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CHILD SOCIAL RELATIONS AND GENDER

A thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.d.  
in the discipline of Psychology

by

DAVID C. PANTER

B.Sc. (Hons) Experimental Psychology

The Open University, October 1988

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports six studies investigating the ways in which children experience themselves as gendered beings. The first two studies evaluate the theories of gender development proposed by exponents of both cognitive-developmental, and social learning theory, schools of thought. The results indicate that neither approach, with their emphasis on cognition at the exclusion of behaviour, or vice versa, provide sufficient explanation of the child-gender interface.

In studies three and four, childrens' experience of gender is not located within their cognition or behaviour, but within their social relations. Thus in each of these studies children are exposed to controlled contextual changes, eg. sex of interacting partner or gender-appropriateness of toys given to play with, to investigate the strategies boys and girls use to maintain relationships between them. Results suggest that two relational



strategies, person-centred and object-centred, are employed by the children, and that their use is related to gender. Furthermore, it is indicated that such strategies are affected by context, with some contexts affording the use of particular strategies.

The fifth study provides four detailed case-studies, set against a major contextual change in childrens' social relations; the transition from nursery into full-time education. The material presented indicates that changes are brought about in the child's experience and practice of gender as a result of this transition. The final study of the thesis explores the child's own awareness of the transition they have been through and the changes this has wrought upon them.

Thus the research presented in this thesis argues for a dynamic model of gender; one in which the child's experience of theirself as a gendered being is clearly located within their social relations.

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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. Abstract	i
2. Acknowledgements	iii
3. CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and Overview	1
1.1. What is gender?	
1.2. Gender and the clinic	
1.3. Gender re-framed	
1.4. Gender and psychology	
1.5. Conclusion; Reclaiming gender	
4. CHAPTER TWO: Child Social Relations	29
2.1. Introduction	
2.2. What is a child?	
2.3. The child within psychology	
2.4. Children and research	
2.5. Conclusion; A starting point	
5. CHAPTER THREE: A Cognitive-developmental Approach	59
3.1. Introduction	
3.1.1. Gender identity	
3.1.2. Knowledge of genitalia	
3.1.3. Gender constancy	
3.1.4. Toys and friends	
3.1.5. Rationale for the present study	
3.2. Method	
3.2.1. Subjects	
3.2.2. Procedure	
3.3. Results	
3.4. Discussion	
6. CHAPTER FOUR: A Social Learning Theory Approach	87
4.1. Introduction	
4.1.1. Rationale for the present study	
4.2. Method	
4.2.1. Subjects	
4.2.2. Procedure	
4.3. Results	
4.4. Discussion	

7.	CHAPTER FIVE: Strategies Used in the Social Relations of Pre-School Children	110
5.1.	Introduction	
5.1.1.	Rationale for the present study	
5.2.	Methods	
5.2.1.	Subjects	
5.2.2.	Procedure	
5.2.3.	Materials	
5.3.	Results	
5.4.	Discussion	
8.	CHAPTER SIX: Contextual Effects on the Strategies Used in the Social Relations of Pre-School Children	125
6.1.	Introduction	
6.1.1.	Rationale for the present study	
6.2.	Method	
6.2.1.	Subjects	
6.2.2.	Procedure	
6.2.3.	Materials	
6.3.	Results	
6.4.	Discussion	
9.	RESUME	142
10.	CHAPTER SEVEN: Starting School; Four Case Studies	146
7.1.	Introduction	
7.1.1.	Rationale for the present study	
7.2.	Method	
7.2.1.	Subjects	
7.2.2.	Procedure	
7.2.3.	Analysis	
7.3.	The Home	
7.4.	The Nursery	
7.5.	The School	
7.6.	The Case Studies	
7.6.1.	Adam	
7.6.2.	Lisa	
7.6.3.	Darren	
7.6.4.	Michelle	
7.7.	Discussion	

11. CHAPTER EIGHT: Childrens Awareness of Transitions 194

- 8.1. Introduction
- 8.1.1. Rationale for the present study
- 8.2. Method
- 8.2.1. Subjects
- 8.2.2. Procedure
- 8.3. Results
- 8.4. Discussion

12. CHAPTER NINE: Child Social Relations and Gender 203

- 9.1. Introduction
- 9.2. Dynamic gender
- 9.3. Gender in context
- 9.4. The future
- 9.5. Conclusions

REFERENCES 223

APPENDIX A - Data Relating to Chapter Four

APPENDIX B - Data Relating to Chapter Five

APPENDIX C - Data Relating to Chapter Six

APPENDIX D - Interview Schedules for Chapter Seven

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
<u>Tables</u>	
Tab. 1.1. Internal/external opposition in gender theory	28a
Tab. 3.1. Sex of 'best friends' named in interview by pre-school and school groups	86a
Tab. 5.1. Summary of main results to chapter five	124a
<u>Figures</u>	
Fig. 3.1. What boys play with - pre-school group	86b
Fig. 3.2. What girls play with - pre-school group	86b
Fig. 3.3. What boys play with - school group	86b
Fig. 3.4. What girls play with - school group	86b
Fig. 3.5. What boys and girls play with - pre-school group	86c
Fig. 3.6. What boys and girls play with - school group	86c
Fig. 3.7. What boys play with - pre-school and school group	86c
Fig. 3.8. What girls play with - pre-school and school group	86c
Fig. 4.1. What children played with	109a
Fig. 4.2. Sex of partner in dyadic interactions	109b
Fig. 4.3. Total initiated negative interactions by sex of partner	109c
Fig. 5.1. Page layout	124b
Fig. 5.2. Pages turned first and tabs pulled first	124c
Fig. 6.1. Time spent playing with house	141a
Fig. 6.2. Time spent playing with space station	141a
Fig. 6.3. Time spent in joint play	141b
Fig. 6.4. Time spent on each storyline with house	141c

<u>Figures</u>	PAGE
Fig. 6.5. Time spent on each storyline with space station	141c
Fig. 6.6. Time spent on initiating behaviour	141d
Fig. 6.7. Success rate of initiated behaviours in %	141d
Fig. 6.8. Time spent on maintaining behaviour	141e
Fig. 6.9. Success rate of maintained behaviours in %	141e

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

### Contents

- 1.1. What is gender?
- 1.2. Gender and the Clinic
- 1.3. Gender Re-Framed
- 1.4. Gender and Psychology
- 1.5. Conclusion: Reclaiming Gender

#### 1.1. What is Gender?

- And what's so bad about being soft like a woman? Why is it men or whoever, some poor bastard, some queen, can't be sensitive too, if he's got a mind to?
- I don't know, but sometimes that kind of behaviour can get in a man's way.

(pg. 29)

In 1374 a rooster unaccountably laid an egg in Basel, Switzerland. For this 'unnatural crime', history records the unlucky creature was burned at the stake. *Gender dysphoria* (Steiner, 1985), as the present day scientists of gender would have termed this phenomenon, was not at all respectable. It still isn't. Despite the so-called sexual revolution of the Sixties, a preference for liberal attitudes, minor legal reforms, and all our Boy Georges, peoples reaction today would have been to put this poor rooster to the modern day stake; transformation by the media into an object. Gender is one of the most universal tools of social regulation, and in the Britain of today violations of the explicit gender rules are still frowned upon.

This thesis is concerned with those gender rules, and more



specifically with how a child comes to be enmeshed within that rule system. The child born into a gendered world, soon comes to recognise it has a gender and that gender carries with it a great baggage of meanings. Many attempts have been made within psychology to interpret the child's unpacking of those meanings, but for a variety of reasons each has been unsuccessful. A common cause of this failure is a reluctance to consider what it actually *is* we are talking about when we speak of gender. So, before we look at the nature of children, and models of child development this chapter will focus upon the complex phenomenon that gender seems to be.

Gender is of great importance to our lives and yet comparatively little is known about it. Psychological research in this area has been likened to the tale of the blind men trying to identify an elephant (Constantinople, 1979). Each researcher gropes wildly at different aspects of the whole and can come to only partial conclusions, about this composite of individual experiences. To realise the importance of gender to our lives, and to recognise that it *does* constitute a commonly experienced phenomenon, one does not have to look far into everyday dialogue. As Katz (1986) states "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!" are probably the first three words heard by newborns the world over.

The intricate involvement of gender in our lives can be most clearly seen in the formalised dialogue of literature, where social relations are played out in bold relief.

In the extract at the beginning of this chapter, taken from *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* (Puig, 1976), the relationship of genital sex and the associated masculine or feminine traits are brought into focus. Molina, a gay man, takes pride in being sensitive, gentle and caring; he is also passive in his sexual relationships. Interpreting these traits to be characteristic of women he refers to himself throughout the novel as a woman. The heterosexual Valentin, who shares Molina's prison cell, continually denounces Molina's attitude towards himself, and yet unwittingly affirms it by allowing Molina to become both his substitute mother and lover. In doing this Puig highlights the gender divisions between care-giver and care-taker, and questions the one-to-one relationship of sex to gender: male to masculine, female to feminine.

In *Orlando* Virginia Woolf (1928), through her hero/heroine, explores the relationship between 'identity' and gender. At the beginning of the work Orlando is, and experiences the world as, a man. However, chapter three sees a transformation:

"Orlando had become a woman - there is no denying it.  
But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely  
as he had been."

(pg. 97)

Thus, despite his change of sex, Orlando's identity initially remains unchanged. Yet as the character goes on to discover the social cues of gender, for example clothing and body characteristics, they begin, in turn, to transform the nature of her relationship with other people:

"It was not until she felt the coil of skirts about  
her legs and the Captain offered, with the greatest

politeness, to have an awning spread for her on the deck, that she realised with a start the penalties and the privileges of her position."

(pg. 108)

This in turn leads Orlando to change her own reactions to other people:

"That men cry as frequently and unreasonably as women, Orlando knew from her own experience as a man; but she was beginning to be aware that women should be shocked when men display emotion in their presence, and so, shocked she was."

(pg. 127)

Woolf suggests that the social cues of gender, differentially experienced by men and women, bring about differences in behaviour and subsequently, identity:

"The man has his hand free to seize his sword, the woman must use hers to keep the satins from slipping from her shoulders. The man looks the world full in the face, the woman takes a sidelong glance at it."

(pg. 132)

The 'reality' Woolf's novel points at is not her own but a consensual one rooted in the greater 'reality' of the observable world in which the writer acts. Consider,

"Although I neither wanted to play with dolls nor dress up in mother's clothes, I was constantly taunted for being a girl....we all knew I was a misfit."

