' (Opies,1977:
> 345).

Once again the children's use of language represents the
appropriation and transformation of adult form.

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1. See,example on pp.321-330.

One of the overall characteristics of the performative aspects of the children's language is, then, the creation of semantic and linguistic barriers which separate off and define the cultural context of their social world. Socialization, in this light, is not merely the ordering and classification of children by adults, but the active reordering and process of self-classification performed by the children themselves:

> 'By using slang, local dialect, a
> multiplicity of technical terms,
> word-twistings, codes and sign
> language, children communicate
> with each other in ways which
> outsiders are unable to understand
> and thus satisfy an impulse common
> to all underdogs. ' (ibid:344)

This ' impulse ' is nothing more, however, than the structural necessity to maintain group unity in the face of external systems of control,to distinguish the ' them ' from the ' us ' in their own terms. Through recognising and exploiting the power of language as a symbolic system the children exclude adults from participation. For adults, to be greeted with the couplet, " Ha, ha, ha, hee, hee, hee / An elephant piddled up a rhubarb tree " means nothing; it is pure nonsense. For the children it is a traditional insult applied to the bearers of stale news, a damning comment on their boring and banal personality.

Rhymes and rhyming

It was suggested above that the children pay particular attention to the rhythmic and musical quality of language in their conversational style so it is not surprising

/..

that rhymes themselves are integral to the activity of
talking. These rhymes are those passed directly between
successive generations of children, unlike nursery rhymes
taught to children by adults: ' not always invented by
children they are used by them and transmitted by them,
largely without the mediation of adults or the help of
print ' (Rutherford, 1971:8). To hear a group of
children sniggering in a corner over one of these rhymes
is to feel the power which such esoteric knowledge brings
with it, what Tambiah describes as the ' magical power of
words ' (1973:175). The stirring of adult memories on
the hearing of these rhymes supports the suggestion that
these verses are the ' peculiar property of children '
(Rutherford, 1971:8). Half-remembered verses speak of
the adult's past participation in this corpus of secret
knowledge.

The two major transformatory styles characteristic of the
children's construction and use of language indicated above
are (1) semantic changes and (2) changes in the spelling
of words themselves. These represent play upon form and
content and it is these two movements which give to the
language of ' doing nothing ' its autonomy. The children
are their own ritual specialists and teach one another,
through performance, their cultural style. It is such
techniques which contain and order the culture of children
and are techniques replicated in many diverse dimensions.
The rhymes of children are one such area.

As the Opies (1977) show, many rhymes have an extremely long history; some were originally adult verses and others are translated in different cultures. Some rhymes endure whilst others are momentary. Unlike nursery rhymes, however, these verses are not frozen through the literary mode, but form a purely oral tradition, subject to continual change through the social context of use. In this sense the rhymes are subject to the children's own creativity for the content can change through performance. But it is a creativity which is highly structured.

The Opies remark that ' rhyme seems to appeal to a child as something funny and remarkable in itself, there need be neither wit nor reason to support it ' (1977:37). Indeed, this is the case. Rhymes, unlike jokes, are rarely introduced; they appear as a normal part of the conversation or, in the case of counting-out rhymes for games, they are functional to the game itself. The conversational style of ' doing nothing ' allows the children to burst spontaneously into rhyme in mid-sentence - through rhyming nicknames or word games - and verses can crop up within the normal flow of talking. In that they are part of normal conversational style they need have no extrinsic purpose other than that of contributing to the performance of the speaker and the experience of the listener. There is, for example, no weighty meaning attached to the following rhyme; it is pure nonsense, an experience to be enjoyed:

/..

> Mrs. White had a fright
> In the middle of the night.
> She saw a ghost eating toast
> Halfway up a lampost.

Other rhymes, however, are more conscious constructions;

these are transformations of songs which were once popular

in the adult world but no longer commonly sung. For example,

the children have their own rendition of the old musical hall

favourite, <u>Daisy, Daisy</u>:

> Daisy, daisy, the cops are after you
> And if they catch you
> They'll give you a month or two.
> They'll tie you up with wire
> And set your knickers on fire.
> So ring the bell and pedal like hell
> On a bicycle made for two.

It will be noted that the form of the song is maintained; its

metre and rhythm are used to experiment with the content and

the whole song is contained by the retention of its original

boundaries, the first and the last lines. A love song is

transformed into a slightly licentious verse but its form

is unaltered. It is an iconic image of the process of

manipulating form between adult boundaries of order symbolic

of the culture of ' doing nothing '. The traditional folk

song, <u>Johnny's so long at the fair</u>,undergoes similar treatment:

> Oh dear what can the matter be,
> Three old ladies locked in the lavatory,
> They were there from Monday to Saturday
> Nobody knew they were there.

Again, the form of the song remains but the metre and rhythm

of the original provides the vehicle for an altered content.

The theme of the song is also retained; absence is still

the underlying message but a traditional love lament has become transposed into a verse which ridicules the adult world. The humour of this verse lies in the fact that for adults lavatories are merely places for excreting bodily wastes; on the other hand, toilets for children are places for many other kinds of activities.[1] The three old ladies are, as it were, being made to use the toilets in the manner of children, a wish which is profoundly anti-adult. The infinite flexibility of the language used by the children is echoed in their rhymes. Once having transformed a song this transformation itself yields further possibilities:

> Oh dear what can the matter be,
> Mr.Jackson's locked in the lavatory,
> He was there from Monday to Saturday
> Nobody knew he was there.

Here, a particular teacher is made the figure of fun in the verse; the generality of the original transformation is used for specific ends.

As the above examples suggest rhymes are important in the language of the children. They are themselves speech forms, not merely a form which uses language. Rhymes are part of the style of talking, a way of conversing which allows for continual invention and re-invention and it is through constant use and repetition that the creative power of language is released and realised through performance.

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1.   See examples on pp.245-246,p.456,p.457,p.459.

Other rhymes are parodies of songs which adults regard as legitimate for children; children are instructed to learn nursery rhymes, religious hymns and carols. But these are of the adult world and therefore quickly subject to alteration through reference to phenomena significant in the culture of children:

> We three kings of Orient are,
> Selling ladies underwear,
> Knicker elastic
> How fantastic
> Two shillings a pair.

In the above verse, collected in 1978, it will be noted that the last line refers to shillings as currency. Seven years after decimalisation this is a significant indication of the continuity of childhood lore between successive generations. However, that it is a style of restructuring language which is retained, rather than simply specific examples, is demonstrated by the speed with which new material can be assimilated by the children. The structuring principle is always the same. The following rendition of We three kings was known to myself as a child in Birmingham during 1962-3 when Beatlemania gripped the pop world:

> We four Beatles of Liverpool are,
> John in a taxi, Paul in a car,
> George on his scooter ,
> Tooting his hooter ,
> Following Ringo Starr.

This was itself a transformation of an original transformation cited by the Opies as being current in Birmingham in 1959, prior to the Beatles era:

> We three kings of Orient are,
> One in a taxi, one in a car,
> One on a scooter,
> Tooting his hooter,
> Following yonder star.

The choice of subject matter for these parodies of adult

songs is particularly significant; the humour and illicit

enjoyment to be gained from reciting them lies through their

reference to ' taboo ' topics.   In particular excretory

and sexual functions feature predominantly through references

to knickers, underwear, lavatories and the sexual act.   It

is through the rhyme form that excretory and sexual matters

are discussed, knowledge openly displayed and transmitted

between children.   Knowledge of the adult world is gleaned

by the children and incorporated into their culture through

this verbal style; it is stored here and passed on to others

through performances.   This may well account for the

perpetuation of sexual myths amongst children and the

familiarity of quite young children with sexual terms and

swear words.[1] Whether an individual child understands the

explicit reference of a particular word is not important;

he or she knows implicitly that it is ' dirty ' or ' rude '

for it is the mode and manner of transmission which gives it

great symbolic weight.   Form and performance dominate

content,recalling the features of tale telling discussed

earlier.

Through memorising and later using such words the children

can appear knowledgeable and may only afterwards fully

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1.   Further discussion of the acquisition of sexual
      knowledge by children appears on pp.441-458.

comprehend their meaning. In this respect, many verses

can be said to be educative mnemonics which assist the

learning process as socialising forms. The following

verses make this explicit:

> Mary had a little lamb
> She also had a duck
> She put them on the mantelpiece
> To see if they would....

> Mary had a little lamb
> She covered it in charcoal
> And everywhere that Mary went
> It looked right up her....

In the recitation of these kinds of rhymes the last word is

not spoken and the listener is left to silently fill in the

gap. The nursery rhyme, with which the child will have

considerable familiarity, provides the metre and rhyme scheme

as clues to the length and sound of the missing word. In this

way such rhymes test the listener's knowledge and fluency

in the use of ' tabooed ' language. Those who cannot think

of a fitting ryhme are ridiculed; in not getting the point

they reveal their ignorance. It is important, then, for

such children to laugh for, through laughing, they assert

their familiarity with the topic and reinforce group

complicity.

As a socializing process this use of rhymes is interesting

and raises some fundamental issues. Through performance

the separation between the children's and the adult's

worlds are displayed. Adults who hear such rhymes are

often lulled by the familiarity of the form and remain

ignorant of its content; the adult's ignorance is exposed
to the children. On the other hand, the form also serves to
disguise a particular child's ignorance from others in the
group. Such rhyming, then, produces a learning style which
is specific to the culture of ' doing nothing ' and allows
the children to operate successfully within it; it is also
remarkably effective in inhibiting the learning of the content
of the children's culture by the adult world. Culture in
this sense is truly creative in making experience possible
for the children and impossible for adults and it is through
performance that this cultural space is defined and
realised.

The language of ' doing nothing ', therefore, has certain
fundamental structuring principles which give to it a
particular style, and which find repetition in all spheres.
For example, in many of the children's verses, as in their
tales, authority figures such as teachers, policemen and
adults in general are conceptually distanced from the children's
culture through abuse or ridicule. One of the best known
examples is a verse traditionally sung on Guy Fawkes night
by the children.

> Build a bonfire, build a bonfire,
> Put Miss Robson on the top,
> Put Jackson in the middle,
> And burn the fuckin' lot.

The form of the rhyme is used to insult specific individuals
and it will be noticed that poor Mr.Jackson again is the
target as the children use the rhyme in their own cultural
context. The funeral pyre of Guy Fawkes symbolises the

burning of authority, the eradication of those seen by the children to control them. This, in itself, is a transformation for it was the authorities who burnt Guy Fawkes after his challenge to their control.[1]

As the Opies' (1977) collection reveals such parodies are endless but, as I have suggested, the process of transformation is highly consistent with the general features of the language of ' doing nothing '. The form of the original is always retained but its meaning drastically altered in performance through the insertion of symbols specific to the culture of children. Another example will emphasise this point:

> While shepherds washed their socks by night,
> All watching I.T.V.,
> The angel of the Lord came down,
> And switched to B.B.C.

---

1. As a child in the early 60's I sang a similar verse:
> Build a bonfire, build a bonfire,
> Put the teachers on the top,
> Put the text-books in the middle,
> And burn the flippin' lot.

This rhyme was usually sung to celebrate the end of the school term. It is another example of the continuity of the lore of children. Interestingly, when I was a child we thought the swear word 'flipping' was quite daring; for the children in the late 70's ' fucking ' has become the replacement ' taboo ' word.

Another half-remembered verse went as follows:
> No more Latin, no more French,
> No more sitting on the old school bench.

I sung this verse at junior school where Latin was not a subject and I doubt whether I knew what Latin was. This is a further example of the importance of the performative and educative aspect of children's language and also highlights the transmission of verbal lore through generations of children. The Opies (1977) give similar examples, pp.321-2.

Firstly, this rhyme is a parody of a traditional carol:the
religious message sung as a celebration in the adult world
is transformed into a mundane and humorous commentary by
the children. This is achieved by punning; the children
exploit the homology of sound between ' watched their
flocks ' and ' washed their socks '. Also significant
is the fact that the angel of the lord, a messenger from
the supreme authority, is sent to order and control activity;
for the children I.T.V. was the channel they always watched
and it is this outside angelic controller who forces them,
as it were, to switch to the more educative and staid B.B.C.

The linguistic creativity of children, apparent in the above
examples, mirrors their continual experimentation with the
elements of a material world whilst ' doing nothing '. It
is a creativity similar to that of bricolage defined by
Lévi-Strauss as follows:

> ' a set of tools and materials which
> is always finite and is also hetero-
> geneous because what it contains bears
> no relation to the current project, or
> indeed to any particular project, but
> is the contingent result of all occasions
> there have been to renew or enrich the
> stock or to maintain it with remains of
> previous constructions or destructions.'
> (1972:17)

Many of the songs, rhymes and words used by the children
are transformations of those in the adult world or reworked
versions of songs they used to sing as children and many of
the games and activities of ' doing nothing ' represent
similar   transformatory modes.[1] Through processes of dis-
ordering, reordering, reversing and inverting the dominant

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1. See discussion on pp.233-262.

language children create their own ordered linguistic
system out of its many parts.

Disorderly language

I have argued so far that the language of ' doing nothing '
is a creative process of disordering and reordering the
adult tongue in a highly systematic and meaningful mode. It
is consistent therefore that the telling of jokes, the posing
of riddles and the performance of verbal tricks should be a
major aspect of the language of ' doing nothing ' : all
these represent explicit ways of playing with the form and
meaning of language, of reordering that ordered system.

The common practice by children of collecting riddles and
jokes, noted by the Opies (1977), was carried out by the
children. One girl had inscribed in an old school note-
book a collection of over eighty riddles and jokes; others
were always keen to swop riddles and jokes with their friends.
Such practices reinforce the idea that talking for the
children is in itself an activity; like the recitation of
rhymes and the telling of tales, joking and riddling are
modes of conversing for the children, not merely a part of
conversation. Jokes and riddles appear in the course of
talking ; rarely are they set aside as a specific speech
act for, as I shall show, they are an iconic image of the
flow and style of the ordinary language of ' doing nothing '.
The only time that jokes and riddles are set apart is when
the talking stops; when there is literally nothing to say,

someone may suggest telling a joke or posing a riddle
as a way of continuing the conversation. The following tape
transcript reveals the style in which jokes and riddles are
included in the ordinary flow of talking:

> " A: Stephen phoned this morning.
> G: What did he say?
> A: He wanted to know if Tony was here.
> K: He'd be standing there saying (mimicing
>   his voice) " Is our Tony in? "
> A: You are horrid.
> K: Eh...I've got me foot stuck.
> A. Save you kicking people.
> K: Allison, what would you do if a queer
>   man got on your back?
> A: I don't know.
> K: Toss him off.
> G: Toss him off.
> K: Throw him off or toss him off...toss him off.
> G: Toss him off.
> K: That's a funny one.
> G: I think I'm rare......" [1]

Through the collective memorising of jokes the children always
have some at their disposal to contribute to the conversation.

The appropriateness of joking and riddling to the structural
form of the language of ' doing nothing ' lies in the fact
that both are games of classification, reflecting the playing
with order noted previously for the culture as a whole.[2]
As Mary Douglas has shown,

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1. This joke revolves around a central pun. ' Toss off '
   is in the children's vocabulary, the verb for
   masturbation. Hence, the double meaning between
   ' throw off ' and masturbate. This is yet another
   example of the educative role of the language of
   ' doing nothing ', see pp.441-458.

2. See Chapter 3.

> ' the joke merely affords the
> opportunity for realising that an
> accepted pattern has no necessity.
> Its excitement lies in the suggestion
> that any particular ordering of
> experience may be arbitrary and subjective.'
> (1968:365)

Both jokes and riddles, then, play with the form of language
itself and reveal through performance the ambiguities
created through the very act and process of the imposition
of order. They display the inherent arbitrariness of the
relationship between the signifier and signified.

However, jokes and riddles do not in their essence create
these possibilities; it is the social context of their
exegesis which frames the joke's possibility as a subversive
mode. For a joke to be perceived as such requires some implicit
consensus of meaning, a collective representation of the
particular classification which the joke works to subvert.
As Douglas argues ' in every period there is a pile of
submerged jokes, unperceived because they are irrelevant
or wrongly balanced for the perspective of the day ' (1968:
366).

Joking is thus culturally prescribed, subject to the spatial
and temporal co-ordinates of that order, and it is this
cultural specificity which is revealed when attempts are
made to translate jokes across cultures. In the present
context, it is displayed in the differential perceptions
of the humour to be obtained from ' zzubing ' bees
between adults and children. The spatial and temporal

/..

boundaries which separate the children from the adult world render many of their jokes point<u>less</u> for adults for the point of a joke is to be found between those classificatory lines. The following joke exemplifies this and also illustrates how jokes are incorporated by the children into ordinary conversation:

> " Stephen comes up to me and asks if I
> want a paper job. Thinking that he is
> referring to a newspaper round, I reply:
> "No". Annoyed he says: " Say yes ".
> We repeat the routine: (1) " Do you want
> a paper job?" (2) "Yes" (3) Well lift
> yer arse and let me wipe it! "

The importance of newspaper rounds in the children's culture as a source of employment ensures that when told to other children this joke is bound to work; they are guaranteed to reply in the affirmative. Told to an adult the joke is doomed to failure for the significant referential frames are absent. There is no consensus on meanings. Moreover, it is apparent from the Opies (1977) collection that many of the children's jokes have been repeated for generations, as part of the collective verbal lore of childhood and adults may hear from their own offspring jokes they themselves used to tell. That these jokes are no longer funny for adults is a function of their spatial and temporal distance from the significant sets of symbols which, within the children's culture, give these jokes their resonance, their ' points ' of conceptual focus.

For example, many of the children's jokes are, like their rhymes,built around sexual or excretory concerns. Both

these subjects are, in different ways ' taboo ' for the children and, hence, suitable topics for the disorderly use of language. In that the children are shielded from their own sexuality and sexual potential through their conceptual and often physical separation from these ' adult ' spheres, the introduction of sexual matters within the referential frame of the children's own culture is, in itself, a disordering action.[1] Bodily wastes, on the other hand, are as Mary Douglas (1969) has shown inherently ambiguous substances for they transgress the boundary between the inner and outer body. It is significant, therefore, that those who are perceived to be in an ambiguous social position should concern themselves most explicitly with matters which reflect and symbolise their own marginality. Through joking and riddling disorder is transformed and rendered orderly within the children's own cultural space.

Dirt appears in many guises in the children's jokes: dirty words, dirty substances and dirty thoughts and as topics which are matters out of place and time and therefore conceptually disordered - dirty - for the children:

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(1) Did you hear about the Irishman who
    thought that <u>Johnny</u> Cash was the change
    from a durex machine?   1

(2) A: What's the difference between an elephant's
       arse and a letter box?

    B: I don't know.

    A: Well I wouldn't give you my letters to post.

(3) A boy asked the teacher if he could go to the
    toilet.

    Teacher : Recite the alphabet first.

    Boy   : a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,l,m,
              n,o,q,r,s,t,u,v,w,x,y,z.

    Teacher : What happened to the ' p '?

    Boy   : Its running down my leg.

The content of such jokes mirrors their form: the literally

or metaphorically dirty symbolises the dirt of disorder

produced conceptually through performance by the children.

Jokes represent, therefore, a disordering mode and it is a

pattern which finds repetition in riddling as the production

of classificatory disorder through performance. As Ian

Hamnett suggests, although riddles are usually formulated as a

question and answer, getting the answer is not the main

purpose of the activity for riddles ' rarely give enough

details for the answer to be ascertained and some riddles

---

1. The term ' Johnny ' is a word used by the children
    to refer to the contraceptive condom. Here, then,
    a pun revolves round the double meaning of ' Johnny ',
    as a name of a singer and a contraceptive. Note also
    the incorporation of a traditional scape-goat: the
    stupid Irishman. This demonstrates the incorporation
    of ' adult ' humour already into the children's
    mode of thought. See also the footnote on p.314.

are presented more as statements than questions ' (1967:
384). It is this feature which facilitates their use in
the conversational style of the children. Whilst talking
to each other, for example, the children make jokes through
the use of statements which are inverted riddles: one girl,
looking at her comb, remarked that " it has been to the dentist ";
the comb was missing a few teeth. Another boy commented when
I got a pie out of the freezer that " the pie will come out
sneezing ", it would have caught a cold in its icy surroundings.

As with jokes, riddles are also culturally specific and the
social context of their exegesis is crucial. Riddles require
the participation of knowledgeable others who can appreciate
the process through which the play upon form is achieved. The
answer to a riddle is relatively unimportant; as with joking
it is the process of reordering achieved through word-play
which must be appreciated. When I was asked a riddle I was
often berated or accused of having heard it before if I
provided the correct response. To riddle in the children's
culture involves ' getting the point ' and demonstrating an
appreciative awareness of the subtle transformatory logic
performed upon language itself, as is shown by the following
example:

> ' Mog tells me a joke: " What's the
> dirtiest thing in the world?" I say
> that I don't know. Delightedly, he says,
> " Second hand toilet paper."When I don't
> laugh he says: "..Get it? Get it?
> Covered in shit ."

/..

By not laughing I demonstrated my own distance from the
children's culture, although I had understood the riddle.
Mog's eager explanation of the process of transformation
of the literally dirty demonstrates his concern that I
should appreciate the logic by which such metaphoric
movements are accomplished.

In both jokes and riddles, therefore, humour is to some
extent a by-product of performance. ' Getting the point '
is the major concern. The pivot upon which any particular
word-play turns must be discovered and the focal point around
which images are inverted or overturned is the central
quest. These metaphoric movements are subtle transformations;
both riddles and jokes direct attention to separate and discrete
classificatory orders by temporarily conjoining them in
performance and exposing their ambiguity; both bring ' into
relation disparate elements in such a way that one accepted
pattern is challenged by the appearance of another which in
some way was hidden in the first' (Douglas, 1968:365).

Many other linguistic games played by the children also
exploit the implicit structuring of social classification
through exposing it to public gaze. The implicit is made
explicit and form and content manipulated which moves these
games outside the purely verbal domain; the joke becomes a
joke upon the listener who is caught out in his or her
unconscious dependence upon one particular ordered mode of
thought:

/..

Q: If blue houses are made of blue bricks
   and red houses are made of red bricks.
   What are green houses made of?

A: Green bricks.

Q: No, greenhouses are made of glass.

Through exploiting the difference between classificatory
orders the respondent is made to appear stupid. Lulled into
a false sense of security the listener is led into matching
the colour of bricks with the colour of the houses;
concentration is focused upon appearance,on the form rather
than content. By switching between different semantic
series the questioner achieves his or her success: the
question concerning greenhouses focuses upon function and
content rather than form. ' Green houses ' becomes ' green-
houses ' and the previous symbolic weight attached to colour
as a classificatory principle is shifted and transferred to
the method of construction. Unless the riddle has been heard
previously this deceit will commonly be missed, for such word-
games contain their own ritual dynamic and energy which propel
the respondent towards disaster.

Such expositions of order in its own arbitrariness is often
a focus of the children's language games and the permanence
of social classifications shown to be an illusion. Unless
it is realised that this is the very point of the game the
respondent will inevitably become ensnared:

```
" Q:  What's 2 and 2?
  A:  4
  Q:  What's 4 and 4?
  A:  8
  Q:  What's 8 and 8?
  A:  16
  Q:  What's 16 and 16?
  A:  32
  Q:  What's 32 and 32?
  A:  64
  Q:  How do you spell "shop"?
  A:  S H O P
  Q:  What do you do at green lights?
  A:  Stop.
  Q.  No, you can go at green lights! "
```

The above example illustrates well the ritualised dynamic of such language games. The first five questions, which are asked at great speed, propel the respondent onwards; through the process of repetition a patterned sequence of numbers is established, a rhythm set in motion: 2 plus 2 is 4, 4 plus 4 is 8, 8 plus 8 is 16, 16 plus 16 is 32.... Suddenly, this flow is dramatically interrupted by the question switching to spelling but the rhythmic and repetitive mode already established through the number series remains; the respondent urgently seeks a rhyme for the word ' shop ' which belongs to the sequence of movements associated with traffic lights, that is ' go ' and ' stop '. It is ' stop ' which rhymes with ' shop ' and the respondent is involuntarily trapped. Throughout the riddle conscious attention has been at a minimum; the questions are simple, requiring little thought and recalling the ritualised chanting of mathematical tables learnt as small children; emphasis has been placed upon repetition, rhyme and motion, rather than upon semantics, so that the final question is similarly answered. The deft switch from form to content is missed and

the respondent is left feeling ridiculous. If by any
chance the correct reply is given the questioner usually
accuses his or her victim of having heard it before, so
certain are the children in their manipulation of
perception.

Playing with this relationship between sound and sense,
between the signifier and the signified, between form and
content is common in the language of ' doing nothing '.
It recalls the use of puns noted above in the everyday
language of the children and finds its fullest expression
in children's jokes and riddles. Here, the children delight
in the musicality of their language and in their ability to
manipulate form and content with great ease and fluency:

   (1) An Irishman breaks out of prison: " I'm free!,
       he shouts.
       " So what " says a boy, " I'm four."

   (2) Clean my boots boy.
       Yaas, sir.
       No, my boots.   (Yaas - your arse, when
                          spoken in a pidgin english)

   (3) What's dracula's favourite singer?
       Fang Sinatra   (Fang - Frank)

   (4) There's a dirty film on telly tonight.
       Close down.
                (Close down - clothes down)

   (5) A man went to have a heart transplant but they
       gave him an arse transplant and then he died of
       of a fart attack.
                (heart - arse - fart)

A further feature of children's jokes and riddles is the
mode and manner of transmission which, as noted previously

/..

for other aspects of the language of ' doing nothing ',
allows for both conservation and innovation in performance.
The emphasis upon form permits a multiplicity of contents
to be incorporated within the particular style. Old jokes
- Why did the submarine blush ? Because it saw Queen Mary's
bottom - appear alongside jokes of very current interest;
the similarity of form permits a variety of content and
structures the performative style.

During 1978, for example, the television programme <u>Happy</u>
<u>Days</u> heralded the appearance of four new jokes in the children's
repertoire, jokes which all conformed to the patterned
structure outlined above:

   (1) Q: Why doesn't the Fonz like hot weather?
         A: Because it ain't cool.

   (2) Q: Why does the Fonz live in a freezer?
         A: Because he's cool.

   (3) Q: Where does the Fonz shop?
         A: Hey Presto.

   (4) Q: What does the Fonz say in Ireland?
         A: Straw.   1

---

1. The four Fonz jokes illustrate again the cultural
specificity of joke-telling. All require an intimate
knowledge of the television programme for them to be
understood. Jokes (1) and (2) refer to the Fonz's
behavioural style: he is a 'cool' American kid of the
1950's rock and roll era, not a college boy. Joke (3)
requires knowledge of his mannerisms: on entering a room
the Fonz puts up his thumbs and says, " Heeeeeey" to which
the studio audience responds with loud cheers and clapping.
In joke (4) this is also used: in Ireland the Fonz says
" straw ", rather than " hay " and turns his thumbs down.
Here the children incorporate part of the humour of the
adult world and use the Irish as a scapegoat for
stupidity.

Plate   6   :   "   The Fonz   "

Similarly, a few weeks after the murder of Lord Mountbatten in the summer of 1979, the following joke was told to me:

> Q: How did they know Lord Mountbatten had dandruff?
> A: They found his head and shoulders all over the beach.[1]

The translation between orders

In conclusion I shall consider one final feature of the language of ' doing nothing ' which encapsulates many of the structural principles explored above. It illustrates that the language itself is part of talking and not just its vehicle; talking communicates ideas and also the experience of linguistic performances but other things talk apart from words.

The children ' talk ' in a variety of ways. In that it is a performing art, rather than merely a method of communication, the children experiment with alternative modes of conversing: rhythmic messages are relayed through drum beats, through hitting central heating pipes and flashed between children with a torch. The pattern of speech is translated from the spoken word into non-verbal domains and it is investigating the potentiality of such objects as communicative mediums which forms a large part of ' doing nothing ' itself. To ' do nothing ' you have to ' do something '; to say ' something' you need say ' nothing '.[2]

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1. This joke refers to the advert for hair shampoo called ' Head and Shoulders ' which is a medicated treatment for dandruff. Lord Mountbatten was killed by a bomb blast which exploded his boat off the coast of Ireland.

2. Children also use the wider resources of the body for communication, see Chapter 6.

All such performances involve translation between orders and it is in the children's use of acronyms that this is best expressed. Acronyms are not of course confined to the language of ' doing nothing ' but their use by the children slightly differs from their employment in the adult world. Adults most often use acronyms as abbreviations, as a quick way of referring to well known social organizations such as the T.U.C. or the C.B.I. This assumes a consensual world-view, a common pool of knowledge; they are used for ease of recognition, for economy. In time some acronyms become word-like: the letters, which originally stood for individual words, conjoin to form a new word, a new commonly used term : NATO, G.C.E. or C.S.E. Often questions are asked in quiz shows about the original referents which have been conceptually obliterated over time, so frequently is the new ' word ' used in everyday speech.

In the language of ' doing nothing ' acronyms reverse this pattern. Acronyms are not used for abbreviation or quickness particularly; their main purp o se is <u>mystification</u>, <u>disguise</u> and <u>secrecy</u>. This is not a result of their use over time, but a deliberate intention from the outset. Acronyms for the children are ways of codifying messages; they are not designed for collective consumption, for ease of recognition. Rather, the reverse is true; acronyms are devices for obfuscation, not clarity, and only those who have access to their referential frames can translate them. Many acronyms are therefore employed by the children to protect group

knowledge from outside comprehension, and once again, it

is sexual knowledge which is most frequently disguised

through the use of acronyms:

```
(1) A.D.I.D.A.S.      A durex is done after sex
(2) I.T.A.L.Y.        I trust and love you.
(3) S.W.A.L.K.        Sealed with a loving kiss.
(4) B.O.L.T.O.P.      Better on lips than on paper.
(5) H.O.L.L.A.N.D.    Hope our love lasts and never dies.
(6) B.I.S.H.O.P.      Before intercourse suck his overgrown penis.
(7) A.F.R.I.C.A.      After fucking rinse in carbolic acid.
(8) E.N.G.L.A.N.D.    Every naughty girl likes a nob daily.
(9) C.H.I.N.A.        Come home I need affection.
(10)C.H.I.L.Y.        Come home I love you.
(11)F.I.S.H.          Fuck I'm staying here.
(12)C.H.I.P.          Come home I'm pregnant.
(13)C.R.I.S.P.        Come running I'm still pregnant.
(14)J.A.C.K.I.E.      Just a cute kiss is enough.        1
```

The acronyms above are usually written on the backs of

envelopes containing love letters or Valentine cards. A

coded message conceals a most secret and personal communication.

Here, words of common parlance such as Bishop, England, Fish

or Chip are used as acronyms, a transforming act which reverses

the process used in the adult world where acronyms become

words. Moreover, the intention is radically transformed:

for the children these outwardly innocuous words contain

highly explicit sexual messages ; a whole statement is

condensed into one extremely resonant symbol. The girl who

signs herself ' Jackie ' says far more than the name alone

implies as does the exchange of messages carried out through

the sequential use of the acronyms C.H.I.P., F.I.S.H. and

C.R.I.S.P.

---

1. A 'nob' in acronym (8) refers to the act of sexual
    intercourse.

The inherent ambiguity of this use of acronyms recalls the structured patterning of the children's language already established. They are massively transformatory speech forms, ritualised and dynamic. For example, acronyms are used in games of ritual insults, reflecting the use of couplets discussed above as linguistic weapons between opponents: If a boy calls another Puff, (homosexual) the insulted quickly converts this into an acronym and responds: " Yes, I'm perfect, unique, fabulous and famous", emphasising the initial letter of each word. Alternatively, the accusation Puff can be yelled at someone and immediately followed by a different explanation of the acronym: prehistoric, unhuman fat fairy. This doubles the insult through the additional accusation of effeminacy in the word ' fairy ' [1]

The destruction of words achieved through dismantling them into their component parts as acronyms allows certain 'taboo ' words to be used. As the following incident illustrates, to spell out the word is not literally to speak it for only its parts have been enunciated:

> " Stephen tells me a joke with the word fanny
> in it.He wouldn't say the word itself but,
> pointing to each person in the group, made
> them say one letter each. F A N N Y was thus
> produced but embarrassment at speaking the
> word was avoided through only using its
> component letters. Similarly, later Stephen
> insulted Michael through saying M.I.A.S.S.,
> meaning Michael is a stupid sod. Michael could
> not retaliate for, as Stephen pointed out, he
> had not actually <u>said</u> that at all. "

---

1. A comparable series is established for the insult ' pig'.
   Translated into an acronym, it means ' pretty intelligent
   git. '

Such use of acronyms reflects the ways in which many adults may disguise their conversations in front of young children. Through spelling words out, rather than saying them, adults attempt to prevent their offspring from understanding. Here, this power is used in reverse; the children use acronyms to disguise <u>their</u> knowledge of matters pertaining to the adult world. A further example occurred at the youth club. The children were asked to list what activities they wished to do and the acronym M.G.S. appeared on many of the boy's forms. It later transpired that the activities they most enjoyed were money, girls and sex.

The game ' I spy ' also relies on the use of acronyms; an initial letter of a word is given as the clue and an object must be spied which begins with that letter. Whilst playing this game one day with two boys the ' spying ' part gradually disappeared till eventually it became totally impossible for me to participate in the game. It had transformed into a purely verbal competition of matching <u>any</u> words with the letters given: B.F. stood for ' been flooded ' and M for 'mains electricity ' B stood for ' bastard ' and S for ' shit '. ' I spy ' had become an excuse for playing with language itself, not a form of play which merely utilised language; it acquired its own momentum as each boy tried to think of more and more crude and vulgar words to fit to a given letter.

Acronyms are, therefore, devices which enable translations to be made between different orders of language. They

facilitate the development of alternative semantic systems
which are limited to a particular social group for only those
with knowledge of the cultural context of their derivation
can translate them. In this sense acronyms are one way
of ensuring a monopoly of knowledge through exploiting the
power of language as a tool of non-communication, rather
than communication, a facility which was used to the boys'
advantage in the game of ' I spy '.[1] The following case-
study highlights this point. It describes the cultural
context of the creation , development and power of one
particular acronym during a period of approximately one
month and, as such, the acronym NWCWTW is a highly saturated
and powerful symbol of the process and form of the language
of ' doing nothing '.

NWCWTW : A case study

The following passage extracted from my field notes reveals
the background to the emergence of the acronym NWCWTW in the
children's language.

> "' I was sitting talking to Jackie and in a
> pause in the conversation she suddenly inter-
> jected: "NWCWTW". This seemed strange to me;
> I thought it was a word and asked her what she had
> said. She repeated it fast and I tried
> miserably to copy her. She thought my attempts
> hilarious and then proceeded to say it slowly.
> Only then did I grasp that NWCWTW was a phoenetic
> acronymn. Eventually I too could say it fast. I

---

1. The exclusivity of knowledge which the use of acronyms
   creates does find parallels in the adult world. For
   example, the computing industry makes great use of
   acronyms to describe its technical support systems.
   Those who have no knowledge of computing find its
   language impenetrable.

asked her what it meant and she replied
that it meant nothing: "It's just something
to say ". By the way she denied it and
laughed I knew that it must have some meaning
and asked her again. Again she denied it and
told me to ask Noreen and the others. I ask
her if it was rude and she just laughs,
suggesting that it is. I ask her if each
letter stands for a word. She says that she
won't tell me and I feign annoyance and
disinterest. Then she says that she won't
<u>tell</u> me but that she'll help me work it out."

This encounter is significant in a number of respects for
it highlights many of the points already discussed concerning
the language of ' doing nothing '. Firstly, the acronymic
form , NWCWTW, is itself an icon of the children's language.
It follows the patterning of sound and rhythm indicated
earlier as a structuring principle: spoken quickly it contains
its own energy through the repetition of the 'W' ; spoken
phonetically it has a musical quality, with emphasis being
placed on the ' N ', ' C ' and ' T '. Secondly, the
acronym was interjected into the flow of ordinary conversation
in a style similar to the telling of jokes or riddles, the
recitation of verses or the telling of tales. It appeared
unprompted with no introduction or explanation.

Thirdly, the encounter as a whole is informative about
the power of language . Jackie delights in the fact that
she knows ' something ', that she has a secret from me and
taunts me with her exclusive knowledge. NWCWTW is meaningless
to me, an adult, and she laughs at my ignorance. The
language of ' doing nothing ' is the children's monopoly,
a language which separates their culture off from the adult

world, a powerful deflective boundary against outside
intrusion. But as the conversation progresses Jackie
relents and says that although she will not tell me what
it means, I can try to discover the meaning of NWCWTW:
a linguistic game has begun. Jackie has implicitly
acknowledged that NWCWTW is an acronym.. but I must
participate in order to become party to its meaning.