(Fallowell & Ashley, 1982, pg. 10)

"When Rae had long hair everyone said how pretty and pleasant she was, now that she's had it all cut off people have started to say that she's cheeky. I haven't noticed any difference yet."

(Rae's mum Elaine, 1984, workshop dialogue)

The above quotes come respectively from a male-to-female transsexual and the mother of a four and a half year old daughter. Each highlight the function of gender both in the way

in which a person, in effect, 'reads' themselves, and in turn, of the way in which a person is 'read' by others. These real-life examples of 'gender in action' reinforce the dynamic depictions of gender presented by both Puig and Woolf.

As a child George Jamieson was perceived by those around him to be "like a girl". This being viewed by others as inappropriate behaviour for a genital male, George came to see himself as a "misfit". Whilst one would not like to posit any simple causal relationship between this self-perception and the phenomenon of transsexualism, it *is* significant that April Ashley, as George was to become, should comment upon the occurrence of this event. Equally, Rae's mum was able to detect a change in the comments of others in reference to the temperament of her daughter brought about by a new hairstyle. At the time of her response the mother had not noticed any change in her daughter's temperament, but as a result of the comments of others she was prompted to consider the possibility of change. Rae, the daughter, having been given the cue from others may now come to view herself as "cheeky", and hence start to behave cheekily.

Gender can be seen in action all around us. As we walk down the street, queue at the checkout in the supermarket, or engage in our work, we continually make assumptions about the gender of other people. We do this by evaluating all the social cues such as clothing, hairstyle, gait, etc. Yet such decisions can be based upon the flimsiest of evidence, as was discovered by Smith & Lloyd (1978). Here parents were presented with baby 'X' to mind

for a short period of time. Baby 'X' remained the same in each trial, the only variable being the colour of the Babygrow the baby was wearing; pink or blue. The temporary parents were given no other information about the infant. Despite the lack of evidence the parents, on the basis of the colour of the Babygrow, categorised the baby as a boy(blue) or a girl(pink). As a result of this decision the parents interacted differentially with baby 'X'.

This urge/need to categorise people, objects, etc. into dichotomous gender concepts is extremely persistent. In a study by Gertz (1979) for example, people readily categorised as 'masculine' or 'feminine' such things as colours or numbers. Whether there is agreement about the appropriate gender of '25' is a moot point. However, of more importance in this context is the fact that all of her subjects felt themselves able to ascribe a gender label to '25', and that many were able to support their decision with 'good' reasons.

So far, we have seen that gender is;

i) important in our everyday lives,

and ii) not an entity that resides within the closed covers of a text book, but is a constituent of the social world in which we are all contained.

As participants in a social world, gender surrounds and informs us, providing a frame through which to view life. We not only make gender decisions about objects and other people, but also

about ourselves. We *all* have a gender.

## 1.2. Gender and the Clinic

In providing a frame through which to view the world, gender also provides a blueprint, or rulebook, for social regulation. A marker of its importance in our lives is the treatment we provide for those who violate those rules. To quote from a recent paper by Lim & Bottomley (1983),

"A wide range of articles used inventively, a preference for girls as playmates, choice of feminine toys, avoidance of boys and rough-and-tumble play were all features shown by Robert (five and a half years old)"  
(pg. 470)

Yet they also report,

"He neither believed or wished that he was a girl"  
(pg. 470)

This would suggest that Robert was confident about being a boy. However, a 'gender-role' disorder was diagnosed resulting in Robert being treated by a variety of different methods, largely behaviouristic, until he engaged in the correct amount of masculine behaviour. Whilst the case study presented in this paper dates back to the late Seventies the treatment of effeminate behaviour in young boys ('tomboyishness'(sic) in girls not being seen as a 'problem') is still a very contemporary issue (eg. Steiner, 1985) and cannot safely be considered an historical artifact.

The case outline given above acts as an example of what has become known as *gender dysphoria*, the new term for what previously had been called transsexualism (the oft quoted "mind of one sex in the body of the other" syndrome). However, Meyer &

Hoopes (1984) state,

"It must be recognised that the term *transsexual* is not an adequate label. It does not represent the clinical variance to be found among applicants for reassignment, or allow for adequate description and classification of the differences."

(pg. 447)

The authors go on to explain that the term 'dysphoria' emphasises a persons difficulty in establishing a gender identity, and the pain and conflict surrounding their formulations of masculinity and femininity. It encompasses, but is not restricted to, persons who request sex-conversion therapy. Thus, dysphoria extends the diagnostic code, enabling a vast array of gender problems to be classified which previously went unmentioned.

Green, in his introduction to his joint volume with Money *Transsexualism and Sex Reassignment* (1969), looks at transsexualism in mythology, history and across cultures. He gives evidence to show that transsexualism is a modern phenomenon in terms of its diagnosis and treatment, by suggesting that there are many cases both in history and from other cultures where comparable gender-crossed adults and children are assimilated into the social system without difficulty. For example, the Navaho (a North American Indian group) called a cross-gender male "nadi E". As such they were addressed by the kinship term used for a woman and were granted the legal status of womanhood. In some cultures it was women who were able to live as men, for example, in certain Brazilian cultural groups women were observed who "abstained from every womanly occupation and imitated men in everything and wore their hair in a masculine fashion" (De

Magalhaens, cited by Green & Money).

Despite the historical and cross-cultural evidence most modern theorising on gender and the phenomenon of transsexualism is based upon the work of the aforementioned Money, who on the surface appears as a social determinist. His most often cited case is that of a male identical twin who, due to an accident during circumcision, lost his penis and was surgically provided with a vagina after birth and subsequently raised as a girl. According to Money this case clearly exemplifies the strength of the environment over biology. Despite the child being born a biological male it did, he claims, develop 'normally' as a girl. Money goes beyond this and concludes from the successful outcome of this case and the failure of certain others, that there is a critical period in which the child's sex can be reassigned.

Money suggests that the child's core-gender-identity, operating on some form of 'gate' mechanism, is locked into place at around eighteen months. Children reassigned before this time developed successfully, those reassigned after this age did not; that is, they suffered from later 'emotional disturbance'. However, the case of the "guevadoces" presented by Imperato-McGinley et. al. (1974), would seem to refute the concept of a critical period. The "guevadoces" are a small group of children in Central America who appear female at birth, and are raised accordingly, but who go on to develop a penis and male secondary sex characteristics at puberty. At that point they are raised and regarded as boys



by both themselves and others. In the light of this it would seem that Money's evidence may be explained, without recourse to biology, by considering instead the relationship between a person's expectations, social interactions and gender.

The families studied by Money lived in North America and were thus cultured in a particular ideology of gender. It has already been shown that in Western culture adults interact differentially with children dependent upon whether the child is perceived as a boy or a girl (Smith & Lloyd, 1978). It may be that the sex-reassigned child who, as Money states, suffers from later emotional disturbance, does so not because there is a discrepancy between their core-gender-identity and their newly reassigned sex, but from an internalising of parental confusion over how to interact with a child who has changed sex. Equally one has to consider the emotional effect of undergoing various surgical operations and regular visits to hospital etc., including the repeated examination of the child's genitals. In comparison the families described by Imperato-McGinley et al. are from a culture in which notions of sex and gender are such as to encompass the particular transformation which some of the children undergo. This social explanation is reinforced by recent evidence regarding Money's pre-core-gender-identity success case. Ryan (1985) reports that during the research for a television documentary it was discovered that the now adolescent sex-reassigned girl was exhibiting serious 'adjustment problems' with regard to her sex.

The links in Money's theory between the biological and the social effects on gender development are unclear. Rogers & Walsh (1982) suggest that,

"Under the cloak of a 'well-informed' liberal, he presents a blueprint for maintaining traditional sex roles and traditional oppression of those who do not conform to them."

(pg. 270)

For Money (1972) the biologically 'wired-in' core-gender-identity provides the basis for the learning of a gender role; gender identity is the inner experience of gender role, and gender role the public expression of gender identity. He suggests that the core-gender-identity is a prerequisite for the acquisition of the 'appropriate' gender role, implying a biological basis to gender role. This also implies a one-to-one relationship between identity and role, of male to masculine and female to feminine. An assumption that is also apparent in the definition of gender dysphoria given by Meyer & Hoopes referred to above. As we have seen in the case of Robert it was the discrepancy between his gender identity - his belief that he was a boy - and his gender role - his 'feminine' behaviour - which classified him as *having* a problem. It could be argued that Robert is the victim of a restrictive model of gender - one endorsed by Money et al. which has been extremely influential within the recent history of gender-psychology. Both Kohlberg and Mischel who wrote seminal works on gender development in 1966 for Eleanor Maccoby's book *The Development of Sex Differences* base their theories on this model. Yet, given the power of these models to impinge on peoples' lives, neither Kohlberg or Mischel present any empirical

or observational evidence to support such a model. Such unfounded assumptions have had at least two consequences:

- i) clinicians have considered *anything* which oversteps the one to one relationship of male/masculine and female/feminine to be 'abnormal',
- and ii) psychologists in their research have failed to consider or look for evidence of this one to one relationship *not* existing, with cross-over in the learning of masculine and feminine behaviour by boys and girls only being seen within the context of 'a problem'.

The overall result, as shall become clear in section 1.4., is a flat, unrealistic view of gender development where it is only permissible for boys do masculine things and girls do feminine things.

### 1.3. Gender Reframed

Money's case-studies date back to the late fifties, the decade which saw the first person to surgically change their sex. Now that such transformations were biologically possible they had also to become psychologically possible. Money's theory provided just that possibility. If the 'gate' was to close, locking in the 'wrong' gender identity, then the child, when adult, would indeed feel as if they had 'the mind of one sex trapped within the body of the other'. It therefore becomes legitimate to relieve the individual's angst by surgically altering their body to suit the enslaved identity. A penis is easier to destroy than to create, accordingly there has, until recently, been a dearth of female-male transsexuals with by far the majority of cases being male-female. Even in the latter case we only come to acknowledge those male-female transsexuals whose surgery itself

is a substantial aspect of their fame (eg. April Ashley, Tula, Jan Morris, etc.). This tempts the casual observer to believe that sex reassignment is in general a satisfactory resolution of the difficulties faced by these particular individuals. Yet as in Money's case of the circumcised twin who was unsuccessfully reassigned this is not always so. Lothstein (1983) was alarmed to discover that there was little, if any, post-operative evaluation or follow-up of transsexuals. On attempting to do so he uncovered a high number of transsexuals who were *more* ill-at-ease with themselves after surgery than before. Some turned to suicide whilst others resorted to attempts at reversing the surgical procedures. For them sex-reassignment was not the answer; Money's core-gender-identity, which gives such procedures credibility was a specific historical point in the development of the dialectic of gender, and as such could not but be informed by the cultural mores of the time.

Since the Fifties however, there have been many cultural changes, and these developments throw into question the most fundamental aspects of Money's theories. Rogers & Walsh (1982) argue that his rigid gender structures make for the "oppression of those who do not conform to them" (pg. 270). It is a significant criticism for one of the many cultural changes there have been since the Fifties is that the very people oppressed by those structures have found a voice....

The womens's movement has grown throughout this period and in so doing has placed 'traditional' views of gender under scrutiny.

To experience being a woman, and thus by implication the psychological and social limitations placed upon you, is to experience the rigidity of gender definitions. A woman is expected to behave in certain ways because she is a woman; that is, she is in possession of a vagina. Thus, to challenge what it is to be a woman, is to challenge the closed logic of gender. It runs like this: if being a man, a male, means behaving in a 'masculine' manner; if masculine means for example, driving a train, then any woman who drives a train is *by definition* acting in a masculine way. Engaging in masculine activities is therefore not in accord with her identity, being female, therefore she must be 'abnormal', q.e.d. And indeed this is historically what has happened to women when they have moved into what were considered to be male occupations. They have encountered a circular gender-logic.

Consequently, the progress that has been gained in recent times by women in the recognition that they *can* engage in a full range of occupations, activities and behaviours suggest, at least according to Money's model that either; i) there are a vast amount of gender dysphoric women, or ii) the rigid view of gender imposed by the gender theorists does not hold up in the light of reality.

Another social movement which has actively challenged this gender-logic is that of gay men and lesbians. Sexuality is perceived by many as the concrete expression of gender thus it conforms to the same circular gender-logic. So males behave in a

masculine manner and part of that manner is to find women sexually attractive; similarly females behave in a feminine manner and part of that manner is to find men attractive. This view of necessity results in any person who is sexually attracted to a person with the same genitalia as themselves being seen as 'abnormal'. Hence, 'homosexuality' remained classified as a 'mental illness' in the American catalogue of diagnoses, the "DSM III", as late as 1973 and was only declassified as a result of political pressure exerted by gay men and lesbians. Indeed, the terms 'queer' and 'deviant', to describe gay men and lesbians, are still very much part of everyday dialogue. However, the very *existence* of this large group of people again flies in the face of any theory which posits a rigid gender structure 'norm'.

This should come as no surprise to anyone who has regular contact with children. It is extremely difficult to draw clear boundaries between what boys do and what girls do. The definitions of masculinity and femininity for them are fluid, changing over time and from one environment to another and attempts at convenient categorisation do little to express the reality and creativity of children. Whilst it might be easy to classify 'play with dolls' as feminine, 'painting' does not lend itself so readily to facile pigeonholing. In reality even the classification of doll play as feminine is problematic - how do you classify boys playing with Action Man? Furthermore, children also show great awareness of what is considered to be *appropriate* behaviour for boys and for

girls, and literally, act accordingly. Hargreaves (1975) gave sheets of circles to nursery age children to make pictures out of. On analysis, it appeared that boys turned the circles into footballs, cogs, wheels, etc., whilst girls turned theirs into faces, flowers, jewellery, etc. However, when the children were asked to carry out the same task but to do it as a member of the opposite sex would do it, the results were reversed. Davies (1983) obtained comparable results with a group of teenagers. Here the young people were asked to perform the fairground task of moving the metal hoop along a wiggly wire; if the hoop touches the wire a bell sounds. The variable was the explanation given as to what the task tested; either your needlework ability or your skills in electronics. When the task was considered to be gender appropriate the person did well; thus when needlework was the given explanation girls did well, when it was electronics boys did well. When the task was considered gender inappropriate the person performed badly. Yet, as with the Hargreaves study, the results were reversed when the subject was asked to imagine that they were a member of the opposite sex.

These studies, in conjunction with our lived experience of the world, indicate quite strongly that a theory of gender development created out of the spirit of the late Fifties/early Sixties provides at least an inadequate description of gender in the Eighties. As suggested in the previous section there is a clear need to move away from the rigid gender structures initiated by Money to a more flexible account of this phenomenon.

#### 1.4. Gender and Psychology

Gender is something which we all possess. It is also something which appears to be both flexible and of importance in the constructing and deciphering of everyday events. Given the extent and range of this phenomenon it is not unreasonable that psychology, particularly working from within a 'scientific' framework which a clearcut distinction between observer and observed, has had difficulty in coming to terms with it. To borrow an analogy from IBM. Gender is not a product *of* our environment; it *is* our environment. So integrated is it, in fact, that it is difficult to even provide an adequate description of gender because the language available to discuss the issue does itself reflect various perspectives and theorists. Thus, before considering how psychology has approached this area in the past it is worth making an aside to look at the etymology of gender.

The research described within this thesis focuses upon what, within psychology has been generally referred to as the 'development of gender identity'. This title provides an umbrella for a subject which has gone through many transformations in its nomenclature. Indeed the related literature is littered with a variety of labels such as 'gender differentiation' and 'sex-role development', each reflecting the era of their creation, and the ideology of their creator.

Archer & Lloyd (1982), in an attempt to clarify this gender lexicon, made a distinction between the terms 'sex' and 'gender';



Sex alludes to a biological distinction based upon genitalia; the penis and the vagina,

and Gender describes the socially learnt, or derived, categories ascribed to men and women such as clothing or forms of employment.

This distinction is useful as a concept organiser but is, at heart, flawed. As Kessler & McKenna (1978) argue, a distinction based upon biology should not be assumed to be non-social, or 'natural', because the categorisation power lies not in the biological object per se (ie. the genitalia), but in the socially-defined perceptions of the biological object. The classification of being male/female is based upon the inspection and the resulting attribution of a sex to the newborns' genitalia. Sex is therefore *also* a socially derived category and should thus be encompassed within the term 'gender'. However, given the above proviso, Archer & Lloyd's distinction of 'sex' and 'gender' will, as far as possible, be used here. (See Table 1.1.)

A vast amount of psychological research attempts to make some connection to gender. Most researchers, *regardless of the topic under investigation*, seem to consider it necessary to conduct statistical tests to draw conclusions of a sex difference in the results. Or to put it another way, the researcher tries to find behavioural or cognitive differences dependent upon the subject being in possession of a penis or vagina. Whilst some of this material is of interest most does little more than reflect the automatically assumed importance of gender in our lives. The topic under consideration here however, is that of the a priori

development of a gender identity. Part and parcel of the infant 'growing up'. Most models of gender development view gender as an entity which is gained in childhood and which then remains fixed, to be unchanged throughout adult life. This particular model of both childhood and the person will be challenged in this thesis.

Late twentieth century psychology has seen gender development research being influenced by two major theoretical approaches. Indeed, these two approaches could be seen as dominating psychological thought on most topics during this period; cognitive-developmental theory and social learning theory. In relation to gender each of these approaches highlights a different element of the developmental process and have in turn led to differing styles of research. Further, these two approaches can be viewed as closely aligned to Archer & Lloyd's distinction of 'sex' and 'gender', with the cognitive-developmental being concerned with the internal concepts and with the social learning theory focusing on the external behaviour. (See Table 1.1.)

The first approach, the cognitive-developmental, proposed by Kohlberg (1966), has almost entirely concentrated upon the child's formation of a network of gender concepts. Kohlberg, following Piaget, maintains that gender development proceeds through these concepts in a regular progression, or series of stages, as a function of the child's level of cognitive development. The research spawned by this approach has focused

on the use of cognitive tasks to gain access to the gender concepts used, and their order of appearance in the child's cognitive development. This focus can be equated with 'sex' in that whilst not claiming a direct link to biology the primed unfolding of a developmental sequence is assumed. Thus the emphasis is upon something which, if not innate, is internal to the developing child and that understanding can only be gained by looking at what is happening within the child's head.

In contrast the social learning approach, pioneered by Mischel (1966), emphasises that which is external to the child. The focus is placed upon the child's observable behaviour, highlighting the environment and the social influences on the public expression of behaviour. The research based on this approach has sought to reveal the importance of social reinforcement and the 'modelling' of key people by the child (eg. parents, peers and teachers) in the development of appropriate gender behaviours.

These two approaches, and their respective bodies of research, are based upon, and in turn uphold, there being two components in gender development; i) gender role, the external behavioural characteristics of masculine and feminine, and ii) gender identity, the internalised recognition of being male or female. (See Table 1.1.) Both concepts have developed out of the clinical work conducted by Money et. al. described in previous sections. The two elements are quite clearly described by Money & Erhardt (1972);

"Gender identity is the sameness, the unity and

persistance of ones individuality as male, female or ambivalent, while gender role is everything a person says or does to indicate to others or to the self the degree that one is either male, female or ambivalent....gender identity is the private experience of gender role, while gender role is the public expression of gender identity."

(pg. 4)

The discerning reader may well have already spotted the circularity of argument presented by compartmentalising gender in this fashion: the oppositions of gender identity - gender role, sex - gender, cognition - behaviour each reflect an internal/individual - social dualism. Neither the complex phenomenon of gender, nor the child's acquisition of a gendered state, can be described by recourse to this simple counterpointing. Even recent attempts within psychology to provide updated theories of gender development have floundered. For example, Archer & Lloyd (1982) promote little more than a re-vamped cognitive-developmental approach, renamed the "interactionist approach" (pg. 206). This theory accepts all the basic arguments of Kohlberg and incorporates the social learning theory account by citing modelling as the mechanism relating the initial self-categorisation of boy/girl to the acquisition of appropriate gender behaviour. This wholesale appropriation and re-formulation of existing theories does nothing to tackle the problems inherent in those theories. Indeed, Lloyd's (1987) move towards the use of the now fashionable term 'social representation' does little to aid our understanding of the person's acquisition of gender. It seems that the psychological researchers continue to blindly grope the elephant.

Gender is multi-dimensional and must be seen as so; grasping one part of it will tell us very little. Furthermore, to take such a limited perspective is intolerable because theories do not stand alone but are used to uphold a particular version of reality. Thus Money's view of gender and the psychological research which supports it has the specific result of labelling some people as 'abnormal' and in need of 'treatment'. However, in order to gain this whole view we have to be willing to step outside boundaries placed around psychology by the scientific tradition. Something which, as trained scientists, we are reluctant to do....