The following extract reveals the progress of the game:

(2) " I work on the premise that each letter stands
for a word and Jackie tells me that the first
two letters stand for four letter words, the
next two for three letter words and the last
two for four letter words. I guess the middle
two, CW, as ' can we '. She says that this is
correct but that it can also be 'WC', which
would then mean ' we can '. Having got ' we
can/ can we ' I look at the first two letters
and guess ' next week ' as the words to go
with NW. She won't tell me at first whether
it is correct and, after I assume that it is,
she agrees. The formula now reads ' next week
we can/can we '. I am now lost but try and
fit all sorts of words with the ' t ' and the
' w '. I try rude words none of which work.
She then says that because " you've turned
the middle two round " I should now be able to
work it out. I try and make anagrams out of
the first two words applying the principle of
reversal and, on failing, ask her if the letters
of the last two words are in the first two. She
writes them on her hand and then says no and rubs
them off. She says, showing me her hand: " You
can try and read them now " and laughs. Next
she says: " You've turned the middle two round
so turn the others round ". I then ask : " You
mean WT? " " No", she cries at my stupidity.
I then grasp the idea and turn the paper round.
The ' W ' then becomes an ' M ' and the ' T '
becomes an ' L ' when one half of the horizontal
line is cut off. I still can't grasp the signi-
ficance;finally she writes down ' make love '. "

From this extract it is apparent that the principle of
inversion is a structural feature of the acronym, one which
is a common theme throughout the language of ' doing nothing '.
The ways in which the various transformations of the acronym
are achieved are summarised below:

(i)   N W   N W

        C W ⟶   W C

        T W   T W

(ii)   N W   N W

        C W ⇌   W C

        T W ⇌   W T

(iii)   N W   N W   N W

        C W ⇌   W C   W C

        T W ⇌   W T ⇌   M L
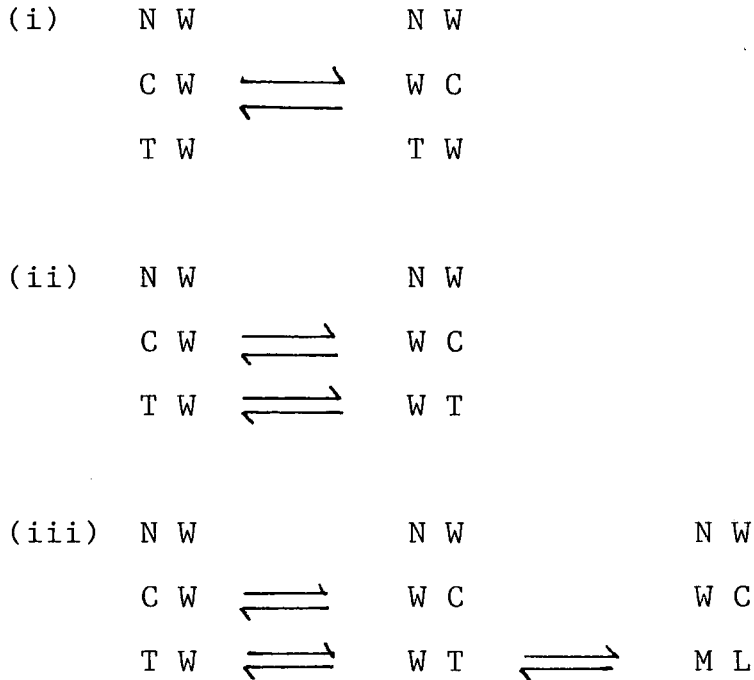
In the first sequence the middle two letters are reversed:
'C.W.' becomes 'W.C.' These two letters stand for ' we can'
or ' can we '. Through the principle of reversal a statement
is transformed into a question . In the second sequence the
last two letters are reversed: 'T.W.' becomes 'W.T.' In the
third sequence this transformation is itself transformed by
inverting 'W.T.' which, when written upside down, becomes
'M.L.' if the one end of the ' T ' is cut off. It is this
final transformation which yields further information for
'M.L.' stands for ' make love '.   The whole acronym. now

reads in two directions: ' Next weekwe can make love ' or
' next week can we make love '. Once again, a seemingly
meaningless acronym hides and disguises in its form a
potent and powerful message: only through knowing the language
of ' doing nothing ' can this be deciphered.

That this language is infinitely flexible can be seen in the
next extract. The fact that I had successfully decoded the
acronym ., that I had gained access to its exclusive meaning,
was seen as potentially threatening. I had overstepped the
boundary, penetrated too far into the private sphere of the
children's culture:

> " Having solved the acronym Jackie <u>then</u>
> says that inbetween the last two letters
> there is a ⋈ sign. When this is turned
> round it is similar to a 'p'. This word
> is there but it is silent and not spoken.
> It's a French word and also English and
> " it's all about love and stuff". This she
> will not tell me."

Here again inversion has a part to play: *ℓ* transforms
into *f* . The significance of the 'p' still eludes me;
Jackie had successfully reestablished exclusive control.
But, as the final extract reveals, it was not control over
a particular body of knowledge, but over the process of
knowing itself:

> " Jackie then tells me about how it all
> started. She says that Noreen,Coker and
> Tosha were always together and they started
> saying 'N'.'C'.'T'. They then put in the
> 'W' after each letter because it sounded
> better. Hence, they would say 'NWCWTW' to
> each other as a greeting. People then began
> to ask what it meant so they then made up
> the meaning for it." Its funny getting adults
> to say it, especially men, because they don't
> know what they are saying", she remarks."

Here then is the central feature of the language of ' doing
nothing ' ; the control of perception structures the form
and content of the language itself. The acronym was originally
derived from the nicknames of three children, names which are
themselves disguises, only meaningful to those who have
access to the children's culture.[1] They are names used by
the children which confuse and disorder external perception
of that culture. Secondly, although this was the root from
which NWCWTW sprung other children began to ask what the
acronym meant, so another meaning was invented which differed
from the original: something which was meaningless to the
children was invested with significance by them and given
meaning which, in turn, became meaningless to the adult world.
Such disordering of perception lies at the heart of the
language of ' doing nothing '.

A few weeks after this initial conversation I became aware
that NWCWTW was becoming further transformed as it spread into
a wider social context. Other children had adopted it and
changed it for their own purposes. Some of the boys began
shouting out 'TW', an abbreviated form of the acronym; in
announcing this to the world they were declaring 'make love'
out aloud, but in a form which no adult could understand.
Later , the acronym became further condensed and only the 'W'
remained: it is significant that what had initially been the
least meaningful part of the acronym - inserted because it
sounded better - was the part which was retained, for it
could be freely transformed. The 'W' phonetic sound

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1. For a discussion of nicknames, see Chapter 5.

/..

began to appear in all kinds of words: ' hovercrafts '
became ' howercrafts '. ' well developed ' became ' well
dewelloped '. The resultant sound was similar to that
produced by the speech defect which turns 'v' into 'w'.
For the children to adopt this form of speech reflects
their wider use of the body as an expressive medium: the
demonstration of one's own self control through mocking the
afflicted, the revelation of one's own perfection in the face
of defective others.[1] The gradual incorporation of NWCWTW
into the children's language yielded yet another transformation:
what had originally been a play upon language through the use of
acronyms became a way of playing with language more generally:
NWCWTW was made to conform to the patterned and structured
style of the language of ' doing nothing ' through the
addition of a hard 'a' sound on the end:

```
"  G:  Spa⊤..... ta nkna.
   A:  What's that?
   G:  Our speech.
   G:  Ren ne kna...re ne gnna...Sta.

   K:  Kwa Nwa twa.
   K:  KW NW TW.....TWWWWWW
   K:  Who's TW.
   A:  I don't know. Who's TW?
   K:  Tosha..TW... and Gench is SW.
   A:  (to Stephen) Why are you SW....S, from Stephen?
   G:  Stawa.
   A:  And you haven't got anything? ( to John)
   K:  Nawa
   G:  I'll give him one.
   G:  KWa
   K:  KW KW
   G:  KWa
   A:  Why KW?
   G:  It's his name.
   A:  From Kirby?
   K:  KW
   A:  Why aren't you GW....from Genner?
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1. See Chapter 6.

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G:  Who?...Stawa. Stephen.
K:  I'm JW...J William....JW.
K:  You're a JW an'all.
A:  A JW?
K:  JW.
A:  JW from James.
K:  No you're a AWa.
A:  Allison....Awa.  "
```

The language of ' doing nothing ' is, then, primarily a
language of performance, what Bauman (1977) has defined
as a way of speaking, a verbal art. To analyse it merely
as a series of texts would be to obscure its creative power
and potential, to misrepresent its stylistic form and use
by the children. Indeed, many of the characteristics cited
by Bauman as being specific to performance, rather than
literal or everyday speech, appear in the language of
' doing nothing ': for example, the children have their
own special codes, often archaic in origin, and rely heavily
on figurative language for it is this which provides the
semantic density and novel forms of expression characteristic
of many of their linguistic games; throughout the language
of ' doing nothing ' parallelism is evident in the repetition
of both form and content, a device which structures their
performances and gives overall unity and style to the language;
the children also employ many paralinguistic features, such
as rhythm, pace and rhyme to structure their language use and
have recourse to a traditional body of special formulae to
mystify and mislead others.

But above all of these special effects it is the creativity
achieved through performance which is most characteristic

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of the children's language; as Bauman notes performance

' sets up , or represents an interpretive frame within

which the messages being communicated are to be understood'

(1977:9). For the children it is the context of their

own culture which is framed by the language of ' doing

nothing ', a structuring system which provides the clues

and referential points for their interpretation of the

world. In this sense the language of ' doing nothing '

represents the children's own performance in the process

of socialization.

In addition, as Bauman notes, performance is set apart from

ordinary speech and it is this marginality which gives to

performance its power. For the children, the language of

' doing nothing ' is an exclusive tongue, used only between

themselves; it is a language which controls external

perception,a deflective device which, through its stylistic

form, keeps the content secret. Those who are set apart

from society have, through performance, created their own

boundaries of separation through a particular use of language.

Finally, as Bauman remarks, one of the most important

features of any performance is its capacity to transform

social structure through its power over the audience. In

the language of ' doing nothing ' the children are alternatively

performers and listeners; they judge each other's competence

through their ' knowledge and ability to speak in socially

appropriate ways ', ways which are specific to their own

culture (ibid:11). Performance, for the children, is then

integral to their own socialization; it both instructs
and constructs modes of interpreting the world, provides
the potential for acquiring new knowledge and consolidating
that which is already known. Through talking with one
another and performing together children gain knowledge
of the social world and begin to experience parts of it
through the context of their own culture. The language
of ' doing nothing ' frames in part, therefore, the
structure and experience of the children's self-socialization.

CHAPTER 5:   NICKNAMES AS A MODE OF THOUGHT

" Don't stand chattering to yourself
like that," Humpty Dumpty said, looking
at her for the first time, " but tell
me your name and your business."
" My name is Alice, but---"
" It's a stupid name enough!" Humpty
Dumpty interrupted impatiently. " What
does it mean?"
" Must a name mean something?" Alice
asked doubtfully. " Of course it must,
" Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh:
" my name means the shape I am-- and a good
handsome shape it is, too. With a name like
yours you might be any shape, almost."
Lewis Carroll.

Introduction

The language of ' doing nothing ' images through its

performance the transition made by the children between

childhood and adolescence. Its puns, riddles and linguistic

games are of the Carrollian kind, replete with images of

inversion, reversal and transformation. It is a language

for jesting with the social world through deflecting and

controlling outside perception, one which reveals the

process of social order through illuminating its discontinuities.

It is part of the socialization process which the children

themselves conduct and nicknaming provides a condensed and

powerful case-study of this learning process. Nicknaming

is integral to the language of ' doing nothing ' and reflects

many of its characteristics but, most importantly, nicknaming

is fundamentally concerned with processes of social classi-

fication. For the children nicknaming represents their

creation of a social order and reveals their position within

it.

Martin Gardner, commenting on Humpty Dumpty's conversation

with Alice, writes that

> ' in real life proper names seldom
> have a meaning other than the fact
> that they denote an individual object,
> whereas other words have general,
> universal meanings. In Humpty Dumpty's
> realm, the reverse is true. Ordinary
> words mean whatever Humpty wants them
> to mean, whereas proper names like
> " Alice " and " Humpty Dumpty " are
> supposed to have general significance.'
> (1966:263)

This looking-glass world is an appropriate metaphor for

the complex of inverted and reversed images which structure

the culture of ' doing nothing '. Here,too, names are

mirrors of the social self, having general rather than

particular significance, semantically rich, rather than

devoid of meaning.

Naming is the process of conceptual classification and, amongst

the children,nicknames are crucial for the categorisation of

social persons. As Geertz writes:

> ' peoples everywhere have developed
> symbolic structures in terms of which
> persons are perceived not baldly as such,
> as mere unadorned members of the human
> race, but as representatives of certain
> distinct categories of persons, specific
> sorts of individuals' (1975:363).

Nicknaming is one such symbolic structure. As I demonstrate

below, nicknames confer individuality through recourse to a

linguistic conformity which, in turn,serves to generalise

the individual, to classify him or her. In this sense

nicknames mediate between the self and others, between the

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individual and group; they represent the process described by Burridge (1979) of gaining self knowledge in relation to traditional and alternative possibilities.

As Goodenough suggests, modes of address and reference ' communicate over and over again things about the self and self-other relationships ' (1965:275). Naming systems express ' something about which people are concerned, something about their own identities or the identities of others that they want to emphasize ' and thus the structure of any particular system expresses the particular ' nature of the identity problems ' in that society(ibid:275).

The nicknaming practices of the children is one such process of identification carried out by those who, in terms of the dominant structure, have no identifiable place. Being between the categories of child and adult they are in process of switching identities and, as I show, it is through nicknaming that the children themselves conceptually control and order this movement. Nicknames, for the children, therefore class the unclassified, order the disordered and rename the already named in terms appropriate to the culture of ' doing nothing '.

Names and nicknames

According to de Saussure (1960) names - linguistic signs - are purely arbitrary but through the process of signification

once a particular category is identified its name serves
to semantically delimit its boundaries. Through this
ordering process difference is achieved, leading to an
immediate proliferation of other categories, defined
minimally through the principles of opposition and
contrast. Meaning of categories is constituted through
difference and in this manner social knowledge is constructed
around a ' logical scaffolding ' as Wittgenstein argues:

> ' one name stands for one thing,
> another for another thing and they are
> combined with one another. In this
> way the whole group - like a tableau
> vivant - presents a state of affairs.'
> (Douglas, 1973:31)

This state of affairs is, however, only realisable in action.
To emphasise this I quote once more from Giddens: ' the
constitution of language as meaningful is inseparable from
the constitution of forms of social life as continuing
practices ' (1979:4). Systems of social classification
are therefore immanent in action; nicknaming, as one
particular symbolic system, is to be understood as social
practice.

For the human animal names take on a more significant usage over
and above that of outlining and bounding a category or species.
Names are used to refer to or address particular individuals
or animals. [1] These are proper or personal names - autonyms
as Lévi-Strauss (1972) calls them - which refer to the self.
Seemingly, therefore, autonyms refer to and express individu-
ality; in this sense there is not a category of ' Susans '

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1.   For an analysis of animal names, see Lévi-Strauss (1972).

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which differs in certain prescribed ways from a category
of ' Marys ' as cats differ from dogs.

However, as Lévi-Strauss emphasises, it is only through
processes of contrast that autonyms confer individuality:
' an autonym only determines a " self " by contrast to
other " selves " ' (ibid:192). Only through comparison
is a cat not a dog. There lurks an idea, therefore, that
proper names operate also as tacit classifiers, that
' proper names and species names form part of the same
group ' (ibid:213). Indeed, for Lévi-Strauss ' there
is no fundamental difference between the two types of name'
 in a linguistic sense   (ibid:213). Their difference lies
instead in the ' enterprise of classification ' in any
particular society (ibid:213).

In the context of contemporary British society Lévi-Strauss's
assertion can be substantiated : proper names form part of
a paradigmatic set. Names, it is believed, are chosen but
the very fact of choice, rather than invention, indicates
the existence of a set of names considered to be appropriate
labels for human beings. Although there is the assumption
that the combination of christian name and surname produces
a relatively individual sign of personal identity, and
therefore one could expect the distribution of names to be
more or less random, the parameters of ' choice ' of names
are subject to certain classificatory constraints.

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Choice is conditional upon gender; it is often circumscribed by family tradition so that, for example, a baby may be named after a father or grandmother; parental choice is limited by the names already bestowed upon a baby's siblings; it may also be constrained by geographical location or historical period and by the aural aestheticism of the conjunction of christian name with surname.[1] The surname itself is an obvious classificatory device and can be regarded as a ' classifier of lineages ' (ibid:193). What therefore appears to be free creation is, on closer inspection, limited by a variety of implicit classificatory procedures so that ultimately can one be said to be really naming or is it rather that ' one therefore never names: one classes ' ? (ibid:181).

A move into the children's culture, where the very idea of names and naming is a constant preoccupation, confirms this suspicion. Their nicknaming practices reveal the ' species' attribute of names and that names are not in fact a ' very reliable way of fixing identity ' (Goffman,1976:77). Nicknames deny the commonly held assumption that through

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1. Exceptions to the gender rule do occur; for example Francis can be both masculine and feminine. The historical constraint on naming practices is evident in generational differences; currently names such as Conny, Elsie, Cissy, Fred, Albert belong to the older generation. Geographical constraint on naming is evident from my own fieldwork: my husband's name ' Jeremy ' was considered to be rather strange and no one ever used it, preferring ' Jerry ' instead.

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naming ' the individual can be differentiated from all others and that around this means of differentiation a single continuous record of social facts can be attached ' as a medium for establishing personal identity (ibid: 74). Nicknames are powerful classificatory devices.

The Oxford Dictionary defines nicknames as ' names added to or substituted for person's, place's or thing's proper name ' and as Goffman (op.cit.) suggests re-naming is one of the most common and easiest ways in which people disengage themselves from their conferred personal identity. However, nicknames must be distinguished from other re-naming practices.

Nicknames differ from pseudonyms in two ways. Firstly, pseudonyms may be adopted by authors or entertainers as identity masks but, as Goffman points out, they are often ineffective for ' the individual's previous name is likely to be available, and even widely known ' (ibid:76). Nicknames, in contrast, are highly effective masks; they are limited in their use and known only to members of a specific social group. When used publicly, as a form of graffiti, the individual's proper name remains unknown.[1] Nicknames are effective new identities. Secondly, pseudonyms are usually chosen by the individual of his or her own volition for personal and private reaons. Nicknames, on the other

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1. See pp246-249 and p348 for a discussion of graffiti.

hand, are group property; they are chosen by others for the self. Nicknames are eminently social and dependent upon specific interpersonal relationships. They mark and remark upon an individual's place within a group. Amongst the children nicknames are publicly acknowledged symbols of their relationships with each other and with outsiders. They are comparable with the ' monikers ' of criminals: ' nicknames given in the criminal community and retained for life, but used only by and to members of the community or the wise ' (ibid:77).

Nicknames, therefore, refer to the individual. They are not general classificatory terms, substitute names for specific groups in society used by children-such as "blue pigs " for policemen - but operate like (and often instead of) personal names. At the same time, however, nicknames are also species names; in their linguistic form and mode of use and generation nicknames act as social classifiers. Nicknames image the ' passage from the unity of a multiplicity to the diversity of a unity ' (Lévi-Strauss, 1972:136).

This aspect of nicknaming highlights the theoretical importance of Gidden's analysis of the duality of structure as ' the essential recursiveness of social life as constituted in social practices ' for to divorce language from its source of generation - language users - is to

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ignore its capacity for creativity and change (1979:5).
Meaning is therefore not an intrinsic property of words but
emerges through them.

For example, to fully comprehend the semantic load of
nicknames, their explicit and implicit meanings, their
fluctuations in affective and effective tone and resonance,
it was crucial to watch and observe their circumstances of
generation and use. Only through extended participation over
time was I able to perceive the highly systematic and powerful
nature of the children's nicknaming practices; only then could
I perceive the lie in the old dictum that " sticks and stones
may break your bones but names will never hurt you."
Similarly, Morgan, O'Neill and Harré also discovered that
nicknaming is seminal in social relationships between children
as an ' effective instrument of social control of appearance
and personality projection ' (1979:3). Only through seeing
nicknaming as social practice can its power be perceived;
it is this which allows one to call and be called.

The inadequacy of a purely linguistic analysis divorced
from its practical context is demonstrated in the Opies'
(1977) discussion of children's nicknames. Although they
rightly suggest that ' children attach an almost primitive
significance to people's names, always wanting to find out
a stranger's name, yet being strangely reluctant to reveal
their own ' - a case confirmed by my own fieldwork experiences-
they offer no explanation for this phenomenon (1977:176).
Instead they provide long lists of nicknames and make little

reference to the context of nickname use or how their various contributors obtained their material. The Opies merely suggest that some nicknames are traditional and others not and give the examples listed by two fourteen year olds:

> ' Phumph, lumber bontts (bonce), lush,
> Gables, square head, pugh, Jimpy, Hepsibs,
> lofty, big head, Rudolth, hog, scoffer,
> flippin kid, titty, rocker box, chubby cheaks,
> chink, coaca, Cowson, screawy, nuts, bolts,
> Tweedle, woolly wog, Kedah Wong, gilly, ruby
> nose, Bullet Head, nutty and cominist. '
> (ibid:174).

Such lists, barren of contextual references, remain essentially devoid of meaning.

In comparison, the details of the ethnographic context to be discussed below reveal that the context of nicknaming practices are crucial: different kinds of nicknames carry varied semantic loads and are used in certain specific social interactions. Such factors as knowing whether a nickname is a momentary insult or a permanent form of address, knowing the gender of the referent or speaker, being able to judge whether the resulting response to name calling was intended or accidental are all pertinent to an understanding of nicknaming as social practice.

Dundes, Leach and Özkok make precisely this point in their analysis of Turkish boys' duelling rhymes :

> ' it is not just a matter of describing
> the general function of one type of
> insult, but also of describing the
> particular rationale underlying the
> use of one particular insult by one
> particular individual to another
> particular individual on one particular
> occasion. ' (1970:326)

As Winslow perceptively notes : ' a child may good-
naturedly accept his nickname in the course of normal
social interaction but the same name may be used derogatorily
in other contexts ' (1969:256). Understanding the different
levels on which name-calling may work requires knowledge of
the social context of use. Adults use nicknames only on
certain occasions and only to certain people and there are
many different social contexts which inspire or restrict
the use of such epithets; children likewise perceive these
options. As Hymes suggests, ' persons choose among
alternative modes of address, and have knowledge of what
the meaning of doing so may be ' (1971:76). To explore
this process involves an analysis of the '"semantics" of
social relationships as well as the semantics of verbal
form ' (ibid:77).

Towards an understanding of nicknames: a model of the self

On first acquaintance with the children I was immediately
struck by their use of names. Indeed it was difficult
to get to know their names, to put a face to the name or
a name to the face for the children switch easily between

their personal names and alternative nicknames. Often

they would tease me as I attempted to get to know their

names by denying that they were called particular names

or giving me names which no one ever used. Only after a

prolonged period of time was I able to know how to name.

The analysis of nicknaming practices discussed below is

based upon a collection of 133 names used of 111 individuals.

As is immediately apparent from these figures there is no

one-to-one correlation between name and individual. Nick-

names are ambiguous identity pegs and, I shall show, it

is this very ambiguity of nicknaming which gives it such

power.

Nicknames are group property and hence can be regarded as

markers of group membership. Through following the origin

and derivation, the application and use of nicknames it is

possible to trace the patterning of social relationships.

In the following section I discuss what can be termed

permanent nicknames. These can be defined as those alternative

labels given to specific individuals by the children which

endure over a period of time. Permanent nicknames are given

to friends and foes but the names are of a qualitatively

different kind for each group. As I shall show it is adults

- especially teachers - who receive the permanent nicknames

reserved for outsiders.

In the next section I compare these nicknames with what can

be termed the temporary nicknames used between the children.
Temporary nicknames are names uttered only in specific
social circumstances; they indicate the value placed on
a relationship at any particular time. Such names can be
indentified as insults and over time, as I shall suggest,
temporary nicknames may transform into permanent labels.
Through exploring the patterning of nicknames over time
such qualitative changes can be explained.

To explore the movements in affective tone of different
kinds of naming involves examining the systematic character
of nicknaming through the working out of its individual
manifestations; to explore the syntagmatic chain of nickname
exchange reference must be made to its paradigmatic structure,
which itself is a syntagmatic element within the overall
performative paradigm of the language of ' doing nothing'.

The word ' nick ' means to steal, to alter or to make
an incision and the term nickname itself bears witness to
this tendency to transform. ' Nickname ' derives from the
Middle English an ' eke-name ' (surname); the ' n ' was
nicked and made to intrude upon the ' eke '. An ' eke-name'
transformed into a ' neke-name ' which itself became a
nickname. The children's nicknames discussed below incorporate
both these processes of transmission and transformation.

There are two major sources of nicknames. The first source,

classed below as the cultural source, is one in which an individual's social identity, his or her personal name, is stolen and through alteration used as the basis for a nickname. The personal name is amended through the addition or subtraction of letters; it is transformed through pun or parody and used as a springboard for a rhyming nickname. An individual's own name is literally ' nicked ' for the creation of a nickname.

The second source of nicknames is termed the natural source. Here, the physical rather than the social body, inspires the nickname. A new identity is created from and described in relation to an individual's physical appearance, personality or actions. As I shall show the source of nicknames is critical for it structures the new identity, an identity which is conceived to be either part of culture or part of nature, either of ' us ' or of ' them '.

Permanent nicknames: child to child

These nicknames are those which can be continually heard. They are a constant mode of address and reference, shouted out in anger or in play. They appear in sentences such as " I saw Hammy yesterday " or " Knack off, Kirby ".[1] They are used in much the same way as proper names. Permanent nicknames are divisible into six categories, five of which

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1. "Knack-off " means ' stop it ' or ' go away ', always used in annoyance.

are derived from the cultural source and one from the natural source.

The cultural source:

The first major category of nicknames is by far the most common and is one which involves alteration of the proper name by the addition or subtraction of letters. It is divisible into three sub-categories:

C.1.1. Standard abbreviation of Christian name:

Although this sub-category is not specific to the children's nicknaming practices, as it encompasses what can be defined as common abbreviations or familiar forms of Christian names, it has been included as one type of the nicknames used by the children. They are names used informally or as a sign of familiarity. Few names are of this type, however.

Walter	-	Wally
Susan	-	Sue
Jacqueline	-	Jackie.

C.1.2. Other types of abbreviation, including surnames:

In this sub-category some names are included which could have been classed in (C.1.1.). However, they are perhaps more commonly used amongst the children and thus deserve to be distinguished. It is this sub-category which contains the most common permanent nicknames, especially amongst girls.

Delvin	-	Del
Maurice	-	Mog
Blenkinshop	-	Blenk
Sharon	-	Shaz
McAloon	-	Maca
Julie	-	Jue
Teresa	-	Trez
Heslop	-	Hezzy
Brigham	_	Brig

C.1.3. Lengthening of surnames by the suffix ' y '

Clough	-	Cloughy
Plews	-	Plewsy
Graham	-	Grahamy
Sparks	-	Sparksy
Fish	-	Fishy

Occasionally there occurs a double transformation of the personal name in address, so that Genner, which is usually Gench (C.1.2.) might become Genchy (C.1.3.). Similarly, Jav (C.1.2.) is Javvy (C.1.3.) on occasion and Glendenning which could be Glen (C.1.2.) is always Glenny (C.1.3.).

C.2.0. Personal names used as the source of a pun or parody

Here is perhaps the ' desire for fun ', which the Opies (1977) find so characteristic of the child's language, but which so far in the nicknames has been lacking. This

category is, however, significantly sparse. Only three
permanent nicknames are of this type.

Thomas   -   Tucker (from the nursery rhyme,
"Little Tommy Tucker sang
for his supper.")

Colson   -   Coker (a pun based on the phonetic
equivalence of ' col ' and
' coal ', leading to the
inverted semantic association
with ' coke '.)

Roger   -   Rogger (involving the substitution
when spoken of a hard ' g '
for the soft ' g '.)

C.3.0. Substituted names

In this category appear nicknames which have no obvious
connection with the individual's personal name but represent
the substitution of another autonym.

Stephen   -   Dicky

Stephen   -   Sam

Alan   -   Benny

It could be argued that here nicknames serve a functional
role through distinguishing between those with the same
christian name. The next category prevents any such
simplistic conclusion.

C.4.0. Names which cover more than one individual

This category demonstrates the paradoxical nature of
nicknaming practices. Many names, previously assigned to
earlier categories must necessarily feature here for particular
nicknames take on further meanings in performance. No longer

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can gender or individual boundaries be maintained. Although the nickname ' Olly ' is of the type (C.1.2.), being a corruption of the surname Allchurch, <u>all</u> the boys of that family have the same nickname - a neat inversion of the naming procedures adopted by parents to distinguish their offspring. A complex transformation has occurred: the classificatory device - the surname - is transformed into a personal nickname for an individual but is then used as a new classificatory label.

Similarly, ' Maca ' covers two brothers so that the question is frequently asked : " Big or little Maca ? " This is reminiscent of two other brothers, ' Big Mog ' and ' Little Mog '. ' Leddy ' spans two brothers, although each boy has his own individual nickname. ' Bouch ' makes do for a brother and sister as do the nicknames ' Plewsy ' and ' Feather '. Clarification, in terms of individuality, is not therefore a prime function of nicknaming practices. Some children have more than one nickname; others have no nickname at all. No one ever knows <u>why</u> a person has a particular nickname, rather than another, and the fact that he or she has a nickname is never questioned. A nickname " just is ".

C.5.0. Surnames as nicknames

This practice, common in Public schools amongst boys and often between teacher and pupil elsewhere, is also a form of nicknaming used by the children. It is however comparatively rare. Amongst the children there are but

four examples: ' Genner ', ' Liddel','Kirby'and 'Leddy'. It
is possible that these nicknames do not, in fact, constitute
a separate category in analytical terms for three of these
children have alternative nicknames found in other categories.
' Genner ' and ' Liddel ' are also known as ' Jue ' and
' Delly '. The boy called ' Leddy ' is also ' Dicky 'and,
as is obvious, both surnames ' Leddy ' and ' Kirby ' already
end in a ' y ' so that alteration might not be necessary.
' Leddy ' and ' Kirby ' correspond to the type of nickname
(C.1.3.)

The significant poverty of this category suggests an
equality in social relationships, when contrasted to the
superior-inferior relationship involved in the use of surnames
alone between teacher and pupil, master and servant or friend
and enemy. Often surnames will be used alone when a fight
or argument - a power struggle - is about to take place.
These kinds of nicknames may, therefore, represent temporary
nicknames. This theme of the relationship between the use
and type of nickname and social distance will be amplified
below.[1]

N.1.0. Physical appearance as a source of nicknames

The nicknames in this category are all based on analogies
with the individual's physical body or descriptive of his

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1. See pp.363 - 377.

or her character or manner. The explanations of the nicknames
were offered by the children themselves.

<div style="margin-left:2em">

Colin   - Rocky (because of his slicked back hair
and Rock 'n Roll image - a
veritable Elvis Presley)

Wendy   - Weed (because she's small and goes about
with Bill and Ben)

Kevin   - Mouse (because of his sticking out teeth
and pointed nose)

Paul   - Nipper (because he always used to nip
girls' arses)

Alan   - Mouser (because he's always on the scrounge)

Anne   - Inch   (because she's small)

</div>

To summarise some of the observations so far: an individual
child may have two or three interchangeable permanent
nicknames. Some nicknames may be place specific as, for
example, one boy who is known as ' Tiddler ' in his class
at school (being the smallest in stature) but ' Delly '
at the youth club. Some nicknames refer to more than one
individual with no regard to gender. Other nicknames are
used only by girls of girls. In a context where the male
voice is more audible I thought at first that girls did not
have nicknames. Close attention, however, revealed that
Sharon was often ' Shaz ' and Patricia often ' Trish ' when
the girls were talking of or to each other. Boys know the
nicknames of girls - they understand the references - but,
in general, they address girls or refer to them by their
personal name or a familiar form (C.1.1). Occasionally boys
might use their own nicknames for girls in address so that

Jacqueline might be addressed as ' Jack '.[1] Girls, in contrast, always use the boys' nicknames.

The first major category (C.1.1.;C.1.2;C.1.3) is by far the largest being 64% of the total. It is striking by its very predictability. A personal name can often be deduced from an examination of the nickname and amongst the girls all but a handful of nicknames fall within this class. The highly consistent patterning of nickname derivation is revealed through the following incident:

> " Jackie tells me that she has an invitation to
> a party but that she wasn't asked directly. I
> said: " You got it by proxy?". She replied
> " No, from Dave". Proxy she understood as
> a nickname, comparable with Plewsy, Cloughy,
> Fishy or Grahamy. "

All but 8 of the children's permanent nicknames derive from the cultural source.

Permanent nicknames : child to adult

In contrast to the rather bland permanent nicknames used between the children the nicknames they give to adults are spicy and poignant. These names can be roughly divided into the categories outlined above with some exceptions. In

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1. This example is instructive for the girl in question did not conform to many of the implicit restrictions placed upon females in the culture of the children. She always wore trousers and often joined in ' male ' activities. Here perhaps she is classified by the boys as 'male '.

general, for adult permanent nicknames the categories are fewer and less well bounded. It is, in fact, their ambiguous qualities which lend these nicknames their power; many names are highly resonant and depend upon a complex combination of methods of derivation. However, the two main sources - the cultural and natural sources, - are still distinguishable.

The cultural source:

The first major category is one in which the adult's personal name is altered by adding or subtracting letters. The majority of these nicknames are constructed from the individual's surname; in that most of these nicknames are ones given to teachers this is of no surprise. Teachers' Christian names are usually closely guarded secrets.

C.1.1.   Personal name as the basis for a rhyming pair

Mr. Smith	-	Smith Withy
Mrs. Not	-	Snotty Notty
Mrs. Bell	-	Smelly Belly
		or
		Bell the Smell
Mary	-	Mary the Hairy Fairy

In all these names the suffix ' y ' is used to form the rhyming element.

C.1.2. Surname lengthened by the suffix ' y '

This sub-category has been included but it is ambiguous in use. As will be suggested later this may in fact represent a transient category similar to the category of surnames used alone (C.5.0.) found amongst the children's permanent nicknames.

Mr. Hall	-	Hally
Mr. Brook	-	Brooky

C.2.0. Personal names used as the source of a pun or parody

Mrs. Not's husband is a transgressor from (C.1.1.) - an extended pun whose nickname only becomes meaningful when seen in conjunction with that given to his wife. His name being Ivor invites the obvious nickname: " I've a snot up my nose. " Mrs. Bell reappears here as ' Ding Dong ', which reflects the rhyming element noted in (C.1.1.) . Mr. Angus is known as ' Scottie ' although he speaks with a local accent. Mr. Doudle is ' Dougal ', Mrs. Beveridge is ' The Beaver ' and Mrs. Mazerretti is ' Long Spagetti '. All these nicknames depend upon either a phonetic or associative resemblance between (i) the literal meaning of the name or (ii) the sound of the name when spoken.

C.3.0. Personal name used to refer to the media

Here the nickname is derived from the association of the adult's

personal name with characters or items from the media.

Mr. Wood	-	Woody Woodpecker (The headmaster who is also ' the beak ')
Mr. Gregory	-	Gregory Peck
Mr. Smith	-	Smiths Crisps
Mrs. Dabs	-	Sherbert Dabs

Also there is Mr. Phillips who is " years <u>behind</u> time ", a parody of the Phillip's Electrical advert which proclaims its products as being " Years <u>ahead</u> of time "; a neat inversion!

<u>The natural source</u>:

Here there are two categories of adult permanent nicknames:

<u>N.1.1. Personal appearance as source for nicknames</u>

Raggy Pants	- (who is always dirty)
Auntie Bionic	- (who talks incessantly)
Snoteater	- (because he does)
Fat Parkin	- (who has an enormous belly)
Beaky	- (who has a long nose)
Concorde	- (" " " " ")
Madame Le Box	- (who has a square-shaped head)
Sexy Sam the Dustbin Man	- (an unkempt man who is reputed to pinch girl's bottoms)

Kiddie Catcher	(the school attendance officer)
Miss MacMoan	(Miss MacLone," who always tells yer off ")
Squeak	(who has squeaky shoes)
Owl Eyes	(who wears glasses)

N.1.2. Personal appearance or actions linked to the media

Little Rolf	(who looks like Rolf Harris)
Hitler	(who wears a moustache)
Planet of the Apes	(who has a moustache and protruberant chin)
Bugsy Malone	(who rides a motorbike)
Mitchellin	(who is fat, like the Mitchellin Man)
Barnaby Bear	(whose ears stick out)

Approximately half the permanent nicknames for adults are derived from the natural source in contrast to 10% of the nicknames used amongst the children. However, these figures are of little import when the inspired and cruel overtones of these nicknames are compared with the rather reserved comments evident in the permanent nicknames the children give to one another.

To summarise the contrasts between these two kinds of permanent nicknames there are a number of qualitative differences in (i) their use and application (ii) their mode of construction and (iii) their semantic flavour.

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No.	C.1.1.	C.1.2.	C.1.3.	C.2.0.	C.3.0.	C.4.0.	C.5.0.	N.1.0
54 Boys	3	31	3	3	10	5	3	6
18 Girls	3	13	3	-	-	2	1	2
72	6	44	6	3	10	7	4	8

Grand Total   80   8

No.	C.1.1.	C.1.2.	C.2.0.	C.3.0.	N1.1.	N1.2
39 Adults	9	4	4	6	14	8
	23				22	

Fig. 5.   Nickname Distribution For Children And Adults

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Firstly, the difference in use according to gender, noted for the children's permanent nicknames, is not apparent in adult nicknames; male and female receive equal treatment. The names for adults are intended to be abusive and are given to adults who are hated. A teacher who is disliked must have a nickname and, I was told, if there is not one currently in use the children will soon find one. In contrast, the children's permanent nicknames for each other are relatively neutral. They reflect little emotion and are used by all and not just close friends.

An obvious distinction between these two kinds of permanent nicknames is that whilst the children use their nicknames as both address and reference terms, the adult nicknames are purely referential. By virtue of the assumed, and probable, authority of the adult over the child adult nicknames cannot be used by the children as address terms for fear of painful retribution. However, beyond this purely pragmatic difference lies another explanation: the nicknames given to adults are secret knowledge. Many adults who get to know their nicknames may work on the principle that nicknames are given to popular people, just as they might see the practical joke as fun, as not serious in intention. The ways in which the children express these nicknames, their insistence that a hated teacher must be named, denies this belief. The children, if playing a trick on adults, will often hint at the trick before the discovery is made if they think of it as fun. If, on the other hand, ridicule is the

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aim the unwary adult will be left to discover it alone.
Just so with nicknames.

Nicknames wield power and the ones reserved for hated adults
are abusive in intention and conception. Those permanent
nicknames for children remain neutral. The boy nicknamed
' Mouse ' has it emblazoned across his jacket; even though
it pin points most acutely his deficiency in looks it is
not a name to be hidden or to be ashamed of. It invites
no retribution to the namer from the named.

Secondly, nicknames for adults are linguistically more
complex. They often involve two or more words and at times
a whole sentence. In contrast, the children's permanent
nicknames are short and snappy. In the whole collection
no permanent nickname for the children is more than two
syllables long. Most are monosyllabic and even " Grahamy",
which is three syllables, is spoken as if it contained just
two: " Gramy '. Similarly, the nicknames which stem from
the natural source (those which appear to be potentially
insulting) are short and simple: ' Rocky ', ' Inch',
' Nipper ', ' Mouser '. These are very different from the
adult names: ' Sexy Sam the Dustbin Man', ' Put a Tiger
in your tank ' and ' Planet of the Apes '.

Thirdly, the adult nicknames contain a multitude of metaphoric
associations. As a set they indicate a stress on the parts
of the body. The names are metaphorical constructions around

the nose, the mouth, the stomach, eyes, ears, faces and
sexual organs. There is no reference to body parts in the
children's nicknames. Animals as metaphors abound and there
are many references to familiar T.V. personalities or characters.
This source of nicknaming - adverts, cartoons and children's
T.V. programmes - make the names instantly recognisable to
other children who can perceive the hidden identity of the
individual who is named. These names represent yet another
useful aspect of this corpus of sacred knowledge: the children
can speak of ' Smiths Crisps ' , ' Gregory Peck ' and ' Dougal '
without those not in the know understanding the reference.