Cognitive-developmental theory deals with cognition, and social learning theory deals with behaviour; both of which in their own way can be observed, measured and quantified. In considering these elements we focus on the child's understanding of gender and the child's display of particular behaviours. We learn very little about how the child *views* gender in relation to themselves, *why* the child engages in certain behaviours and not in others, *how* the child interprets that behaviour and how the child internalises what others make of that behaviour. To start addressing these questions we have to move beyond simple cognition and behaviour to explore the social and emotional nature of the world in which the child is based. To do this we must make recourse to the ideas and theories generated from the psychoanalytic tradition.

Whilst psychoanalysis provides an important insight into gender

development, it is seldom taken on board by the theorists in mainstream psychology. It fails to be recognised because it does deal with the social and emotional, elements which cannot easily be observed or quantified, and therefore is assimilated into the scientific/experimental domain with difficulty. The only recognised 'experimental' research within the gender field related to psychoanalytic theory is the work of Sears, Rau & Alpert (1966). Yet even this work is not directly derived from the psychoanalytic tradition, focusing instead upon an examination of the links between the psychoanalytic concept of 'identification' and the social learning concept of 'imitation'. Thus, despite its supposed importance in terms of being a major theory commenting on gender development, psychoanalytic theory has been neglected, with little but lip-service being paid to it within the mainstream psychological community. The social and emotional world of the child must be considered if our theories of gender development are to adequately describe and explain this complex phenomenon.

#### 1.5. Conclusion: Reclaiming Gender

Whilst there are no easy definitions of gender the following has been established.

1. Gender is part of the fabric of the social world. As participants in that social world we are caught up in gender; we all have a gender, and we all view the world through the framework of gender.

2. Gender is also a tool of social regulation. This is apparent

from the ways in which we attempt to deal with those who violate the gender rules.

3. Gender also presents us with a contradiction. We all make gender assumptions about ourselves and others despite the fact that our lived experience refutes those very assumptions. We are entangled in gender-logic.

4. Traditional approaches within psychology has not been successful in describing the phenomenon of gender. This is partly because psychology does not have an adequate gender-language, but also because its scientific framework does not acknowledge either the cultural standpoint of the researcher, or the importance of the social and emotional world of the child to any theory of gender development.

These issues set the scene for the research and ideas presented within this thesis. At question is the existence of a one to one relationship between a child's genitalia and their behaviour, and hence the way they understand themselves as a boy or a girl and how this may affect the activities and social relationships they engage in. In doing this the thesis is also questioning some of the basic theoretical and methodological assumptions made by contemporary psychology.

At this point it is important to explain why I have chosen to look at gender development in this particular way. As we have seen the concept of gender is so complex that there are many different ways in which the interested researcher might approach the subject. The way in which I have chosen the starting point I

have, is influenced by my own particular history within psychology and my own personal history as a gay man.

My own training within psychology took place at Sussex University where I studied Experimental Psychology. This course was firmly based within the 'scientific' experimental approach, offering subsidiary courses in perception, memory & attention, physiological psychology and artificial intelligence. Whilst Social Psychology and Developmental Psychology were offered within the University as separate degree courses it was possible to take an option course within Experimental Psychology on developmental psychology and to take a number of options in issues related to clinical psychology. I picked my way through this range of options such that I became heavily involved in animal behaviour (imprinting in chicks), child development and clinical psychology. My degree project work on imprinting in chicks (Boakes & Panter, 1984) led me to look at the socialization process in child development and in particular to focus on the development of gender differences. In turn this led me to look at gender issues which clinical psychologists had problematised, eg. transsexuality and homosexuality. Layered on top of this, increasing my motivation, was my search for an explanation of my own gayness and an explanation of my own display of what traditionally might be classed 'masculine' and 'feminine' attributes.

As has been described above the models of gender development proposed by Kohlberg and Mischel, which represent the approaches



of the cognitive-developmentalists and social learning theorists respectively, posit a one-to-one relationship between sex and gender, hence male to masculine and female to feminine. Such models do not appear to match the reality of people's lives, including my own.

These same models, as also described above, uphold and maintain the theoretical concepts underpinning the clinically defined 'problem' of *gender dysphoria*. This diagnosis which involves a mismatch at some level of sex and gender, eg. the boy who behaves in a 'feminine' manner or the adult transsexual who believes themselves to have the 'mind' of one sex in the body of the other, refuses to acknowledge the possibility of *cross-over* of 'masculine' and 'feminine' behaviours in the same person regardless of biological sex. In order to examine how these models of gender development have become established it is necessary to return to the now 'classic' texts - the arguments of Kohlberg and Mischel - and to demonstrate experimentally why these theories do not accurately describe or explain the phenomenon of gender development. In doing this I am attempting firstly to undermine the theoretical basis to gender dysphoria, and secondly to demonstrate the inadequacies of an experimental approach to the study of such a complex phenomenon.

It should also be remembered that this research is being conducted as part of a Ph.d. research programme and as such should demonstrate my own research abilities - including my ability to utilise experimental methods. The material presented

here should be seen as bridge building, both for myself and for other experimentally-based psychologists. I am engaged in building a bridge away from an objective experimental approach to a position where other, non-experimental, approaches might be seen as more appropriate.

In taking this starting point I am not necessarily taking the most obvious one, however, given my own background it is one that makes sense. I am aware that in doing this I am neglecting a large area of existing work which relates to gender, ie. much of the writing on gender spawned by the feminist movement which draws heavily upon ideological analysis and psychoanalytic thinking. For me to start with this, or to examine it in detail within this piece of Ph.d. research, is not possible. By the end of the thesis I will arrive at a point where it will become possible for me to consider this wealth of literature, and for me to feel comfortable with the use of methodologies implied by it, eg. discourse analysis.

Essentially this thesis for me is about a set of struggles. A struggle to find a theory of gender which makes sense to me, ie. is a useful tool for understanding my own gendered history and behaviour. A struggle to expose and undermine existing theories of gender development which give credibility to the, often needless, interventions of psychologists and other 'professionals'. A struggle to engage in meaningful research, for both myself as researcher and the families and workers acting as objects for the research, within the restraints of Ph.d.

acceptability. And finally a struggle to overcome the need for experimental methodologies and to accept other methodologies, ones which are not reliant upon the notion of 'objectivity', as being legitimate modes of research.

In the following chapters we will look more closely at the models of both child development and the person presented by psychology. In so doing we will consider the importance of taking a multi-dimensional perspective which incorporates the social and emotional elements. Kohlberg and Mischel will also come under closer scrutiny with experimental evidence being presented which cast doubt upon their theories. Finally, throughout the rest of the thesis material will be drawn from experimental research and case-studies to help make clear the move towards other methodologies which might enable the development of a more flexible and dynamic account of gender development.

If the issues seem complex then it is because they are complex and it would be foolish to pretend otherwise, for, returning to Woolf,

"When a subject is highly controversial - and any question of sex is that - one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold the opinion one does hold."

(1928, pg. 8)

Table 1.1. Internal/External Oppositions in Gender Theory

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
SEX - the possession of a vagina(female) or penis penis. (Archer & Lloyd).	GENDER - the behavioural characteristics of feminine and masculine. (Archer & Lloyd).
GENDER IDENTITY - the recognition of being female or male. (Money).	GENDER ROLE - the behavioural characteristics of feminine and masculine. (Money).
COGNITIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY - the acquisition of a series of gender concepts or knowledge. (Kohlberg).	SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY - the acquisition of behavioural characteristics. (Mischel).

## CHAPTER TWO: CHILD SOCIAL RELATIONS

### Contents

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. What is a child?
- 2.3. The child within psychology
- 2.4. Children and research
- 2.5. Conclusion: A starting point.

### 2.1. Introduction

What are little girls made of?  
Sugar and spice and all things nice.  
What are little boys made of?  
Slugs and snails and puppy dog tails.

But what are *children* made of?

In the first chapter it was made clear that the theories and models of gender which are popular currency within psychology present many problems. However, this thesis is not only concerned with gender as a concept but, more importantly, with how a person comes to view themselves as a gendered being, and how this relates to their behaviour. Much of the evidence cited in the first chapter was drawn from research centering on the adult; adult transsexuals, adult women, adult gay men, etc.. Indeed this area of research was opened up for me from an adult perspective. I was concerned with examining the theoretical basis for the *treatment* of adults considered to have a gender disorder. To engage in this process it is necessary to locate within the various theories the elements which make such *treatment* viable. When looking at theories of gender one is automatically drawn

into a consideration of theories relating to child development, for gender development and child development are inextricably linked. This chapter will look at what it is that constitutes the child, consider how this concept has been internalised within psychology, and survey the styles of research it has constructed around the child.

## 2.2. What is a child?

The answer to this question may appear obvious. After all everyone is aware of what children are. We see them around us every day; we have laws to protect them; we have institutions for them to attend; and every one of us was once a child. Yet despite this we cannot take the substance of the child for granted. We all possess a gender and behave in gendered ways but, as was apparent from the material presented in the last chapter, this does not mean that the concept is well defined.

All western societies create a period between birth and 'maturity' and assign to that period persons who have not yet been recognised to hold the credentials for adulthood. In contrast to adulthood this period is entitled *childhood* and pertains to the child; named variously 'small adults', 'infants', 'children', 'little people', 'kids', 'brats', etc.. In the popular imagination of our own culture the child is an inexperienced entity which, during this period of childhood develops both physically and mentally, and having done so successfully, is able to enter the adult world. This process is

perceived as finite, hence "What will you do when you grow up?", and second place to the adult, "You'll see when you're older".

Such phrases indicate that the child is a *social object* rather than the product of some natural imperative. The child is not alone in this. Concepts like 'gender', are no less concrete than, say chairs, as social objects. That is, the specific meaning of these entities is defined by the behaviours that society directs towards them and not from any inherent properties of the object itself. For example, as members of this culture we share an understanding, or have a meaning of, what a chair is. This is despite the difficulty we have in producing a physical definition which adequately embraces all aspects of 'chair'. A chair is a chair because we call it one, and sit on it. The form (ie. armchair, electric chair, kitchen chair, etc.) is mutable; the meaning derives from the behaviour we direct towards it.

Similarly, a child is not defined physically, but socially. The term 'child' represents a particular position held in society, which in turn may imply a series of behaviours which together constitute a mode of social interaction. In this sense it is no different from the terms 'man' and 'woman'. In the case of the child, youth is tagged as significant. In the case of 'man' and 'woman' it is the genitalia that are tagged as significant and have a social meaning attached to them. It is this meaning which becomes the basis for another set of social interactions. then this meaning is used as the basis for a whole variety of social interactions.

This process can be observed from a number of perspectives. Everyday dialogue reflects the complexity of this socially-derived concept of the child. For example, we condemn the behaviour of others, regardless of age, by describing them as 'childish' and 'immature'; we attack them with such phrases as "it's about time you grew up". Not only is the concept of the child used without regard to age within our own culture, but it also differs *between* cultures as Denzin (1977) illustrates,

"The Amish, for example, eschew dominant American values, balk at compulsory education, and encourage children to go only as far as eighth grade in schools managed by the Amish. By the age of two, the Amish young cease to be children, they are treated like small adults and are encouraged to assume an adult's responsibilities." (pg.17)

The idea of two-year-olds being given adult responsibilities is unacceptable within our own culture. This unacceptability is argued for on the grounds of the child not being physically, mentally or emotionally able to take on such duties. Indeed, theories of child development credit the two-year-old with very few skills. However, there is no reason to suggest that the Amish two-year-olds are, either biologically or developmentally, any different to two-year-olds in Britain today. And the Amish are not alone in their view of young people. The World Health Organisation operates a number of training programmes in developing countries aimed at teaching 'parenting skills' to five-year-olds. In doing this the real abilities and skills that young people have are being acknowledged, as is the reality of their lives.



The concept of the child varies not only between cultures but also over time. This was recognised by Phillipe Aries (1962) in his study entitled *Centuries of Childhood* . In discussing childhood he argues that the child as it is known in the contemporary western world did not come into existence until the mid-sixteenth century. He suggests, drawing evidence from cultural artefacts such as paintings, literature, diaries and notebooks, that prior to this time children were perceived as miniature adults. Thus,

"in medieval society, the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. 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 it from the adult.... In medieval society this awareness was lacking." (pg.128)

More recently Postman (1983) has stated that the child is not a cognitive or biological fact, but a social convention. In his work, *The Disappearance of Childhood* , he argues that the child and childhood were created during the Renaissance as a consequence of the invention of the printing press; with the resulting literacy, an abstract skill, becoming an essential tool requiring an extended period of education. Thus the world became divided into readers and non-readers, with illiterates of all ages being referred to in child-like terms. Postman further suggests that print was used to hide the secrets of society (eg. sexual facts) from non-readers. This in turn allowed the readers to develop a sense of shame and the non-readers, the children, to be seen as innocent. He therefore views literacy, schooling and shame as fundamental ingredients in the

differentiation of the adult from the child. Beyond this Postman, in his discussion of shame, also suggests that the introspection which shame brings to the adult is all part of what differentiates the individual from the collective mass. The adult is an individual whilst the child aspires to individuality.

Whilst the work of both Aries and Postman have not gone unchallenged it is difficult to refute all their claims. Even within recent times the notions of both the child and childhood have fluctuated in their meaning. The age at which a child legally becomes an adult with voting rights has changed from twenty-one to eighteen. Schooling has become compulsory and the age at which one can leave school has changed, gradually being extended upwards. Similarly, there is continual debate surrounding the appropriate age at which a young person should enter the school system. It is a dynamic process: in the period following the second world war, the western world has seen the creation of an entirely new element of childhood - the teenager. And like all dynamic processes, the dialectic of childhood is observable in the tensions it creates: A sixteen-year-old cannot vote, and yet may have heterosexual sexual relationships. It is illegal to have sexual intercourse with a fifteen-year-old girl; whilst at the same time twelve- and thirteen-year-old girls regularly model on the pages of adult fashion magazines in sexually-aware poses.

And so like chairs, children are *best* defined by the behaviour directed towards them. As already stated above children are

viewed as inexperienced and innocent. They are also seen as dependent upon adults and in need of protection. Whilst one cannot deny that at the beginning of its life the newborn *is* dependent for food, carriage and maintenance upon the adult, the age at which this provision should be discontinued is subject to debate. This uncertainty is reflected in the numerous books dedicated to giving parents advice on the care of their children. Yet whilst these books may differ on the appropriate time at which to change the newborn's diet from milk to solids, or on methods of toilet training, but they invariably agree with the generally received view that children are in need of parental attention for many years. A view mirrored within legislation. Laws are constructed around the child in the spirit of providing protection. There are laws to protect the child from work, sexual relations and physical abuse. Such laws set out not only to protect the child but also to protect the cradle of the child - the family. In consequence, legislation extends beyond what may be a legitimate protection of the immediate needs of the child to an array of other issues. The laws of censorship, sexuality and economics are all thus brought into play in the cause of protecting the family, and thus by implication, the child. Truly, the child is father to the man...

Yet the net result of this construction is that the child is seen as not being an equal to the adult. The child, by this assumed dependence upon adult, becomes less than adult. Farson (1978) sees a confusion here between nurturance and self-determination,

a dichotomy between protecting children and protecting their rights. Freeman (1983) suggests,

"We have distanced ourselves from children and, in doing so, we have to an extent dehumanised the young." (pg.3)

This dehumanisation manifests itself in a variety of ways. Adults use a limited language with children, where trains become "choo choos" and dogs become "bow wows". The adult also speaks slower, louder and with greater emphasis to a child than to a fellow adult (unless the adult is disabled in some way in which case they too are considered to be less than adult, eternal children). Even when the child does engage in something which the adult perceives as adult-like the child is not treated as adult but as either humorous or 'cute'. In these respects the child is literally 'powerless', that is they are engaged in a power relationship with adults.

'Power relationship' is an often used but ill-defined concept. Indeed, much time has been devoted to this subject by philosophers and researchers, and much material has been produced in the process. For many power is intricately linked to gender and in terms of how gender is practiced, as we shall see later in the thesis, this does appear to be the case. It is often assumed that power is unitary; that is it operates in a particular direction, with one person controlling another. Foucault (1977) in his work *Discipline and Punish* is at pains to show that power is not simply repressive, negative; it is also positive, productive of knowledge:

"We must cease once and for all to describe the effects

of power in negative terms: it 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it 'abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact power produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production" (pg.194)

Therefore persons take up positions within a power relationship, one person may appear to be in control, but in taking up that position they are enabling the other person to also assume a position. The relationship is thus creative.

With the adult and the child, the power relationship conveys a controlling/manipulating relationship in which one party possesses something which the other does not. Thus the adult is perceived as having the knowledge and abilities that the child does not. This power which the adults believe themselves to have is illusory, because the child is also enabled to take up a particular position which can be 'powerful'. Any adult involved in childcare will be aware of the newborn's ability to exert power over them.

However, the reality of where power resides is forgotten with the result being that children are not treated as adults. Freeman (1983) presents a liberterian view of children explaining that,

"It requires....respect for the competencies of children. It argues for children to be seen as persons, not cases. It demands that children's capacities be acknowledged, that they be given a say in the decision-making processes concerning them whenever this is feasible and they are capable of participating meaningfully" (pg.3)

Such a perspective has implications for those engaged in research with children. Psychologists are adults too, and from their assumed position of power they often make two mistakes;

- i) an underestimation of the child's knowledge and abilities,

and ii) engaging in adultamorphism, that is inferring the adult's position in interpreting the child's intentions, behaviours and emotions.

### 2.3. The child within psychology

Psychologists are also adults and thus they too cannot escape this power relationship. They view the child through adult eyes and share the same cultural standpoint on the meaning of the child and childhood as all adults do. If the focus of their study is children as suggested above, ignoring this power relationship is detrimental not only to their own theorising but also to their practice.

We have considered various ways in which workers within psychology have theorised about gender development. Now we shall move to a consideration of the inherent models of the child presented by the three major schools of thought within the area of gender development, Psychoanalytic, Social Learning and Cognitive-Developmental. The task of excavating these models is more difficult than analysing the theories themselves because the assumptions made about the nature of children operate at a more fundamental level. They are the foundation stones for the theory and as such are buried deep. Blunt instruments are called for. The following analysis may seem crude; but no cruder than the fundamental ideas it seeks to uncover.

1. The model of the child underlying the psychoanalytic tradition, based on the works of Freud (1916, 1938) and his adherents, is best summed up by the term 'deterministic'. Here a

concept of human nature has been developed by adults, primarily derived from work conducted on other adults, and transposed to the child. For example, Freud himself did not work with children but instead conceived his view of the developmental stages of childhood via his psychoanalytic work with adult patients. This theory has been taken by others and related directly to children. The child is seen as a narcissistic creature, an inheritor of the instinctual, largely pleasure seeking energy common to all people. The child is asocial, a bundle of undefined impulses (the 'id'), which through a series of developmental stages (oral, anal and genital), the process of identification (the Oedipus/Electra complex) and the effect of social conscience (the superego) conceals its narcissism with a veneer of social responsibility producing an acceptable self (the ego). The child, in gaining its credentials for adulthood, does not lose its essential human narcissistic nature but suppresses it, by becoming social. This sequence of events does not follow an innate unfolding plan, but relies upon the guidelines, or restraints, given by the adult. Thus the adult is put in the position of 'restrainer' of the child.

2. The Social Learning Theory approach, with its origins in the Behaviourist school, was pioneered by Bandura & Walters (1963). Whilst it is considered to be a development on behaviourism, Social Learning Theory never shook itself free of the original model of the child underpinning behaviourism. Behaviourism itself has its origins in work based in the observation of behaviour, primarily in animals, developed by Watson in the 1920's and taken further by Skinner in the 1950's. The fundamental behaviourist

assumption is the oft-quoted 'tabula rasa'; in social learning theory the child is seen as "a vast potentiality that can be fashioned by direct or vicarious experience into a variety of forms within biological limits" (Bandura, 1977). The child develops (or is "fashioned") via direct reinforcement/punishment of behaviour, and more importantly, through the process of vicarious *modelling* of others' (adult) behaviour. However, social learning theory is one step removed from true behaviourism as it acknowledges, if in a limited way, the role of cognitive processes. The slate is not entirely blank. The "biological limits" which Bandura talks of are seen in terms of cognitive processes such as attention, retention, self-regulation and motor-production. This model of the child does not credit the child's emotional existence. To use, aptly enough, a computer analogy the cognitive processes, or hardware, is innate, whilst the software is provided by society, or more explicitly adults. Thus the adult is placed as 'programmer' to the child.