Media figures <u>are</u> used as metaphoric names for the children
but are always directed towards the self. They are never
permanent nicknames. Instead, they represent self-
ascriptions, destined to augment prestige. To call oneself
' The Fonz ' or ' The Hulk ' is a form of self-congratulation,
implying great ability. The Fonz has a way with girls, the
Hulk has exceeding physical strength. A boy may call himself
' The Bionic Man ', as a form of self-appraisal, but ' bionic '
as in ' Auntie Bionic ' is a critical assessment of her
constant gossip; it does not suggest visions of strength
and masculinity. Moreover, it is apparent that the choice
of media figures as metaphors for the self are taken from the
realm of super-heroes.[1] Super-heroes are not used for

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1. For further discussion of this , see pp.426 - 444.

adults, those who are despised. In this respect I received a mark of acumen from one boy; he told me that I warranted the status of the Fonz's wife.

From these initial conclusions it is possible to draw up a series of conceptual oppositions which form a series of inverse images revealed through the semantic analysis of nicknames.

CHILD	ADULT
Cultural Source Predominates	Natural Source Predominates
Sexual differentiation	Non-differentiation by sex
Simple, short names	Long, complex names
Non-abusive	Abusive
T.V. heroes for self-appraisal	T.V. and media used for abuse
Neutral attitude to the other expressed	The other as a hated enemy
Address and reference terms	Usually, only used in reference
Few animals and inanimate objects	Many animals and inanimate objects
The body as a physical whole	The body as separate parts

Fig.6. The differences in construction and semantic value between the two types of nicknames (read horizontally), and the characteristics of each series (read vertically).

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The data in Fig.   6   summarises the conceptual represen-
tation of two kinds of species: ' them ' and ' us '.
' Them ' - visualised as the adult world through nicknaming
practices - are separated off into a named category.   ' They '
have names which refer to the natural world or to the popular
culture of the media, cartoons and adverts.   ' They ' have
names which belong to the realm of ordinary discourse, highly
constructed names involving a multitude of metaphors.   ' We',
on the other hand, have names of the social world; ' we '
have cultural labels which are self-referential, names which
are restricted to the human order.

However, to leave the analysis as a discrete discussion of
binary classification would be to reify what is a complex
and highly ambiguous social practice. Not all adults are
hated; not all children are liked. Clifford Geertz argues
that to achieve a comprehensive appreciation of cultural
processes it is necessary to undertake an ' extended
unpacking ' of the relationship between empirical reality
and conceptual thought (1975:90). Crucially, this involves
maintaining the distinction between symbols and their
referents for the ' the latter are not in themselves symbols',
of making an analytical separation between a model of and
for reality (ibid:92).

In this respect Fig. 6   expresses a <u>model of</u> the world:
the children's nicknaming practices represent a process
of symbolic classification predicated upon and congruent
with the non-symbolic reality, that is the social distance

between the children's and the adult's worlds. However,
through exploring the mode of operation of temporary
nicknames a _model for_ reality is revealed : temporary
nicknames represent the conceptual manipulation and
transformation of the adult-child dichotomy in the physical
world.

This process suggests that nicknames, whilst being individual
names, are also species names. They are totemic and the
adult-child dichotomy represents the totemic operator.[1]
Totemic naming systems are metaphoric in character but, as
Lévi-Strauss remarks,

> ' the homology they evoke is not between
> social groups and natural species but
> between the differences which manifest
> themselves on the level of groups on the
> one hand and on that of species on the
> other ' (1972:115)

Totemism postulates ' a homology between two systems of
difference ' (ibid:115).

The features summarised in Fig. 6 frame the model of
reality - the adult-child dichotomy - but also provide the
referential points for the model for reality. The nicknaming
system, like totemism and other systems of social classifi-
cation,

> ' are codes suitable for conveying messages
> which can be transposed into other codes,
> and for expressing messages received by
> means of different codes in terms of their
> own system ' (ibid:75-6).

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1. See Lévi-Strauss (1972).

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Metaphoric nicknames may reflect the physical reality but they are metonymical links in a symbolic system. Not all ' fatties ' will be nicknamed according to their shape; not all those who are so named will be fat. Indeed, reversal may occur: the name ' tiny ' may be used for the very tall. Just as Lévi-Strauss dismisses any biological explanation for the existence of totemic practices, preferring ' ethno-logic ' to ' ethno-biology ', I suggest that nick-naming should also be understood primarily as a logical conceptual system (1969:100). Such a perspective moves the analysis to a consideration of how self-knowledge is constituted, of the expression of social unity through inclusion against the diversity of exclusion, of the children's own conception of the social order and their position within it. These questions can be explored through exposing the underlying logic of nicknaming practices, manifested in manifest forms.

A model for reality: temporary nicknames amongst the children

Fernandez has argued that the mission of metaphor is to create a ' synthesia in respect to continua in different domains ' (1974:124). This is also the mission of temporary nicknames: temporary nicknames reconstruct and realign the divisions and boundaries between the children's and the adult worlds.

Temporary nicknames, unlike the children's permanent
nicknames, are intrinsically bound up with sentiment
and are highly metaphoric. As Winslow suggests in his
discussion of children's derogatory epithets they ' can
function as implements of social control ' (1969:262).
They achieve this persuasive power through metaphor,
through confusing different conceptual domains.

I suggested earlier that temporary nicknames can best be
described as insults. They are not names by which children
are necessarily always known but are usually only momentarily
invoked. They are less person specific than permanent
nicknames as is apparent from the fact that many of these
names represent those which the Opies (op.cit.) have
identified as ' traditional '. In this sense, temporary
nicknames are species names, not proper names, applicable
to many rather than single individuals. However, as
opposed to terms of general abuse - such as pig, puff and
spacca - temporary nicknames are of a highly contrived
nature. They are similar in both derivative form, mode of
construction and semantic flavour to the names discussed
previously for adults. The congruence of sentiment which
accompanies their use emphasises this marked resemblance
in construction. It is precisely this contiguity which
unleashes the insult.

<u>The cultural source:</u>

C.1.1. Name used as the basis for a rhyming pair

Jacqueline Spaccaline

Jannet Cannot

Tucker Fucker

As in the adult classification, play is usually on the ✓
children's personal name, but here it is the Christian
name which is used rather than the surname. All the
three temporary nicknames above have a multitude of
associations. In the first nickname there are three
modes of abuse: (1) the use of Jacqueline implies a
formality and hence a social distancing, as normally she
is called Jackie; (2) the nickname includes <u>spacca</u>, a
general insult; (3) the rhyming quality of the name is
similar to that employed for hated adult nicknames; she
has been metaphorically moved into an excluded and abused
group. The rhyme form may facilitate a singing jeer. As
Hardman (1973) notes, the phrase ' Cowdy, cowdy custard'
(from my own data: ' Tucker is a nutter ') always follows
a distinctive rhythm and tune which allows abuse to be sung;
variations in verbal content are unimportant for ' the
meaning is fixed in the tune ' (1973: 97).

C.2.0 Personal names used as a source of a pun or parody

Riggerby - Riggertwit

George - Georgie Porgie

In the first example, the personal name is turned into an insult through the addition of a general insult <u>twit</u>. In the second , recourse is made to the nursery rhyme character who kissed the girls and made them cry; insult is added to injury through exploitation of the rhyme form.

C.3.0. Personal name used to refer to the media

    Andy   -   Andy Pandy

    Sheena - Barry Sheene

    Allison - Alibaba

The natural source:

N.1.1. Personal appearance as source for nicknames

It is in this category that the majority of temporary nicknames occur, reflecting the similar emphasis in the adult classification. In contrast to the category (N.1.0) for the children's permanent nicknames, the ones used temporarily are graphic illustrations of the individual's deficiences. <u>Permanent</u> nicknames in this category were, by contrast, neutral in tone.

Golliwog	(for a half-caste boy)
Blackie	(" " " " ")
Concorde	(for a boy with a large nose, c.f. adult classification N.1.1.)
Snotbag	(c.f. snoteater in adult classification N.1.1.)
Iron Jaw	(for a boy who had recently acquired a brace for his teeth and was embarassed about it)

Fat William	(for a fat boy c.f. Fat Parkin in adult classification N.1.1.)
Daft Margaret	(for a girl who attends the 'spac' school -i.e. she is E.S.N.)
The Tramp	(for a dirty, poorly dressed boy, c.f. "the dustbin man " in adult classification N.1.1.)
Freckle Face	(because she had one)
Copy-cat pig	(because she does)
Fatty Bum Bum	(for a fat boy)
Barrel	(for a fat girl)
Tank	(for a fat girl c.f. Opies (1977))

N.1.2. Personal appearance or actions linked to the media

Smelly Pele	(footballer. Insult is achieved through rhyme form)
Smerf	(Shell Petrol advert, cartoon character)
Miss Piggy	(the Muppet Show)
Pixie and Dixie	(T.V. Programme for children)
John Player Special the Snoteater special	(cigarettes)

It is apparent that the temporary nicknames used amongst children bear many of the characteristics familiar in the permanent nicknames given to adults. There are references to animals and inanimate objects; the body is split into parts; there is no regard to gender differentiation; the names are linguistically complex; there is an emphasis on the natural source as the mode of derivation, (c.f. Fig. 6, adult series).

Earlier, reference was made to Winslow's(1969) comment that nicknames work on many different levels: one particular name may be at one time acceptable but at another hurtful. By exploring in detail how temporary nicknames are evoked an explanation of this paradoxical process is achieved. The key to this puzzle lies in the distinction between teasing and the breaching of friendships, between conceptual recognition of an individual as a member of ' us ' rather than ' them '.

Teasing is integral to name calling. To tease a friend is metaphorically to move him or her into the category named for adults - outsiders - through evoking a temporary nickname. For that moment in time he or she becomes conceptually something other i.e. a metaphoric adult/ outsider. By addressing a friend with a temporary nickname a distance is created between the namer and the named, a conceptual distance analogous to that between adults and children. Frequently, temporary nicknames are used in games of name-calling: each individual tries to outwit his or her opponent through conceptually manoeuvering the other into more distant classificatory domains. The aim is to achieve the maximum insult. The game is finished when one insult is perceived to over-step the normative boundaries of the game , at which time the namer will be met with a physical response in the form of a fight or a refusal to continue the game.

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The following examples outline the process of name-calling
in such linguistic games:

(1)   "Kirby, Bouch and David were visiting. Kirby
        gets up to leave and David shouts: "Bye,bye,
        Kermit". Kirby replies: "Bye,bye Fuzzy Bear"
        to which David shouts: "Bye,bye,Miss Piggy".
        Kirby threatens to thump him".

In this series all the names are taken from the T.V.programme,

The Muppet Show. An initial alliterative pun is made on

Kirby's permanent nickname: Kirby is transformed into Kermit

(the frog). Taking up the challenge Kirby continues the

theme by calling David Fuzzy Bear, to which David responds

with yet another animal metaphor, that of the pig. Pig

is a general insult and genderized, in this case, as female;

David therefore achieves a double insult and Kirby can only

reply with a physical threat.

(2)   "Tucker and Stephen are sitting round the bonfire.
        Tucker calls Stephen "Woodenbrain" to which
        Stephen replies "Leadbrain". Tucker responds
        "Noseface". Later Stephen calls Tucker,
        "Friar Tuck", followed quickly by " Fire Tuck".

In this example, there is a complex interplay on personal

characteristics. Stephen was well known for certain

ineptitudes and so Tucker's nickname for him, "Woodenbrain",

was highly resonant. Stephen, not to be outwitted,

picked on a substance denser and heavier - that is thicker-

than wood - ' Woodenbrain' became 'Leadbrain'. The new

insult retained the original's form (something brain) but

was more insulting for it implied greater stupidity. Tucker,

in reply, changed tactics and once more directed his insult

against Stephen's body through calling him "Noseface".
(Stephen had a large nose). This nickname continued
the established theme of bodily description but represented
a direct hit. Stephen's later attempts to get his own
back were less successful: through using Thomas's nickname
' Tucker ' as the starting point he transformed it into
'Friar Tuck'. Tucker being a small, thin boy, was not
offended by the name and gave no response. The final
transformation of 'Friar' into 'Fire' was equally unsuccessful;
Tucker did not rise to the bait for the names were not good
teases.

(3)   " Coker was teasing Noreen. He kept rushing
       up to her and calling her Thirks ".

In this last case is another example of teasing. Coker
and Noreen were going out together and Coker was deliberately
endeavouring to make her angry. Noreen was called Noz and
Coker always used this nickname. By calling her " Thirks"
he was insulting her in a number of ways. Firstly, he was
not using her own nickname , thereby distancing himself from
her . He employed the nickname " Thirks " (a permanent
nickname from Thirkel) and a name which belonged to her:
brother. Metaphorically, Coker was transforming his girlfriend
into a male, and possibly chastising her for some of her more
aggressive, masculine behaviour.[1] Later, he capitalised upon
this latter insult by suggesting that she " stinks of vinegar",
another undesirable quality.

1. See below for a discussion of gender prescription
    for action, pp.426 - 458.

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In the three examples above it is significant that many of
the temporary nicknames, although following the pattern of
construction outlined previously, used the individual's
permanent nickname, rather than proper name, out of which to
form the insult. All these three incidents were about
teasing rather than insulting and the use of the permanent
nickname represents a sign of their affectionate rather
than abusive intention. A similar series of transformations
would be the one directed at Kevin, known as ' Coker ', when
he was called ' Coconut   '.

However, temporary nicknames can also serve to create more
permanent divisions in social relationships; the social
distance instigated through teasing becomes the main reason
for name-calling rather than its result. Here there is a
change in use: the temporary nickname becomes used in
reference as well as address. In teasing the name is only
used in address. When the friendship is finally breached
the temporary nickname becomes permanently applied and
changes to a purely referential term. In address the
individual will be called by his or her personal name. This
pattern recalls that already discussed in the use of permanent
nicknames for adults.

As Morgan, O'Neill and Harré (1979) confirm, nicknaming is
an effective instrument of social control. Anyone who is
perceived to trangress the unwritten rules of conduct

adhered to by the group as a whole - rules of behaviour and physical appearance - can be sanctioned through nicknaming. Temporary nicknames are used to insult those who go beyond the bounds. For example, the temporary nickname ' Professor ' was given to one boy who boasted of his knowledge in front of his friends and ' Daft Margaret' was picked on for her stupidity. To be picked out from the crowd is to be named and temporary nicknames, which are linguistically complex and semantically rich, symbolise this process of individuation; the insulted lose their permanent nicknames which are less outstanding, which conform to the names given to others. In both these instances each child had to tread most carefully in case the temporary nickname was maintained. Once an individual is thus named the name may stick like glue and total exclusion from the group must surely follow. In this way nicknames serve to delineate the implicit social norms established by the children.[1]

Children who are external to a specific group are identified and named: they have permanent derogatory nicknames. Three sisters are collectively known as the ' The Jumble Sale'. Their clothing is perceived to be non-conformist and the children would remark: " There's a jumble sale outside " when they caught sight of them. Another boy once remarked, when a jumble sale was planned at the Club, that " the

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1.See pp426-441 for further discussion of bodily norms.

Sparks can buy their clothes there ". These girls were peripheral to the main group at the club; they had to find friendship elsewhere.

Whole groups of outsiders are named in this fashion. They are specified as groups apart. Although within the village there were no formalized gangs and during the two year period of fieldwork friendships remained relatively fluid, the village lads had a strong sense of territorial identity. Through using the geographical boundaries of the village they conceptually delimited the extent of their own territory; lads from nearby villages were collectively known as ' Bishop Botters', ' Teefab Metal Mob,'C-----Twats', and F------- Evil Bastards'.

The change from using a temporary nickname as a tease to using it as a positive insult is symbolised in the move from the name being used purely in address to it becoming used as both an address and reference term. Total exclusion from the group occurs when a temporary nickname - an abusive name - is used only in reference with the personal name being used in address. The use of the surname alone as a nickname (C.5.0.) may similarly mark changing sentiment. Both these processes of name changing represent a form of social death; non persons are those who do not have a permanent nickname. In many ways, therefore, as Morgan, O'Neill and Harré also note, it may be'better to be stigmatized than to be a non-person, for not to exist socially is the worst fate of all' (1979:47).

It remains to be discussed how the children name adults
whom they like. If those children who are disliked are
conceptually distanced from the group by drawing analogies
(through nicknames) to adults it would seem logical that
adults who are favoured should be conceptually equated with
the children. This seems to be the case. Similarity, but
not contiguity, is asserted in a negative fashion through
the process of not giving permanent nicknames to liked
adults. A negative process is hard to substantiate but as
Crick suggests ' semantic investigations have to cope not
only with a diversity of conventions, but also with the
semantic power of purposive non-conventionality ' (1976:135).
By not giving adults abusive nicknames the children positively
flaunt their usual nicknaming practices.

Such adults will be referred to and addressed by their personal
name. To tease such an adult an abusive nickname is delivered
directly in address as amongst the children: I was nicknamed
by the terms ' Alibaba' or ' Clogger '.[1] Should such an
adult break the friendship, however, there is a mode of
distancing comparable with that used amongst the children.
The category (C.1.2.) for adults was identified earlier as
ambiguous : this can now be explained. The addition of the
suffix 'y' succeeds in temporarily insulting a liked adult
through drawing an analogy with children. This finds
expression in such statements as " I got wrong off Hally
yesterday " or " Woody told us off ". There is a temporary

1. ' Clogger ' was derived from my footwear-clogs-and
   Alibaba from my Christian name.

change in sentiment. Should that adult become <u>permanently</u> unacceptable he will acquire an adult-type of permanent nickname.

It seems therefore that if the children wish to tease a member of the adult <u>liked</u> group he or she must be pushed towards the children's category by addressing him or her in the same way as the children tease each other. If the children wish to <u>insult</u> such a liked adult, he or she is moved further into the children's classification scheme; conversely, if a member of the children's group is insulted he or she is moved towards an adult type of classification. That is to say, in order to insult the children exclude a person who is usually included (a child) and <u>further</u> include a person who is on the boundary (a liked adult). Involved in both these processes of changing sentiment is a complex series of transformations and inversions which accomplish movement around, what Fernandez has called , ' quality space ' (1974:124). The boundaries of this quality space rest on the framework of distinctions established in Fig. 6 which govern the construction of nicknames for ' us ' and for ' them '. The mode of description of this space is based on the child-adult dichotomy, on ' us ' and ' them ', but expression of who exactly belongs to each category at any point in time is achieved by movement between these two extremes through the manipulation of different types of naming, see Fig.7.
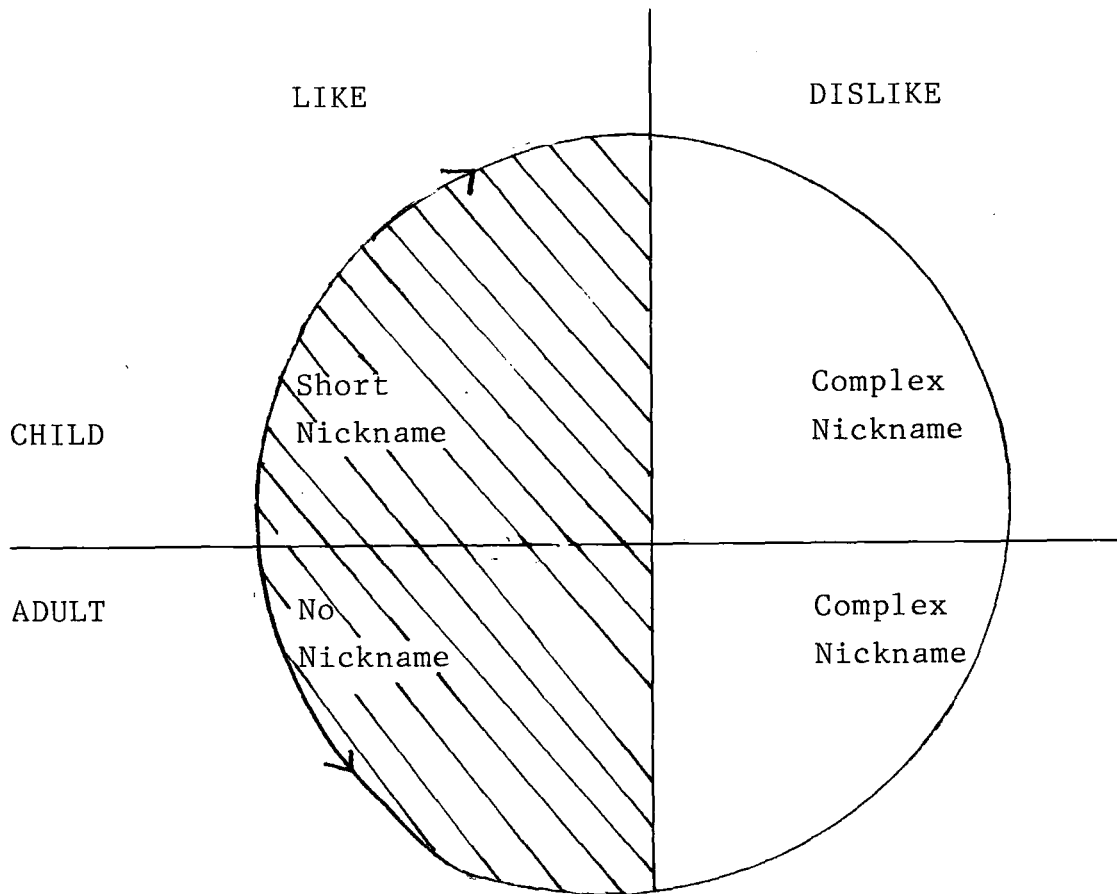
Fig.7.   The Metaphorical Shifts Incurred Through
                    Nicknaming Practices

N.B.   The arrows indicate the direction of metaphoric
            movement in category status and the shaded areas
            the equivalence conceptually accomplished through
            the affective use of nicknaming.

The quality space around which individuals can be moved

through the children's nicknaming practices is further

illustrated by the following two examples in Fig.8.   The

table plots the changes in name over time as a child and

an adult moved from favour to disfavour.   In each case

it is the use of particular address and reference terms

which registers the changing sentiments:

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	PERMANENT NICKNAME (+)	TRANSITORY NICKNAME (+/-)	TEMPORARY / NEW PERMANENT NICKNAME (-)
CHILD	Bouch (A) Bouch (R)	Iron Jaw (A) Boucher (R)	Paul (A) Boucher/Iron Jaw (R)
ADULT	Mr.Hall (A) Mr.Hall (R)	Mr.Hall (A) Hally (R)	Mr.Hall (A) Hally Scrawly (R)

Fig. 8. An illustration of the change in nicknames given to
(i) a child and (ii) an adult as each moved from favour
to disfavour over a period of time.

Changes in nicknaming also reflect changes in social status.
At a certain point an individual will be perceived by the
other children to be leaving their world and drifting towards
the boundaries of adulthood and, at this time, nicknaming
may change. During the fieldwork period one boy who was
always called ' Butch ' by the children gradually began
to prefer that they addressed him by his personal name and
would reproach anyone who used his previous nickname,
especially if it was a younger child. Eventually even in
reference ' Butch ' became used infrequently by the children
as he began to separate himself off from their world.

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Conclusion :   Nicknames as a mode of thought

The preceding analysis reveals a powerful and semantically
rich system of naming. It is one which has its own internal
logic, a mode of thought which structures and is structured
by the children's own understanding of their relationship
with others. Nicknaming , as a social practice, represents
one of the ways in which the children conceptually reorder
and manipulate the strictures of a classification scheme
which works to categorise them apart.

The high consistency of this example of nicknaming practices
is, I suggest, a function of the particularity of the ethno-
graphic setting. Morgan, O'Neill and Harré conclude from
their studies that ' the intensity of the nicknaming system
is related to the intensity of the social structure '
(1979:50). They argue that ' nickname density is highest
where the institution approximates to Goffman's total
institution ', that is when people are subject to strong
processes of social control which force them into ' relatively
close and prolonged contact with each other ' (ibid:51).

This correlation between nicknaming and social structure is
substantiated by Barret's (1978) analysis of changing nickname
practices among adults in Benbarre, Northern Spain. He
suggests that with increasing modernization personal
nicknames - those coined from ' personality characteristics,

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place of origin or occupation of particular individuals'
- have become increasingly surplanted by traditional inherited
family nicknames (1978:94). These latter names have ' no
necessary connection between the meaning of the name and the
individual it identifies ' for they are passed down between
generations (ibid:95). Through the diminution of
community sociability, which he sees as integral to the
process of coining, disseminating and establishing personal
nicknames, inherited nicknames which do not rely on continual
face-to-face interaction for their transmission have become
more common. That is, the village has become less of a
' total institution'.[1]

In general, therefore, the more rigid the boundaries between
social groups, the more people are turned in upon themselves,
the more coherent and elaborate nicknaming practices become.
In the village where the children live, go to school and
socialize within a limited physical and social space, where
they have continual and close contact with one another both
in school and outside it, where there is a marked separation
between the adult world and the children's world, the
conditions exist for the emergence of a highly coherent and
strongly bounded ' autonomous world ' and the development
of a world view which conceptually separates the ' us ' from
' them ' (Morgan, O'Neill and Harré, 1979:2).

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1. See Goffman (1968).

This world view finds one expression through the totemic qualities and symbolic import of their nicknaming practices: nicknames enable the children to draw relatively rigid boundaries between different species, between ' us ' and ' them '. This difference incorporates ideas of social distance and is expressed in the linguistic form of the names themselves.

Leach (1964) ; (1971) has explored the relationship between language and cultural conceptions of familiarity. He poses the problem of the social contexts of utterance of two alternative kinship terms, ' mummy ' and ' mother ', and asks what conditions inspire or restrict their use:

> ' when a speaker's competence includes
> two kinship words which are alternative
> referents for the same individual the
> words are differentiated in the speaker's
> mind by a complex of associations which
> we may call ' semantic colour ' which
> may have a phonological base '. (1971:77)

In the nicknaming practices of the children this hypothesis is confirmed: the differences in semantic colour noticeable between the two types of nicknames used by the children are reflected in differences in phonology.

Firstly, the permanent nicknames used by the children for each other are short and simple; those used for outsiders are, by contrast, long and linguistically complex. The children's permanent nicknames gain their overall phonological uniformity through the use of particularized

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suffixes: ' y ', ' z ' and ' a ' or ' er ', the latter two being aurally indistinguishable. Examples of such nicknames are:' Baz ', ' Gaz ', Daz ', ' Shaz', ' Caz', 'Maz' and 'Trez'; 'Linty', 'Hutchy', 'Delly','Joany','Glenny', 'Hezzy' and 'Canty'; 'Tosha', 'Whipper ', 'Moga ', 'Maca' and ' Rogger '. Such names are composed of sounds which are ' easy to control '; these, as Leach argues,are usually reserved for close relatives as in ' mama ' and ' papa ' (ibid:78). More distant relationships , those which are ' surrounded by awkwardness and taboo will tend to be signalled by ' difficult ' sounds ', a pattern again apparent in nickname construction: names given to outsiders are long and complex, contrasting strongly with the names used for close friends (ibid:78).

In the light of these findings it is surprising that few researchers have considered the process of social <u>inclusion</u> through nicknaming: for most writers nicknames are merely ways of individualising people through stigmatization, of excluding those who are perceived to be different or of reinforcing social norms through derogatory epithets and ridicule. Morgan, O'Neill and Harré (op.cit.), for example, make no clear distinction between differences in semantic colour between different kinds of nicknames. Although they note that some nicknames are of the Marion - Maz variety (category C.1.2.) they make no comment on the significance of having this kind of nickname. It is, I suggest, precisely because they have not considered the performative aspect of

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nicknaming, have not paid close attention to the usage of nicknames as address and/or reference terms, that they have missed the importance of such prosaic nicknames for the establishment of group unity. There is, however, an indication from their work that this is in fact the case: ' the smaller the school class the more internal motivations played some part in the formation of nicknames (1979:39). This is substantiated in my own findings: members of the ' us ' group most often have nicknames derived from personal names - what Morgan, O'Neill and Harré term as the internal motivation - and it is this principle of nickname construction which, I suggest, symbolises the unity of the group.

Nicknames, then, are used both as inclusive, classificatory devices as well as exclusive, individualising ones. The rather prosaic and unimaginative nicknames which the children use constantly for one another as permanent address and reference terms - ' Trish ', ' Hooky ' and ' Gench '- are positive symbols of inclusion within a particular social group. Such names have rarely been considered as nicknames at all with undue attention being placed on the more flamboyant names, those generally perceived as comical or insulting.

As Collier and Bricker (1970) correctly note, nicknames can therefore operate as both classifiers and individualisers. Nicknames classify ' us ' and ' them ' through giving names

to individual members, but the names chosen reflect the
category to which these members belong, and therefore act also
as classificatory devices. This movement between individual
and category is a complex interweaving between internal and
external perceptions. Among the children, although their
permanent nicknames individuate within the group, the very
process of nicknaming serves to blur external perception of
individual members. Nicknames therefore provide a disguise
for the individual and are used to confuse outsiders.

Whilst working at the youth club, for example, I soon
became aware that the children were adept at manipulating
their nicknaming system for their own gain; through exploiting
this difference between internal and external perception
of it the children managed to confuse and disorder the adults
who were in charge as on the occasion when one boy managed
to get two games of table tennis, rather than the allotted
single game. Table tennis was very popular so there was a
rota on which children who wanted to play signed their names.
Through writing down both his personal name and his nickname
(ostensibly referring to two people) this particular boy
achieved his goal. Another boy wrote down his two alternative
nicknames to achieve the same end and yet another wrote down
the nickname ' Leddy ' twice, arguing that the one name
referred to himself and also to his brother.

Within the group nicknames individuate; to outsiders
nicknames serve as masks for individual identities. Stephen

/..

is ' Dicky ' but also ' Leddy ', whilst ' Leddy'is ' Tucker '
who is really Thomas. Alan is ' Benny ' but sometimes
' Mouser ' and Maurice is ' Mog ' and also ' Macca '.
' Maca ' is also Mog's brother and ' Little Mog ' is ' Big
Mogs' brother. In some cases the nickname is in such constant
use that the individual's personal name is unknown, as is
the case with the legendary ' Pegga ' who used to live in
the village. He may or may not be ' David something ' but
none of the children were certain. The display of graffiti
sprayed around the village reveals a wealth of nicknames,
so conspicuous and ostentatious and yet, to outsiders,
ultimately meaningless. The physical identity is lost to the
stranger under a disguised name. It was one of the high
points of my fieldwork when I was at last able to identify
the faceless names which decorated the interior of the tele-
phone box.

The ways in which the nicknaming practices of the children
serve to colour in the contours of their social map,
indicating familiarity and distance, friends and foes, suggests
that the study of names, which in anthropology assumes
importance under the headings of teknonymy and necronymy, could
well be augmented by studies of nicknaming. The analysis
presented here has, for example, covered many of the issues
raised by Hilda and Clifford Geertz (1964) in their article
on teknonymy in Bali. They suggest that above all teknonymy
provides a classificatory frame for the life of the community:

Plates 7 & 8   " The display of graffiti sprayed round the
                   village reveals a wealth of nicknames. "

/..

' The mode of address in this situation
becomes the weather vane for their social
situation, summing up the various vectors
of prestige, and correspondingly, shifting
with the changes in their social situation.'
(1964:98)

Nicknames, however, do not merely function as codes for

communication, as disguises or implements of social control:

they have an immense symbolic significance demonstrated

perhaps most explicitly in the permanent nicknames which

the children use daily as address and reference terms amongst

themselves. Through transforming their personal names the

children gain new identities which are, I suggest, more

meaningful to them, coming as they do from their own cultural

context rather than from outside it. The children replace

the identificatory label given to them by adults at birth

with a new and more semantically rich name which is of and

about their own social world.

In this respect it is highly significant that the majority

of these permanent nicknames used by the children are

constructed out of a literal destruction of their own personal

names. The choice of this destruction is a response perhaps

to the fact that they will most often have heard their personal

names as a negation of their own activities in the reprimands

and orders emanating from the adult world. Through decimating

this perceptually negative identity given to them by adults

the children actively create a new one from its broken parts

as they seek to gain more control over their own destiny. It

represents a process of linguistic bricolage.[1] It is not

surely a matter of pure practicality that most graffiti is

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1. See p.302 - 3 for discussion of ' bricolage '.

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written in capital letters: to see TOSHA painted in huge,
white block letters on the wall of the bus. shelter suggests
that this is a name to be proud of, a name which is far more
meaningful to its owner than Tony from which it originated.

Nicknames, then, are powerful tools in the children's
hands and form an exclusive body of knowledge, one which is
framed by the language of ' doing nothing '. Firstly, the
ways in which nicknames are created reflect the structural
principles previously outlined for the language as a whole.[1]
For example, the children use particular suffixes - ' er ',
' a ' and ' z ' - in creating their permanent nicknames for
one another , preferring short, sharp names; these two
principles are a consistent feature of their wider exclusive
vocabulary. Acronyms also are used for nicknames: Susan
Anne Marie is known as S.A.M., Wayne White as W.W.and Teresa
Cook as T.C. Words, then, which are the peculiar property
of the children are nicked words, words from the adult language
cut short and deliberately transformed within a particular
paradigmatic structure.

Secondly, the permanent nicknames of the children have a
linguistic uniformity which symbolises the social unity of
' us ' as opposed to ' them ', a feature which makes these
names, like other words in their vocabulary, exclusive to
the culture of ' doing nothing '. But, the names used for

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1. See Chapter 4.

/..

' them ' whilst being diverse in form are, nevertheless, still created within the frame of the children's language: rhyme and alliteration are frequently employed in these names and many of them contain references to taboo subjects: to shit, snot, sex and other conceptually dirty topics. Such names fall within the interpretive frame set out through the children's linguistic performances.

Thirdly, the resonance and power of the nicknaming system as a whole stems from the performative aspects of the language of ' doing nothing '. It is through performance that nicknaming acts to classify: to segregate or unite through teasing and taunting others, through using names as address and/or reference terms the children continually reorder their social relationships. Through nicknaming, transgressors of the implicit cultural rules can be quickly excommunicated and revealed to be in error; new people can be included , old companions ruthlessly dismissed. Nicknames reveal the power of language described by Tambiah when ' the uttering of words itself is a ritual ' and becomes an effective instigator of social action (1973:175). To call someone ' Hartley Hare ' is to diminish them through relegating them to a fantasy world by analogy with the media and to further remove them from social life by a <u>natural</u> metaphor. The language of ' doing nothing ' creates a frame for interpretation through performance and the nicknaming practices of the children image this learning process.[1]

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1. See Chapter 4.

Finally, the importance of nicknaming stretches beyond its role in illuminating the paradigm of the language of ' doing nothing ' for nicknames feature in many of the children's non-verbal forms of expression. Nicknames appear as graffiti, symbolising the creation of personal territory out of public space;[1] nicknames appear in girl's tattoos and are used in their divination techniques and are emblazoned across the boys' jackets.[2] They are resonant symbols of the culture as a whole and represent one small aspect of the process of self discovery, the path of self-socialization which is characteristic of ' doing nothing.'

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1. See Chapter 3.
2. See Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6:   LEARNING TO BE : THE BODY IN TRANSITION

' The fact that the performers are young
is neither here nor there - they are
really in adult situations. In my view,
you become an adolescent and that's
generally the way you die. To put it
the other way round, these kids wheel
and deal and play power games just like
adults ! '

(Bill Forsyth's comments on his film,
Gregory's Girl, Guardian 13th June, 1981).

Introduction

Burridge argues. that ' to become it is first necessary to

belong; and belonging makes it possible to define just

who or what one is ' (1969 : 46). Belonging, for the

children, is a subtle stylistic form, a mode of being and

doing, which is implicit rather than explicit in their

actions. They have no structured or named groups; they

do not belong to any formalized subcultural groupings and

yet there exists a tacit sense of belonging which sets up

and initiates its own lines of exclusion. There is a style

of being comparable to the style of youth subcultures,

noted by Hebdige, through which a ' challenge to hegemony '

in the adult world is symbolically realised (1979:17).

As he suggests style in youth culture is the process by which

' objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed and

....magically resolved at the profoundly superficial level

of appearance : that is, at the level of signs ' (ibid:

17). In this way the children learn a mode of being

and only those who participate with style are said

to belong. In this way they also learn a mode of becoming
through manipulating, transforming and experimenting with
the signs of their own culture.

Nicknames are but one example of this process of belonging;
they symbolise the patterning of membership. Those who have
no nickname-good or bad-are marked as outsiders; they are
non-persons obliterated from the social map, people who
are not worth mentioning. To have a derogatory nickname
is at least a sign of recognition; to have no nickname at
all is to be conceptually ignored, to be socially invisible.
It is a symbol of outsider status and outsider status is
predicated upon those who do not act stylishly. David
was one of these; he expressed his outsiderhood in a multi-
tude of significant ways:

> " David always seems to be on the fringes
> of the crowd; he is never one of the crowd.
> David has no nickname. He was the first
> to befriend me which gave him some initial
> kudos but since the others have come to
> see me he has been the first to stop
> visiting. His position has been usurped.
> In appearance David's outsiderhood is given
> visual expression: he wears a dark checked
> suit-jacket over non-descript trousers; his
> shoes are plain lace-ups or slip-ons. He
> never wears boots or 'trainers' like his
> younger brother. David does not wear badges
> like the other lads. His hair is long and
> often greasy; his skin poor with a tendency
> for spots. He always seems to have a cold
> and appears dirty. David has a slight
> hesitancy in his speech and cannot engage in
> verbal repartee. He always has money and
> buys sweets which he gives away; he buys
> cigarettes to give to others but does not
> smoke himself. In this way he purchases
> friendship for a shortwhile. He befriends
> those who are temporarily ostracised by
> others but seems to have no real mates. His
> friends come to his house and steal from him.
> Although often on the edges of some action

/..

> David never acts himself; he is accused of
> telling tales. David boasts of his father
> getting him a job and has ideas of becoming
> a social worker. The others know their fate
> and have realistic aspirations. At 16 David
> has tried to commit suicide and has entered
> a psychiatric hospital. "

Daivd was not actively disliked and rarely excluded; he

was tolerated as an irrelevance.

In contrast, Mary was a non-conformist in a different way.

She utilised the style and was not outside it. Her non-

conformity was within the terms of the style itself and

opinions were expressed about her actions. David, who

was always outside it, was rarely talked about. Mary

belonged:

> " Mary is one of my main informants from the
> girls. I got to know her early during my
> fieldwork and she remains a constant visitor.
> Mary is highly informative on rhymes, nicknames,
> riddles, jokes and games. She has taught me
> a great deal about the culture. She participates
> effectively within it and in many ways expresses
> it to its fullest extent. However, Mary has
> no close female friends, unlike the other girls;
> she moves between different groups. Some of
> the girls dislike her, perhaps because she seems
> to be independent. Mary always has a boyfriend
> and changes them often; some of the boys call
> her a ' whore '. She plays games alongside the
> boys and is not an on-looker like the other girls.
> She always wears trousers; some call her a
> 'lad-lass', a tom-boy. Her clothes are always
> fashionable though: highwaisted trousers, close-
> fitting stretch shirts, smart shoes. She is
> always clean and tidy; she wears many badges.
> She has a nickname. She expresses little
> concern for what others think of her and always
> has somewhere to go. For all that she rejected
> many of the ' feminine ' styles of behaviour
> Mary was the first to conform. At 18 Mary
> has left work and has three children."

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Belonging is therefore not merely a matter of conforming, of submerging individuality within a general frame. Belonging is a question of style: style is the expression of individuality in particular cultural ways, the discovery of self through prescribed stylistic forms. Individuality must be expressed through style and not, like David, outside it. Mary belonged; she worked with the cultural forms and yet remained independent of them. David was an outsider who failed to grasp these signs but was heavily dependent upon the style itself. Mary was nicknamed; David was not. The style of being is the style of becoming: Mary's individuality led to her final incorporation through massive conformity as an adult and mother; David's desperate attempts and repeated failure to submerge his perceived individualistic inadequacies within the general frame ensured his continued perpetuation as an outsider.

As I explore below, for the children, belonging is therefore a delicate balance between self and others, between individuality and conformity; it is a tension which must be handled with style. The ways in which the children learn how to belong are manifold: linguistic and verbal skills are one form but an ability to utilise other mediums of expression is also crucial. The body itself is an important vehicle of style. As Benthall writes :

> ' Since our society uses words as its
> primary means of social control all repressed
> groups will tend to find their most effective
> and confident expression through the body's
> wider resources rather than within the
> enclosure of verbal language, in so far as they
> opt for self-assertion rather than for inte-
> grating with the norms of the majority.'(1975:11)

To act stylishly involves learning how to use the body
and it is through learning about the body that knowledge of
the self, of one's own individuality, is realised.

This chapter, therefore, is concerned with the children's
use of the body as a medium of expression.   Through
analysis of the multiple conceptual transformations wrought
on the body by the children I suggest that in Western
contemporary society, which lacks any institutionalised
rite de passage to adulthood, it is the physical body which
becomes the expressive focus for that transition. Firstly,
I explore the various ways in which the children themselves
construct and display a concept of ' normality ' for the
physical body. At a time when physical puberty is beginning
to change their bodies in particular ways these agreed bodily
norms provide a standard against which children can compare
the changes occurring in their own and other people's bodies.
Secondly, I discuss how this concept of physical ' normality '
provides a measure of social status, in particular for
concepts of gender. If adolescence is a metaphoric rite de
passage to adulthood then it is, as the final section
demonstrates, at this time that the social construction of
gender begins to resonate: the children teach one another
their respective gender roles as adults through the context

of their own culture. It is a style of being and becoming predicated upon the physical body.

Adolescence: The body in transition

In his essay on the techniques of the body Marcel Mauss indicated the role of the body as a cultural sign. He argued that ' man's first and most natural technical object and, at the same time, technical means, is his body '(Mauss, 1979:104). In using the word technique Mauss emphasised that the manner in which the body is both used and perceived differs between and within cultures, ' between societies, education, proprieties and fashion ' (ibid:101). This variation, Mauss argued, results from the implicit learning of bodily techniques, achieved through what he termed as a process of ' prestigious imitation '; it is a tacit education which is culturally specific (ibid:101). Ways of walking, sleeping, standing and sitting are the literal embodiment of cultural styles; they are more than the simple outward manifestation of biological processes. From birth onwards the natural physical body is continually constrained and modified in its movements by culture.

This representation of cultural forms through the physical body is highlighted in Mauss's suggestion that bodily techniques may be subject to further variation within a particular culture in accordance with social classifications of age and sex. This too is not solely explicable as a function of biological difference; rather, it represents

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the imposition of cultural forms upon the physical body, the
domestication and control of nature by culture. The ways in
which males and females, children, adolescents and adults
use and perceive their bodies are culturally prescribed;
they are learnt techniques rather than purely inherited
characteristics.

In any society the process of physical maturation is
conceptually controlled:it is made meaningful and ordered
through the use of classificatory concepts, such as a child,
adolescent and adult, which frame the process of ageing into
sequential form. Such representations attempt to constrain
the inevitability of this process through the imposition
of bounded categories. But the use of such static conceptual
divisions contains within it an inherent tension; in
attempting to fix and define an individual's place within a
category his or her relationship with members of other
categories is, at the same time, mapped out, for only through
contrast and comparison does each discrete category gain
its own significance.

Ironically, therefore, the construction of conceptual
categories of social persons is achieved through movement,
a movement which transcends those cultural divisions, a
movement portrayed as a series of classificatory categories
through which the individual will or has moved. For the
individual, therefore, whilst being defined and constrained
through membership in a particular class of persons, the

inevitability of his or her exit from that category is also

apparent. For the individual, a further movement is

necessarily involved: the oscillation between individuality,

in terms of the uniqueness of the self, and communality, in

terms of the self's relationship with others in the same

social category. Writing of tribal communities Van Gennep

(1908) identified this movement of individuals between

different conceptual stages of the life-cycle as one form

of a more general phenomena, rites de passage:

> ' For groups, as well as for individuals,
> life itself means to separate and to be
> reunited, to change form and condition, to
> die and to be reborn. It is to act and to
> cease, to wait and to rest, and then to
> begin acting again but in a different way.
> And there are always new thresholds to
> cross: the thresholds of summer and winter,
> of a season or a year, of a month or a
> night; the thresholds of birth, adolescence,
> maturity and old age '. (1960:189-90)

Such rites de passage are social constructions, social

interpretations of the passage of time in an individual's

life or passage through social space. They both represent

and create order in social life and throughout this transition

between categories new techniques of the body must be learnt

appropriate to each new social status.

For Van Gennep puberty rituals - the series of rites

surrounding the transition from child to adult status

common in many cultures - are erroneously named. He argues

that they are more correctly initiation rites. They are

first and foremost social statements concerning the

culturally perceived status of a group or an individual:

they initiate individuals into a new social category and
are only secondarily concerned with marking the onset
of physical puberty, for'physiological puberty and social
puberty are essentially different and only rarely do they
converge ' (ibid : 65). For Van Gennep, then, they are
primarily ' rites of separation from the asexual world and
they are followed by rites of incorporation into the world
of sexuality ' (ibid:67).

However, in contemporary British society which lacks such
formally institutionalised rites de passage the physical
body is commonly used as the symbolic medium through which
changes in social status are marked. The age, shape, size
and functioning of the physical body are seen as referential
poles, visual images of category membership. Adolescence,
for example, is said to be characterised by changes in
attitude, temperament and behaviour patterns, explained as
the outward manifestations of inward bodily changes occuring
with the onset of puberty. However, implicit within such
biological explanations there exists also the tacit
recognition and acceptance of a conceptual relationship
between physical and social maturation, a suggestion that
adolescence is also a social transition, a period of ambiguity,
a form of rite de passage between childhood and adolescence.[1]

Moreover, many popular conceptions of adolescence image
this transitional quality of adolescence through metaphors
of movement, energy and power and through symbols of

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1. See pp.22-30 and for a discussion of Coleman (1980)
    see pp.539-549.

transformation predicated upon the changes occurring in the physical body. For example, James Hemming (1975), in what he himself describes as an impressionistic account of adolescence for parents, describes the experience variously as : -
' on the road to adulthood ' ; ' moving towards freedom and independence ' ; a ' period of rapid development ' . Adolescents are portrayed as ' striving ', ' moving ', ' penetrating'; they ' plunge adventurously into life ', they are active and not passive creatures. Images of movement, energy and power abound: adolescence is a ' tide of vitality', ' a whirl of energy ',
' a ranging dynamic '.

Finally, for Hemming, adolescence is a ' school for life ' , a rebirth: ' adolescence is a second birth - a severing of the psychological umbilical cord; a second weaning - learning to live by one's own thoughts and feelings ' (1975: 22). As early as 1908 Van Gennep outlined these motifs of death and rebirth in the symbolism of <u>rites de passage,</u> themes later elaborated by Turner :

> 'The novice and his or her seclusion-setting
> are symbolically equated with dying, death,
> invisibility, darkness, decomposition, eclipse,
> the dark of the moon, uniformity, humus,
> compost, and the like, followed by symbols of
> rebirth, new dawn, vegetative growth, naming
> anew, new dress and so on. Liminal symbols
> tend to be ambiguous, equivocal, neutral,
> ambisexual, rather than to be classificatory
> reversals. This is because liminality is
> conceived of as a season of silent, secret
> growth, a mediatory movement between what
> was and what will be when the social process
> goes inward and underground for a time that
> is not profane time. ' (1978:279).

Adolescents, then are midway between the categories of
child and adult, anomalous and indeterminate beings who
participate in a ' teenage culture , epitomised for adults
by strange forms of dress, music and dancing ' (Davis:
1975:716). They form a disorderly and disruptive population
of ' soccer hooligans, delinquents, muggers or addicts,
teeny-boppers or premature pill users ' (Harrison, 1975:
630). The ordinary adolescent rarely features in the
press; in the newspaper world they are all extra-ordinary
and potentially subversive. The following headlines image
the adolescent : " £1m. wreckers under siege. County
declares war on army of vandals "; " Gang warfare erupts
on Council estate"; " Vandals take revenge after bus
curfew " ; " Siege school hit again"; " Toughs wage war on
too-smart schoolboys "; " Schoolboys offer sex for sale
in town centre"; " Sex row school girl moves in with lover";
" Guy Fawkes fun ends after youth throws Peter on bonfire".[1]

Such stereotyped images recall many of the features charact-
erised by Turner (1969); (1974) as being intrinsic qualities
of the liminal phase of a rite de passage reinforcing the
suggestion that this may indeed be a useful metaphor for the
period of adolescence. In his extensive elaboration of
Van Gennep's (op.cit.) thesis Turner describes the ritual
liminar as being ' betwixt and between all fixed points
of classification ' as potentially threatening to structure
itself (1974:232). The newspaper headlines would have
this communitas as anomie, a perception resulting, I suggest,

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1. All these headlines appeared in the local newspapers
   during the period 1977-79.

from the relatively recent social visibility of ' adolescence'
as a distinct phase in the life-cycle. As Hall and Jefferson
note,

> ' "Youth" appeared as an emergent category
> in post-war Britain, one of the most
> striking and visible manifestations of
> social change in the period. "Youth"
> provided the focus for official reports,
> pieces of legislation, official inter-
> ventions. It was signified as a social
> problem by the moral guardians of the
> society - something which we "ought" to
> do something about '. (1976:9)

This ' something ' was, moreover, usually working class,
male and potentially disruptive, popularly epitomised
in the subcultural gangs of mods and rockers, Hells Angels
and skinheads. These 'folk devils' of the second half of the
twentieth century symbolise the potential power of this,
as yet, emergent category which has ' encroached upon
childhood in one direction, maturity in the other ' and
still remains relatively uncontained and uncontrolled
(Ariès,1979:28).[1] In structural terms adolescents therefore
belong to the inbetweens. Too old to be children, yet too
young to be adults they are denied the security of either
category; the adolescent is ' matter out of place ', a
symbol of disorder made manifest in the rise of youth
subcultures which deliberately set themselves apart from
mainstream social order (Douglas,1969:35).

And yet, for the majority, this opportunity for self

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1. It was in Cohen(1973) that the term 'folk devils' first
   appeared. For a discussion of youth subcultures see
   Hall and Jefferson eds (1976) and Hebdige (1979).

assertion through conscious participation in structured
subcultures may not arise; they are, like ritual liminars,
in a process of normal social transition and, as I shall
show, there exists for them ' a continuous thread of
structure ' throughout the period of their adolescence
which such images of warring and violence , subversion
and deviance negate. (Turner, 1974:254) And it is
precisely through this process that, for most adolescents,
their power to change and effect is neutralised. Adolescence,
like liminality, is about change, rather than revolution and,
for the children with whom I was working, this is particularly
resonant: the potential creativity of their adolescent
culture, replete with its images of opposition, reversal
and inversion, is, as I shall demonstrate, but a preparation
for their massive conformity as adults.

Adolescence is comparable, then, with what Turner (1969)
describes as normative communitas; it is an educative
experience for their later participation in social life as
adult members of the community.[1] As Turner writes: neophytes
receive ' the knowledge and wisdom of the group in those
respects that pertain to the new status ' (1969:98-90). But,
as I shall show, it is a process of self, more than institu-
tional, socialization; it is a rite of passage conducted by
the children themselves in the context of their own adolescent
culture. The integral relationship between social and physical
maturation during adolescence makes the significance of the

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1. See also Richards (1956).

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body as a medium of expression possibly at its greatest

at this time,precisely because the body is used as a symbol

of classificatory status by others. The transformations

which the physical body is undergoing are taken as signs

of movement and change for the social body. For the children

themselves, therefore, these signs are symbols: symbols of

both present and future status, symbols of being and becoming

and, thus, also symbols of belonging.

Bodily styles :   the promulgation of bodily norms

The process of ' growing up ' is, then, both a social and

physical experience; for each individual it represents a

transition from one social category to another, a movement

reflected in and refracted through the bodily changes

occurring at puberty. The children's awareness of this

complex interrelationship is symbolised in the importance

placed by them upon their physical appearance and is also

imaged in their concern that the changes which the physical

body is undergoing are changes which will permit them to

find a place within the new social context. For the children,

therefore, the transformation of the physical body represents

a transformation of the social self; adolescence is a process

of social and physical reconstruction for a new conformity.

It is a search for individuality through communality, for

the self through others, and it is through learning the

style of particular bodily techniques that this is primarily

achieved.

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Normality of the physical body is crucial; the body must

conform to an agreed and commonly held set of principles

as is apparent in the children's attitudes to those with

perceived bodily defects:

> " A nutter escaped from the compound
> at Sandby and then phoned up: " Is Cell
> 24 empty ?". " Yes." "Phew, I've escaped."

The physically afflicted are also mocked through rhymes:

> Half a pound of nuts and bolts,
> Half a pound of plastic,
> Mix them up, what have you got?
> A bionic spastic.

Such rhymes and jokes provide frames for humanity; through

recognition of the abnormality of others the children assert

their own conformity. In Gateshead, in the North-East of

England, the term lep (from leper) was a common taunt

during the 1960's and, during my own period of fieldwork,

spac or spacca (from spastic) was a frequent form of abuse.

Other insults used by the children similarly abuse the

physical body through relegating the insulted to the natural

world, to a category set apart from humans. The insults

cow and pig reflect the metaphorical shifts incurred through

nicknaming practices: ' Hartley Hare ', ' Dougal ' and

' Woody Woodpecker ' belong to the animal, not the human,

realm. But one of the most effective insults used between

children is bairn; the abused is reduced to a lower category

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status, to a category which he or she is endeavouring
to leave.[1] As Hemming notes, this concern for the
normality of their own physical appearance is common
to the adolescent experience in Western industrial
societies:

> ' The majority of adolescents are
> displeased with their bodies.An enquiry
> from a sample of girls produced a whole
> catalogue of physical imperfections.
> They felt themselves to be too tall, too
> short, too fat, too thin, too pimply,
> too freckly, too pale, too flat in the
> chest, too well developed and so on.
> Boys also anxiously weigh and measure
> themselves and feel it acutely if they
> think they are physically inferior.'
> (1975:32).

Through verbal relegation of others to a less than human
world the children, then, are symbolically realising their
own perfection.

Unlike adults, children do not have the means freely
available to permanently alter their bodies. They can
rarely resort to dieting, wear wigs or have plastic surgery
except under a directive from the adult world. They must
therefore learn to master the constraints of their physical
bodies through social means and, as the above examples
show, one of the most effective devices employed by the
children is ridicule of others. Criticism of the physical
body appears frequently in the nicknames and insults children
exchange with one another and these ritualised taunts are
educative in their power to exclude others from belonging. The

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1. The term 'bairn' acts as an insult for it is the term
   used in the north-east of England for babies and young
   children. It is used by the children in such phrases
   as "Don't be such a bairn" or " You're still a bairn".

puppy fat and pubescent spots, dismissed by adults as

' something to be grown out of ', are used as highly

symbolic targets for verbal abuse by others for they

represent symbols of the social self. ' Spotty Face ' and

' Fatty Bum Bum ' are always threatened with exclusion.[1]

Analysis of the nicknames and insults which children use

reveals, then, an agreed set of concepts of normality for

the physical body; through abusing others the children

reveal the style to which ' normal ' bodies must adhere.

Standards are laid down for both the shape and size of the

body and its various parts and, as Hemming (op.cit) notes,

complaints children make about their own bodies are always

through reference to excess: too tall, too short, too fat,

too thin. Bodies must not deviate, therefore, from a

median upon which the children themselves have tacitly

agreed. There is a common standard against which one's own

body and the bodies of others are measured. Those who are

perceived to differ too much from this symbolic mean are

identified and named: ' Big Ears ', Flat Nose ', ' Gobby '

(too big a mouth) and ' Beaky ' (too big a nose).

Conformity is similarly induced for the style in which the

body is used: for example, there is a median of intelligence

which must not be exceeded: those who are too bright are

named ' Big Head ' or ' Professor ', those who fail to reach

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1. It is interesting to note the prevalence of advertisements
    for acne remedies in teenage magazines, which underlines
    the importance of not having a blemished face for the
    adolescent.

the level are called ' Thicky ' or ' Dafty ', a perception
often reinforced by the additional comment that " your
head is full of sawdust " or " your brain is in your little
toe". [1] Adolescence, then, is about conformity, but it is
conformity to a particular style whose parameters have been
defined from within the children's own culture.

But bodily style must not only be realised in the act of
being; it must also be portrayed in the act of doing i.e.
through performance. It is not enough merely to look
right: the children must act right too. Here, then, is the
particular tension: acting stylishly involves asserting one's
individuality, but it is an individuality tempered by the
style of conformity. Learning how to use the body is a
technique which the children must therefore acquire and it is
through using the body in particular culturally defined
ways that this is achieved. One way to act stylishly, to
master this tension, is, as I shall show, to effect temporary
transformations upon the physical body. And, it is through
utilising body techniques learnt in early childhood that
the children begin to develop this skill.

In the street games played by little children the physical
body provides a focus for experimentation and transformation.
The limits, boundaries and abilities of the physical body are

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1.   During adolescence much of this is centred around
     sexual mores. See pp.426-441 for an extended discussion.
     Again, this emphasises the idea that in contemporary
     Britain physical puberty is conceptually linked to
     social puberty, particularly by those undergoing
     transition.

explored, tested and manipulated in a manner comparable with the ways in which the physical environment is re-interpreted and transformed through play.[1] These skills are acquired through play and continue to be used during adolescence.

For example, small children transform the body through the imposition of physical handicaps on one another during the course of a game. In the ball game, ' Ten Bad Eggs ', a penalty is imposed on anyone who misses the ball. For the next throw the child may have to stand on one leg or endeavour to catch the ball with only one hand. If the child is successful - i.e. if he or she has proved master of the handi-cap - normal body movement is restored. Similarly, the game ' Queenie ' involves imposing handicaps on children who fail to elude being caught:

> " Queenie.
>
> The game is composed of a King, Queen and two jacks. Someone is chosen to be on. All the others stand with their legs open while the King, the person who is on, rolls the ball between their legs. This person is transformed into the Queen and "she" has to run and retrieve the ball. The rest then run as far away as possible. On picking up the ball the Queen shouts: "Stop". All the others must freeze and, if they are able to, they try and sit on the ground. The Queen is then commanded by each of the others to take some kind of stride, the object being to make her go as far away as possible from themselves. " A giant step" is a long stride; " a pin step ", a small stride, placing heel to toe and a "Lampost" involves lying flat on the ground and stretching out as far as possible. The Queen

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1. See pp.233-249 for a discussion of the transformation of the physical environment.

> then goes to the point where "her" fingers
> reached. The Queen then attempts to roll
> the ball between the legs of the others
> (hence, the advantage in having sat on the
> ground) and the game begins again."

In both these examples those who have <u>least</u> control over

their physical abilities are ruthlessly punished by the

rules of the games through further tests of bodily skill.

Other games, whilst not transforming the body as a penalty

or punishment, require the performer to utilise his or her

body in an unusual way. They demonstrate the physical prowess

of those who succeed. ' Itchy Bay ' - a form of ' Hopscotch '-

involves being able to hop from square to square at speed;

' Donkey ' involves throwing a ball against a wall and

jumping over it as it bounces off the ground.

But the most important transformatory device in many of

these street games is the power of touch. In games such as

' Tiggy ' ' one player is marked by significance and tries

to keep or lose it ' and through the act of touching he or

she transmits the ' sign of the chaser onto the chased '

(Huxley,1980:119). These games create a distinction between

the one and the many, between ' it ' and the rest for one

child is singled out to be ' it ', to be a thing different

from the others. As Huxley's comments suggest to be ' it '

is, however, double-edged: in some games, the 'thing ' has

the advantage and children will endeavour to remain being

on for ' it ' has a prestigious position; at other times

' it ' is the loser and children will try to lose the stigma.[1]

This ambivalence of the role of ' it ' is expressed by children in their use of fate to decide who ' it ' will be. Counting-out rhymes are often used at the start of a game to come to a fair decision. As each word is spoken a child is pointed to and, by the end of the rhyme,' it ' will have been discovered. For example:

> Ibble, obble, black bobble,
> Ibble, obble out.

On the word ' out ', the first child is excluded and the rhyme is repeated until only one child remains. That child will be it.[2] Similar rhymes are:

> Mathew, Mark, Luke and John
> In this game you're not on.

and

> One potato, two potato, three potato, four
> Five potato, six potato, seven potato more.

The ambiguity of ' it ', which necessitates such fatalistic rhymes, stems from its stigmatising power, described by Huxley as ' the most primitive form of playing scapegoat where the infection of significance can be laid to rest ' only by tigging, that is by touching, another person (ibid:120). Amongst the children this was made explicit in a game called

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1. 'Oxo' and 'Blocky' are two games which give opposing values to 'it'. In 'Oxo' 'it' has a prestigious position but in 'Blocky' 'it' plays a stigmatised role, See pp.238-239.

2. This rhyme once again reveals the continuity of children's verbal lore. The Opies (1969)cite approximately 21 variations of this counting-out rhyme, coming from all parts of the country.

' Lurgy ': through touch a contagious disease - the lurgy
- was passed between the children. [1]

In the street games they played as little children adolescents,
therefore, have already learnt many bodily techniques,
techniques which are concerned with symbolic confrontation
and mastery over the body itself. They are techniques about
individuality and_ conformity, about an individual's ability
to use his or her body in culturally prescribed ways and,
during the transitory period of adolescence, this bodily
style continues. There are, for example, particular forms
of bodily expression which are signs that have to be
learnt: the sign for the sexual act is the thumb and fore-
finger pressed together forming a circle; shaking hands with
the left hand, rather than the right, means that a promise
need not be kept; promising to do someone a favour with
legs or arms crossed similarly releases a child from any
obligation. To make certain, therefore, that a bet will be
carried out requires a third person to ' cross the bet ',
to seal it by placing his or her hand over the two who are
challenging each other.

But by far the greatest emphasis is laid on competitive

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1. The power of touch can also be transmitted through objects;
   for example, in 'Queenie' it is the ball which touches and
   causes transformations. Note also the significance of
   'touch' in the adult world: we touch wood for luck and hang
   charms around necks or arms which offer protection through
   their proximity to the body. Also of significnce is the use
   of the word 'touched'; someone who is mad is said to be
   ' touched ', to have been transformed through some past
   action.

and combative uses of the body, a performative style which brings the expression of individuality to the fore but within prescribed cultural limits. It is through the performance of practical jokes that this tension is primarily displayed, a process which bears considerable structural similarity to the verbal battles conducted between children.[1] I quote again, therefore, Mary Douglas's analysis of jokes: a joke is a ' play upon form ' and its power lies in the suggestion that ' any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary and subjective ' (1968:365). Here it is the physical body which is being deliberately disordered but it is a performance which, like their verbal contests, is carefully structured: the disorder produced is contained and controlled.

The practical joker can only successfully perform his or her tricks if he or she is confident that the structure of the joke will be recognised by others; the joker will have failed if his or her antics are taken literally. The children who perform jokes upon and with their own bodies or the bodies of others are, at the same time as they reveal the ambiguity of a particular bodily order, also ruthlessly establishing their own conformity and normality. Practical jokers therefore reinforce the bodily style through visually mocking those they verbally abuse.

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1. See pp.303-316 for a discussion of verbal joking.

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Mimicry, for example, is one way in which the children subvert the order of the physical body through temporarily transforming its shape, its size or functioning. Half a table-tennis ball is placed in the eye socket; vampire teeth inserted in the mouth; false noses clasped to the face. These gruesome additions poke fun at the disabilities or disfigurements of others whilst also confirming the normality of the child's own facial features. In many photographs the children are pulling faces; through distorting their visages for a joke they have a fixed and permanent record of the possible transformations which the physical body can undergo. Similarly, jerky walks mimic the crippled and balls pushed up the backs of jumpers ape the hunch-backed. The following tape transcript reveals one example of body experimentation as two boys played with some putty:

> " T: (looking at the putty on the end of his
>   thumb). My thumb's bigger than yours.
>   (T. puts the putty on his nose).
>
> A: Who's that?
>
> T: Just think if you had a nose like that.
>
> A: What if you had a nose like that?
>   (Both practice making different noses).
>
> T: (humming a tune with putty on the end of
>   his nose) What's this?
>
> K: Muppets.
>
> A: (looking at his nose encased in putty).
>   You can't pick your nose now anyway.
>
> T: (picking his nose encased in putty) Wanna
>   bet? (to K) Let's look at your nose - let's
>   have a look, man. (they both laugh and continue
>   making different noses). "

All these jokes and games with the body are sources of fun so long as they are not misconstrued, so long as the

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<u>Plate 9</u> " In many photographs the children are pulling faces;
through distorting their visages for a joke they have
a fixed and permanent record of the possible transformations
which the physical body can undergo."

transformations are not taken as ' real '.

Another method of revealing one's own physical normality
is through transforming other people's bodies achieved by
drawing them, unwittingly, into oblique situations of
conflict and making disguised physical attacks upon their
bodies. This process again parallels the verbal tricks
children perform upon one another.[1] To be caught out is
to have misconstrued the context of this body language;
the unfortunate victim loses prestige at the expense of
another's superior bodily style. For example, to take a
proffered hand is to risk having one's finger pushed up the
nose; to look down when someone points at your throat and
asks, " What's this?", is to risk being cuffed under the
chin. The oldest trick of all must be guarded against:

> Thump me and thump me not,
> Went down to the river to bathe,
> Thump me not was drowned,
> Who do you think was saved?

A modern equivalent is: " Repeat after me - cat, dog, pig,
duck". The joyous rejoinder as a fist flies through the air
is: " I told you to duck".

The necessity of mastering this body style is brought out
through such tricks and games; they demonstrate that gaining
individual mastery over the physical body is the style of
belonging. Adults - those who do not belong - are therefore

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1. See p p. 303 - 316.

often used as targets for such attacks for they possess a
false sense of security in their bodily control which can be
easily disrupted by the children's style. Once again a
parallel can be drawn with the linguistic sphere; adults
are frequently caught out by the children's verbal dexterity.
Learning to be is, then, a style which is structured by
and which also structures the culture of ' doing nothing '.
The parallels noted above between non-verbal and verbal
forms of expression mutually reflect a particular style of
performance. They emphasise the structuring principles of
the culture of ' doing nothing ' which allows for a multi-
plicity of contents within a particular form. Bodies and
minds are both framed by the context of ' doing nothing '.

Indeed, the mind is itself often transformed. In the street
games played by little children the whole body can become an
object of play; the player also becomes the plaything in games
of spinning and twirling informally played by younger children.
Feelings of vertigo and altered states of consciousness are
produced through these activities for, on finally standing
still, the world is made to rotate. Such principles are
formalized in fairground amusements where the mechanical
devices produce similar states of being. The more devastating
their effect, the more appreciated they are by the children.

But this experimentation with the body and the mind continues
during adolescence in more informal activities; for example

/..

through inducing trances, as the following account reveals:

> " Stephen tells me how they put each other
> into trances at school by getting the victim
> to breathe deeply and then he or she is pushed
> in the stomach. He says that then you press
> their temples hard and they fall asleep. Then
> you tell them to " go and get someone " (i.e.
> go and attack someone) and then they go wild.
> To wake people out of a trance you have to hit
> them hard. He was put in a trance and told to
> go and get Fat Parkin. After he had got Fat
> Parkin Stephen had explained that he had been
> in a trance and he had let him off (i.e. from
> retaliation)."

Whether or not an actual trance state was induced this

example reveals the children's recognition of possible

transformations of the self, and the potentiality of altered

states of consciousness. This may be the appeal of the

Incredible Hulk, who not only changes character but also his

physical body during his transformatory process.[1] The possi-

bility of exploiting the fears and weaknesses of other people,

apparent in the description of the trance, appears also in

the following incident:

> " Maurice turns off the light in the room
> and goes, with hands out stretched, towards
> a smaller and younger child who is standing
> in the corner. He waves his hands in front
> of him in the dim light and closes in on him.
> The younger child is obviously getting quite
> frightened."

All these different kinds of body expression are a consistent

feature of ' doing nothing '. Transformatory acts are

performed on other people's bodies and the limits and

boundaries of the children's own bodies are a source of

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1. See, p.359.

continual experimentation. They reveal the parameters of the style: the lines between conformity and individuality. Communality is, in essence, expressed at the expense of doing others down, acting in terms of the style for individual gain, which is an idea perhaps best illustrated in the concept of the ' dare '.

Dares represent the playing out of the oblique competition inherent in practical jokes, through making competition the focal point. Like the tribal initiate who undergoes bodily feats, dares invite an individual to give direct proof of the possession of bodily style, of control of body techniques. Dares involve the proposer in thinking of an act which he or she thinks another will not perform and competitive performance is introduced through the question : " Dare me to......? ". Alternatively, the proposer of a dare will call someone's bluff and say: " I dare you to....". The hint of scorn in the latter challenge is echoed in the statement " You wouldn't dare.....". All three kinds of challenges are based on an assessment of another 's ability in relation to one's own and rely on the knowledge that, if required, one could one'self perform the action for issuing or challenging a dare may require that the competition is played out and the test undergone.[1]

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1. Examples of dares recorded and actually carried out were: (1) stealing cigarettes (2) jumping into an open sewer (3) breaking a window (4) climbing onto a garage roof.

Dares therefore test power relationships. Any who fail
to fulfill a dare, having taken up the challenge, will
have to pay a forfeit; for example, they may lose social
prestige and be derogatorily nicknamed, that is, they will
be marked as not belonging. They will be temporarily excluded
from the group for failing to participate within the style.
To regain social status a child may have to pass another
bodily test, such as " Fag Chewing ". The filter of a
cigarette must be chewed in order to regain one's social
status through a different kind of demonstration of mastery
over the physical body.

Encapsulated in the dare is, therefore, the inherent tension
of the style of ' doing nothing '. The body is, for adolescents,
a source of and for processes of establishing both conformity
and individuality within the group. The physical body is
a medium for symbolic and real acts of aggression, actions
which situate each individual within the group through his
or her ability to use the style appropriately. The normality
of other people's bodies is assessed according to one's own
and one's own body similarly judged by others.

All body : nobody

The above examples of the ways in which children develop a
median of normality for the physical body as part of their
bodily style are extracted from the total communicative

act of the body as a medium of expression. The ' nobodies '
which adolescents feel themselves to be are in fact ' all
body '. They utilise every aspect of their bodies to
communicate ideas amongst themselves and to the outside world.
Their cultural style is primarily body based.

On first acquaintance with the children I was struck by their
dynamism; they seemed to be constantly on the move, full of
energy and vitality as the following extracts from an early
field diary reveal:

(1) "Throughout the film there was constant noise and
comment. Peter leapt up and burst a crisp bag in my
ear. Others blew up crisp packets and burst them on
people's heads. Scenes of fighting and the start of
gunfire produced noisy clapping and jeering."

(2) " Paul and Stephen spent most of the evening teasing
Susan. They kept rushing up to her and pulling the
front of her jumper, yelling " Bingo " at the tops
of their voices."

(3) " Mog and Noz have a spitting contest. They chase each
other round the room and in and out of it and when the
other is not looking spit in their face."

(4) " Kim and Coker playing a game of slapping each other
on the bottom. They rush in and out of the room. Kim
screams at me: " Tell him Allison " in obvious delight.
I say: " No, you're enjoying it "."

(5) Hutch and Diane rushing in and out of the room
thumping each other. Julie and Gench stamping on each
other's feet, biting and hitting one another.

(6) " Jacky was throwing darts at other children. He intimi-
dates Gerky by aiming darts at his feet until he gives
him a cigarette and chases him out of the room. Then
he attacks me in a friendly fashion by pricking me with
darts. This evening I discover that Lyn is Paul's
sister when she threw a dart at his foot."

/..

(7) ' Suddenly the place erupts and Stephen has had
his face covered in charcoal and runs off to
retaliate on someone else. Very soon everyone's
faces are blackened with charcoal. The children
are very cunning, running up behind someone and
leaving black palm prints across the faces of an
unsuspecting bystander. Soon a variation to this
activity is found. They first spit on their hands
and then rub in the charcoal - this makes the
charcoal dust sticky and more difficult to remove.
The game then turns into a series of fun fights
and leaves and grass and cindered potatoes are
stuffed down each other's clothes as they sprawl
on the ground. The children begin by assaulting
me, quickly followed by attacking the other adults.
We all join in and fight back, running round to get
back at the children. Eventually everyone is black
all over and then the jokes begin. Kirby remarks
that he is Cunte Kinty and Jackie that he is a member
of the Dinka tribe. (At this time "Roots" was on
television). Then anyone who is still white, who
has avoided the game, is ostracised. To be in on
the act it is necessary to be black '.

1

I was not immune from joining in this bodily style. Throughout

my field notes are records of the children forcing me to use

my body in their style:

(1) As usual this evening they are all kicking,
squeezing and pinching me and trying to tread on
my toes.

(2) Whipper punched me gently in the stomach - a sign
of affection?

(3) Jacky rushing up and giving me bear hugs then
tickling me.

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1. In two of the examples, (3) and (7), it will be noted
that 'spitting' occurs which represents yet another
example of the children's use of body as a form of
expression. Interest in bodily wastes and the orrifices ⅄
of the body is, as noted previously, a feature of their
language. This parallel again reinforces the emphasis upon
structural form: the children's delight in holding spitting
matches,belching competitions and farting contests reflects
their interest in all matters dirty.
In extract (7) it is interesting how 'blacks', a normal
target for the children's abuse, become first of all the
object of mimicry and then, suddenly, the process is
reversed: whites are attacked. Again here it is form
rather than content which matters.

(4) Gench and Coker pretend to strangle me with
their toilet chains.

(5) The children are all very tactile - squeezing,
poking and hitting me, slapping me on the behind
and pulling my scarf to try and choke me.

The seeming mayhem and riot which assaulted me at first

soon became familiar and I learned to participate in it as

a later entry in a field diary reveals:

> " The noise level is incredible- screaming,
> shouting, piercing whistles, rushing in and
> out and slapping one another, but it is quite
> a normal atmosphere. They delight in making
> these noises, in hitting each other - lads and
> lasses alike ".

The above examples speak for themselves. Whilst ' doing

nothing ' the body becomes a play-thing par excellence.

Its transitory state seems to focus and concentrate this

activity; the changes which puberty is bringing to the

physical body are mirrored in the social uses to which the

children subject their bodies. It is a particular body style

which gives to the culture of ' doing nothing ' its vitality

and energy.

Crisp bags are blown up and burst on people's heads; gloves

and hats filled with snow and snowballs rubbed into each

other's faces, scrubbing, as it is called. Informal games

of ' Tiggy ' start spontaneously when one group of children

chases another in and out of the room, slapping, tickling

or kicking one another. Each act invites retribution and

the chase begins again. Flicking girls' bottoms with

rubber bands is much enjoyed by twelve year old boys as well

as running up to girls, pulling out the front of their
jumpers, like two protruding nipples, and yelling <u>Bingo</u>,
insinuating that their breasts are very apparent. Ducking
heads under taps and throwing water over each other, knocking
off hats and hiding articles of clothing all induce roars of
laughter.

Boys, in particular, enjoy ' arm wrestling ' which tests
each other's strength: elbows are placed on the table,
hands locked together, and then each tries to force his
opponent into submission by bringing his arm down on the
table. ' Murder Ball ' is also popular and the whole body
becomes a weapon for attack: two teams line up facing one
another with a ball between them and, on the whistle, each
team tries to get the ball by grabbing, kicking, pulling,
pushing and shoving or, ultimately, sitting on members of
the opposing team.[1]

This style of belonging is a way of using the body which, to
the untutored eyes of the adult world, appears aggressive,
violent and potentially dangerous. It is these outward
signs of disorderly conduct which reinforces the popular
conception of adolescence as a turbulent and possibly anomic
period of life. The ' all body ' emphasis apparent in such
forms of expression contrasts radically with contemporary
Western emphasis upon the mind. Indeed, ' mindless

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1. Many of the boys' activities are associated with physical
   strength; this is perceived by them to signal their
   physical and, hence, social maturity, see pp.426-441.

behaviour ' is often a criticism made of adolescents. But, gradually during my fieldwork, I came to understand such bodily techniques as symbolic rather than real acts of violence, as experimentation upon and with the body: rarely were any of the children involved in real and damaging acts of aggression. Most of their ' disorderly ' actions fell within the realm of what the children call <u>fun-fighting</u>: these are jokes about power relationships played out through the medium of the physical body.

Fights take three forms:- <u>fun fights</u>, <u>scraps</u> and <u>arranged fights</u>. Only the latter two are truly acts of direct physical violence and the children maintain rigid distinctions between kinds of fights:

> " Arranged fights have both a time and place, usually after school or as Rob says in the "battle ground" - a piece of wasteland. These fights are prearranged and have an audience. Lads are not allowed to pull hair, scratch or kick when someone is down on the floor. You cannot pounce on someone when they are not looking. If you do the onlookers will set on you and they will kick you. Rob says that the person who has offered the fight must throw the first punch.
>
> Scraps are when someone just pounces on you and you can do anything. This is probably the most violent. Abby says there are not so many arranged fights now - mostly scraps. Mog for instance knacked him in. Mog had called him "Egor" so Abby called him "Frankenstein" and then "Black Honkey". Rob says it's sissy to pull hair and to use your finger nails. These are girls weapons. Caz is proud of the fight she had with Darren. She delights over how she had left big scratches down his back. Both Rob and Abby show me scratches they have received from fighting with girls." 1

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1. In this extract the phrase 'to offer' is used for arranging a fight. This is current usage amongst adults also. ' To offer someone out ' means to suggest a fight outside.