3. The Cognitive-Developmental framework, essentially developed by Piaget (1969), presents a more liberal pairing of the adult and child. The child's cognitive processes, which are linked to behaviours, develop through a series of stages, on an upward stairway to adulthood, or adult-thinking. However, Piaget credits the child some control in this process by describing them as an 'active agent' in their own development, that is the child itself may generate advancement, often by accident rather than by design. Yet, this is essentially a preformationist perspective,



where the child is born with some inbuilt plan waiting to unfold. Therefore the child is predisposed to the methods of advancing their own development, with the adult providing the preformed child with appropriate stimuli to adjust to the cognitive and social rules of the particular culture into which the child is born. Thus the adult is placed in the position of 'catalyst' to the child.

Rendering the three major traditions in developmental psychology down to a paragraph each is of course a gross simplification. However, it is a justifiable one, since we are concerned here, not with the processes of development, but the implicit models of the child underlying the theories. This is important because these are also the models of the child on which workers within each tradition base their research methodology. The models dictate the types of questions they ask about development, which in turn demand different methods.

It is not clear if each tradition places society as a whole or the individual adult in, respectively, these restraining, programming and catalytic roles. However, society is a world inhabited by the adult; in the terms of each tradition the credentials for adulthood and for membership of the society are the same. To be a member of the society, is to possess the knowledge of the social world; is to be an adult. Thus the child is positioned by researchers at the negative end of a power relationship with adults.

In one sense this view is correct because children do not possess

the same social knowledge as adults, neither do they have the same language skills. Yet in many cases it becomes very difficult to use this distinction. How is one to compare, for example, the child who can read and write, to the adult who is illiterate? Or the child who's mathematical skills far outshine the average adult and goes to university at the age of ten? Such cases become the exception, and need to be re-incorporated into the body of the theory by the creation of a special category - the *gifted* child. Then, since these children are deemed to have an 'abnormal' development, it lets the theorist of the hook - the rules of development are only expected to apply to 'normal' children.

Within the practice of psychology the child is denied access to self-determination. The child is never considered for what it is; only for what it is not. The child is viewed negatively such that, it is defined by negatives. It has not obtained object constancy, it does not know how to behave properly, it cannot conserve, and so on. These negatives assist in the creation of the idea of the child being on a journey to a positive end when all lacks, and absences will have been checked off, its 'potential' realised. This view ignores the fact that at whatever age, or whatever point in time one chooses the child *is* fully developed. Children should therefore be respected for what they do know, and what they can do. They should not be seen as half-filled vessels.

As suggested above there are consequences for research methods if the rights of the child to self-determination are overlooked. Firstly, the child's knowledge and abilities are underestimated.

The child is not expected to be in possession of a sophisticated knowledge of the social world, so it is not looked for. Secondly, an important developmental issue is not acknowledged. As Shotter (1982) points out, the child does not only gain 'knowledge' of the social world, but also learns 'how to be' a listener, watcher, imaginer, thinker, requester, boy, girl, pupil, etc.. In effect how to be a certain type of person, to take up a position 'in relation' to someone else. A distinction is being made here between epistemological and ontological problems; to know is not to be. The child may understand the principle, or have the knowledge, of listening, watching, or of what boys and girls do, but that is not to say that the child is *able* to be a listener, watcher, boy or girl. Within these statements are of course implications for research methodology. As we have seen, the questions one asks dictates the methods one uses. If one wants to look at the 'how to be' question a consideration of cognition, behaviour or emotion alone is not enough. One needs to grasp a more complete picture, a picture which respects the knowledge and abilities of the subject regardless of age or social position.

It is therefore useful to accept that 'to be' is essentially a social activity because one is *always* talking about 'being' in relation to something else. There cannot be a pupil without a teacher, or a watcher without the watched. On the other hand the epistemological problem, the understanding of principles, is a non-social, or reflexive activity (in engaging in this latter activity one might make account of the 'to be', eg.

existentialism, but this is not about experiencing the 'to be'). By not acknowledging this assumed power relationship between adults and children psychologists have traditionally only concerned themselves with the reflexive activity, the epistemological problem. The psychologist either tests the child to see what it knows, or observes the child to see how it learns. In doing this the ontological problem goes unexplored and the psychologist is poorer in both methodology and in understanding the developmental process.

This view of the child is indicative of a wider belief which underpins psychology. That is of it being possible and logical to talk about the human individual as an autonomous unit which is merely influenced by social factors. Llewelyn & Kelly (1980) state,

"(psychology) works with a 'biological' conception of individuality, in which the form of individuality is bounded within the limits of the individual organism. Just as organisms 'have' physical organs, systems of organs and so on, ie. interconnected physical structures, so too do individuals 'have' personalities, needs, aspirations, etc." (pg.407)

Such a notion of individuality presents a static image of the person, and constructs the dichotomy of the individual and the social. This is the same dichotomy that allows the child to be adultamorphised, with the child having to internalise the Social through the restraining, programming or catalytic activities of the adult. The external social dimension is related to the individual internal dimension. This perspective, strengthened by its avoidance of the ontological aspects of development, fails to monopolise on the 'dynamism' of human relations. Seve (1978) argues in favour of this dynamism,

locating "the human essence" (pg.72) in the social relations *between* individuals rather than in the individuals themselves. As we have seen the three main strands in developmental psychology at root fail to address this issue, instead they focus upon questions and methods which proceed from this partial perception. Developmental psychology needs therefore, a working model of the child, and its development, that takes into account the social and personal elements, the epistemological and ontological problems, and the dynamic relations between them. Only by taking an holistic view of the child can something approaching the whole truth be discussed.

The next section will consider the ways in which recent developmental psychology has tried to construct such a model. It is important to look at this recent history because this provides the theoretical background for work discussed in this thesis and reflects a number of workers who have been influential in my own thinking. In Woolf's terms, this is an attempt to explain the opinions that I hold.

#### 2.4. Children and research

As has been suggested it is important for the researcher to examine the model of the child with which they are working since any particular model has implications for both the type of methodology constructed and the possibilities perceived. If the child is conceived of as blank slate waiting to be drawn on the research spawned by that approach will focus upon the

processes by which the drawing might take place. Not surprisingly, behaviourists, and subsequently the social learning theorists, have attempted in their experimental studies to examine observable behaviour which might constitute such drawing. Typically these studies take two forms. One form as described by Bandura (1970) is where the child is given the opportunity to observe a 'role model'; an adult playing alone in a room hitting a large inflatable Bobo doll with a toy hammer. The child, once having had the opportunity to view this model, is then allowed to play in the same room with the same toys. If the child hits the doll with the hammer in the same way as the adult model, the child is said to have 'modelled' the adult. The slate has been written on. The second type of research in this tradition is characterised by Rosenblith (1959). In this study a group of children are observed during 'free play' in a nursery school setting. The 'objective' observer, over a given time-frame, notes the behaviour of each child, counting each occasion of violent or co-operative behaviour. The recorder is also able, for example, to note if one violent act follows the particular child observing the violent act of another child. Once again the focus is simply on behaviour, and charting the manner in which the slate might be written upon.

These studies are only concerned with behaviour and not, for example, the motivations for that behaviour (other than reinforcement/punishment regimes). Such motivations may exist but are not of central concern to the social learning theorist. A more detailed analysis of the problems of this methodological

approach is presented in Chapter 4. Suffice to say here that such an approach is derived from, and in turn supports, a one-dimensional view of the person where cognition, emotions and the social context of the child are not considered, or even appreciated, as important factors in what constitutes the child.

Piaget, in constructing the cognitive-developmental approach, was concerned with the child's acquisition of a number of cognitive concepts. The developmental structure is arranged hierarchically, with each concept building on those going before. For Piaget the child is constituted by these concepts; individual children being described by the developmental stage which they have obtained. The methodology spawned here reflects this process and therefore concentrates on 'testing' the child's cognition. The cognitive-developmentalists might thus test the child's concept of 'conservation' by showing them a ball of clay and then rolling the same piece of clay into a sausage shape and asking the child if the clay is the same amount. If the child answers "yes" they are believed to have acquired the concept, if they say "no", they have not. Equally, Kohlberg, in coming to grips with the child's moral reasoning would ask the child to say which is more 'wrong'; to break one cup deliberately, or to break ten cups by accident. The child is expected to say the former on the understanding that to intend damage is considered socially to be more 'wrong' than to do something by accident. A more detailed discussion of the flaws inherent in this approach and accompanying methodology is presented in Chapter 3.

The social learning theorist looks at the behaviour of the child and from this infers the intentions and meanings behind this behaviour, in order to construct a view of both the child and the developmental process. The cognitive-developmental theorist focuses on the cognition of the child and in so doing infers from this the child's intentions and meanings. Both of these approaches fail to consider the child for what it is, choosing instead to build up a picture based upon assumptions from what the child says, or from what the child does. Yet since those assumptions themselves are based on a partial understanding of the child, denying its ability to engage in a dialectic with its environment, then at best one is left with half-truths.

This brings us to a point reached in the previous chapter where it was suggested that social learning theory and cognitive-developmental theory had dominated the thinking and practice within mainstream gender research. Similarly, until recent years, this picture reflected the state of the art within developmental psychology as a whole. As in the gender field the theory and work of Freud and the psychoanalytic movement have not gained much popular currency. The reason for this lies partly in psychoanalytic theory's emphasis on the realms of the emotions, or affect; areas which are not as easily quantifiable as 'behaviour' or 'cognition', or reassuringly subject to scientific empiricism. However, in recent years some developmental psychologists have begun to incorporate, in varying degrees, certain aspects of psychoanalytic thinking. For whilst it is not without flaws (eg.



positing the adult as restrainer) the psychoanalytic school does provide a potentially useful framework for *escaping* the restrictive concept of the rational individual. It is important to challenge the notion of the 'rational' because this implies that people have a non-contradictory way of operating; such a concept is in opposition to a person taking up a variety of positions in relation to other people which may be contradictory. Within psychoanalytic thinking it is not simply a question of the individual child developing, but of the developmental *process* having a dynamic tension between the id and the superego to produce the ego. Additionally the theory, in its mechanism of identification (Oedipus/Electra complex), immediately places the developmental process into a structure of relationships which progress the development of the child. This dynamism is crucial if one wishes to move away from the individual/social dichotomy. The willingness of researchers to take on these ideas and introduce them into their theorising has been a slow process and it would be painting too rosy a picture to suggest that such ideas are in any way firmly established within mainstream thinking. Indeed, it would be fairer to say that there has emerged in the last ten to fifteen years a generation of developmental psychologists who have taken these ideas on board. In the mid 1970's several workers were beginning to step outside of the traditional frameworks of social learning theory and cognitive-developmental theory. Just when developmental psychology was becoming more entrenched within those approaches

Lock (1978) edited a book entitled *Action, Gesture and Symbol* which focused on early infant development. This volume, looking at the development of communication, was important because it moved away from the notion of the child as passive, instead seeing the child not so much as a thing which adults behaved towards but as a person which existed in its own right, a person which has the ability to act, to provoke a response from adults, and to participate in interactions. This book collected together for the first time the work of a number of researchers who had begun to acknowledge these ideas. In doing so they were attempting to move away from the micro-analytic studies of child-caregiver interactions, in which behaviour was broken down into thousands of small codable pieces, to consider the child in relation to others. For example, Urwin in her chapter on communication between blind infants and their parents states,

"While the child learns to make himself understood, what he says must be relevant to those around him. He is acquiring language which serves to maintain social reality through the roles and social relations which realize and perpetuate it." (pg.83).