Fun fights, on the other hand, are not for real; there is
no intent to injure. Funning or fun fighting is pure
entertainment:

> " Stephen tells me a secret. When they stayed
> in a house with the school Michael and the other
> lads used to have fun throwing things at each
> other during the night and shining torches at
> people. Once he picked up a " hawker " (a
> kind of boot) instead of his slipper and threw
> it across the room; - He said: " It nearly
> knocked this lad's teeth out ". No one "knacked
> him in " though because it had been an accident
> and wasn't meant seriously."

Real fights - scraps and arranged fights - are, in contrast,
serious in intent and execution. Good fighters are well
known and an individual's reputation is discussed and
evaluated. Partners for scraps or arranged fights are
carefully considered and if an opponent is larger or a better
fighter then the challenge will not be taken up. Fights are
remembered and recounted in conversation; they mark times when
friendships were broken, honour vindicated or prestige lost.
Arranged fights are usually concerned with honour. An elder
brother will fight in defence of his sibling and brothers
fight on behalf of their sisters. To win a fight is to give
a visible demonstration of mastery over one's own body and
the body of another. Lads fight lads, lasses fight lasses
and lads and lasses fight each other. The following incident
reveals the process and performance of a fight:

> " This afternoon a lot of the children were
> in the house. They had been there for many hours
> when they started to watch television. Mog began

> annoying Tres and teasing her till eventually
> she suggested a fight. The two of them walked
> out of the house in silence into the back lane.
> The others followed but I remained behind
> thinking it was a " fun fight ". After ten
> minutes Gench came in and said they were arguing.
> I asked one lad who had remained behind whether
> we should go out. He said: "no". A little later
> Gench returned to ask me to stop the fight. I
> went outside to see Mog and Tres locked together
> in a real scrap, hitting each other's heads against
> the wall. Two of us pulled them apart. Mog was
> shaking with anger and difficult to hold: Tres's
> nose was bleeding and swollen and looked as if it
> was broken. "

This particular fight became a great topic of conversation.
As no one had won, Tres gained some glory and boasted about
her bruised and swollen nose. Mog, who felt guilty for
" hitting a lass " , was anxious about how much he had hurt
her but still maintained that he was glad he had hit her.

Belonging, then, is a matter of style and a question of
learning the techniques of the body appropriate to that
style. Real and symbolic battles are fought through the
medium of the physical body and an adequate bodily knowledge
is therefore crucial. For the children control over the
physical body is equated with control over the self. To
return to Burridge: ' to become it is first necessary to
belong; and belonging makes it possible to define just who
or what one is ' (1969:46).

Concepts of gender

A major part of the transition to adulthood involves learning
how to act as a sexual being for passage between childhood

/..

and adulthood represents a move from the <u>classificatory</u>
asexual world of children to the sexual world of adults.
New techniques of the body must be learnt to accomplish
this transformation of the physical and social self,
techniques which are subject to the constraints of style
discussed above but played out in terms of gender: normality,
in terms of both the appearance and actions of the physical
body becomes gender specific.

Firstly, the shape and size of the body must conform to the
requirements of style. For girls, fatness and large size
are physical characteristics of great symbolic weight. They
are used as classificatory criteria for the self. Fat girls
are teased and insulted by nicknames such as ' Barrel ',
' Tank ' or ' Ten Ton Tessie '. Large girls are called
' ' Lampole ' or ' Big Bertha '; such nicknames are intended
to be pejorative. In contrast, small girls are not subject
to such verbal abuse. The nicknames ' Inch ' and ' Weed '
are affectionate; little derogation is implied in these
names.[1] Preference for the thin during adolescence is
reinforced by contemporary media representations of the
acceptable shape and size of the female body. Lean female
bodies are highly valued and perceived to be desirable. The
thin belong to the fashionable public world, the world of the
single girl, a social world which precipitates marriage. The
fat,on the other hand, are seen to belong to the domestic
sphere of wives and mothers, the private world of the home.
That children have absorbed these symbols is demonstrated

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1. This is substantiated by Morgan, O'Neill and Harré's (1979)
   findings on nicknames.

428 .

by one fifteen year old male's view of the world from a
female perspective:

> ' I would eats lots of cream cakes when
> I got married and tell my husband that
> now I'm married I can get as fat as I
> want and he should be grateful for being
> able to live with me.'   1

The thin female body is perceived to be the body of the
unmarried girl: it is, therefore, through the possession
of a slim body during adolescence that the adolescent girl
visualises her passage to adulthood, a transition which, as
will be argued later, is seen to be accomplished primarily
through marriage.

For boys, on the other hand, the opposite perception pertains.
Large size is regarded as the most important characteristic
of masculinity. Many boys express concern over their weight
and, throughout my fieldwork, it was the boys who made most
use of the bathroom scales. They constantly sought to
discover, through precise measurement, how much weight they had
accrued, as is revealed in the following incident:

> " J: (after weighing himself) I'm getting
>   fatter.
> A: (Regarding this small 12 year old) You're
>   getting bigger ..it's a good job you're putting
>   on weight.
> J: I'll soon be an adult."

For girls, in contrast, gaining weight was negatively
perceived and they made strenuous efforts to restrict their
intake of fattening foods.

This emphasis placed upon large size is, for boys, likewise

1. Sunday Times, October 1st 1978: Chauvinist Piglets.

Plate 10 " It is through the possession of a slim body during adolescence that the adolescent girl visualises her passage to adulthood, a transition which is seen to be accomplished primarily through marriage."

a projection of their future status. Manliness is perceived
to be associated with physical strength, with the ability
to fight, to protect and to defend. The corollary of an
increase in the weight of the body is perceived to be an
increase in strength. Physical strength is of overwhelming
importance to boys and is symbolised in their wish to learn
how to box and to participate in weight-lifting. The appeal
of such ' super heroes ' as the Hulk and the Bionic Man to
the boy is consistent with this perception. Such ' rare
beings ' are symbols of male prow.ess, a hidden strength lies
submerged beneath an apparently normal external appearance.
The Hulk and the Bionic Man both appear as normal males,
but each has within them hidden resources of exceeding power
and strength.

The use of nicknames amongst boys reflects these ideas.
Small boys are insulted by names such as ' Titch', ' Tiddler '
and ' Shorthouse ', whilst fat boys more often merely teased
through names such as ' Fatty Bum Bum ' or ' Fat William '.
For boys it is far worse to be small and puny than fat; for
girls the reverse holds true. For both genders it is, of
course, better to be ' normal '. The following diagram
summarises the polarity of shape and size of the body, on
the basis of gender, through the use of nicknames:

Fig. 9. The promulgation of concepts of gender through nicknaming.

	PEJORATIVE NICKNAME	NON-PEJORATIVE NICKNAME
Girls	Lampole Fatty Big Bertha Ten Ton Tessie (Large)	Weed Inch (Small)
Boys	Titch Tiddler Shorthouse (Small)	Fatty Fat William (Large)

This discriminatory pattern of bodily shape and size, based on social conceptions of gender, is reinforced through extension to the parts of the body. In particular the shape and size of the sexual organs is seen by the children as a crucial consideration in fulfilling the perceived requirements of gender roles.[1] The Opies (1977) note that school children have a wealth of alternative terms for parts of the body - for the nose, the head, the ears, the eyes - but they fail to mention that the sexual organs are similarly renamed by children and, amongst the children with whom I worked, the number of words used by them for the sexual organs considerably outweighed alternative terms for other bodily parts.

Significantly, this renaming of the sexual organs by children is again linked to an internally derived concept of normality. Those who are perceived to differ are insulted by being named

1. Much of the following material is derived from comments from the boys for the girls were far less willing to discuss sexual matters explicitly. This, in itself, represents part of their perceived gender role which calls for the public silence of the female in contrast to the aggressively public display of masculinity. See pp.441-458.

/..

in a derogatory fashion and it is apparent from the names used
that the children associate abnormality of the sexual organs
with conceptually unnatural sexual activity. This may be in
terms of homosexuality, excessive indulgence in sexual
intercourse or, indeed, lack of any sexual experience. For
example, the common taunts used amongst the boys are mostly
connected with homosexual activity:<u>puff</u>, <u>homo</u>, <u>backskuttler</u>,
<u>botter</u>, <u>bummer</u> and <u>bugger</u>. For girls, the insults most
frequently used are <u>pros</u> (prostitute - excessive sexual activity)
or <u>les</u> (lesbian - abnormal sexual activity).[1] From the
children's point of view, the size and shape of the sexual
organs is then conceptually linked to forms of sexual activity
and there exists a norm to which all must adhere; once again,
however, this norm is gender dependent.

For girls, the breasts should ideally be visible but not
obtrusive. Large breasts are negatively perceived by boys
and girls alike, but small breasts receive derogatory comment
too. One girl was described to me as " being like a lad ",
as having " small tits like bricks ", hard rather than soft,
small and insignificant. Girls without any visible signs of
breast development are often teased but those with large breasts
are more frequently insulted for large breasts are seen as
resembling the breasts of an adult woman, that is of a woman

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1. Boys are confused about lesbianism and understand it as
   a girl's unwillingness to have sex rather than as a
   sexual relationship <u>between</u> girls.

/..

who is sexually experienced and who has produced children.

Similarly, the vagina should ideally be small and judgement
of size, by males, is based on presumed or actual sexual
capacity. A girl, seen by boys, as being sexually promiscuous
may be insulted and condemned for her actions through appell-
ations such as ' Welly Top ' or worse ' Bucket Top '. Both
nicknames suggest a large vagina, a vagina enlarged, like
the breast, through excessive sexual activity. Girls who have
facial hair are also subjects of frequent taunts from boys,
for the growth of facial hair is perceived to be the most
visible symbol of masculinity. Thus, the girl who has a
shadow of a moustache represents an anomaly: she confuses
the strict conceptual division between the genders which
adolescents construct for themselves on the basis of physical
appearance.

The importance of girls physically conforming to these
gender-specific norms is brought out in the following
incident when a cruel joke was played upon one rather fat
and plain girl:

> " There is a very large, fat girl in the club
> tonight. She has tiny breasts but the rest of
> her is enormous. She tells me that she has a
> boyfriend of 22, which is older than the boyfriends
> of many of the girls. They usually go out with
> lads of about their own age. Sandra asks her if
> her mam knows and does she like him. A large
> crowd begin to gather around her and the girls
> tell her that Gaz - the most popular lad in the
> club for the girls - wants to go out with her.
> Lynne acts as the intermediary. She tells her
> that Gaz wants to go out with her. Will she
> go? After some persuasion - the girl is suspicious

- she agrees and ' it ' is arranged for 8.30.
' It ' is the first meeting alone. At 8.30
Gaz refuses to go and the girl is waiting
outside the club. The other girls push him
outside and so he is committed. Gaz and
the girl walk off towards the woods and a
crowd of lads and lasses follow, at a distance,
to see what will happen. The crowd leap in and out
of the bushes, scurry behind trees as they attempt
to follow the pair - Surely the two must be aware
of their followers for there are many suppressed
giggles and shrieks? Gaz and the girl climb
over the fence at the bottom and are gone. Soon
they reappear and there is a mad rush of the
onlookers back into the club. Gaz enters alone
and tries to laugh it off as a huge joke. The
rest all demand to know what happened. He is
embarrassed but then makes much of the tale and
' skits ' her too. He said that she had refused
to do ' it ' as the ground was too wet. Gaz
relates how he had found a dry patch but in the
end ' nowt happened '. Gaz says " it'll be all
round the school tomorrow " and is worried
what Julie, his regular girlfriend, will say. The
rest find it very amusing. Gaz goes on to
relate to me about when he used ' to go down the
shed ' and he and his mates used to do the same
thing to another ' fat lass ' who was ' geet
ugly '. They ' skitted her ' and then one of his
mates would tell her he wanted to go out with her.
The same procedure followed as the two headed
towards the wood. Gaz says how one time by the
time they had all arrived, one of the lads was
standing with his pants down so he ran up and
slapped his ' arse '. Finally, Gaz remarks that
the girl has two brothers and he says they might
' kick his head in ' for the joke tonight played
upon their sister." 1

To belong it is necessary to conform.

For males, however, the preferences are again reversed. The

desirability of a large penis is expressed in numerous ways:

temporary replacements - such as billiard cues, large pine

cones, screwdrivers- long, hard objects, are held between

the legs as symbols of both the prevailing conception of

1. ' to skit ' means to tease.

male adequacy in terms of penis length and of virility. Such

conceptions are generated by boys through public display;

each competes with another over claims to sexual prowess.

Amongst the younger boys this may take the form of peeing

competitions, for example, a common practice as recalled

by Robert Roberts in his autobiography:

' You monitors still, keeping good watch on those " offices "
at playtime, are you?"

'Oh, yessir,' I said. ' We're allus watchin'.

'Tell them to report to me any boy who stays in a closet
more than two or three minutes. Understand? Have those
peeing competitions in the urinal stopped?' he asked,
looking stern.

'Oh,yessir! ' I lied. ' All that's finished now .'

Had he known that in this sport the school outcast stood
all-comers ' champion, having hit a brick with a stream
of effluent eight feet above ground level, his fears about
Ig would have found ample substance.

(1978:77)

Those who can produce the longest stream of urine, who can

aim it the highest, are judged to be the most capable of

fulfilling the male gender role.

Amongst the older boys this competitive style is made most

explicit and the comparative lengths of penises are frequent

topics of conversation; again the larger and longer the

better. Those boys who fall short of such definitions of

adequacy, produced through competition, are liable to be

insulted by the term puff or, as one boy said to another,

" you need a magnifying glass to see his. " The following

transcript of some boys playing with lumps of putty is an

example of 'one such discussion:

/..

T: (with putty on the end of his finger) (Sings) It's time to put your finger right. It's time to put it right.

K: (laughs)

T: (showing his finger) What does that remind you of? (i.e.an erect penis)

K: (copying him) Watch, watch.

A: What does it remind you of then Tucker?

T: (laughs)

T: I've got one.

A: I bet you don't know how to use it.

T: Wanna bet.

K: (laughs)

T: I've did it afor (low voice)

K: Done what before?

A: Done it once before have you?

T: (embarrassed) Yes.... it was alright.

A: (teasing) It was alright was it ?

T: Yeah.

A: I'm pleased about that Tucker.

T: Every lad's got one.

A: Every lad's got one have they?

T: Yes (laughs)

K: (pointing at his drooping putty) Ah...its asleep.

A: (to K) I wouldn't give yours much chance then.

T: (screaming with delight and shouting) She wouldn't give yours much chance.... He's never used it.

A: It's bent at the end.

T: (laughs)

A:(T.hitting my nose with his puttyed finger) Get off. It's bending Tucker.

T: (laughs)

T: (showing his drooping putty) What does that remind you of? Whoops (as it droops right down)

A: Boasting again Tucker (as he straightens it out)

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The acquisition of facial hair is, for boys, a very visible
symbol of the onset of physical puberty and is taken by
them as an important sign of their transition to full adult
male status. The boys often used to proudly tell me how
frequently they had to shave and I was told by two young boys
that the growth of body hair on the arms and legs was a
' sign of strength.' The growth of pubic hair is particularly
important; the insult ' Baldy Bonks ' (literally bald
testicles) is used to expose the physical inadequacy and
social inferiority of others: body hair is a very public symbol
of masculinity.

During adolescence, then, perceptions of gender are massively
dependent upon physical appearance and stereotypes for each
gender are constructed and assimilated through social experience.
Children teach one another the rules for body conformity through
a process similar to the ' ritual levelling ' described by
Turner (1974) as a feature of the liminal period: the
individual seeks or is made to conform to a commonly perceived
standard. For the children, the construction of this conceptual
commoness is based upon the overt changes occurring in the
physical body at puberty and those who do not conform, in
bodily terms, may well be regarded as socially inadequate.
This relationship underlines the earlier suggestion that in
contemporary Britain a complex interweaving between conceptions
of physical and social maturity create, for the adolescent ,
the symbolic rite of passage to adulthood which is institut-
ionally absent.

To summarise so far: the male gender stereotype is one of overt sexuality, of large, strong, and obtrusive size in bodily terms. Females, in contrast, should appear to be small and delicate, revealing few outward signs of their sexual maturation. Girls should approximate to the child-like state; they should hide and control their sexuality from public gaze. Boys, on the other hand, must constantly demonstrate and make increasingly visible their masculinity; they must act and appear as men. For each gender there is, then, a particular movement: girls look back to the status they have lost whilst boys prefigure their own futures. Male adolescence is a process of exhibiting the body; female adolescence is a process of bodily negation. [1]

These opposing styles of bodily expression are further re-inforced through the clothed and decorated body; concepts of male and female gender are visually displayed through distinctive styles of dress and adornment. During my period of fieldwork, the boys focused upon the distance between the extremes of the body, paying particular attention to the adornment of the feet and shoulders. Their uniform was primarily boot-based and rigorous semantic distinctions were made between different kinds of footwear: ' Martens ' differ from ' Hawkers ', ' Riders ' from ' Sannies ', ' Trainers ' from ' Docs '. These boots were always highly polished and fastened with brightly coloured

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1. This is the <u>public</u> presentation of the female; see pp.449-472 below for an alternative interpretation from the girls' own perspective.

laces. Wide-legged trousers were worn cut off short,
revealing a tightly bound ankle encased in leather. The
visual image created by this juxtaposition is one of
continual growth; it is as if the boy is forever outgrowing
his clothes, getting, one could say, too big for his boots.
The top half of the body was similarly the focus of detailed
decoration. Short denim or leather jackets hugged the frame
tightly; the backs of these were massively decorated with
brightly coloured badges, with stickers and embroidery.

The boys also decorated their bodies in particular ways.
During the fieldwork period it became fashionable for hair
to be close cropped and for boys to wear an earring - either
a gold stud or ring - in one ear. Tatoos were also common,
sometimes homemade copies of professional patterns: one boy
had above each nipple the words ' sweet ' and ' sour ';
another had a dagger scratched on his arm.[1] More common,
however, were the ' borstal spots ', a single blue dot on
the cheek or four dots on the knuckles. These latter tattoos
are highly suggestive: they decorate the fist used for
fighting, symbolising male strength, but they also contain
a hidden code for each dot corresponds to the letters
A.C.A.B., an acronym meaning ' all coppers are bastards '.[2]

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1. Scars are also proudly displayed for these forms of bodily
   decoration also symbolise strength and toughness.

2. Once again, the unity of the children's culture is
   expressed through their use of acronyms for body
   decoration.

As a whole, then, the dress of the adolescent male is one
which focuses attention on the extremes of the body; it
creates an illusion of growth, expansion, development, of
strength and virility, reiterating the particular emphasis
expressed by them in the size and shape of the naked body.[1]

The visual impact of the female presents a stark contrast:
it emphasises a reduction in size of the body. Clothes
swamp and crush the female form. A newspaper article
described the female fashion, current during my period of
fieldwork, as follows:

> ' Some recent visitors from London were
> amused and astounded by all those vast
> circular skirts, worn ankle length with
> leather jackets or bombers, together with
> ....clodhoppers... Neither butch nor punk
> it coincides with no current fashion.
> Neither feminine nor sexy, the dark
> jackets and voluminous skirts showing
> sparrows ankles stuffed into those grotesque
> shoes are the essence of dowdiness and
> ugliness. ' 2

The skirts and jackets were, indeed, uniformly sombre, usually
dark blue, grey or brown. The visual impression is one of
the body being contained and controlled by the clothes
themselves; the heavy shoes weight down the feet, the flowing
skirts allow little freedom of movement. Alongside this
appears another image: that of frailty and delicacy of frame.
The swirling skirts focus attention on the narrowness of the

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1. For an example of one boy who was an outsider, see pp.391-392
   above. His clothes were but an extension of his excluded
   status. At one time a brand of bubble gum gave free gifts
   of tatoo transfers which the younger boys used; these were
   seen by older boys as 'kids stuff' and they jeered at them.
   To belong it is necessary to have permanent,self-inflicted
   tatoos.

2. Extract from the Northern Echo 28th March 1979.

waist as do the high-waisted trousers and long leather coats, nipped in at the waist. Similarly, the heavy shoes emphasise, through juxtaposition with the hem of the skirt, the slender ' sparrows ankles ' which peep out from beneath yards of material.[1] As a whole, the illusion created is one of uniformity in appearance, the denial of individuality; the female bodies merge together into a blur of darkness.[2] It is,indeed, neither ' feminine nor sexy ' but is an image which is consistent with the prescribed gender role of the unmarried adolescent female expressed in other aspects of bodily style. The male body, in contrast, is a body of individual expression and choice in composition of design and colour within the limits of a prescribed form. These publicly displayed contrasts are, however, subject to private contradictions.

Adolescence: public and private

As the above examples have shown it is during adolescence that children begin to learn particular body techniques in relation to gender. Children teach one another ways to behave and ways to appear: girls who are seen to possess sexual

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1. The girls often also wore white ankle socks and sandals which both reflected the current 'fifties look' fashion-apparent in the popularity of the television programme, The Fonz, which is set in this era - and further served to emphasise their child-like status.

2. Consistent with this image girls should not have tattoos but this public ideal is privately denied in the context of the girls' own culture, see pp.456 - 457.

potentiality must mask its outward symbols for fear of exclusion from the group; boys, on the other hand, must constantly reveal and demonstrate their own potential in order to belong. The gender differentiation revealed in contrasting sizes of the body and its parts, through visible and invisible expression of sexuality, is extended into the realm of everyday social interaction. For example, boys are extremely visible in the public world of the culture of ' doing nothing '; girls, in contrast, inhabit its edges. They remain near to their own private spheres. In the youth club room this largely conceptual division was given physical expression; the boys played loud and violent games of table football and aero-jet in the centre of the room whilst the girls clung to its walls, huddled in groups, talking amongst themselves.

But this distinction between public and private realms of action is nowhere made more explicit than in the expression of sexual knowledge. Girls should, and do not, reveal their knowledge of sexual matters to the public world; they keep their knowledge private, just as they conceal the physical changes in the body brought about by puberty. Boys, on the other hand, compete openly with one another over sexual knowledge, reflecting the competitive atmosphere surrounding the body's physique, discussed above. Boys are active participants in sexual encounters whilst girls act out a more subtle and less visible role. For example, suckers (love-bites) are displayed and paraded by boys; shirts are left open precisely to reveal the marks. Girls, on the other hand,

/..

attempt to hide them by wearing scarves or polo neck sweaters.
They will, however, reveal them in private amongst their
female friends and considerable discussion will then ensue
concerning the precise details of the encounter.

A similar difference is in evidence in the public telling
of a ' dirty' joke or the singing of a rude song in mixed
company. Boys delight in their telling, whilst girls remain
reluctant to join in and frequently berate their male
companions for being disgusting. This is _not_ to suggest
that girls are not as well versed in the repertoire as boys.
Indeed, their knowledge may often surpass that of their male
contemporaries but girls should not publicly _appear_ to be
knowledgeable. For example, during the recitation of ' Tea
for one ', told to me by a fifteen year old girl in the
presence of a much younger boy, lines five and six - the
more explicitly sexual ones - were relayed through the boy
as an intermediary. The girl herself refused to utter them
openly:

```
Tea for one, the party's just begun,
Tea for two, she's taking off her shoe,
Tea for three, she's sitting on his knee,
Tea for four, she's lying on the floor,
Tea for five,her legs are open wide,
Tea for six, she's taking off her knicks,
Tea for seven they're doing it like heaven,
Tea for eight, the doctor's at the gate,
Tea for nine, there's nappies on the line,
Tea for ten, they're doing it again.
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The masculine world is therefore the public world and boys
must make their claim to male gender within this arena. Proof
of sexual experience may be difficult to provide so that

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judgement of a boy's sexual encounters and knowledge lies

mostly in his ability to talk about sex itself. It is an

art developed from an early age. For example, the following

document , entitled ' Racing at Ascot ', was handed around

a group of boys aged between twelve and fifteen. It had

been obtained from a friend, who in turn had got it off

his elder brother. Although none of them fully understood

the references, an affected comprehension was conditional

upon each one's participation in the recitation. Significantly,

' Racing at Ascot ' was brought by David the outcast, for

whom an insider status was temporarily acknowledged.[1] More

significantly still he refused to read it out aloud - he lacked

style in recitation - and I was made to read it to them:

Racing at Ascot:

1. Lovely legs   9-1
2. Pyjamas   8-1
3. Big Dick   2-1
4. Nylon Pants 10-1
5. Bare Belly

6. Passionate Lady 8-1
7. White tights   40-1
8. Clean sheets 1,000-1
9. Conscience 10,000-1

Commentary

Place your bets they're off.
Nylon Pants and Pyjama are off with a rush, clean sheets
is in a dangerous position and conscience is left at the
post. Passionate Lady and white tights are very close
together with Big Thighs are very close together with
Big Dick trying to force his way between nylon pants
and lovely legs. At the turn Passionate Lady is under
pressure while white tights and Lovely legs are slowly
drawing apart with Big Dick slowly forcing his way into
the gap. Its a tight between passionate lady and Dick.
But she is taking everything he can give her and it is
looking like an exciting finish. Passionate Lady is
quivering with excitement and Big Dick is doing everything
in his power to get his spurt before its too late. White

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1. David was constantly attempting to purchase membership
   through such means. See p.391.

tights and lovely legs fully excited and foaming at
the mouth. Big Dick has made his spurt and won by a
length.

Summary of the Race

Big Dick looked like a winner from the start
Clean sheets never had a chance
Nylon Pants was helpless and conscience was left
at the post. On the whole it was a tight finish and
next time passionate lady will carry more weight.
Bare Belly was scratched.

(Uncorrected document)

And a twelve year old boy told me the following rhyme:

Dr.White time please,
Tampax two,
Durex-pect me to believe that?
Blobably.
Wank you very much.

The importance for public demonstration of male gender lies

more in the possession than in the understanding of such

pieces.

But the value in learning such rhymes is realised in the

wealth of terminology they contain which allows the boys to

compete publicly with one, another over knowledge of

sexual matters. A whole new vocabulary must be mastered by

the boys for this public display of competence in the culture

of ' doing nothing '; this may involve knowing how to swear,

knowing rude jokes and rhymes, telling sexual stories or

merely shouting out obscenities. To be able to use terms

such as <u>bell end</u> or <u>pigeon kiss</u> symbolises a boy's ability

to fulfill his culturally prescribed gender role.[1] The importance

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1. The term ' bell end ' means the end of the penis; the
   term ' pigeon kiss ' refers to oral sex female to male.

of this is revealed in the following incident: a group of
boys came to visit me and asked if I had a French dictionary.
One of them had heard the word ' dard ', meaning sting or
prick, but was unsure of its pronounciation and spelling.
That it is crucial to be accurate in these matters is echoed
in another incident:

> " T: What's V.D.?
> K: Vertical dangler.
> A: You don't know what V.D. means?
> K: Venirical disease.
> A: Venirical disease?
> K: Venirical.
> A: Are you sure?
> K: Well, its something like that."   1

K. retreated abashed and later asked me what the correct
word was.

In such public demonstrations of knowledge it is important
for the boy's to be able to ask cryptic questions such as:
" Have you a sink or a tap ? " or " Have you a match or a
fire ?" Those who do not know the equivalence of tap and match
with penis, of sink and fire with vagina, are liable to be
ridiculed if they answer incorrectly. The public admission
of ignorance is, however, rare. In response to challenges
about sexual knowledge boys usually answer: " I used to know
but I've forgotten." This reply provides some relief from
the humiliation which would otherwise follow. Indeed,
challenging another's information is a dangerous path to tread
for no one is really certain of the ' facts '. The facts of

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1. Note here the ease with which K. substitutes appropriate
   words for the acronym; the word ' dangler ' is used for
   penis by the boys.

life' for the boys are often really ' facts of popular

culture ' and knowledge is gleaned from a variety of outlets:

from pornographic magazines, from elder brothers, from tales told

by others and from the verses and songs handed down between

generations of children themselves.[1]

The reluctance of the adult world to admit the sexuality of

the young may also partly contribute to the persistence of

many sexual myths among adolescents. A recent report reveals

the common beliefs that, for example,' " pregnancy is avoided

if you do it standing up" or " on the first time " or, more

poignant still, " if you don't enjoy it".'[2] Other myths, the

idea that venereal disease can be transmitted from toilet

seats, that masturbation makes you blind, may, on the other

hand, still form part of the knowledge of the adult world or

may be told to children by adults to curb their activities.

But it is male knowledge of the female anatomy which is most

subject to misconceptions: for example, the boys understood

the clitoris to be the female equivalent of the testicles,

the vagina was regarded as the same as the labia. Female

masturbation was seen by one boy as horrific and unnatural,

as something perhaps akin to anal sex; but for him, female

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1. Comparable examples of this competitive ignorance amongst
   boys are vividly illustrated in Robert Robert's (1978)
   autobiography, p 51.
2. National Council for One Parent Families, <u>Pregnant at
   School</u> (1979:10)

sexual activity was in any case practically impossible without

the aid of a male. Such male ignorance is, I suggest, both

cause and effect of the socially constructed female gender

role. The shroud of secrecy, both literal and metaphoric,

surrounding the female body creates much mystery and curiosity

amongst adolescent boys about the details of female anatomy.

The following three extracts reveal different misperceptions

of aspects of female sexuality:

(1)   " The boys have been talking about sex:
        M: "I've had mine for 12 years, Tony has had
        his for 11 years, Stephen has had his for
        14 years and Jeremy has had his for 23 years."
        Mog looks at Jackie. He is uncertain what
        to say and the boys confer with one another.
        Mog says Jackie, who is 16, has had hers
        for 5 years. The others agree. It is
        obvious that the lads assume female
        genitalia, unlike male genitalia, to appear
        with the onset of puberty".

(2)   "Kirby comes to see me. He has found a free
        gift out of a woman's magazine. A " Carefree
        Towel" for discharge. He is fascinated and
        puts it on. He then lists the names of all the
        other sanitary towels he knows and tells me
        what they look like. However, he assumes all
        of them are for mensturation- this he calls
        'gruel' and 'slime'. He is revolted and makes
        a noise of being sick."

On one rare occasion a group of boys and girls were having

a conversation with me about sex and Grahamy was attempting

to demonstrate his knowledge:

(3)   "Grahamy is trying to embarrass me and failing.
        He tells me that he made a huge "dildo" out of
        a pile of grass and also ' other things that you
        get from the chemist'. The girls don't know what
        he means by a dildo and he tells them that it's
        what you send away for. The light dawns upon them.
        He continues to try and test me by asking if I
        know what an " erection" is and which hand my
        husband "goes out" with (masturbates). I give
        as good as I get and the girls look on with

> amazement. Finally he gives up and announces
> that he knows what ' cancer of the crevix' is.
> The girls roar with laughter at his mispronounci-
> ation. Grahamy compounds this error by saying
> that he has a clitoris. Again the girls roar
> with laughter. Realising his mistake he says
> he has had a ' sex change ' but Grahamy has lost
> face in front of the girls."

This discussion was unique for rarely are such matters openly

discussed between the sexes and that it took place in front

of an adult was the more unusual. Grahamy's persistent

attempts to embarrass me failed and the girls looked on with

admiration. " Just listen to her talk" commented Shaz, for

I was talking like a male, rather than a female, in my public

display of knowledge.

The acquisition of sexual knowledge, and the use of it, is

alternatively framed and handled by the adolescent female.

Their knowledge is comparable with the boys' but is contained

within a culture bound by the metaphors of love, romance and

marriage. Sexuality and sexual experience is translated from

its purely physical expression into a social construct within

the private world of the adolescent female. For girls, the

male body must be sheathed in ideas of romance and love.

For example, " I love Elvis ", written by many girls upon

their hands, transforms the overtly sexual adult male into

a romantic symbol, an object of spiritual desire rather than

physical lust. Bedroom walls are adorned with Elvis posters

and it is not thought abnormal for teenage girls to lie

in bed surrounded by pictures of men. The clothed body and pop-star

imagery transforms the sexual idol into a romantic symbol; the

pictures of female nudes avidly collected by boys are, in

contrast, expressions of overt sexuality, or physical lust,
rather than romance.

This conceptual transformation of sexuality within a
romantic framework forms the basis for an alternative adolescent
culture for girls. It is rarely commented upon by the adult
world, for it can be contained and controlled within the
private sphere; it remains in the mind, in the bedroom, in
the magazines and stories. Unlike the public male culture
it does not intrude upon everyday life. The girls' culture
would therefore seem to be partly neutralized in its power
through its confinement to the private sphere. but, as I
shall argue, it is this very invisibility which allows it
to flourish.[1]

For example, Valentine's Day was more generally celebrated
by girls than by boys. Valentine. rhymes were collected by
girls and swopped between them. Many are traditional to
the female culture. One girl could recite 42 rhymes off by
heart. These included the more vulgar rhymes and sexy acronyms
but, for public consumption on the card itself , she favoured
the more romantic and sentimental verses:

> If your love for me is true,
> send to me a ribbon blue.
> If for me there is no hope,
> send to me a ten foot rope.

---

1. This point is echoed in McRobbie and Garber (1975) who
    argue that whilst girls may be marginal to predominantly
    male subcultures, they are central to another: the
    bedroom culture. See also McRobbie (1978) on this
    culture of romance in her analysis of the teenage
    magazines for girls.

or

> I don't know how it happened,
> I only know its true.
> There is a space within my heart,
> No one can fill but you.

In contrast, Valentine's Day passes in an air of assumed indifference for boys and the only rhyme one boy _said_ he could recall was:

> Over a bridge
> Over a plank
> A kiss is no good
> Without a wank.

This latter rhyme was told to me in the presence of a girl as beginning: " Over a tree ". She rather grudgingly corrected him, thereby demonstrating both her knowledge and a reluctance to admit it.

For girls sexuality is domesticated through romance and it is romance which is seen by girls to lead to marriage. Much of the culture of the girls is directed towards this end, towards discovering their future status as married women. For example, how many twists it takes to core an apple tells the initial of one's true love, through translating the numbers into the alphabetic sequence. A similiar discovery is made by counting how many times it takes to light a match by twisting it on the side of the box. Another divination technique involves drawing around one's hand on a piece of paper and dividing it up in the manner illustrated in Fig.10. This technique produces, through the act of elimination, a very detailed description of a girl's marriage: it reveals the name of the boy a girl will marry, the colour of the wedding dress, the transport which will take the couple away

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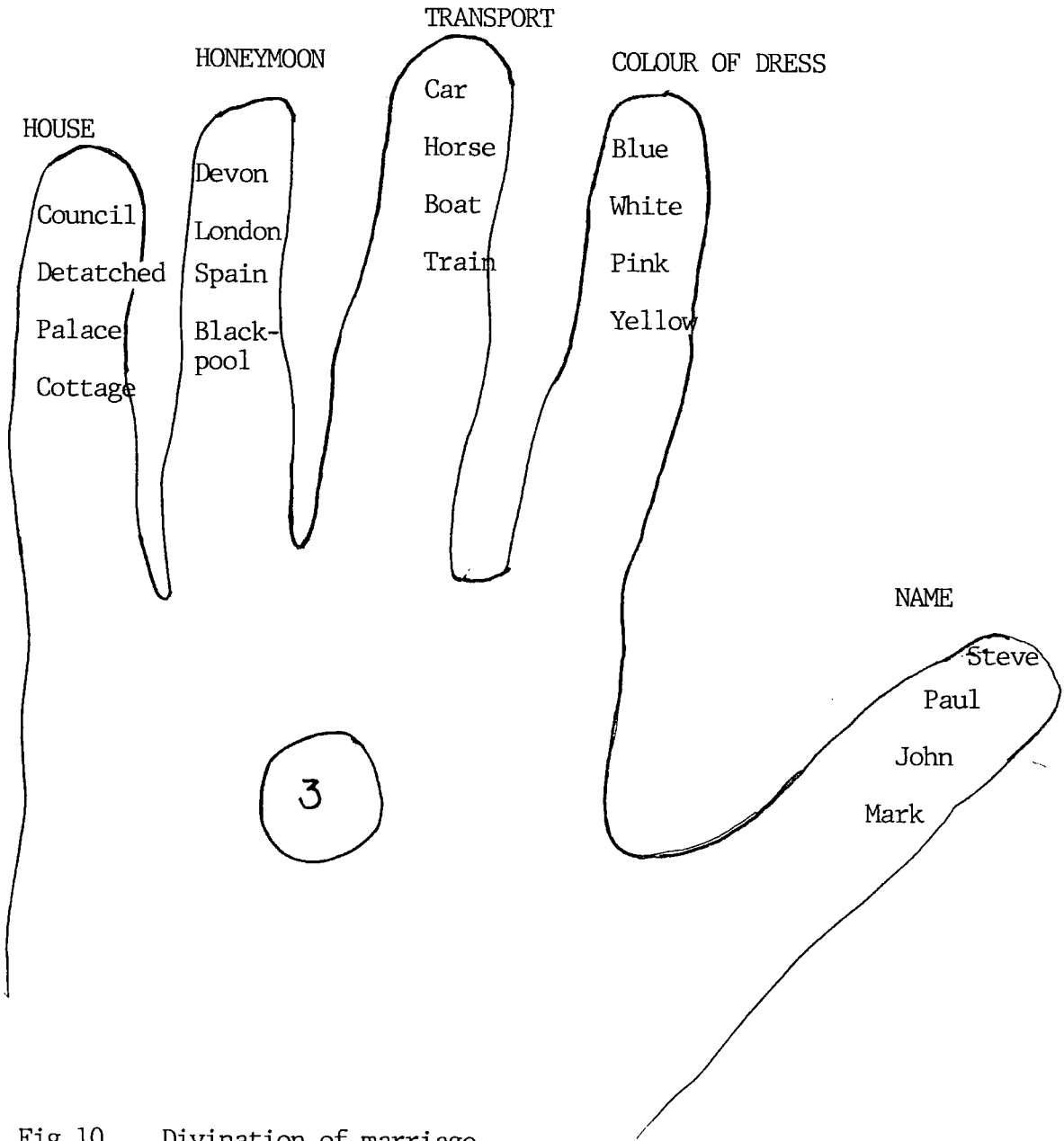
Fig.10. Divination of marriage

N.B. To divine the future a number between 1 and 5 is
chosen - in this case 3 - and then counting round
the hand begins. On each third count a choice is
eliminated until only one choice is left on each
finger. The 5 remaining choices represent the
divined future.

/..

from the ceremony, the place of the honeymoon and the kind
of house they will eventually live in. Other divination
techniques are less detailed; usually they merely reveal
the name of a girl's future husband, or foretell if a current
romance is likely to continue. Such latter devices involve
manipulating the boy's name and the girl's, crossing out
letters to calculate the result, see Fig.11.

The girls also hold superstitions connected with marriage,
their personal future as they conceive of it: it is, for
example, said to be unlucky to wear a ring on the wedding
finger for an unmarried girl. If a girl should inadvertently
do this it must be twisted three times before removal. It
is thought to be unlucky for love to receive a Valentine a
day late. Girls talk constantly amongst themselves about
marriage and their relationships with boys and glean information
from older married women about their possible futures. One
girl asked me what marriage was like, commenting that she had
heard that " the first year was the worst ". No boy ever
mentioned marriage to me.

The private world of adolescent females is, then, framed by
a romantic imagery but it is this very disguise which allows
them some freedom of movement beyond the boundaries publicly
used to contain them. Through concealing their sexuality,
in both social and physical terms, girls can themselves
initiate sexual encounters. From the perspective of their
own culture girls are active huntresses, trappers of males,

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S A M A N T H A      J O N E S

D A V I D          H U T C H I N S O N
```

Aim : <u>To test whether ' it ' is true (i.e. true love)</u>

1. Cross out letters which are the same in each name

    S̶ A̶ M A̶ N̶ T̶ H̶ A̶   J Ø̶ N̶ E S̶

    D A̶ V I D   H̶ U T̶ C H̶ I N̶ S̶ Ø̶ N̶

2. Give remaining letters a numerical quantity in
    relation to their place in the alphabet, beginning
    A = 1:

D = 4	M = 13	I = 9
D = 4	J = 10	C = 3
V = 22	E = 5	
I = 9	U = 21	

3. Single numbers which appear are 0,1,2,3,4,5,9

4. Convert these numbers back into letters, beginning
    with A = 0 (c.f. stage 2).

A = 0	C = 2	E = 4	J = 9
B = 1	D = 3	F = 5	

5. Out of these letters, A,B,C,D,E,F,J, you must try to
    make a word. If you can make a word then ' it ' is
    true; if not ' it ' is false.

<u>Fig. 11.</u>   Divination of marriage through names.

/..

the lurers and snarers of men. Thus, it is the girls who
make love strings to entangle the males. A piece of cotton
is tied around the wrist and seven knots made in the end.
A wish about a particular boy or a current relationship is
made on the tying of each knot and the love string is kept
on for seven days. On the seventh day the boy about whom
the wishes were made is persuaded to break the string. In
doing so he inadvertently seals his own fate for this is said
to make the wishes come true.

Such ensnaring of unwitting males is performed by a number
of other ' magical'means. [1] Relationships are symbolically
cemented   through inscribing, and thereby fixing, particular
pairings on walls, on the backs of schoolbooks, in the dust
on cars, in wet cement or carved into tables. The girls
publicly present   a _fait accompli_ for all the world to see.
Significantly, it is the nicknames of the boys which are used
for such inscriptions: the boy's secret and personal identity,
the one by which he is known to his mates, is publicly
displayed with a girl's name. The walls of the bus shelter
and telephone boxes bear witness to the changing relationships
between the sexes, cataloguing the beginnings and endings of
love affairs as JOHN + JACKIE is replaced by JOHN+JUE, which
later is added to by DEL + JUE. Boys, when they decorate the
public world, merely write their own names; it is the girls
who dare to publicly reveal   their sexual encounters.

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1. See footnote on p.457.

But,more important than these etchings, is the writing of names on the girl's own body for girls, too, have tattoos. They do not inscribe their own names or have the pictorial tattoos of the boys but, instead, use their own bodies to express particular romantic attachments:

> " Jackie has Ray scratched on her arm. Ray
> stands for Raymond with whom she is now going
> out. She did it in the 'bogs ' with a pin
> and had ' got wrong ' off someone at work
> for doing it. It lies under her watchstrap
> so her mam cannot see it. Ray has Jackie
> tatooed on his left arm in ink so she doesn't
> see why she shouldn't have his name on her
> arm. Ray has told her off for doing it."

Such visible signs of a sexual relationship are not considered to be correct conduct for the female by the male: it is a public admission of private affairs.

> " Sandra and Noz both have the following symbol
> drawn on their hands in biro.
>
> I ask Sandra about them. She says one is for
> Gench and the other is Noz's sign, but both
> are identical. Later Hutch asks Noz what they
> mean. She says one is for George. He asks
> Sandra why she has the sign on her hand but she
> will not tell him. Whilst Sandra is out of the
> room Noz tells Hutch that it stands for Gench
> but she warns him not to say anything. Sandra
> reappears and Hutch begins to tease her and
> points to the 'G' on her hand. Sandra denies
> that it stands for Gench and says it's a secret
> sign. She leaves the room."

The importance of these visual clues of sexual relationships is brought out in the following incident:

> " Jackie and Sandra nearly have a fight because
> Sandra used to go out with John. Jackie saw that
> Sandra had John written on her hand, and says
> that Sandra wants her to finish with John. This,
> she thinks, is a way of making her jealous. I
> pick up this weather vane of their social
> relationships - the next day Jackie has John
> written on her right and left hand. They have made
> up their quarrel. "

This active female role is carried through in a number of
ways. Girls draw hearts , pierced by arrows, on pieces of
paper or on walls or pavements; the number of feathers on
the end of the arrow correspond to the letter of the boy's
name. Hairs from a boy's heads are retained in matchboxes,
possessions of a boy are coveted by the girl: scarves
borrowed, badges stolen, jackets worn and combs acquired as
if, like magicians, they can use these personal items to secure
their victims through a form of metaphorical control. Gaining
access to a boy's jacket is indeed to have acquired some degree
of control over the boy himself, for it is on this jacket
that boys express their individuality through creative
decoration of it.[1]

This idea of possession is brought out well in the following
account of a fight between two girls:

> " Kay tells me that she went to the club and
> had a fight. She went out with Abby on Saturday
> night and this other girl was furious because
> she had. She had all her mates at the club last
> night and she had insulted Kay. So, they went
> into the "bogs" to fight it out. Kay told her to
> take off her glasses and then thumped her on the
> nose, and it started to bleed. She herself had
> bruises and scratches on her legs and arms. The
> others came in and broke it up as you aren't
> allowed to fight in the club."

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1. c.f. Leach (1976a) pp.29-32.

Such fights represent a public demonstration of a girl's possession of a boy.

That girls recognise and exploit their own sexual powers is encapsulated in the <u>Licence to Kiss</u>, a secret formula circulated amongst girls in private. The Licence has five stages and is granted when all five stages have been achieved within a relationship. The five stages are : (1) Your arms around him; (2) His arms around you; (3) Lips together; (4) You kiss the boy; (5) The boy kisses you. If the last stage is not reached a girl is said to get seven years bad luck. The <u>Licence to Kiss</u> is of great significance for it stresses the role of the female as instigator of the encounter and reveals that a competitive spirit also exists amongst girls; some girls have gained their licence, others have not. The private culture of girls reveals, therefore, an alternative female perception of their role in relationships: in the male oral tradition (see for example ' Racing at Ascot ') it is only the male who is portrayed as the active participant.

<u>Conclusion : relationships between public and private</u>

During adolescence there is, then, considerable conceptual distance between male and female worlds, a separation maintained through gender specific bodily techniques. However, it is also during this period of social transition that relationships <u>between</u> the sexes take on a particular significance for sexual relationships are seen by the children to

bea necessary element in the assumption of full adult status.
It is a tension which must be handled with style and, once
again, the culture of ' doing nothing ' proscribes the form
within which such relationships between public and private
are managed.

One way in which the children straddle the conceptual gulf
between male and female worlds is through the use of inter-
mediaries to initiate sexual encounters. A third party,
either male or female, is used as a go-between at the start
of a relationship for relaying messages or passing notes:

> " It seems that Kim fancies John. Stephen
> passed this message to Mog who gave it to
> John. He told John that " a girl fancies you ."
> Later he found out that it was Kim."

I was brought into the role of intermediary too:

> " Maurice asked me to get Janet from the
> " bogs ". He said he had a message for her
> from Tony. The message was scrawled on the
> back of his hand: " I want to go out with
> you, Tony ."

And the following sequence of relayed messages was recorded
at the onset of one relationship:

> " Cloughy told John to tell me to tell Jackie
> that he liked her. I told Jackie the message.
> Then Jackie told me to tell John to tell
> Cloughy that she liked him. Cloughy then told
> John to tell me to tell Jackie that she had to
> " do the asking ", that is, to ask him out.
> After this initial exchange the two sat side by
> side not speaking for a while and then left the
> room together, and the relationship began."

Through the use of a neutral party negotiations are transacted and, as revealed in the above accounts, <u>both</u> males and females can employ a go-between. Performed in secret, agreement is reached prior to the start of a relationship and should either party prove reluctant later no public face is lost.

This use of intermediaries is highly instructive. On the one hand it publicly reinforces the prescribed gender roles through emphasising the distance between male and female worlds whilst,on the other, it also points to a number of private contradictions of these gender specific norms of behaviour.

For girls, using an intermediary ensures that their public image of purity is maintained. As suggested above, the majority of girls appear to publicly accept their muted status, defined both for and by males, for they possess an alternative perspective on their own futures which remains within a private female culture and provides them with a conceptual resolution to their predicament. Through the use of a third-party to initiate sexual relationships girls can therefore continue their active participatory role outside this private sphere for only the intermediary, who is usually a close friend, will know of their attempt to engage in a sexual relationship. They can enter the public world with no adverse criticism of their actions.

Go-betweens play a critical role in the sexual life of adolescent girls for any who <u>publicly</u> transgress the

prescribed passive and non-participatory female role are
liable to be condemned. If a girl chooses to reveal and
flaunt her sexuality she is classed as <u>pros</u> (prostitute)
by boys; she represents the dangerous sexual female, the
temptress of male fantasy, the ' Annie ' who appears in
the following rhyme:

> Danny and his girlfriend Annie,
> She had a great big fanny,
> They went to the pits,
> He sucked off her tits,
> And that was the end of Danny and Annie.

As girls well know such behaviour during adolescence will not
provide them with a secure future; a <u>pros</u> will never find a
permanent boyfriend.

On the other hand, girls who reject the prescribed female
role in another manner are equally condemned by boys. Girls
who do not reveal <u>any</u> sexual potential, who wear jeans rather
than skirts, who join in male activities on their own terms
rather than through a boy-friend become classificatory males,
<u>lad lasses</u> (tom-boys). <u>Lad lasses</u>, if they continue with
such behaviour, are also unlikely to find permanent boy-friends.[1]
Using a go-between as mediator between private and public allows
the girls, therefore, to maintain a fine balance between these
two extremes. A girl may make herself available or express
her interest in a boy privately, before entering the public
arena of sexual relationships.

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1. c.f. the account of Mary, pp.465 - 466.

For boys, too, intermediaries are useful. In that boys must publicly appear to be well versed and experienced in sexual matters, to be successful and popular with girls, the use of a go-between insures that no slight on their social status occurs should a girl refuse, for only the intermediary will know. This is particularly crucial for girls possess their own opinion of male sexuality, one which is predicated upon their own futures in terms of marriage and one which contrasts dramatically with the male self conception , their public image. Girls will frequently warn each other against " going with " certain boys. These will be those who are overt in their sexual behaviour, those who are regarded as lads. Such boys are only suitable for platonic relationships; they are not thought of as potential spouses or permanent boy-friends for their fidelity is in question. This alternative perspective is expressed in the following rhyme, thought by the girls to be hilarious:

> My friend Billy had a ten foot willy,
> He showed it to the girl next door,
> She thought it was a snake,
> So she hit it with a rake,
> And now it's only three foot four.

The public male gender stereotype is cut down to size by the girls in private. On the other hand, boys who show no interest in girls, those who cannot participate with style, are privately condemned by girls as puffs. For boys too there are,then,extremes within which they must contain their sexual activity. Like the girls, they must achieve a fine balance in order to belong.

Much of this private reconstruction of public gender roles is predicated upon the children's future in terms of marriage. For males and females alike, marriage is seen as an inevitable part of full adult status and adolescence is seen as the preparatory phase for this. But different perceptions of marriage exist; again they are culturally prescribed and gender specific.

For girls, marriage or a long-standing relationship with a boy represents the ideal and long awaited opportunity for the public legitimation of their own sexuality. Marriage is seen to provide a release from their sexual exile through the relaxation of constraints upon their sexuality. This perception is, I suggest, intimately linked with the reproductive power of the female. Pregnancy is thought to be the most overt and visible symbol of female sexuality. Ideally it should occur within marriage - it should be legitimated - but girls who have babies outside the marital state do not suffer adverse criticism for long. They become classed as mothers, rather than wives. Indeed pregnancy may be the precipitating factor in marriage. Sue who had her first baby in November 1979 came to see me in great excitement, saying that Paul was going to give her an engagement ring for Christmas.

That pregnancy is considered to be the most powerful symbol of female sexuality can be seen in a number of ways. For example, the common north-eastern expression " to fall wrong " (to become pregnant) applicable to both married

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and unmarried women, is highly resonant: ' to fall wrong '
is to topple from the mythical pedestal of virginity, to
make public the private sexuality of the female. The
teasing of girls by boys often revolves round the subject
of pregnancy : a thump in the stomach is said " to hurt the
baby " and fat girls are often taunted by the accusation
that they are pregnant. Fat girls resemble pregnant women
and recall the overt expression of female sexuality. As one
man said of a local girl: " it's such a shame, she can't have
children and such a big strong lass as well". Being married
and yet childless, the girl had not fulfilled the requirements
of her gender role. Throughout the fieldwork period I, too,
was gently criticised for not having started a family.

The onset of physical puberty for girls does not, then, mark
the beginnings of any sexual freedom for them. Girls are
literally cursed by their own bodies for, without marriage
or a long standing sexual relationship, they are allowed
little public expression of their sexuality. Their sexual
potential must be concealed and constrained until it can be
legitimated through marriage .That marriage is seen as the
ideal fulfillment of the female gender role is expressed in
attitudes to unmarried women. Spinsters, for example, are
often conceptually equated with lesbians for, in not marrying,
the children perceive them to be 'unnatural', as lacking normal
heterosexual desires. They are called "old hags"or "witches"
and frequently gossiped about. The private culture of the

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female with its emphasis upon love, romance and marriage
symbolises then the transition to adulthood for the majority
of girls. What is particularly ironic about this conception
is that, as McRobbie and Garber point out, they are swopping
one set of restrictions for another: the conceptualization
of sexual freedom in terms of marriage ' symbolises a
future general subordination and a present one ' (1976:221).

Girls, therefore, are literally and metaphorically muted.
Having been classed by others in need of containment and
control they cannot participate so visibly in the adolescent
culture. That this conception finds wide currency in
contemporary Britain is revealed in the following comments
of a fifteen year old girl:[1]

> " If I was a boy I would be a lot
> happier and free. I would not have to
> stay at home so much and worry about
> coming home early. I would be able to
> stay out late and go around with the
> gang. Also, I would not have trouble
> with having menstruation and worrying
> about getting pregnant. "

And, in the context of my own fieldwork, the power of such
cultural classifications was brought home to me by one striking
example. One of my best female informants was Mary whom
others regarded as a <u>lad lass</u>.[2] She was aggressively independent,
invariably wore trousers, although fashionable ones, and joined

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1. Extract taken from Sunday Times article October 1st,1978:
   <u>Chavinist Piglets</u>.
2. Mary is the example of the outsider discussed on pp.392-393
   above.

in most of the male dominated activities. And, yet, she
also participated in the private female culture. She was
an avid collector of Valentine rhymes and was highly
informative on many aspects of the life of an adolescent
female in the north-east of England. She also had many
boyfriends, whilst not flaunting or actively encouraging
sexual attentions from boys. She was unique amongst the
girls and seemed to be able to fuse quite effectively the
separation between the public and private domains, the
genderised social distance. It was, however, Mary who at
the age of 18 became pregnant with her first illegitimate
child and at the age of 19 was expecting twins. In attempting
to break out of the subordination ascribed to her gender she
was the first of the girls to conform to the gender role
ascribed for adult females.

Mary's case is illuminating. She had seemed to offer an
alternative route for girls on their journey to adulthood
in a context where few options are available.[1] Her failure
to continue to transgress the cultural constraints is the
more poignant in her eventual massive conformity. Even for
Mary it was the traditional female role which was allotted
to her but one which was not sanctified through marriage, the
normal rite of passage for the female.

That marriage is seen in this light by girls is further
symbolised in the custom of decorating a bride - to-be

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1. See pp. 221 - 233 above for a discussion of female
   employment.

prior to her wedding. It is the female equivalent of the male
stag night; a rite performed by women for women, a symbol
of their private culture. It represents the final stages of
their transition to adulthood through celebrating the removal
of many public constraints on their sexuality.

For many months prior to the wedding a girl's friends will
secretly make a costume for the bride. A huge paper hat
is constructed out of masses of brightly coloured paper
flowers and a dress, similar to a sandwich board, is made
out of cardboard. This dress is covered with messages,
composed from newsprint, of an overtly sexual nature. The
evening before her marriage, or on her last day at work, the
future bride must put on these clothes. She is literally
immobolised by the size of the hat and may require other girls
to support its brim. Her shoes may have been replaced by
giant shoes, covered with silver paper, again making movement
difficult. She must then parade through her work place in
this costume, publicly declaring her intention to marry
through the wearing of it.

The pinning of overtly sexual comments onto the female body
symbolises the transition she is making from the private
female culture to the public world, from the concealment
of sexuality to its display. Even at this time, however, the
future bride must affect an air of innocence for she, as
yet, has not completed the transition. It is significant
that such costumes are always made by unmarried girls who,

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Plates 11 & 12   '' The pinning of overtly sexual comments onto the
                female body symbolises the transition she is making
                from the private female culture to the public world.''

in the construction of them, are both celebrating their
friends final release, as they see it, and prefiguring
their own future hopes. <u>Married</u> women, significantly, do not
take such an active role in this rite. In the evening the
girls will go out together to celebrate further, often
drinking a great deal of alcohol, an action which parallels
the male stag night, and represents another inversion of
the prescribed female role. The liberation achieved through
intoxication is normally guarded against for it is a public
display of lack of control, an experience normally denied
to the female.

In contrast to this massive celebratory act marriage, for
boys , is seen by them to signal the end of their freedom
and a restriction of the overt sexual activity which has
characterised their adolescence. Warnings against marrying,
on the pitfalls and disappointment encountered, are often
given to the boys by older men. In particular children
are often cited as being the cause of marital disharmony;
many men said that, although they might have married, if
they could begin again they would never have had children.
It is,therefore,the reproductive power of the female which is
perceived to bring change in social status, further emphasising
the suggestion that it is pregnancy which is thought to be
the most resonant symbol of female sexuality.

Many of the common metaphors used by males to describe
the married state reflect these negative perceptions of

marriage. Boys become " hitched ", " trapped " or " caught"; they are literally tied by the love-strings secretly made for them by the girls.[1] The stag night is a night of heavy drinking in the company of other men; it is a meeting for commiseration rather than, as in the female case, a celebration. Furthermore, the state of bachelorhood does not carry the stigma attached to spinsterhood and many married men speak enviously of the bachelor's freedom: the freedom to go with other women, to go abroad for holidays because money is not needed to support the wife and family, the freedom to change jobs and to get sackless (drunk) with no fear of retribution. As Corrigan (1979) also notes in his work many unmarried boys changed jobs regularly but commented that when they got married such free living would have to end.

Such perceptions of marriage are, however, only partially realised in practice for, in the context of the north-east of England, many married men do still continue to indulge in laddish behaviour. They congregate in working men's clubs, gather on the allotment as a community of men, a community which parallels the separated domestic community of their wives. The separation between the sexes, between the public and private worlds, begun during adolescence is thus mirrored in the adult world: the two are mutually reinforcing, further

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1. This essentially conservative attitude of adolescents is widespread, see for example the survey conducted by the Sun newspaper October 21st 1980. It is not confined to this particular context. As a teenager my female friends and I used the phrase " to go trapping " meaning to go out and find some boys at the local dance.

underlining the suggestion that adolescence is truly a preparation for adulthood, a rite of passage.

In conclusion, then, it is marriage which is seen to represent the end of adolescence for both males and females. The images of containment, restriction and concealment of female sexuality, the perceived loss of sexual freedom of the male at marriage meet and mutually reflect upon one another in connection with the question of female virginity. Through marriage the passivity and sexual innocence of the female is transformed: the ' wife ' has become the ' whore ', that is the overtly sexual female used by boys during their adolescence only for short-term relationships. It is, then, through their conformity to a predominantly male perception of the female self during adolescence that girls can express their sexuality as adults through the institution of marriage. For boys, marriage signals the restriction of their adolescent sexual freedom through conformity to the female perception of male sexuality.

The gender roles and perceptions of marriage presented above are images of the future generated from within the children's culture, ideals to which all must aspire, behavioural norms to which all must adhere, if they are to belong. That individual children may privately acknowledge that, in practice, adulthood may conflict with these projections underlines the power which such cultural constructs wield in shaping the aspirations and values of the group as a whole. Adherence to these beliefs is a prerequisite for belonging.

As such, then, perceptions of gender mirror the style of belonging characteristic of the culture of ' doing nothing '. It is a style of conformity tempered by individuality within prescribed cultural boundaries. Overstepping these limits may lead to exclusion. As in other aspects of the children's bodily techniques it is the physical body which provides a focus for the social body. It is the medium through which knowledge is displayed, acquired and assimilated, knowledge which will be necessary for the transition to adulthood.

CHAPTER 7 : CONFECTIONS, CONCOCTIONS AND CONCEPTIONS

' Symbols may well reflect not structure,
but anti-structure, and not only reflect it
but contribute to creating it. '
(Turner, 1974:270)

Introduction

Bodily style is a mode of belonging expressed through the

complex interweaving of different body techniques into an

ordered symbolic system. The physical body mirrors the

social self and, thus, bodily style is a sign of belonging.

In conclusion to this discussion of the culture of children

I trace the patterning over time of changes in one particular

body technique as the child moves towards adulthood. It

represents a condensed and highly evocative symbol of that

physical and social transition, a symbol of being and

becoming.

As Mary Douglas (1969) has shown the body as a symbolic

system is vulnerable at its orifices for substances pass out

of the body through them. These substances are ' marginal

stuff of the most obvious kind (for) spittle, blood, milk,

urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed

the boundary of the body ' (1969:121). All these bodily

wastes, as I have shown, feature regularly in children's

jokes and conversations and, in general, children regard the

orifices of the body as significant for in allowing passage

between the inner and outer body they, conceptually therefore,

allow movement between the self and others.[1]

In particular, certain orifices are of maximal importance:

> " Stephen remarked that he had seven
> holes in his head. Delly said: " No,
> there's only five." The eye sockets
> are blocked up by the eyeballs - they
> aren't holes. There are only five
> holes: - two nostrils, two earholes
> and the mouth. "

And of all these holes in the head the mouth is most crucial.
Words for the mouth are many, symbolising its conceptual
importance : hole, hooter, trap, rattle, gob and face. This
latter equivalence of the face with the mouth indicates the
importance of the mouth as an expressive orifice ; that the
face is the mouth is revealed in the following semantic
equivalents: " shut yer face ", " shut yer trap ", " shut up ".

The mouth allows innermost thoughts to be given outward
expression and, thus, through the mouth the self is revealed
to others. Those who talk too much are gobby; he who tells
tales on another is a ' Big Mouth ' for he gabs too much with
his gob . To have a gemmy is to have a chat and to be able
to talk is, as I have shown, critical in the art of ' doing
nothing '. Those who cannot verbalise successfully do not
belong for they cannot participate in the culture of
' doing nothing ' with style.[2]

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1. See Chapters 4 and 6.
2. See Chapter 4.

All the body's orifices are portals between the self and others; they mediate between the inner and outer body. But it is the mouth alone which also allows passage in the opposite direction and it is this process of ingestion, of taking into the self, which makes the mouth of particular symbolic significance to children. Mary Douglas has written that ' each culture has its own special risks and problems (and) to which particular bodily margins its beliefs attribute power depends on what situation the body is mirroring ' (ibid:121). In that the physical body reflects the social body the children see any changes in their bodies as reflecting changes in their social status.[1] In this sense the mouth is important for it allows substances to enter the body and, hence, to enter the self; the mouth, therefore, has the potential to bring changes to the physical and the social body of children.

Gaining control over the mouth means, therefore, gaining control over the self and over the direction and manner in which the transition to adulthood is made. A young child's first act of rebellion is usually played out through the medium of the mouth and as, Simone de Beauvoir recalls, the mouth is the first body orifice which the child gains control over:

> 'The principal function of Louise and Mama
> was to feed me; their task was not always
> an easy one. The world became more

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1. See Chapter 6.

> intimately part of me when it entered
> my mouth than through my eyes and sense
> of touch, I would not accept it entirely.
> The insipidity of milk puddings, porridge,
> and mashes of bread and butter made me
> burst into tears; the oiliness of fat meat
> and the clammy mysteries of shellfish
> revolted me; tears, screams, vomitings: my
> repugnance was so deeply rooted that in the
> end they gave up trying to force me to eat
> those disgusting things. ' (1978:6)

In this concluding chapter I explore , therefore, the ways in which children gain control over their bodies, and hence control over the self, through learning to acquire one particular body technique: the taking of substances into their bodies through the mouth. Through examination of three case-studies - the eating of sweets, the smoking of cigarettes and the drinking of alcohol - I show how, at different stages in the process of becoming social, children are symbolically defining who they are, the category to which they belong, through the medium of the mouth. In this sense the transition between these activities can be seen as an iconic image of the process of social maturation, the transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood.

Sahlins argues that ' men reciprocally define objects in terms of themselves and themselves in terms of object ' (1976: 169). Children, as I shall argue, also do. As Sahlins continues:

> ' the product that reaches its destined
> market constitutes an objectification of
> a social category and so helps to constitute
> the latter in society...Capitalism is no
> sheer rationality. It is a definite form
> of a cultural order; or a cultural order
> acting in a particular form. ' (ibid:185)

Sweets, cigarettes and alcohol image, then, the process of social transition to adulthood in a Western capitalist society which has no institutionalized <u>rite de passage</u> . The chapter concludes with an examination of the implications of this for socialization theory through situating these activities within the total frame of the culture of ' doing nothing '.

I   <u>Food for thought</u>

The notion that food might be a subject worthy of discussion as a symbolic medium has long been ignored by anthropologists. Past enthnographers have either only made fleeting reference to what people eat or have subsumed that topic under more general headings such as agricultural production or economics. Kinship studies have discussed rules of commensality but not the act of consuming.

However, with the publication of <u>Le Totémisme Aujourd'hui</u>, and Lévi-Strauss's provocative suggestion that animals are ' good to think with ', the subject of food and its relation to the social, rather than the physical, body has become increasingly central to the discipline (1969:162), (see Leach, 1964; Douglas,1969; Bulmer,1967 and Tambiah, 1969). In all these analyses it is suggested that ideas people hold concerning the edibility of different kinds of food are logically linked to other conceptual domains and that, by examining a people's food categories, a more penetrating and incisive explanation of other aspects of the social order can be achieved. As Tambiah argues: ' cultures and social systems

are, after all, not only thought but also lived '; particular
attention should be paid to exactly what people let inside
their bodies (1973:165). We are what we eat.

More recently Mary Douglas (1975) has directly confronted the
subject of food in her analysis of British eating habits.
She identifies two major opposed categories of food: meals
and drinks. Of the two, meals are the more highly ranked and
ordered, being internally structured into ' first , second,
main (and) sweet ' courses, whereas drinks possess no such
structuring (1975:255). Meals, unlike drinks, are also
externally structured by the temporal order - breakfast
followed by dinner and tea - which parallels the weekly cycle
of ceremonial meals. Drinks, in contrast, are ' not invested
with any necessity in their ordering ' (ibid:255).

Eating is not however confined to this rigid system. As
Douglas goes on to argue, besides these major food categories
some ' food can be taken for private nourishment ' but it is
likely to be condemned if considered ' to interfere with the
next meal ' (ibid:254). It is here that she locates sweets.

Sweets, according to Douglas , threaten to disrupt the orderly
consumption of food but hers is an adult perspective. For
adults, sweets are merely an adjunct to real food; they should
not and cannot usurp the place of meals. For the child, as
I shall argue, the reverse is true: it is meals which disrupt
the eating of sweets.

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This opposition was initially revealed to me through a chance statement by an old lady of my acquaintance. Remarking on the quality of the paint used by the National Coal Board on their rented properties she said, disparagingly, that it was " all ket - rubbish " and that it would peel off within a few months. This use of the word <u>ket</u> intrigued me for up until this moment I had only encountered the word amongst the children, used as their general category term for sweets, especially those of the cheaper variety.

Further close attention to language revealed that the word <u>ket,</u> when used by adults, could be a classificatory noun - to mean an assortment of useless articles - or an adjective, <u>ket</u> or <u>ketty</u>, meaning rubbishy or useless. Confirmation of this usage comes from Dobson (1974) who defines the word as rubbish. However, Cecil Geeson cites the original meaning of <u>ket</u> in the Durham dialect: ' something smelly, stinking, unhealthy or diseased ' generally applicable to the ' carcasses of animals, dying a natural death and dressed for market without being bled ' (1969:116).

Seemingly there has been a significant semantic shift between the use of the word in the worlds of adults and children: that which is despised, inedible and a natural substance of the adult world is, for the children, a highly regarded, extremely edible and cultural form of food. More significant still, sweets - like the inedible and stinking carcass - are not classified by adults as proper food; sweets are the

/..

rubbish which children eat between meals.

The metaphoric transformation of the inedible into the edible through a semantic twist is an example of the persuasive effect of language in performance. Fernandez (1977) argues that language does not merely reflect social experience; it acts upon it, creating a continual interplay between conceptual thought and social action. Understanding the performative power and persuasive effect of these movements is crucial to the unravelling of social order;

> ' ethnography is obliged to trace as
> specifically as it can both the accidental
> chains of associations that may be at
> work in any imaginative cultural product
> as well as the higher order concepts or
> controlling ideas that may be present in
> mediating between associates bringing about
> their synthesis. ' (1977:130)

The linguistic paradox of edibility, described above, is one such example; it represents the playing out of controlling ideas about the worlds of adults and children which both creates a cultural synthesis and is itself thereby created.

Sweet thoughts

Sweets - as in ' Ye Olde Sweete Shoppe ' - seem to be an entirely British phenomenon. There is apparently no equivalent abroad and the British sweet industry, in its production of a very extensive range of confectionery, seems to be unique. The concept of the sweetmeat is the nearest parallel to the kinds of confections available in other countries, a confection which is absent from the supermarket shelves and non-specialist sweet shops in this country.

The European sweetmeat dates back to the seventeenth century with the discovery of sugar. During this period sweetmeats formed an integral part of the rich man's menu - they were a part of the meal itself - as is often the case in other countries contemporarily. In Britain, however, the sweetmeat today is best described as a home-made confection to be found delicately displayed in tiny baking cases in a traditional confectioner's shop. Elsewhere, mass production techniques have replaced the sweetmeat with similar, but not identical ,pre-packed products. However, although the sweetmeat has largely disappeared and the traditional sweetshop now competes with supermarkets, newsagents and slot-machines, the sweetmeat's pre-packaged successor strikingly resembles its forerunner in many respects. In this sense the sweet, for adults, may be closer than Douglas (1975) supposes to our major food categories; it may form a sweet course to the meal.

Junk food

Kets and sweets must not be confused. Although the distinction may seem to be purely linguistic other more substantive issues indicate that kets are opposed to other kinds of sweets in being a very distinctive kind of confectionery. Kets belong exclusively to children and, as I shall show, are an iconic image of their relationship to the adult world.

The youth club had a tuck shop and a continual and preoccupying activity for all the children was the buying and selling of

sweets, primarily of the ' ketty ' variety, although older
children tended more towards other kinds of sweets. The
majority , however, almost always referred to the tuck as
kets. In contrast adults generally used the word sweets
although occasionally an adult might jokingly refer to
kets, especially if they were buying sweets for children.
But they would never use the term kets for sweets they them-
selves were going to consume.

It would seem therefore, from my observations, that the
term kets is usually used for those sweets at the lower end
of the price range and it is these sweets that the children
most often buy. It could be argued, therefore, that the
linguistic distinction between kets and other kinds of
confectionery rests solely on economic factors. However,
before assuming that children buy kets because they are cheap
and that, in general, they have less money to spend than adults,
certain problems should be considered. Why don't adults buy
kets? For 10p.,the price of a chocolate bar, they could
purchase ten pieces of bubble gum. Furthermore, why do children
find adults eating kets such a remarkable event, a perception
portrayed in the following conversation:

> " G: Allison, why have you got Space Dust
>   behind there for? (indicating the packet
>   behind a jar on the shelf)
>   A: Because I bought it.
>
>   G: What did you buy it for?
>
>   A: Because I wanted to.
>
>   G: Oh.
>
>   A: Any objections?
>
>   G: Yes
>
>   GL:Yes   "

Secondly, although it is certainly true that children tend to buy the cheaper sweets, it is apparent from my field data that the total amount of money spent by the children on sweets at <u>any one time</u> may be quite considerable: a typical purchase might be: four ' Fizz Bombs ' at 1p each; three ' Liquorice Novelties ' at 2p each and two ' Bubble gums ' at 1p each. The total outlay, 12p, could have bought two small chocolate bars which were also available at the youth club tuck shop. This may be an example of getting more for one's money, but another factor should be taken into account. The spending power of children is obviously an important consideration for manufacturers, but, if this were the sole criterion influencing production, why do manufacturers not produce miniature versions of the kinds of confections available in the higher price range? Some years ago it was possible to purchase slim bars of Cadbury's chocolate for one old penny and a slightly larger version for twopence. The equivalent contemporary products are tiny - ' bite-size ' - ' Milky Ways ' and ' Mars Bars ', sold in bags as ' Family Packs '. Why do manufacturers not sell them singly? The answer seems to be that there is no demand for them and that manufacturers recognise the selling power of <u>kets</u>.

Children, then, do not buy <u>kets</u> simply because they are cheaper or have a lower unit price. <u>Kets</u> have other properties, besides their cheapness, which makes them important. Manufacturers may not therefore be exploiting the power of the child's purse but, more insidiously, the power inherent in the conceptual gulf between the worlds of adults and children.

<u>Kets</u> have their own attractions. In their autobiographies

Jimmy Boyle and Rose Gamble both remember the pull of the

sweet shop window:

> ' Our house stood beside the sweet and paper
> shop, and the next best thing to having a
> ha'penny to spend was playing ' I-Spy' through
> its tiny window. The floor of the window was
> layered with rows of grubby glass fluted dishes
> filled with tiger nuts that tasted like the insides
> of dusty cupboards, gritty spearmint toffee,
> aniseed balls, sherbert dabs and sun-faded jelly
> babies, all at ha'penny an ounce. The quality
> stuff, the buttered brazils and satin cushions,
> was in tall glass jars up on the shelves, but
> we never paid any attention to them.' (Rose
> Gamble, 1979   :19-20)

> ' on a winter's night there would always be some
> of us grouped round one of the sweet shop windows
> playing Guesses - this was to choose the name
> of a sweet and give the others the initial (i.e.
> C.B.? - Candy Balls) and we would pass hours
> playing this game .' (Jimmy Boyle, 1977   :22)

But what is the attraction of <u>kets</u>? In order to resolve all

these problematic issues a statistical survey was carried out

in which the range of confectionery available was divided into

three groups . The term <u>kets</u> designated all those sweets

costing less than 5p. An intermediate group was established

for sweets costing between 6p and 10p and a third group

contained all sweets costing 11p or more, including the

more expensive boxes of chocolates. By isolating <u>kets</u> as a

distinctive group, according to price, it was possible to

explore further, more elusive contrasts between <u>kets</u> and other

sweets,an investigation which suggested that the alternative

adult meaning of the word <u>kets</u> - rubbish - was indeed a

powerful and persuasive metaphor. Much of the attraction of

<u>kets</u> for children seems to lie precisely in the ways they stand

in contrast to conventional adult sweets and culturally
prescribed eating patterns. <u>Kets</u> contravene adult conceptions
of order in numerous ways: in their names, colours, the
sensations they induce, their mode of presentation, their
ingredients and in the timing and manner of their consumption.

Firstly, it is in the names given to <u>kets</u> as opposed to other
sweets than an immediate contrast is struck. Analysis reveals
that children do in fact consume named rubbish - that is,
inedible substances - when they eat <u>kets</u>.[1] It is this meta-
phoric rubbish that children prize most highly as can be seen
from the following table:

PRICE	INEDIBLE/NOT EATEN (1.1) (1.2)		EDIBLE (2.0)	OTHER (3.0)
<u>KETS</u> Below 5p	57	36	44	48
	Total	93	44	48
6 - 10p	14	13	28	22
	Total	27	28	22
11p +	1	16	107	18
	Total	17	107	18

<u>Fig. 12.</u>   This table shows <u>the distribution of names, according to their</u>
<u>semantic connotations within each of three groups of sweets,</u>
<u>differentiated according to price.</u>

1. Each of the price ranges for sweets was further subdivided
   into three categories (1.1) inedible and edible but not
   normally consumed; (2.0) edible; (3.0) other. The confections
   of each group were classified into these categories according
   to the meaning of the names i.e. whether they referred to
   inedible or edible substances. Sweets whose name implied
   nothing concerning their qualities of ingestion were
   classed as other , (3.0), as for example sweets such as
   Ripple, Contrast, Sports. Edibility was assumed to mean
   conforming to food normally consumed or considered edible
   in Britain.

In the first group - <u>kets</u> - it is the domain of inedibility in name which contains the most sweets, being approximately double the number of those in the remaining categories. The intermediate group (6p-10p) reveals an almost equal distribution over all categories. The third group of sweets (11p+), however, reveals approximately seven times as many sweets in the edible category as in either of the remaining two.

If adults regard <u>kets</u> as rubbish, low in nutritive value and essentially ' junk food ', then it is quite logical that manufacturers should label their products in an appropriate manner. <u>Kets</u> are often given names which emphasise their inedibility and rubbishy content in adult terms. Many have names reserved for mechanical or utilitarian objects which adults would never dream of eating. Children, however, will gleefully consume them. For example:

> Syco Discs, Fizzy Bullets, Supersonic Flyers,
> Robots, Traffic Lights, Coconut Bongos, Diddy
> Bags, Telephones, Catherine Wheels, Golf Balls,
> Pipes, Jelly Wellies, Star Ships and Car Parks.