Such ideas did not emerge spontaneously but were themselves based upon earlier work which had focused on the relationships between child and caregiver such as the Newsoms' (1975, 1977) research on intersubjectivity. Here reference was made to a child's power to create shared understandings. Similarly, Shotter (1974) had written on the "development of personal powers", in which the emphasis was clearly placed upon social relations between children and adults.

However, whilst Lock's book was pioneering in terms of its

theory, and construction of the child, it was not so revolutionary in terms of method as it might have been. The research in, and advocated by the arguments in the book was still dependent upon a particular relationship between adult and child, experimenter and subject. The experimenter was still not concerned with challenging the assumptions of the methodology. The rights given to the child within the theory were not given to the child within the actual experiments. In many respects the child was still seen in Piagetian terms; unfolding in response to the stimulation provided by the adult.

Donaldson's work *Children's Minds* was also published in 1978, and this research problematised the methodological approach of the cognitive-developmentalists. Piaget had suggested, as already stated, that children underwent certain developmental stages and at each one the child would 'exhibit' the stage they had attained by the cognitive concepts that they possessed. Piaget posited from his observations that children were unable to do the conservation task quoted earlier until they were six- or seven-years-old. However, Donaldson argued that Piaget's results were *not* a function of the cognitive stage attained by the child but a function of the experimental method. This methodological artefact arose out of the child being seen as an individual detached from their social context. If the child is thought to be self-contained, an isolated individual, then the researcher is led to believe that all there is to the child lies within the child's cognition or behaviour.

Donaldson showed that providing the method was ecologically valid, ie. is set in an appropriate context (eg, the changes in the shape of the clay are brought about by a naughty teddy bear rather than done by an experimenter behind a screen), children of four or five years of age can conserve. Donaldson's work was innovative in that it attempted to focus upon the child's thoughts as part of the social context and not the individual. Cognitive development is seen as originating from the flux of everyday life in which the child is embedded, rather than from within the child.

The work of Donaldson has, albeit slowly, had a large impact on the work of developmental psychologists. It spawned much research itself with many Piagetian concepts coming under close scrutiny by the use of new 'ecologically valid' methods. However, for some Donaldson's work did not go far enough,

"I believe that Margaret Donaldson searches for the answers to important problems in precisely the right places, but it is hampered by a retention of basic psychological assumptions. For example, reasoning is placed firmly within the mind of the child, while context is placed firmly on the outside: the context/cognition problem becomes one of how the social impinges upon the pre-existing individual."  
(Walkerdine, 1981, pg.130)

Donaldson's work whilst clearly taking a step forward in methodology still holds to the dichotomy of the individual and the social. This should not come as a surprise given what has been described above about the notion of the individual being a central organising concept within psychology. After all, psychology is part of society and within the wider neo-capitalist

society of the West, the 'individual' is a prime focus. The individual is what one aspires to and indeed a large amount of time is spent protecting the rights of the individual. Thus our models of the child, or the person, in psychology reflect the generalised societal importance given to the individual which is not to say that this is the only approach, or the correct one.

Within Soviet psychology, which has been created as part of a different culture, a different set of experiences are reflected. Here the importance of the collective is paramount. For example, one could suggest that 'human rights' are not an issue to Soviet people because the whole concept of human rights is based upon a concept of the individual which is not part of the Soviet psyche. The violation of an individual's rights can only be important if the importance of the individual is placed above all else. If the collective good is deemed to be more important then it becomes possible to justify the limitation of the individual's rights for the greater collective good. It is not my intention here to argue the *moral* rights and wrongs of this perspective but purely to offer it as evidence of a different, but valid, perspective to that nurtured in the West and which leads to a different, but equally valid, psychology. That different psychologies do exist is important here, because it provides further evidence that we are not dealing with scientific truths but interpretations of realities.

In the Russia of the 1920's & 30's there was a group of psychologists who have subsequently become known as the Volsinov

school of psychology, named after their leading theorist. Apart from a couple of texts by Volosinov very little is known of this group of workers in the West. Volosinov's two works, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* and *Freudianism; A Marxist Critique* (both translated by Titunik in 1973 and 1976 respectively) provide a remarkable account of a new psychology. In the first of these two works he states,

"The subjective psyche is not something that can be reduced to processes occurring within the confines of the natural, animalian organism. The processes that define the content of the psyche occur not inside but outside the individual organism, although they involve its participation."  
(pg.25)

Further to this he goes on to suggest that,

"The subjective psyche of the human being is not an object for natural-scientific analysis, as would be any item or process in the natural world; the subjective psyche is an object for idealogical understanding and socioidealogical interpretation via understanding." (pg.25)

It must be remembered that whilst this theorising was taking place in Russia, Watson was developing his theory of behaviourism in America. It should be noted that the content of these quotes shares some resonance with the position of Llewelyn & Kelly reported earlier.

Volosinov clearly puts forward the view that the person must be considered to be connected to their environment; the social and the person reflect each other. His perspective relies upon idealogical interpretations of society and in so doing he also argues for an idealogical interpretation of the person, for the two are the same. In making his idealogical interpretations Volosinov makes recourse to Marxism, using this as the analytic

tool. A similar ideological streak was to be picked up by certain followers of Freud in later years. Most notably in this line is the work developed by the French psychoanalyst Lacan.

Lacan's work (eg. 1968) is complex, and only partially available in translation, thus any attempt to summarise it would not do his work justice. However it is worth briefly mentioning it within this context because it elaborates the way in which psychoanalytic thinking concerning development allows one to theorise about persons being both irrational in their social relations, and inseparable from their environment. Essentially what Lacan does, through the use of semiotics, is to de-centre the subject (the individual) from consciousness and locate it in relation to others. Thus for Lacan the pre-verbal child attempts to represent the world to itself in images and symbols into which it projects its desires and fears. Further to this the child, in transforming its needs into symbolic projections creates a situation in which it now desires those projections, but because these are projections and not actual needs they can never be fulfilled. In turn the impossibility of fulfilling those desires leads the child to set up a chain of signifiers (symbols), each one more removed from the original need. This process of signification is important because it allows for many possibilities in terms of the child's motivations; intertwining both the individual and the social in a complex web of meanings to the extent that they become inseparable.

This work provides the base for a relatively new school of

thought which focuses on *subjectivity* . Subjectivity is the general term for those attributes such as intentionality, desire and awareness etc. which make us human subjects. Beyond this Lieven (1980) suggests that,

"subjectivity is socially constructed, it changes historically as societies change, and it is always being reconstructed." (pg.257)

It is argued that this 'subjectivity' forms the dynamism of human relations.

Walkerdine (mentioned above), influenced by the work of Lacan and motivated by a concern for subjectivity, has with others tried to develop a new method of working, in response to specific needs. The questions they are asking are different, focusing on irrational, non-unitary subjectivities, requiring a different practice, one which attempts to capture the essence no less, of what it is to be human. Walkerdine is able to demonstrate and discuss the ways in which humans take up positions in relation to each other and that these need not be consistent within any individual but instead may be contradictory. In her paper *Sex, Power and Pedagogy* (1981) Walkerdine sets out,

"to show, using examples from classroom practice, that in both the case of female teachers and of small girls, that they are not unitary subjects uniquely positioned, but produced as a nexus of subjectivities, in relations of power which are constantly shifting, rendering them at one moment powerful and at another powerless." (pg.14)

She concludes,

"Understanding the individuals not as occupants of fixed, institutionally determined positions of power, but as a multiplicity of subjectivities, allows us to understand that an individual's position is not uniquely determined by them being 'woman', 'girl' or 'teacher'. It is important



to realise the individual signifiers as subjects within any particular discursive practice." (pg.23)

In taking up this stance one is finally tackling the ontological question of 'how to be' laid down by Shotter (1982) and providing an account which legitimises the feelings and experiences of Woolf's Orlando. Beyond this, Walkerdine also acknowledges the right of the child to self-determination. Nothing is assumed or inferred, the child is simply credited with the knowledge and abilities required to engage with others in a social world. This is no more, or no less than that credited to the adult.

### 2.5. Conclusion: A starting point

Much ground has been covered in this chapter. The social construction of the child has been examined and consideration given to the ways in which various traditions within psychology have themselves assumed differing models of the child. As a result different theorists have sought to find answers to different questions, using different methods. In not considering these models of the child researchers have often failed to respect the knowledge and abilities of children.

Further to this it has also been shown that psychology has a history of dealing with humans as individuals and not as seeing them in relation to others. Such thinking has led to both the adoption of a static model of the person and once again to limits being placed on the range of research methods utilised.

As in the previous chapter, when considering gender, a dynamic model of the person is called for. Such a model is found in the

work of Soviet psychologists and in the work of a group of new developmental psychologists such as Walkerdine. Here is a movement away from studying the child in isolation toward seeing them within the discourse of everyday life, taking up various positions, or various subjectivities, in relation to others.