Other kinds of sweets rarely have such names, with perhaps the exception being ' Black Bullets'.That this is no mere coincidence can be seen from the entries sent to an ' Invent - a - lolly ' competition for children run by the Sunday Times.[1] First prize went to a lolly called ' Skulduggery', whose wrapper portrays a human skull; second prize went to the ' Thick Ear ' lolly, shaped like a human ear and third prize to the ' Electric ' lolly, which masquerades as a light bulb.

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1. See Sunday Times Colour Supplement, 16.11.80.

Not only do children consume that which is inedible but
they also metaphorically ingest many animals whose consumption
is normally abhorred by adults and which are surrounded by
dietary taboos. Many of the names given to _kets_ are taken
from the animal kingdom; they are names of creatures which
are either conceptually close or distant from our own domestic
world,animals which, as Leach (1964) has shown, are not
considered edible. But this applies only to the adult world
of meals; in the children's eating of _kets_ such distinctions
are ignored. Cannibalism in particular ranks highly:

> Womble Dips, Mr. Marble, Snakes, Kangaroos,
> Micky Mouse, Spooks, Yogi Bear, Jelly Footballers,
> Dinosaurs, Lucky Black Cats, Dormice, Mighty Monkey,
> Bright Babies, Jelly Gorrillas and Fun Faces.

Other kinds of sweets are generally conservative so that
' Plain Jane ', ' Merry Maid ' and ' Poor Bens ' are the sole
representatives.

This rubbishy attribute of _kets_ is highlighted when the above
names are compared to the names given to other more expensive
kinds of sweets. Unlike _kets_ , the names given to these sweets
are often descriptive of the actual composition of the confec-
tionery, frequently yielding precise and detailed information
for the consumer. Adults, it seems, like to know what they
are eating. For example:

> Munchie Mints, Butterscotch, Assorted Nut Toffee,
> Nut Brittle, Coconut Whirls, Rum and Butter Toffee,
> Caramel, Peppermint Lumps,Toffimallow, Royal Butter
> Mints, Liquorice Bon Bons and Chocolate Coconut Ice.

Althought a few <u>kets</u> possess descriptive names the unfamiliar
eater should beware of assuming that the description refers
to the taste. The names of ' Seafood', ' Shrimps ' and
' Jelly Eels' may lead to the expectation of a savoury flavour;
they are, however, sweet and sickly. ' Rhubarb and Custard '
and ' Fruit Salad ' are hard, chewy <u>kets</u>, presenting a
marked contrast to the sloppy puddings implied by the names.
Such inversions and contradictions of the accepted adult
order are, as I have previously shown, an essential feature
of many spheres of the child's world so that ' Silly Toffee
Banana' and ' Orozo Hard Juice ' could only be <u>kets</u>.

<u>Kets</u> are mostly brightly coloured, as in the luminous blues
and fluorescent oranges of the ' Fizz Bomb ' and the vivid
yellows and reds of many jellied <u>kets</u>. Some have contrasting
stripes, with clashing colours; for example, the 'Liquorice
Novelty '. Here, black strips of liquorice are festooned
with shocking greens, reds and blues. All these harsh,
saturated colours are absent from the ' real ' food of the
adult order. Blue, especially, is banned; bright blue belongs
to the realm of iced cakes and such concoctions are a highly
ceremonial form of food, divorced from the everyday menu.[1]
Many sweets, also aimed at the child's market but not classed

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1. Birren (1961) provides an illustration of the conservative
   adult attitude to food colour. He cites a Western baker
   ' who once tried to market bread in pastel tints such as
   blue and violet (and) found the venture a dismal failuure'
   (1961:167).

here as <u>kets,</u> are similarly coloured: for example, ' Smarties ',
' Jelly Tots ', ' Jelly Babies ' and ' Liquorice Allsorts '.
Such bright and stimulating colours are not normally
associated with the dinner plate.[1]

In contrast, the sweets which are aimed at a primarily adult
market have a more uniform and sombre appearance. Most
are coated in chocolate, presenting exteriors of shades of
brown, significantly known as ' natural ' - i.e. healthy -
colours today. In the more expensive boxes of chocolates
the highly saturated colours of the <u>kets</u> are present , but
they are masked by a coating of chocolate and hidden from
sight. Where chocolate is not used, the colours of these
sweets tend towards pastel shades, soft, delicate colours
inoffensive to the eye, as in ' Sugared Almonds ' or
' Mints '. The ' Humbug ' , with its sedate black and white
stripes, is a poor relation of the ' Gob Stopper ' and lacks
its coat of many colours. For sweets to be suitable for
adult consumption highly saturated colours must be avoided,

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1. It is important to note that bright artificial colours
   do appear in ' real'food but such foods are also classed
   as ' junk '. Many instant products - e.g. Angel Delight
   and cake mixes - have extremely bright colours. Bright
   colours appear often in food at children's parties -
   e.g. in jellies, blancmange and cakes. Such food, like
   <u>kets</u> , is also regarded as not ' real ', essentially
   <u>rubbishy</u>, possibly detrimental but certainly not
   nutritious.

for such colours are not present in'real' food and adults,
unlike children, are conservative about what they class
as edible.[1]

The eating of this metaphoric rubbish by children is a serious
business and adults should be wary of tackling kets for,
unlike other sweets, kets are a unique experience. Many
of the names given to kets hint at this propensity, so that
' Fizzy Bullets ', ' Fizz Bombs ', ' Fizz Balls ', ' Festoon
Fizzle Sticks ', ' Fizzy Lizzies' and ' Fruit Fizzles ' all
stress the tingling sensation to be gained from eating them.
Many kets contain sherbert and ' Sherbits ', ' Refreshers ',
' Sherbo Dàbs ', ' Dip Dabs ', ' Sherbert Fountains',
' Double Dip Sherbert ' and even ' Love Hearts ' all make
the mouth smart while eating them. Rose Gamble recalls such
a taste :

> ' I liked her cough candy best, and I always
> hoped someone would buy some. It was bright
> orange and tasted of peragoric and pear
> drops. ' (1979:151)

In contrast other sweets provide little in the way of
exciting consumption and there is merely ' Fruit Sensation '
or ' Fruity Sherberts ' in this group. The nearest rival
among these sweets to the explosive taste of many kets is
the ' Extra Strong Mint ' - a poor comparison with the
' Knock out Lolly '. The stress on citrus fruit flavours

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1. The eating of such disordered food is consistent with the
   child's culture, but adults abhor such anomalies. On
   sweet wrappers and other food stuffs a guarantee is usually
   issued which states that : 'This product should reach you
   in perfect condition. If it does not, please return it.'
   (Twix wrapper). Kets,on the other hand, offer no such
   guarantee.

and the tangy, often acrid, taste of many <u>kets</u> contrasts
with the preponderance of sugary or nutty flavours in
other kinds of confections. The ferocious taste of a ' Fizz
Bomb ' is quite distinctive and lingers in the mouth for a
long time, temporarily putting the other taste buds out of
action.

Chocolate, which is a favoured ingredient in sweets aimed at
the adult consumer, is rare among <u>kets</u> but may appear as
chocolate flavour. There is a range of <u>kets</u>, styled in
the shapes of hammers, saws and chisels, which although
appearing to be chocolate are in fact made of a substitute
substance. Similarly, ' Cheroots ' look like long sticks of
chocolate but have a gritty texture and are dry and tasteless
to eat. They lack the rich creamy flavour and smooth texture
so beloved by the advertisers of real chocolate.

This marked difference in taste and texture between <u>kets</u>
and other sweets lies naturally in the ingredients used in
their manufacture. <u>Kets</u> are frequently unwrapped so that
a list of ingredients is difficult to obtain but common
substances include: sugar, glucose, edible gum, edible
vegetable oil, citric acid and assorted flavourings. Other
sweets, in contrast, proudly list their ingredients and
frequently stress their ' natural goodness '. For example,
a message on the wrapper of a Picnic bar announces that it
contains: ' Milk chocolate with peanuts , wafer, toffee and
raisin centre'. In much smaller print it admits that the
chocolate contains vegetable fat - thus lessening its

/..

nutritive properties and desirability - but stresses that there
is a minimum of 20% milk solids which must not be overlooked.

It would seem therefore that sweets, as opposed to kets, are
to be valued as a form of food. The Picnic, as its name
suggests, is to be regarded as a source of nourishment.
Indeed, a recent advert for this sweet advises us to'choose
(our) picnic area carefully'. These kinds of sweets are,
like the sweetmeat, closely associated with our major food
categories and many can be concocted at home from common
household ingredients. Cookery books include recipies for
sweets such as truffles, peppermint creams, coconut ice and
toffee. Kets, on the other hand, are impossible to reproduce
in the kitchen.

Thus sweets belong to the realm of ' real ' food, to the
private world of the kitchen, and are bound to the concept of
the meal. They have names indicative of their wholesomeness
and their flavours echo the patterns of taste normally
associated with the dessert - the sweet course - of the meal.
Mary Douglas suggests that it is ' the capacity to recall
the whole by the structure of the parts ' which has ensured
the survival of the British biscuit in our diet and similarly
it is this mimetic quality of the sweet which has kept it
bound to the realm of ' real ' food (1974:747). Kets , in
contrast, are by their very nature removed from the adult
domestic sphere and belong to the public, social world of
children. In name, taste and consumptive experience kets
belong to this disorderly and inverted world for, in this

alternative world, a new order exists which, as I shall show, makes the <u>ket</u> an eminently desirable product.

Lévi-Strauss (1975) suggests that the differing culinary modes to be found in a particular culture may reflect its conceptual categories and it is in this light that the adult meaning of the word <u>kets</u> becomes highly significant. If sweets belong to the adult world, the human cultural world of cooked foods as opposed to the natural, raw food of the animal kingdom, then <u>kets</u> belong in a third category. Neither raw nor cooked, according to the adult perspective, <u>kets</u> are literally rotten food. These rubbishy, decaying and diseased sweets are the peculiar property of children who are, from the adult perspective, a tainted group. As I have argued they are pre-social, in need of training and correction through the process of socialization and thus it is quite consistent that it should be <u>kets</u> which children regard as their most social form of food. Mary Douglas has argued that ' consuming is finding consistent meanings ' and that goods are purchased and needed ' for making visible and stable the categories of culture ' (1977:292-3). In this sense the <u>literal</u> consumption of different kinds of confectionery by adults and children reflects the conceptual separation between their social worlds.

<u>Metaphoric Meals</u>

Mary Douglas (1975) argues that the eating of meals involves a whole series of rituals, concerning both the presentation

and consumption of food. Food is served on different kinds
of plates according to the kind of meal. It is eaten with
cutlery of assorted shapes and sizes, which transfers food
from plate to mouth. The use of the fingers for this act
is frowned upon by adults and rarely should food enter the
mouth by hand. Chicken legs become embarrassing to eat in
the company of others and the eating of lobsters entails a
battery of dissecting instruments. Finger bowls and servi-
ettes are provided for the eaters of such foods to remove
any particles adhering to the hands or lips. As Goffman
suggests, ' greasy foods that are not considered to contaminate
the mouth can yet be felt to contaminate the hands should
contact have to be made without insulation by utensils '
(1971:73). The more ceremonial the meal the more crockery
and cutlery necessary to facilitate the eating of it.

Those sweets which are to be regarded as belonging to the
realm of ' real ' food must be similarly distanced from the
body, unlike the non-food kets. Kets are usually unwrapped,
whereas other sweets tend to be heavily packaged, for the
layers of paper provide the necessary separation between the
inner and outer body. The phrase ' a hand to mouth existence '
- a poor and despised condition - emphasises the necessity
for maintaining this purity. As with the eating of meals
the more packaging provided the more ceremonial the sweet
and the further it is removed from the 'ketty ' sphere. The
ultimate example is the box of chocolates,which is shrouded
in paper.

First, there is a cellophane outer wrapper which must be removed. Under this is a cardboard box, highly decorated in its own artistic style - the chocolate box kitten or country scene - and frequently ornamented with a bow of ribbon. The box itself is sheathed inside with corrugated paper and each chocolate lies in its tailor-made slot. Like the eating of meals these sweets must be insulated against contamination from external sources.[1]

The ' After Eight Mint ' is superlative in this respect. The clockface printed on the box is repeated on each tiny envelope which encases the sweet and it registers the time at which this confection should ideally be consumed. Its other name - the ' After Dinner Mint ' - secures the place of this chocolate as a highly ordered kind of confection inextricably bound to the concept of the meal. Douglas (1975) suggests that meals are externally ordered by time and that it is the temporal sequence of meals which is used to divide up the day. The ' After Eight Mint ' confirms the suspicion that the eating of sweets by adults should be similarly structured.

After the meal has been eaten the sweets may be passed round. Their tray shaped box and insulating containers recall the crockery and cutlery of the meal and the hand is allowed

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1. This trend is reflected in other foodstuffs. Vegetables are hygenically scrubbed to remove any trace of soil and sold in vacuum-sealed packs in supermarkets, ensuring minimum contact with external sources.

minimum contact with the sweet. The most criminal of acts,
frequently indulged in by children, is to finger the sweets
for, as with the meal, food must scarcely be handled. To
nibble a sweet and then to replace it in the box, again
common practice among young children, is never allowed
amongst adults for that which has been in the mouth must
ideally remain there.[1]

Just as ceremonial meals have a yearly temporal cycle so does
the purchase and consumption of sweets. Boxes of chocolates
are bought at Christmas, birthdays and other ritual occasions,
as is apparent from television advertising: in the week
before Christmas many of the usual sweet adverts are replaced
by ones for the more luxurious boxes of chocolates.

One major ceremonial sweet, heavily packaged and adorned, is
not, however, aimed at adults directly. This is the Easter
Egg, given by adults to children. The Easter Egg, however,
bears all the characteristics of an acceptable adult sweet
and encapsulates the whole ethos of the adult's conception

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1. c.f. Goffman (1971): ' Note that in the matter of markings
   (traces left by the body) knives function in an interesting
   way....since they provide the means of taking without
   contaminating, as middle class children learn the first
   time their mother finds a teeth-marked crater in a cake,a
   loaf of bread or a piece of fruit. These craters are
   defiling, and it is very important to disinfect the object
   and its setting by cutting away with a clean knife until
   only a flat surface remains ' (1971:72).

of food. Firstly, it marks a ritual season. Secondly, the silver-paper covered egg sits resplendent in a highly decorated cardboard box, frequently adorned with ribbon. Under the outer layers the chocolate egg can be found, already separated into two, to avoid much contact with the hand. It is easily pulled apart to reveal a packet of highly-coloured sweets, such as ' Smarties ' or ' Jelly Tots ', which although ostensibly similar to kets are much less 'ketty' in fact. It is highly significant that Easter Eggs are never stuffed with 1p 'Bubble Gum'[1] The Easter Egg is strictly ordered in both its construction and consumption and is ultimately representative of adults' rather than children's conception of acceptable food.[2]

The association of sweets, rather than kets, with the idea of the meal is demonstrated powerfully in advertising techniques. Sweets destined primarily for the adult market are advertised as forms of food. They are either (i) utilitarian in producing a desired end; (ii) substitute food which contains nourishing properties; or (iii) additional extras which will not, however, interfere with meals.

1. A difference may be noted between 'Bubble gum' and' Chewing gum'. 'Chewing gum' is often eaten by adults as well as children, whereas 'Bubble gum' seems to be restricted to children. 'Chewing gum' is heavily packaged and pale cream in colour, whilst 'Bubble gum' is far more 'ketty'. It is wrapped in a single twist of paper and available in a large variety of colours, e.g. pink and turquoise, non-food colours.

2. There is a smaller, cheaper less ceremonial Easter Egg on the market which seems to be aimed directly at children. It has many 'ketty' qualities, for the cream filled egg, although appearing to contain albumen and yolk, is extremely sweet to eat and far removed from the taste of a fried egg which it closely resembles.

In the first category fall the quality sweets: expensive food accompanies exotic life-styles. The ' Black Magic ' advert reveals how a girl is lured to a man for he ' knows the secret of the Black Magic Box '; 'Chocolate Liquers' bring romance and a ' Bounty ' provides a girl with ' the taste of paradise '. The man who eats a ' Twix ' - two finger bar of chocolate - not only gets a 'longer lasting snack ' but gets a girl by giving her the other half.

In the second group is the ' Mars Bar ' which helps the harassed mother ' work, rest and play '. ' Picnics ' help painters finish painting the Forth Road bridge and the ' Picnic ' is placed in the mens' sandwitch boxes. The ' Picnic ' is part of their meal. The ' Marathon ' is similarly a metaphor for a meal: the bar is pictured sliced up like a pre-wrapped loaf. It ' comes up peanuts slice after slice. '

The ' Milky Way ' features in the third group. A group of children sit round the dining table waiting for their father to come for the family meal. They all have a bite of a ' Milky Way ' but it won't interfere with their meal for, as the advertising slogan says, a ' Milky Way is the sweet you can eat between meals without ruining your appetite'. Similarly, a few years ago, ' Maltesers ' were recommended to ladies because they had the ' less fattening centre. '

The separation between the inner and outer body necessary in
the consumption of food is imaged in an old advert for
' Peanut Treets '. A white-gloved ladies hand filled the
screen and held the sweet in its palm; the glove was not
marked with chocolate for ' Treets melt in your mouth
and not in your hand '.

Advertisements for sweets for children are for those which
most closely echo the patterning of adult sweets. For example,
there are adverts for ' Chocolate Buttons ', ' Smarties ' and
' Jelly Tots ' but these sweets are usually purchased by adults
for children. In contrast, I have only seen one advert for
kets on television. ' Fizz Balls ' were advertised through
cartoon imagery which showed the experience of eating the
ket ; two cartoon children were featured with their eyes
whizzing round in opposite directions. ' Fizz Balls ' are
a mind-blowing gastronomic experience ; they serve no other
ends.

As manufacturers seem (to) shrewdly acknowledge the culture of
kets is well established; it is its own advert. The sharing
of sweets among children in their separate social world creates
a pool of knowledge concerning the kinds of kets available.
It was, for example, not long after the arrival of ' Space
Dust ' in the village sweet shop that it had completely sold
out. Kets, unlike sweets, need no promotion. Indeed, they
are self-promoting.

Adult sweets, then, are highly structured and linked to
the realm of food; kets , on the other hand, are divorced
from it. Most kets can be found piled high in a cardboard
box on the shop counter, with no respect for variety or
flavour, into which dirty hands delve and rummage. Few
kets are individually wrapped and, if they are, the packaging
is minimal. Children do not heed the purity rules of adults.
They frequently share their sweets, offering each other bites
or sucks of a ket and dirty hands break off pieces to offer
to friends. Kets are fished out of pockets along with other
articles and ' Bubble Gum ' is stuck to the under side of
tables to be reserved for later use. The absence of wrappers
leaves the fingers sticky; kets are not distanced from the
body.

Many kets are specifically designed to conflict with the
adult's abhorrence of food entering the mouth by hand.
' Gob stoppers ' are removed from the mouth for comparison
of colour changes and strings of chewing gum continually pulled
in and out. Hands become covered in ket and the normal eating
conventions, instilled by parents during early childhood, are
flagrantly disregarded.

Indeed some kets seem not to be designed for eating at all:
' Gob stoppers ' fill the mouth totally, not allowing any of
the normal digestive processes to begin. ' Chews ' produce
an aching jaw - reminiscent of eating tough meat - and
' Fizz Bombs ' simply have to be endured. ' Bubble Gum ' is

Plate 13 " Bubblegum... is never swallowed: instead it is
          expelled from the mouth in a bubble and held at
          the point of entry until it bursts, spattering the
          face with particles of sticky gum."

chewed vigorously, masquerading mastication, but is never

swallowed :   instead it is expelled from the mouth in a

bubble and held at the point of entry until it bursts,

spattering the face with particles of sticky gum to be picked

off piecemeal later.   ' Lollipops ' are pulled in and out of

the mouth and ' Jelly Footballers ' first decapitated.

' Space Dust ', perhaps the ultimate <u>ket</u> has no rival.   The

powder is placed on the tongue where it begins to explode

while the mouth remains open and the ears and throat buzz

and smart.

Neither do <u>kets</u> just function as objects to be eaten , a

feature brought out in the following example:

> " Michael comes round to see me. He has some
> Alphabet sweets. He spreads these ABC sweets
> onto the table and makes words out of them.
> For some words he does not have the correct
> letter so he chews off another letter and creates
> the one he wants. For example, Allison was
> composed in the following manner:
>
> A   -   A
> L   -   L
> L   - was a **J**   turned through a mirror reflection:
> I   -   I
> S   - was 2 x c placed on top of another, with the
>   lower one in reflection: **Ƨ**
>
> O   -   O
> N   -   N
>
> Other letters were also constructed through chewing
> bits off and combining different bits of the alphabet
> together.
> An E was made from an M with the legs chewed off
> and then placed on its side: **Ɀ → Ε**
>
> An R was made with a P and an I, chewed in half
> and placed into the join beneath the circle: **R**

An h was made with an l and a u, turned upside
down: **ꞁႮ**

An E was made with an F plus half an I : **F̲**

An L was made with a T turned upside down
with one of its sides bitten off : **T → L**

After playing a while, Michael then literally began
to eat his words. "

The frequent examination of each other's tongues during the

process of eating kets, together with the other eating techniques

required to consume them, reject the mannered and ordered

conventions of adult society. The joy with which a dirty

finger probes the mouth to extract a wine gum contrasts

strongly with the need for a tooth pick to perform a comparable

operation at table.

Kets therefore are the antithesis of the adult conception of

' real ' food. Kets reject the series of rituals and symbols

surrounding the concept of the meal and are regarded as

rubbish by adults. In that they are so despised by the adult

world kets are prized by children and become their metaphoric

meals. Although children will consume sweets of any kind it

is kets which they will most often purchase. The child's

private funds, which are not controlled by adults, are

appropriately spent on those sweets symbolic of the child's

world and which adults would never purchase. Kets, deemed

by the adult world as rubbish, are under the child's control.

The marginality of kets to the realm of real food is becoming

increasingly expressed in their retailing. Sweets can be

bought in a variety of commercial outlets - in supermarkets,

slot machines, and specialised sweet shops. These shops
are in the centre of towns, in shopping precincts and in
other adult spaces; sweets can be popped in the trolley along
with the meat and potatoes. Kets, on the other hand, are
in peripheral spaces; they can only be purchased in the
corner-shop or the local newsagents. These shops are those
which children often frequent; they run errands for their
parents to purchase forgotten items from shopping expeditions
or deliver the newspapers sold by the shop. In large cities
this spatial distribution is exceedingly apparent; kets
cannot be bought in the centre. They are peripheral to the
adult world of food.

In the village kets were relatively easy to purchase but
shopping was in any case very localized. One interesting
example, however, highlights the relationship between the
peripherality of the children's spaces and the location of
kets. Near where I lived in the village, which was a small
distance from the main shopping street and regarded by many
as an almost separate community of four streets, was a
working men's club. In the off-licence section of the club,
where the children would take bottles back or purchase crisps,
kets were also sold.

Kets, therefore, are extremely significant for children and,
as in the adult world where food has an important social
aspect, kets and the owning of kets are symbols of prestige

for the child. Many _kets_ are sold with additional novelties
such as football picture cards or tatoos.[1] These items can
be swopped, bartered or sold and used as symbols of friendship
or as peace offerings among younger children. The child with
the most picture cards or who distributes _kets_ gains a
peculiar kind of prestige and his social status is momentarily
elevated, just as the provision and sharing of food operates
as a social medium of symbolic exchange among adults.

The importance of these metaphoric meals cannot be overstated.
Ket times are in between meal-times and the eating of _kets_
begins almost as soon as the adult meal is over, lasting
until the structure of adult society again disrupts the
eating of _kets_. Such continual eating of sweets by adults
would be classed as a medical condition in our society, for
which a cure must be sought.

Kets are bought in quantity and range over a full span of
flavours, eaten one after the other with little regard to the
mixture of tastes but, as in the adult meals, contrasting
flavours and colours are important for a well-balanced and
appetising meal. Children will spend much time in deciding
whether to purchase a red or a green ' Climpie ' and agonise
over the choice between a chocolate rifleman or soldier.
Such consumer behaviour is paralleled in the adult world by
people's preferences for particular brands of goods. As
the Opies (1977) point out many _kets_ have been favourites
since at least the 1920's. Not surprisingly, given the

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1. In 1983, the latest _ket_ is the Easter Egg with a plastic
   gift in the centre.

/..

coherent and persistent structure of their culture, the children have an immense knowledge of the varieties of <u>kets</u> available and are always careful to distinguish between them. ' Chewing gum ' is <u>chut</u> or <u>chowy</u> as opposed to ' Bubble Gum ' which is <u>bubbly</u> . A lollipop is rarely called a ' lolly ', but instead a ' Kojak ' or a ' Traffic Light '. Planning one's meal is a serious business.

Kets therefore are children's food, the food over which they have maximum control. By eating <u>kets</u> rather than other sweets they force confrontations with the adult order for <u>kets</u> have been despised by adults. Getting adults to consume <u>kets</u> is the children's delight:

> " Jackie brings over some Space Dust.
> I've never seen it before. It is a sherbert
> based <u>ket</u> and amazing to eat. I am rather
> wary as she is laughing and tempting me to
> try it. My fears are well founded - 'Space
> Dust' crackles and explodes in your mouth
> and makes your ears ring. Jackie thinks
> it a great laugh - especially when getting
> adults to eat it. She tried it on her
> father and was delighted by the horror and
> shock he received on eating it. "

Some <u>kets</u> outwardly resemble inedible objects. I was once brought what appeared to be a bag of shiny pebbles but on eating them - much to the two boys amusement - I discovered them to be sweets. Similar <u>kets</u> can be bought as a bag of nuts and bolts.

Getting adults to eat <u>kets</u> is part of the children's power and it seems that manufacturers have recognised this disjunction between the eating habits of children and adults. There is a range of confectionery produced as ' joke '

sweets. They appear to be ' Jelly Babies ' and ' Jelly Tots ' - relatively safe sweets in adult eyes - but they are bitter and foul tasting to eat. Such sweets are easy to dupe an unwary adult for they are not confections which adults particularly condemn.

The esteem which is attached to <u>kets</u> as the children's own food is emphasised by the ridicule and disgust expressed by the children towards adult food, the food over which they have minimal control.

Children are highly articulate in their views on food and school dinners, in particular, come in for great contempt. The authoritarian structure of the school frequently denies any self-expression by the children so it is significant that it is school-dinners which are most abused.[1] Mashed potatoes are called by the children ' mashy arty ' or ' shit ' when too salty ; mushy peas are likened to ' snot ' and school rice pudding " looks as if someone has hockled in it", that is, spat into it; semolina resembles ' frogspawn ' and there is, of course, the traditional favourite ' spotty dick '. The food which the children are forced to put inside their bodies by adults is metaphorically given the status of the excretions which pass out and the most graphic statement of all goes

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1. For a discussion of this denial of self-expression by the children in the time minimally under their control, see pp.192 - 193.

/..

as follows:

> Yellow belly custard, green snot pie,
> Mix them up with a dead dog's eye.
> Mix it thin, mix it thick,
> Swallow it down with a hot cup of sick.[1]

But food acts as another point of confrontation within the school for the eating of <u>kets</u> in the classroom is forbidden. It represents the intrusion of external activities into the internal space of the school paralleling the rule against talking in class: the culture of children must be kept at bay.[2]

As Charlotte Hardman comments children perceive the adult's ' weaknesses and responsibilities in connection with food and drink ' and much time is spent on reducing ' adult order to humorous disorder ' (1974b:6). Food is used as weapons by the children and ' white pudding ' and peas are often effectively employed. On birthdays the children pelt one another with flour and eggs and one recipe for a home-produced stink bomb comprises bad eggs and oil. Pickled onion water and washing up liquid is mixed together and poured into a squeezy bottle, making a very effective water pistol. But more vehement than the physical attacks with food are the verbal onslaughts directed by the children against adults and their control of food :

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1. The Opies (1977) cite 4 versions of this ryhme, always traditionally associated with school meals which again indicates the wider context of the culture of childhood.

2. See pp. 174 - 213.

/..

> Old Mrs. Riley had a fat cow,
> She milked it, she milked it
> She didn't know how.
> She pulled its tail instead of its tit
> Poor Mrs. Riley covered in shit.   1

The implied sympathy contained in the last line of this rhyme

is not genuine for gales of laughter always accompany the

relating of this event.

Some food is not, however, subject to this kind of rejection;

this is food which the children themselves have assumed control

over. Autumn is the time for scrumping , for stealing snackers

(swedes), walnuts and apples.   Such forbidden fruits are

eaten in defiance of adult authority and thought to taste

delicious:

> " Milt and Linty burst into the youth club
> with armfuls of enormous ' snackers ' (swedes)
> which they have stolen. They procede to share
> them out and they eat them raw. Susan assures
> me that they taste fine so I have a bite. The
> children sit and munch their way through the
> swedes. As I drive away from the club that
> night the drive is littered with swede tops
> which crunch under the wheels ".

> " Paula tells me how she steals Mrs. B's
> apples and conkers. She hurls bricks up into
> the tree to get them down. She always wears
> thick socks and bulky clothes in which to
> secrete the stolen fruit. Once Mrs.B caught
> her and so she gave her back the ones in her
> pockets but she still had some tucked up her
> sleeves and down her socks."

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1. Again c.f. Opies (1977) and Rutherford (1971) for
    comparable versions of this rhyme.

/..

Such food is ceremonial food for the children, part of their
seasonal rituals. Stolen from the adult world, rather
than freely given, it is food which the children prize greatly
for, through their appropriation of it, they can also control
its ingestion. Bonfire night, for example, was always greeted
with great enthusiasm by the children and they demanded
tatties (potatoes) to roast in the embers :

> 'Tatties are thrown into the fire and
> sit in the ashes to cook. Many of the
> children cannot wait for the potatoes
> to cook and eat them half raw. Tucker
> takes charge of the cooking and
> produces some fine mashed (cooked)
> potatoes ".

Anyone who has ever eaten a raw swede or a half-cooked / half
burnt potato would not extoll its palatable flavour but, for
the children, it is like caviar for it is valuable and rare,
representing as it does the flaunting of adult conventions.

Other similarly prized bits of ' real ' food are the rubbish
particles not eaten by adults. The children get scrapings
from the fish and chip shop, small pieces of batter left over
from the frying process; these are unwanted by the adult
world. In his autobiography Jimmy Boyle remembers the
delights of this food:

> " For instance, one of the chip shops
> "Greasy Peters" - would sell a penny's
> worth of scrapings - that was the fine
> bits of batter and potato from the chips
> and fish. Lots of us would go in and get
> these and buy a burnt roll from the bakers
> and put these scrapings onto the roll."
> (1977:49)

And Rose Gamble too recalls the prized delicacy of left-
over batter:

> ' As the lumps of fish bubbled in the deep
> fat, bits of batter broke off and were
> fried into the crispy bits of brittle crunch
> that we called ' cracklin '. Sometimes Mrs.
> Lea sieved some out for us with her long
> scoop and wrapped it up in a bit of news-
> paper, and we had the cheek to put her
> free salt and vinegar on it.' (1979:92)

If ' real ' food is equated with adult order and negatively

perceived by the children it is logical therefore that

' non-food ' should be positively viewed by them. Kets

are seen by the children to be particularly beneficial but

other substances are also considered to be worth investigating.

The children frequently dare each other to eat the literally,

rather than the merely metaphorically , inedible and sawdust,

plant leaves and other natural substances are used. A

particular favourite is the game called ' Fag-chewing ': a

cigarette is passed around a group of children with each

taking a puff until all the tobacco has gone. The unfortunate

person left with the filter is then made to eat it or, at the

very least, to chew it. This mode of ingestion is also used

as a forfeit or punishment in games and may be used to test

the mettle of those who have been temporarily ostracised;

through ' chewing the fag ' successfully such children may

gain readmittance to the group for they have acted with style

and demonstrated mastery over their physical bodies .[1] Such

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1. See pp.418-419 for comparable examples.

activity is reminiscent of Jimmy Boyle's Glasgow childhood:

> ' One kid from the next close to me added
> to the attraction of digging holes as he
> would swallow all the worms we found. When
> he was round we would all dig like little
> Navvies and give them to him. All of us would
> gather round as he would drag it out and make
> it a big deal before taking the worm in his
> mouth and chewing it up. He had a very bad
> burn mark on his face which was a source of
> ridicule, and he was rejected by most of us
> until we discovered his appetite for worms.
> When it got back to his mother she would be
> on the look out, and catching sight of her
> son surrounded by us all looking, open-
> mouthed, while he dropped a big "blood-
> sucker" into his mouth, she would scream
> at the top of her voice and come charging
> downstairs, but by that time we would have
> made off. " (1977:6)

Tales are often told of those who have successfully eaten the

inedible. I was told with all seriousness that one lad had

eaten " them pregnant pills " which he had stolen from his

mother, an act which earned him considerable kudos: he had

acted with great style in putting his masculinity to the test

by eating purely female substances. Another related how a

boy he knew ate some soap powder and all through the day at

school " geet bubbles came out of his mouth ". [1]

Such ability to consume metaphoric and real rubbish is

integral to the culture of 'doing nothing'. By the very nature

of their conceptual marginality to the adult world the children

have sought out an alternative system of meanings through which

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1. Such tales are unlikely to be factual but are part of the
   language of 'doing nothing', see pp.266-272 for a discussion of
   tale-telling.

they can establish their own integrity. Adult order is manipulated so that which adults esteem is made to appear ridiculous ; that which adults despise is invested with prestige.

Through taking control over their own bodies adult order is thrown into disarray by the children. Adults continually urge their offspring to eat up their food and lament that they are ' fussy eaters ', but children are only pernickety in adult terms. As I have shown children stuff a variety of substances into their mouths which would be abhorred by adults.

The eating of kets represents, then, a metaphoric chewing up of adult order. Food belongs to the adult world and is symbolic of their power over the bodies of children. By disordering and confusing adult conceptual categories the children erect a new boundary to their bodies over which adults have no authority. Douglas (1966) has argued for the powerful potentiality of dirt as a disordering substance. The eating of dirty, decaying kets is condemned by adults and it is this very condemnation which allows the children to assume control over their own orifice, the mouth. By eating that which is ambiguous in adult terms they establish an alternative set of body techniques, a unique bodily style. The American edible toy, described by Ron Goulart, encapsulates these ideas quite succinctly :

> 'Mattel's is a more complicated product, and
> more expensive. Their food substance is Gobble-
> Degoop, and when put into molds and heated in
> a 110-volt metal heating unit, then cooled on

cooling trays, it turns into candy insects,
bugs and worms. Two kinds of accessory packs
are available, one of which contains molds
for baking edibles resembling Bugs Bunny,
elephants, bats, weird eyes and tortoises.
The television commercials for Mattel's edible
toy shows kids happily eating spiders and
little snakes. Apparently Mattel believes
young kids with a flair for imitation will
always wait until someone buys them Incredible
Edibles and not try to act out the commercial
with real backyard bugs and insects. Even
just eating the various eatable toys isn't too
wise, since most of them contain artificial
sweetners of the cyclamate class, plus a variety
of preservatives. ' (1970:54)

II Smoke Screens

The eating of kets represents the assumption of a particular

bodily style through controlling the intake of substances

into the body. This action marks the beginning of self

control; the social self is realised through controlling an

action predictated upon the physical body. Self awareness

is gained in spite of adult control through symbolic confront-

ations.

As the children mature the eating of kets diminishes although

children of fifteen and sixteen still buy kets. There is,

however, a movement towards the consumption of more conventional

sweets, that is those preferred by adults. This change in

techniques of the physical body mirrors the social changes

such children are undergoing as they move towards adult status.

" Jacky , aged 16, gives me his money and
asks me to choose him some kets from the
tuck-shop. Deliberately I choose a mixture of
ketty sweets and more conventional ones. I
give him a ' Kit Kat ' chocolate bar, two

/..

jelly caterpillars and a packet of 'Refreshers',
sherbert based sweets. He refuses the Refreshers
and changes them for wine gums, less esoteric
sweets. "

This decline in the eating of <u>kets</u> can be understood in

relation to the process of social maturation. As the children

mature there is a lessening of the restrictions imposed upon

them by adults over eating. They have more freedom over the

food which can be taken into the body. However, new restrictions

over other substances begin to impinge upon them. Tobacco

and alcohol become the central focii for confrontations with

the adult world for <u>kets</u> have begun to lose their symbolic

role. The rituals of rebellion played out through the

eating of <u>kets</u> are transposed onto the smoking of cigarettes and

onto alcohol.

It is significant that the use of cigarettes and alcohol

are restricted in law. Children cannot buy either of these

substances until 16 and 18 respectively; they cannot publicly

be seen to be ingesting them. Both these substances therefore

become privatised, consumed in places and times outside adult

order. Until the age of majority- the symbol of adult status-

the children cannot assume total control over their bodies

in the public world. They must remain socially marginal

until they are physically mature, that is until they are old

enough.

This private and secret act of ingesting forbidden substances

must take place, therefore, in the children's own separate

culture and it is through utilising the techniques of the

body and the bodily styles learnt through the eating of
kets that these actions can be performed. Cigarettes are
smoked and alcohol consumed in terms of a particular cultural
style.

It is often suggested that smoking among young people is an
' image ' technique; children ape their elders through acquiring
their habits. Although in one sense this is born out through
the field data - for smoking cigarettes is seen as a necessary
part of ' doing nothing ' - the manner in which cigarettes
are smoked, the places where they are obtained, smoked and
extinguished are culturally defined by the children themselves.
The culture of cigarettes is of and about their own structured
world and is played out through their own bodily styles. They
learn about structure through participating in their own
culture, rather than passively accepting adult models. The
drinking of alcohol, as I show later, is similarly structured
by this liminal mode.

Smoke signals as signs

There is a considerable wealth of lore attached to the act
of smoking. Firstly, the cigarette is classified by the
children in a number of ways. They distinguish between a
King Size cigarette and an ordinary sized one; between tipped
and untipped cigarettes. The preferred cigarette is a King
Size tipped; the children rarely smoke untipped cigarettes.

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> " Mog tells me that Rocky asked him to
> give someone a message and that he gave
> him a King Size just for going into the
> other room. "

Those who are seen smoking untipped cigarettes are often accused
of having stolen them, for untipped cigarettes are not prized.

Words for cigarettes are employed according to size. A
whole cigarette is either a <u>fag</u> or a <u>tab</u> with the latter
being the more common. <u>Tab,</u> Cecil Geeson suggests, derives
from a ' once popular brand " Ogdens Tabs " (1969:169).
<u>Tab</u> is used by both adults and children and appears most
commonly in the phrase : " Giz a tab " meaning, ' give me a
cigarette '. The children, however, further conceptualise
the cigarette into discrete parts. A <u>nipper</u> is that which
has been ' nipped ', cut short and extinguished before all
the tobacco has gone. On the other hand, a <u>dump</u> is that which
has been dumped and left aside as useless. A <u>nipper</u> is
therefore larger than a <u>dump</u>; a <u>dump</u> rarely has much tobacco
left in it. One lad informed me that the term <u>seconds</u> is
used as a more polite term for <u>dump</u>; <u>seconds</u> should be used
when addressing a girl. Adults do not generally use these
terms.

<u>Nippers</u>, <u>dumps</u> and <u>seconds</u> are all highly valued. All are
second-hand cigarettes, cigarettes which others have finished
with. Cigarettes for children, therefore, are a currency
of exchange and sharing. Just as a child can ask another

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for a suck of a lolly a <u>nipper</u> or <u>dump</u> can be requested.

Frequently used by the children were the following phrases:

" Leave us yer nipper " or " Give us yer dump ". Anyone

who is smoking will be asked for a <u>drag</u> of the <u>fag</u> or

requested to " leave a couple on " or " couple off " and

" second off ". All these are demands for puffs of the

cigarette and, as in the eating of <u>kets</u>, the separation

between own and others bodies is diminished through the

communal smoke.

The acts of communality expressed through smoking are

paralleled in the drug culture where a ' joint ', that which

is jointed together, entwined and constructed , is shared

round as a communal smoke. / The marginality of this act

reflects the peripherality of the children in their smoking

of ordinary cigarettes and the use of left-overs, the rubbish

of other people's smoking, reflects the collection of butt

ends by tramps, another group marginal to the social structure.

One further kind of cigarette is identified by the children

as a <u>duck's arsehole</u>. The description is used for an untipped

cigarette which someone else has smoked and made too wet at

the end which enters the mouth. It is an insult which comments

on the other's inability to smoke and may be linked to one

lad's cryptic description of another: " he looked like a

monkey with a cigarette up its arse". Adults have no need

for a <u>duck's arsehole</u> as a descriptive term; they do not share

cigarettes in the manner of children.

The communality of cigarettes as shared commodities is reinforced by their price. The cost of purchasing cigarettes increases their value and cigarettes are only distributed among friends. Giving cigarettes to others is a sign of comradeship for implicit within such largesse is the idea of reciprocal exchange. The most common expression used by the children is " lend us a tab " ; with the emphasis laid upon ' lending ' rather than ' giving ' there is the idea that the cigarette will be returned. The children always have knowledge about whom they have given cigarettes to or received from and reciprocation is important:

(1) " Jackie gave me a cigarette. She said that she owed me one. "

(2) " John gave me a cigarette and one to Stephen. Stephen said that John owed him five. "

(3) " Grahamy asked me to ' lend him a tab '. I said that I had often given him some and this time I would only lend it. A few days later Grahamy asked me again to lend him a tab. I refused, whereupon he said: ' I'll have to smoke one of my own then.' I held out my hand and he gave me two cigarettes. "

Those who do not willingly heed these unwritten rules of exchange are known and indentified.

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" K:  Who wants a fag?
 GL:  Finally...I've seen him with a fag... What's
       happened. Genchy's fainted.
  A:  Where did you get them from ?
  K:  Nicked them.
  A:  Thought you might.
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GL: Oooh he's got a packet.... get them open.
 K: Very funny.
 G: Not funny.
GL: Oooh, he's got a whole packet ."
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This mediative role of cigarettes in social relationships

is particularly well illustrated in the following example:

> " Julie and Shaz tell me of the lads they met on
> Saturday. They were both standing outside this
> shop when a group of lads came out. One of the
> lads asked if either of them smoked. Julie had
> replied, " yes " and Sharon had been shocked at
> her quick response. The lad then said: " Give
> us a fag then " which Julie had done. Later
> Julie and Shaz went to Presto's for some coffee
> and met the lads in there. The lads beckoned
> them to come and sit in the group. Julie and
> Shaz are both excited about it and are going
> to meet them again next Saturday."

Cigarettes, like kets, are therefore bound by rules similar

to rules of commensality. Cigarettes, like meals, are only

exchanged between friends. David, the outsider to the group

recognised the symbolic importance of this kind of gift

exchange.[1] He would buy packets of cigarettes and distribute

them to others. He did not smoke himself but in this manner

purchased friendship with those who did. However, his attempts

to participate with style were doomed to failure; the giving

and receiving is a cycle of symbolic exchange and, because

he did not smoke, David was always a provider and never a

receiver. The obligation to repay, the cement of the cycle

of exchange, did not have to be fulfilled. David, therefore,

only gained temporary and occasional friendships which ran

out when his cigarettes were gone. The intricate patterning

of this form of gift exchange is generated through the style

of ' doing nothing '; to participate with style, to be

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1. See pp. 391-392.

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included within the group can be achieved through smoking, and only a handful of the children did not smoke.

Obtaining cigarettes is therefore crucial. Cigarettes are used as a form of currency and to curry favour among their friends children employ many methods for obtaining this legal tender. Often, when I asked one of them to do me a favour, he or she would barter with me and perform it if payment was in kind. I, along with other ambiguous adults, was continually pestered for cigarettes and, if I refused, the children would attempt to bargain with me through offering me money. During 1978 the price for a single cigarette was 3p and on one occasion a boy offered me 5p for a cigarette. When I still refused to give him one or to sell him one he tried to persuade me of the the profit I would be making.

The trade in single cigarettes is carried out both among the children and also in two of the local shops:

> " Caz tells me that single cigarettes can be
> bought at T's........ and P's........(two
> of the local shops). She says that in both
> shops the price is 3p, but that P's..... is
> now trying to undercut T's...... trade in
> cigarettes.P..... started to sell King Size
> cigarettes for 3p rather than ordinary ones.
> But P's..... King Sizes are mild cigarettes,
> and when T.... too started to sell King Size
> for 3p the children went there. T.....sold
> stronger cigarettes for 3p."

Those who cannot afford to buy a whole packet of cigarettes can nevertheless still participate in the style through buying singles.

Other ways of obtaining cigarettes is to steal them.
Throughout my fieldwork the children continually warned me
that others were stealing my cigarettes, whilst some would
attempt to win my favour in other ways:

> "Paul and Stephen come to visit me and
> ask me for a fag. I refuse and they say that
> Baz comes here and he only comes to get a
> free fag. They, they said, came because they
> liked coming. In flattering me the two of
> them attempted to gain a cigarette. "

Another source of cigarettes is the Bingo. Many of the children
played Bingo and they won tokens which could be spent in the
shop attached to the Bingo Hall. Here they traded the tokens
for cigarettes. On one occasion Milt arrived to see me with
packets of cigarettes stuffed about his person. He had won
120 cigarettes at Bingo and had only spent £1. This achiev-
ment gained him a lot of admiration and he insisted that I
take a packet for myself. If all methods of obtaining
cigarettes fail intimidation may be used:

> " Jackie tells me that Molly used to bully
> other girls at school. She would demand that
> they gave her cigarettes and would " bray (hit)
> you if you didn't give them to her. "

A child may threaten to tell another's parents that he or
she smokes; silence and secrecy must be bought through the
gift of a cigarette.

<u>Where to smoke</u>

The illegitimacy of the act of smoking for the children imbues

this activity with a shroud of secrecy. It is this which

fosters the systems of exchange and tacit symbolism; through

reading the cultural signs the children learn how to smoke

and to obtain their cigarettes. Where to perform this

illicit activity is similarly culturally defined by the children

and such knowledge is stored in their culture.

Of prime importance is that the activity of smoking which is

publicly carried out amongst themselves must remain hidden

from adult eyes. Safe places for smoking are in the children's

private domains:

> " Mog came round this evening and was pre-
> occupied. His father had caught him smoking.
> He said that he would kill him for smoking
> and said that he was " shitting "himself.
> He asks me if you can be taken away from
> your parents if they hit you. Mog, who is
> 12, said that it wasn't fair because his
> dad lets Sam and Caz, his elder siblings,
> smoke. By the end of the evening Mog had
> fabricated a tale to explain his actions.
> He was going to say to his father that Daz
> had given him the fag to hold but that he
> hadn't actually smoked it."

Although his father must have smelt the smoke it was

important that his father did not know, had not seenwith his

own eyes, that Mog smoked. It would be public knowledge of

a private act, the intrusion of the adult world upon the

culture of 'doing nothing '. This is exemplified in the

following memories of a 20 year old:

> " Benny tells me how when he was younger he
> used to smoke in secret from the age of 8
> onwards. He used to smoke at home and blow
> the smoke up the chimney so his mother
> couldn't smell it. He would buy 5 woodbines
> and some bubbly, which he reckoned would
> take the smell away from his breath. One
> day his mother caught him smoking and
> said that he could smoke in front of her.
> However, he was embarrassed and whenever
> his mother gave him a cigarette he would
> never take a puff. He would let the
> cigarette burn down without touching it."

Smoking is a symbolic act; it represents a further step in controlling what can be taken inside the body. It is symbolic of the movement of the children towards adult status, and, precisely because it is forbidden for them, secrecy is critical. It is an act of self control which must be carried out in private. Adults must not know or, at least, they must appear not to know:

> " Maz tells me that her parents know that
> she smokes and let her smoke but that
> usually she does it out of sight. "

Smoking is a symbolic screen between the worlds of adults and children and the children resent intrusion by adults into their private affairs.

Places to smoke are therefore well known and their merits often discussed:

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> " Gench tells me that at school there is
> a place to smoke called Cancer Corner. It
> is by the shed and scrawled on the wall
> is a notice. This reads: " Don't talk-
> smoke. When you've finished your fag,
> play the nick". He says that if a teacher
> comes by you throw your fag behind the shed
> and pretend you're playing Blocky".

Lung Corner and Cancer Tree are also places for smoking

within the school itself. All these places are marginal

to the school building, distant from the sphere of adult

control. They are suitable, therefore, for anti-structural

activity.[1]

The illegitimacy of the act makes smoking an interesting

topic of conversation. The children sit and talk, telling

tales of how they were caught or nearly caught smoking or

how they avoided being discovered:

> " Stephen tells me that they smoke in
> the Geography room and keep their fags
> in the desks there. They tell me that
> they have both been ' breatherlised' for
> smoking. The headmaster, they say, has a
> 'breatherliser ', like the one used for
> alcohol. They both had to blow into the
> plastic bag but neither of them were
> caught."

> " Bouch and Delly came to tell me that
> they have been caught smoking by a policeman.
> He had asked them for the fag and demanded
> to know where they'd got it. Bouch says: " We
> wouldn't sprang you (that is tell on you),
> so we told him that this lad gave it to us."
> The policeman asked for their name and
> addresses but they pleaded with him not to tell
> their parents, as they would get belted. Delly
> says: " Bouch faked crying " and the policeman
> said he wouldn't report them. "

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1. See pp. 174 - 213.

> " Delly asks me to keep his fags for him
> till Thursday. He wouldn't take them home
> so his mother couldn't find them. He used
> to hide them in his coat linings but his
> mam found out and once he buried them in
> the garden. Another time he gave them to
> Bouch to keep but Bouch handed them out
> to everyone and then threw the rest on
> the fire. "   1

The risk of incurring parental wrath rarely acts as a deterrent; it merely spurs the children on to more devious solutions to the problem of secrecy.

During the fieldwork period I witnessed the emergence of one of these tales. One Christmas Day I was at home and my family came for the day. In the afternoon two of the boys came to visit . They were obviously embarrassed by my visitors and sat on the floor in the corner. They asked me if it would be alright to smoke. I told them to make up their own minds and one of them began to ask my non-smoking relatives if any would care for a cigarette. They all refused and the two lads sat and smoked alone in the corner. Later this event became a real tale to tell; both of them would relate how stupid they felt when no one took the proffered cigarettes. On one occasion when this tale was told, I asked them why they had felt embarrassed. " Well, said Bouch, " I was only twelve and a half at the time."

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1. These tales are stylistically similar to other sets of tales, see pp.266 - 272.

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The symbolic confrontation between the culture of children and the adult world involved in the act of smoking is given explicit form in some contexts. The youth club's rules stated that those under the age of 16 were forbidden to smoke in the club. Compliance with this rule was rare. The children would hang out of the window to smoke, arguing that they were smoking outside the club although their feet were inside it; they would borrow another's cigarette and take a couple of puffs behind the Youth Leader's back; they would stand in the road outside the club and smoke whilst looking in at the windows. Such disorderly acts brought the jokers considerable acumen for they deliberately and directly tested the limits and workings of the rule, explicitly challenged adult order.

The prohibition against smoking was also used by the children for their own ends. To tease or offend another child was simple; through merely shouting out that someone was under age when he or she lit up a cigarette meant that the rule had to be enforced. The delight and eagerness with which the children gave each other away over smoking was at the expense of the Youth Leader. Through public declaration of an offence the Youth Leader was forced to apprehend the culprit and would be involved in endless arguments and discussion, complaints of unfairness and favouritism with the prosecuted. It became an uncomfortable battle of wills which the onlookers delighted in.

How to Smoke

The veil of secrecy which screens off the act of smoking
from adult eyes has led to the creation of a set of
culturally defined techniques of smoking specific to the
culture of ' doing nothing '. It is highly developed and
is one which contrasts with the use of cigarettes among
adults. The eating of kets, that which is frowned upon
by the adult world, rejects many of the conventional uses of
real food; similarly, cigarettes, which are forbidden for
children, are used unconventionally by them. Cigarettes
are not merely used for smoking.

Amongst the younger children the mere act of smoking
represents a symbolic act of confrontation, an act of self
control in the face of adult disapproval. As the activity
becomes commonplace the children begin to employ a whole
range of smoking techniques which, I suggest, extends this
action: through using this they reject the mannered conventions
of smoking in the adult world and create their own meaningful
symbolic order.

Just as food is not only for eating, cigarettes are more
than smoking substances. Cigarettes are used as a source
of entertainment. and games: whilst sitting about ' doing
nothing ' the children compete with each other over their
ability to smoke, their ability to do things with cigarettes:

a ' Postman's whistle ' involves putting a lighted
cigarette into the mouth and sucking the smoke back; another
test is to see how long the smoke can be kept inside the
mouth. Both of these are tests of physical endurance,
demonstrations of bodily style. Less dramatic in their
physical effects are the following games with cigarettes:
making the cigarette climb the ladder involves manipulating
a lighted cigarette between the fingers of the hand making
it move between them; Dracula imitations are performed through
blowing smoke from each corner of the mouth or smoking two
cigarettes at once; lighting a cigarette halfway down and
seeing how long it can be smoked before it splits; and
blowing smoke rings is an art to be practised.

A variation of Fag-chewing was told to me by one lad as a
game called Chew the Fag:

> " In Chew the Fag the one who has to chew
> the butt end - the loser - has to chew it
> the number of years of his age and one for
> luck. If he doesn't do it then he has to
> pass another test. Two lines of children stand
> facing each other and the loser has to run
> between them: " The first time they hit
> you hard once on the back and the second
> time they pummel you with their fists."
> This is a very painful punishment for failing
> to chew the fag. However, as Del remarked :
> " You get a bad back and have to stay off
> school ".

There are also superstitions associated with smoking. If
a cigarette lights on one side alone then the children say
that someone is thinking of you. They also rigidly adhere

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to the belief that third light brings bad luck, an idea originating from the war: three soldiers lit up cigarettes and the enemy saw the flame; on the first light the enemy noticed it, on the second the enemy took aim and on the third light he fired. Many of the children would refuse the third light and I was told that after two lights with a single match the match must be broken in half with one hand in case anyone should later use the match and inadvertently accrue the bad luck:

> " Kirby lit up his cigarette and asks:
> " Who believes in magic ?" Tucker
> replies: " Me, I don't like the third
> light ". "

Cigarettes are a symbol of the self; smoking,in flagrance of adult disapproval, is an act of self will and its widespread importance in the children's world is symbolised by its inclusion in the following Valentine's rhyme; the cigarette here is used as an image of romantic love:

> I wish I were a cigarette,
> All rolled up nice and neat,
> And everytime you took a draw,
> Your lips and mine would meet.

Just as the children ridicule adults through getting them to consume kets, they delight in disrupting the act of smoking among adults. Tiny bangers and ' Stinkeroos ' are purchased from the joke shop and inserted into the cigarette. These substances ignite and give off a loud bang or a terrible

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smell. I was once caught out by a boy who had put a banger

in a cigarette he gave to me:

>" A: What was that? What did you put in my fag, Kirby?
>   G: It's a banger.
>   K: It was rare wasn't it.
>   A: (ironically) Terrific.
> GL: Remember that one I put in our Stephen's fag.
>   Put it right down. Benson and Hedges, right?
>   Put it halfway down- no lying - even the tip
>   went off. He was blacked out. He was in a
>   bad temper.
>   K: Stinkeroos too.
>   A: No, thank you.
>   A: How do you get them in?
>   K: Triangular things with gunpowder on the end. You
>   push them down with a matchstick and put tobacco
>   over it and it looks like an ordinary fag.
>   A: I suppose you knew you'd given it to me.
>   K: Yes.
> GL: He'd have turned it round in his packet (that
>   is, put it upside down to distinguish it from
>   the others)
>   G: Any more in?
>   K: I'll get some of those snowflakes - put them
>   in and all the snow comes out.
>   G: Like tablets.
>   K: Aye, little tablets."

Another lad remembers using a Stinkeroo :

>" Bouch and Stephen tell me how they put a
>Stinkeroo, which looks like a tiny piece of
>lead, into Bouch's father's cigarette. His
>father sat and smoked and " thought someone
>had pumped (farted) ", because of the smell
>that was exuded. "

The importance of cigarettes for the children is further

highlighted by the existence of an equally well defined set

of techniques for using matches. Many match games are played

by the children whilst sitting smoking and ' doing nothing ':

(1)   trying to strike a match whilst rubbing it with the
      foot on a concrete floor.

(2)   trying to strike a match by holding the match still
      and moving the box.

(3)   trying to blow out the match before it gets to the
      end of the red tip.

(4)   placing a match on the end of a heated poker and
      waiting till it explodes.

(5)   making a bomb, by putting a lighted match into a
      full box of matches.

Matches are also made to work as cigarettes:

(1)   putting a lighted match into your mouth.

(2)   putting two matches in your mouth and lighting them
      with another.

(3)   sucking in the smoke from a lighted match which is
      " geet strong ".

(4)   extinguishing a match by putting it in your mouth.

Other games are more formalised as in the following examples:

> " Caz shows me a trick with matches. She
> places three matches in the end of a matchbox
> and says: " Imagine these are three wires, live,
> positive and negative." She says : " Now, put
> the positive and negative together." As I do
> so she moves the matchbox towards me and shouts
> " Bang ". I jump. She thinks it's " a good laugh."
> She adds, that she couldn't do it on Jeremy as he
> " knows all about wires and plugs and that. ."

> " Kirby shows me a match trick. He places one
> match sticking halfway out of the end of the box.
> The match at the end wavers up and down. This is
> the dirty old man in the raincoat."

> " To make a match fly across the room: Wrap silver
> paper from a cigarette packet round the end of
> a live match and place it in the end of a matchbox.
> Light another match and hold it to the silver
> paper. After a while the match with the silver
> paper shoots across the room."

" How to make a match burn twice. Break the
match in half and then (i) strike one half
and (ii) light the other half from it. Alterna-
tively, take a match and light it - (the first
burning) then touch someone with the lighted
match - (the second burning). "

For children, therefore, smoking is a symbolic act. It
represents a movement towards controlling the self through
controlling what substances enter the body. As with kets
it is the symbolism of the act which is most important;
through the meanings which they themselves attach to
cigarettes as mediums of social exchange, as conflictual
symbols , as elements in their games and jokes, the children
define who they themselves are. Cigarettes for them are more
than an addictive habit; they have been appropriated from
the adult world and reinterpreted through the culture of
' doing nothing '. Cigarettes, for the children, are
invested with a variety of private social meanings. Stealing
them from the adult world children use them as symbols of
communication about that world.

III   An alcoholic haze

Alcohol, like tobacco, is a substance of the adult world and
forbidden by law to children. Only at the end of childhood
can they gain legal entrance to adult drinking spaces, the
pubs and clubs. At 18, therefore, the body becomes under the
control of the self and thus the consumption of alcohol is
seen by the children to represent the last hurdle towards
complete bodily control. Prior to this moment the consumption

of alcohol, like the eating of <u>kets</u> and smoking of tobacco,
take place in their own world., in the secret times and
spaces over which they have control, the spaces and times
between adult order.

For the younger children the consumption of alcohol is most
often talked about rather than done; knowledge of alcohol
is gleaned from a variety of sources, from tales told about
others, from observation and, if possible, from experience.
Being able to talk about drinking mirrors the importance
placed upon talking about sex for both acts are symbolic of
adult status:

> " Dale, aged 12, told me that he got"drunk"
> last night. He had a double whisky, a brandy
> and a sherry".
>
> " Macca, aged 15, says he can drink 15 pints
> now without getting"drunk", he just gets a
> a bit tipsy. "
>
> " Chris and Delly tell me what they drank at
> one party. Both are 12. Four whiskies, 2 sherries
> and some beer. "
>
> " Mog, aged 12, tells me that he and his friend
> drank a bottle of whisky between them. Stephen
> says he doesn't like"the stuff" - only sherry."
>
> " Jim and Sam say that they waited for me for an
> hour and a half and had " got drunk " whilst they
> were waiting."

This use of the language of alcohol prefigures the real act
of drinking it.[1] None of the above incidents actually took

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1. c.f. prefiguration of the adult world of work through
    the telling of tales, see p.228.

place but the children use the language with great fluency
and ease.   It is a form of symbolic appropriation which
mirrors the esteem to be gathered from collecting the non-
verbal signs of participation in the adult world of alcohol:

> " All the children are currently collecting beer
> mats. To hear them talk about this activity
> hints at its importance. " My dad's getting me some
> Harp Lager and a Skol ".   This is in place of the
> beer they cannot legally consume."

> " Terry gains a certain amount of kudos. Her
> mother cleans in a local pub and has got her a
> lot of beer mats but also a Babychamp pony
> and a Cherry B sign.   She also has one of the
> cloth, rather than the paper, mats. "

> " A: Are you collecting beer mats ?
> K: Yes.
> G: Aye
> K: (to me) Have you got some?
> A: No. How many have you got?
> K: Me? 200 or something.
> A: 200 different ones?
> K: Different ones - I've got 300 swops -
>   I've got a big drawer full. I keep them
>   in me drawer.
> A: Why are you collecting them?
> K: It's good fun."

Actual participation in the drinking of alcohol occurs
often during the transition from the world of school to
the world of work, the movement from the child to the adult
world.   As they prepare to leave school at sixteen actual
participation in the adult world through drinking begins;
it prefigures their final incorporation at eighteen , the time
when they are old enough.

The retail outlets for alcohol, however, are not as numerous
as those for under-age smokers.   To buy alcohol a child must

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act older than she or he is. They must practise their own

futures through bodily style. Knowledge of how to drink

and where to do it is stored in the culture of ' doing

nothing ', paralleling the cultural techniques of smoking;

' safe ' pubs are known and frequented:

> " Jue tells me that she drinks in the pubs
> in the next village. One of the landlord's
> sons drinks there too. He is only 17 so,
> she says, " he can't really say anything
> about it. ". She is aware that they will
> " get wrong " for selling alcohol to under-
> age drinkers. "

> " Susan tells me that they were drinking in
> this pub - her and her sister and some lads.
> The cops came in so Susan, who is under age,
> swopped her lager for her sister's coke.
> Her sister doesn't drink. This she finds rather
> strange. "

Drinking <u>can</u> take place in public if the children can appear

older than their age, i.e. if they have great bodily style.

But some of the children adopt the technique of drinking in

pubs outside the village for here there is less likelihood

of them being recognised:

> " We took the children to the ice-rink. Sam
> and Plewsy came on the bus and, having arrived,
> Sam said he wanted to go and visit his aunt who
> lived in the city. He was allowed to go, along
> with Plewsy, although we knew that he was going
> drinking. Sam and Plewsy returned to the bus on
> time. We asked if they had enjoyed their drink.
> They grinned and replied:" Yes ".

Most drinking under age, however, takes place in private. The

children get others to purchase the drink for them and consume

it away from public gaze:

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" Joanna is telling Jackie of a party.
Everyone got drunk on whisky and one boy
tried to get off with her. He tried to
kiss her but she collapsed in the bath
and was sick. "

" Paula tells me of a party she had at her Uncle
Charlie's. The had beer and ' all sorts ' and
had raided his drinks cupboard which he had
locked. Drinks were spilled all over the
white rug so she had to wash it so that they
wouldn't know what had gone on. "

" Tres tells me of a party they had at
Christine's. She had got drunk on " snake
bites " (a mixture of cider and beer). She
had " stopped over " at Chistine's for she didn't
want her mam to know she had been drunk. "

Secrecy is important for drinking cannot be done in public:

" Shaz and Mary tell me about how once they
had been babysitting. They had bought a bottle of
cider which they hid in the garden before going
in to baby-sit. When the parents had left they
tried to get their cider. The man had locked the
back door so they couldn't get into the garden.
Shaz had to climb through the window to get
the bottle of cider. "

In contrast, there is one occasion on which children can
publicly perform that which is usually done in private:
New Years Eve. As befits its status as a transitional time
between the old year and the new a ritual inversion takes
place. Adults sanction their offsprings' public consumption
of alcohol; the children demand that they have the right to
drink. Children can play out the role of first-foot and,
for bringing good luck to the house, they are given a drink.
Traditionally, the role of first-foot was assigned to a black-
haired man but the children now regard this as their right.
On the two New Years Eves spent in the field the first-footers

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were always children; they drank the proffered drink then
quickly left to attempt to first-foot another house and gain
more alcohol. Adults recognise their intent and many parents
remarked to me of the irony of this event. They could not
refuse the children alcohol:

> " Mog tells me that last New Year he got so
> drunk that he had to spend the night asleep
> in the bin outside. "

Throughout my fieldwork the children were continually
attempting to get me to give them a drink; I always refused
and they would reply that, in that case, they would be our
first-foots. Then I could not refuse.

Most of the children, however, did not drink seriously. The
tales of alcoholic hazes and drunken scenes are told for
their effect; it is learning how to tell these tales which
is important:

> "A: Did you go to the firework party?
> K: Yes- Genchy had a can of beer - he wouldn't
>   give... yes, you did give us a suck didn't
>   you. It went down the wrong pipe an ' all. I
>   gans:' Give us a sip of that " and I lugged
>   it back and it went down the windpipe.
>   (imitates the effect by coughing and
>   spluttering).
> A: You're too young to drink.
> K: I like it.
> G: I like it.
> K: Cus we was hurrying up you see I tried to get
>   a gob full quick, because I had to go babysitting
>   you see and it went down the windpipe (chokes
>   and splutters). It was nice like - geet strong-
>   strong on the arm - strong arm.
> A: Strong Arm beer. "

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Furthermore, the children in general recognise the dangers of excess alcohol. Many of them would refer to some adults as alcoholics; this term was never used as a sign of approval. Rather, it was an abusive term, directed against those whom they felt lacked self-control. Those who can drink and still retain self-control are admired; those who are dependent upon drink are despised. One boy stole a bottle of whisky from his mother and drank the lot; he was found collapsed in the street and taken in by the police. The others were not impressed and he himself was embarrassed about the event. He would not talk about it and seemed to have lost rather than acquired acumen through his actions. As a tale to tell it might have excitement; as a real event it was hardly ever mentioned.

Conclusion : adolescence as a rite of passage

The transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood is imaged, then, through the transition from consuming kets, to smoking cigarettes and finally to drinking alcohol. The culture of kets is the most systematic through its exploitation of a particular kind of confectionery despised by the adult world. In that kets represent an antithesis to the major food categories in the adult world they are meaningful to children. The culture of cigarettes, on the other hand, represents the appropriation of a substance by children which is forbidden by the adult world, rather than merely despised. Cigarettes, like kets, are invested with a whole range of

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alternative meanings symbolic of the culture of ' doing nothing '. It is, however, a semantic system which is not as resonant as the culture of <u>kets</u>. Finally, alcohol too is appropriated by children through real and symbolic actions but their reinterpretation of this adult substance is but poorly articulated.

Represented in the children's use of these three substances is, then, a progressive decline in the children's reinterpretation of elements of the adult world; the older the child becomes the less <u>kets</u> are eaten and the more cigarettes and, then, alcohol become the focus for cultural experimentation. This sequential movement images the transition the children are making to adulthood for the nearer they move towards this new social status the less force the culture of ' doing nothing ' has. But, the older the child becomes, the fewer also are the restrictions placed upon the physical body and, as I have argued throughout, it is the physical body which is a symbol of the social body. In this sense, therefore, the culture of ' doing nothing ', replete with its images of inversion, transformation, appropriation and conflict becomes semantically redundant as the children begin to participate in the adult world; the complex of structures which it had provided as an alternative and meaningful frame for the children's self-socialization during their childhood and adolescence give way to those of the adult world. As a way of knowing about the world the culture of ' doing nothing ' also, therefore, provides the vehicle for the children's passage into it.

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The culture of ' doing nothing ' is, then, a culture of
and for the experience of adolescence, the process of
' growing up ' and, as I have shown throughout the thesis,
it is both powerful and semantically rich. In conclusion,
then , I shall consider the contribution this analysis can
make to current debates on socialization for, as Coleman
has recently argued, there is an ' urgent need for new
theoretical approaches ' (1980:1). He suggests that the
classical theories, which stem from the disciplines of
pyschology and sociology, fail to adequately account for
much of the empirical evidence derived from research:
' research provides little support for current theories
and fails to substantiate what psychoanalysts and socio-
logists believe ' (ibid:178). In reply to Coleman, then,
I shall retrace some of the earlier themes to show how
anthropology can contribute effectively to this debate
through examining the culture of ' doing nothing ' as a
metaphorical rite de passage, as a period of normative
communitas, during the socialization process.

Firstly, as Coleman notes, in more recent research there has
been ' a preference for viewing adolescence as a transitional
process rather than as a stage or a number of stages ' (ibid:
2). As he suggests ' the individual passes from one state-
childhood- to another- maturity, and   the issues and
problems faced by individuals during this period are pre-
dominantly the result of the transitional process ' (ibid:
2). Transition, as I have shown, is part of the adolescent

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experience. It is demonstrated in the lack of discrete definition of the categories ' child ', ' adolescent ' or ' adult ' in contemporary Britain whether in terms of age or social maturity; category status is context specific and subject to variation, fluid rather than fixed. Here, then, is the first reason for seeing adolescence as a period of normative communitas.

Secondly, as Coleman points out, in most classical accounts of adolescence, certain features are picked out as characteristic of this phase in the human life cycle. Significantly, these are comparable with the characteristics of the liminal phase of a rite of passage as defined by Turner (1969). For example, within the psychoanalytic approach four main themes are identified: (i) disengagement from the family and the seeking of love-objects outside that context; (ii) regressive behaviour, a resort to child-like phantasies and emulation of others; (iii) an ambivalence in attitude, one which stresses both freedom and dependence, leading to uncertainty and self doubt; (iv) non-conformity and rebellion in behaviour as a culmination of feelings of separation and loss which are resolved through the peer group.

Sociological theories point to similar features but account for them through reference to social rather than psychological factors : (i) role conflict, for example between son and boyfriend; (ii) role discontinuity which occurs ' where there is no bridge or ordered sequence from one stage to the next

or when behaviour in the second stage necessitates the
unlearning of some or all of what was learnt earlier '
(ibid:8); (iii) role incongruence when the role ascribed by
others is not the one which the individual would have chosen'
(ibid:9).

Common to both these theories is the idea of ' storm and
stress ' and the problematic teenage years; the suggestion
that the peer group , although crucial, tends to encourage
anti-social behaviour. Coleman concludes :'there is the
general feeling that when young people spend a considerable
amount of time with individuals of their own age more harm
than good is likely to come of it (ibid:10). As he sees
it ' there is, as yet, no theoretical approach which embodies
as its main tenet the essential normality of the adolescent
process ' (ibid:11).

But,within anthropology, there is such an approach. According
to Turner (1969), normative communitas characteristic
of initiation rites in tribal socieities, is ' a time and
place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action '
which allows for the ' scrutinization of the central values
and axioms of the culture in which it occurs ' (1969:156).
It is a period of relative freedom from structural constraints
through the adherence to the new structure of the liminal
phase itself, a time when individuals ' confront one another,
as it were, integrally and not in compartmentalized fashion
as actors of roles ' (Turner, 1967,101). It is a period
of transition and transformation for ' a society's secular
definitions do not allow for the existence of a not-boy-not-

man, which is what a novice in a male puberty rite is (ibid: 95).

And, it is this emphasis upon transformation through transition which is crucial to normative communitas, giving to it its powerful aspect. As Terrence Turner has suggested this power stems from the ' ability (of initiates) to transform relationships and categories that are mutually exclusive' in ordinary society, the ability to link together ' mutually contradictory states ' such as those of son and father, boy and man (1977:57). It is here that the ideas of role incongruence, role discontinuity and role conflict can be situated and accounted for as normal, rather than aberrant, forms of behaviour.

The characteristic stress on storm and tempest in the classical accounts of adolescence is a result of this perceived power of contradiction.As Turner shows this is structure's perception of anti-structure: ' communitas as seen from the perspective of structure... (is) a potentially dangerous but nevertheless vitalizing moment, domain or enclave ' (1974: 243). Those who look from structure to study adolescence can only see the chaos of communitas rather than its own structured setting wherein the individual ' may learn the total pattern of social relationships involved in his transition and how it changes ', that is he may ' learn about social structure in communitas ' (ibid:240).

The anthropology of children which I have outlined through

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the presentation of my fieldwork incorporates these ideas
and, through the adoption of a semiotic and semantic
approach to the study of social life, has as its main
objective the exploration of the children's point of view,
their interpretation of the world. Through intensive and
prolonged participant observation it situates itself within
anti-structure rather than structure. It works from within
the children's cultural experiences rather than remaining
distant and aloof from them. It is an approach which allows
for a rethinking of the question of socialization in terms
of the cultural and social experiences of young people
themselves.

For example, the question of role conflicts and discontin-
uities can be seen as a normal part of the transformatory
process involved in ' growing up ' whereby children learn,
during their adolescence, to be part boy and man, part girl
and woman, a process reflected in their attitudes towards
the normality of their bodies and their interest in the
physiological changes occurring at puberty. As I have shown
such changes are classically held to account for the turmoil
and stress of adolescence but through exploring the children's
bodily style an alternative interpretation can be offered:
through transforming external perceptions of their own bodies
the children maximise their own internal use of the body as
a medium of expression about the social and conceptual
transition they are undergoing. That is, through their

culture of ' doing nothing ' they socialize one another
in a manner which, to the adult world, can be explained and
thereby partially neutralized in its power through recourse
to biological explanations.

The culture of ' doing nothing ' deflects external perception
of the children's activities and it is this which allows
them considerable freedom of movement between the controlling
boundaries which work to contain them. It allows the
children to come to know about the adult world before their
entry into it. As I have shown the style of ' doing nothing '
is highly structured providing for multiple contents within
a singular form.

For example, the three case-studies discussed above, all
recall features of ' doing nothing ' discussed in earlier
chapters. To be able to talk about smoking and drinking
illustrates a child's facility with language, his or her
ability to provide a good linguistic performance. To be
able to eat sawdust or smoke a cigarette backwards shows the
strength of an individual's bodily style, a confidence in
the body which is put to the public test in the context of
' doing nothing '. To be able to smoke within the grounds
of the school shows knowledge of the spaces and times between
adult order, an intimate knowledge of the culture of children.
In performing each of these three activities the children draw
on the resources of the culture of ' doing nothing '.

But within all of the children's activities there is an

underlying theme which gives unity to the style of

' doing nothing '. ' Doing nothing ' is a way of being

and doing which emphasises both conformity and individuality,

something which, as Geertz has shown, is fundamental to

socialization in its broadest terms:

> ' Becoming human is becoming individual,
> and we become individual under the guidance
> of cultural patterns, historically created
> systems of meaning in terms of which we give
> form, order, point and direction to our
> lives '. (1975:52)

For example, in both the children's verbal and non-verbal

activities the tension between individuality and conformity

is continually explored. Competitive tale telling and

riddling mirror the non-verbal competitions played out by

the children through the medium of the body. Permutations

performed upon the physical environment reflect those

performed on the physical body. Nicknames operate to rigor-

ously define the conceptual boundaries of the group and to

instil conformity just as concepts of gender are learnt

through the adherence to culturally defined norms of behaviour

and appearance. Through a multitude of different kinds of

performances in a variety of domains ' doing nothing ' allows

the children to explore concepts of the ' self ' within

the protective walls of their own cultural context. The

doubt and uncertainty, held to be characteristic of the

transitional period of adolescence, is contained by the style

of ' doing nothing'.

And the experiences of the children documented in the foregoing chapters are those of ' normal ' adolescents. The children did not participate in visible subcultures which Turner (op.cit.) would class as examples of spontaneous or ideological communitas, a hierarchical structuring which reflects, through opposition, the structure of wider society. Instead, the children merely came together and confronted one another through their shared experiences, forming free relationships within the context of a separate culture, the culture of ' doing nothing '.

As Coleman points out the failure of most theories to account for adolescence as a normal, rather than an abnormal, phase is due to the overreliance by psychoanalysts on hospitals as research areas - thereby prejudicing their results - and a failure by sociologists in general to disentangle ' youth ' from ' youth subcultures '. He concludes that there has been a tendency ' to confuse radical forces in society with the beliefs of ordinary young people ' (1980: 180). And, yet, as I have argued ' youth ' or ' adolescence ' is a metaphor for change but it is change which is highly structured. The children with whom I worked were, as I have shown, massively conformist and radically conservative in their attitudes and beliefs. In agreement with Coleman, then,'young people , by and large do not reject adult values in favour of those espoused by the peer group ' for, in most cases, ' the peer group values appear to be consistent with those of important adults, rather than in conflict with them (ibid:180). The

transformatory and manipulatory mode of ' doing nothing '
is, therefore, but an educative process whereby children
acquire, through participation, their knowledge of the
adult world. As Turner has argued, ' only those who know
how to build know how to collapse what has been built '
(1974 : 298). For the children, then ' doing nothing '
is a form of normative communitas which allows for the
working out of a new conformity through a process of
creative and meaningful reconstruction, a way of knowing
about the future through the restructuring of the present.

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