In the following chapters I will look more closely at the cognitive-developmental and social learning theories in relation to gender. In doing so I will illustrate the questions that researchers operating in these traditions were seeking answers to, and demonstrate the ways in which they tried to establish those answers. This process will also reveal how such theorists fail in attempting to explain the child's practice of gender. Having done this I will then move on to describe some research which endeavours to build up in some detail a view of both gender and children which is dynamic. This research utilises a variety of methodologies and draws upon a number of the theoretical perspectives set out in this chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE: A COGNITIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

### Contents

- 3.1. Introduction
  - 3.1.1. Gender identity
  - 3.1.2. Knowledge of genitalia
  - 3.1.3. Gender constancy
  - 3.1.4. Toys and friends
  - 3.1.5. Rationale for the present study
- 3.2. Method
  - 3.2.1. Subjects
  - 3.2.2. Procedure
- 3.3. Results
- 3.4. Discussion

### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter the cognitive-developmental approach to the study of gender development will be explored. Kohlberg (1966) has proposed a cognitive-developmental analysis of children's "sex-role concepts and attitudes". This approach is concerned, as its title suggests, with the child's acquisition of particular gender related cognitive concepts. What is more, in line with a Piagetian-based approach the attainment of these concepts follows a prescribed sequence related to the child's general cognitive development. Each of the various gender related concepts suggested by Kohlberg is examined, alongside the relevant research, under separate headings below.

### 3.1.1. Gender identity

For Kohlberg gender identity is the self-categorisation as boy/girl which is irreversibly established early in the child's development. It is this gender identity which provides the basic framework for the learning of gender role. This claim, that gender identity is a *self* - categorisation established early in the child's development, is based almost entirely upon the clinical work of Money, Hampson & Hampson (1957). From their studies on hermaphrodites they report a "critical period" phenomena, a sexual imprinting in humans. They suggest that the development of normal adult 'sexual behaviour' (it is unclear if this refers to sexuality or gender role) is contingent on having been socially assigned to a given sex before the age of three or four. Whilst Kohlberg has certain reservations regarding the Money et al's notions of 'critical period' and 'imprinting' and of their method,

"Owing to the fact that their sample is small and their data largely retrospective and based on pediatric report, self-report, etc." (pg.87)

he still accepts their general hypothesis. Having established this, Kohlberg attempts to marry this notion with Piagetian developmental theory:

"....children develop a conception of themselves as having an unchangeable sexual identity at the same age and through the same processes that they develop conceptions of the invariable identity of physical objects." (pg.83)

However, he produces no other evidence to support this claim.

Indeed, looking at the relevant literature, reveals that the assertion that gender identity is irreversibly formed in

early infancy is not supported. Transsexuals, for example, do not always exhibit acceptance of their early gender assignment, even when it is in accord with observable anatomical cues (eg. Stoller, 1968) but are often desirous of and able to change their gender identity. Imperato-McGinley et al (1974) discuss the 'guevadoces', (literally, 'penis at twelve') a small group of children in Central America who appear, and are raised as, female but who develop a penis and male secondary sex characteristics at puberty. At that point they are raised and regarded as boys, both by themselves and by others. If gender identity *were* irreversible, one would predict all kinds of disturbances for these children which reportedly do not occur.

It does seem however that the young child has some form of gender awareness in that they can, by two years of age, correctly label themselves with regard to their gender with a fair degree of accuracy (Kuhn, Nash & Brucken, 1978; Slaby & Frey, 1975). Thompson (1975) suggests that by 26 months children can identify the different sexes, and that by 30 months, have the ability to make correct use of noun and pronoun labels in relation to both self and others. Weinraub et al (1984) confirms this conclusion, finding that at 26 months, the majority of children in their study were able to verbally gender-label correctly. Lloyd (1987) concludes from this and her own data that by 3.5 years of age children use 'social representations' of gender to name and classify aspects of their world. This ability to correctly gender-label both self and others is seen by Kohlberg as being the child's "self-categorisation" (pg.88). Yet

there is no evidence to suggest that this is little more than an ability to 'label'. One cannot conclude from the available evidence that this ability is related to an irreversible act of self-categorisation.

### 3.1.2. Knowledge of genitalia

The basis for attaining what Kohlberg termed gender constancy, is the understanding of genitalia as the determining factor of one's ascribed gender. Kohlberg suggests that the young child's ability to understand genital sex-differences is dependent upon the achievement of the concrete-operational level of thought and relatively independent of specific instruction or experience,

"Children do not form clear general concepts of genital differences until age five-seven, even when they are extensively enlightened by their parents."

(Kohlberg, 1966, pg.104)

This statement forms part of Kohlberg's more general thesis that children's understanding of gender is dependent upon their level of cognitive development, and not directly upon their experience of genital sex-differences. Kohlberg's evidence is drawn from three studies (Butler, 1952; Conn & Kanner, 1947; Katcher, 1955) in which many children under the age of six or seven years of age gave responses which suggested that they did not know the relationship between gender and genital form. A closer examination of these studies suggests that Kohlberg may well have been unjustified in drawing the conclusions that he did from this data. Two other factors could account for the performance of the child in these studies; i) many children participating in the

studies may not have had the opportunity to either observe or be told about genital sex-differences. ii) children may have been *deliberately* concealing the knowledge of this socially taboo area, especially considering that these studies were carried out in the 1940's and 50's. Indeed, Conn & Kanner's detailed report clearly indicates that both these factors did affect children's responses in the study. It is thus unreasonable to attribute, as Kohlberg does, children's apparent lack of understanding in these studies to their level of cognitive development.

Other more recent studies do conclude in favour of Kohlberg, yet as with the studies mentioned above closer inspection raises several problems. Thompson & Bentler (1971) investigated the priority attached by children to the cues of hairstyle, body-build, and genital form when deciding gender. Children were shown dolls with every mathematically possible combinations of these three cues and asked the children to name the doll, say whether it would be a mummy or a daddy, dress the doll for a party, and for a swim. The data for this study was only partially reported, with the data relating to whether the doll would become a mummy or a daddy being omitted. Thus conclusions of the child's understanding of the relationship between genital form and gender was drawn from indirect evidence such as choice of clothes which may have reflected the child's awareness of social conventions of modesty, for example a female swim-suit may have been chosen for a doll with male genitalia and female breasts not because the child considered the doll to be female but because, whatever the doll's gender, a female swim-suit would conceal those aspects of

the anatomy which are usually concealed in our society. No conclusions, in support of Kohlberg or not, can be realistically drawn from this data.

Levin et al. (1972), also investigating children's judgements of the gender of ambiguous figures, initially asked children to identify the gender of a series of pictures of naked children in which the head was not shown. This study found that 77% of 5 year olds, 48% of 7 year olds, and 11% of 9 year olds made two or more errors on this task. However, as with the other studies reported above there well may have been similar affects of modesty and taboo upon the response given. The author does not comment upon this.

In contrast to these studies the work of Henshall (1983) deliberately set out to try and overcome these problems. Henshall, like Levin et al., used photographs of naked, headless children as the stimulus material. However, these photographs were presented to the child in the form of a 'sorting' game. The intention of this form of presentation, combined with the researcher being a familiar feature of the nursery, was to overcome the child's 'shyness'. In contrast to previous studies Henshall found that 38% of under 4 year olds, and 79% of over 4 year olds in his sample showed an understanding of the relationship between genital form and gender.

### 3.1.3. Gender constancy

One gender concept which is related to knowledge of genitalia is



that of gender constancy. Kohlberg's proposal is that children under the age of six or seven years cannot understand that their own and other people's gender remains constant despite transitory changes in outward appearance or behaviour. This is seen by Kohlberg as being directly comparable to the supposed inability of children at this age to understand the underlying constancy of concepts such as number or length, as demonstrated by Piaget's conservation tasks.

Kohlberg's proposed 'gender constancy' has provided the focus for much of the cognitive-developmental work in the field of gender. It is also one of the most contentious issues in this research area. Indeed, recent reviews of the literature by Henshall (1983) and by Shields & Duveen (1986) have identified some fundamental problems both with the concept of gender constancy itself and with the ways in which it has been investigated. These problems will be briefly outlined below.

Many gender constancy studies have adopted a method developed by De Vries (1969) in her studies of generic constancy, in which the appearance of living things or pictures of living things were transformed in front of the child. Thus, Emmerich et al. (1977), Eaton & Von Bargen (1981), Gouze & Nadelman (1980), Marcus & Overton (1978), and Mc Conaghy (1979) transformed the clothing and hairstyle of pictures of boys and girls in front of children. However, as Shields & Duveen (1986) argue, there is a fundamental difference between gender and the physical properties with which Piaget was dealing with; the latter are all properties which can

be changed by simple operations in the real world (albeit not the operations involved in Piaget's tasks) whilst an individual's gender cannot readily be changed. Of course this criticism only stands if one emphasises the relationship of genital form to gender, for if the social cues of gender such as outward appearance and behaviour, are emphasised, then these are elements which can undergo simple operational changes. For example, many pre-operative transsexuals can 'pass' very successfully as the gender opposite to their genitalia. Given these problems, any study of gender constancy based upon transformational tests are what Shields & Duveen refer to as "ecologically invalid" and it is therefore difficult to decide what children's responses in such tests indicate about their understanding of the gender of people in the real world.

A further complication in these transformational studies is their use of pictures. The gender of a person in a picture is determined by its physical appearance; the addition of a dress will transform the representation of a boy into the representation of a girl (as in certain instances it can in real life). Henshall (1983) argues that children in these transformational studies may believe that it is their understanding of the relationship between the image and referent that is being addressed in these tasks rather than their understanding of the gender of real people. Similarly Shields & Duveen (1986) point out that children may understand the distinction between gender of a person in a picture, which can be changed at will, and the gender of real

people. For in their own study Shields & Duveen found that many children said that the gender of a picture *could* change - and that their own could not.

The most fundamental problem with the transformational studies thus far discussed is their use of the form of testing involved in Piaget's conservation tasks. There is now much evidence (eg. Donaldson, 1978; Neilson & Dockrell, 1982) that the structure of these tasks tends to encourage young children to interpret the questions differently to the way in which the experimenter intends. Such tasks probably tell us more about the child/experimenter relationship than about the child's knowledge of gender.

Having said this it should come as no surprise that several studies have shown that children *can* give 'correct' answers to direct questions about the constancy of their own and other people's gender before the age at which they can give 'correct' answers in transformational tests (Eaton & Von Bargen, 1981; Kuhn et al., 1978; Slaby & Frey, 1975; Shields & Duveen, 1986; Thompson, 1975; Henshall, 1983). However, even with these studies there are discrepancies in the age at which children can give 'correct' responses. For example, the 2-3 year olds in the Kuhn et al. study gave a higher percentage of 'correct' responses to questions about gender constancy than did children of a similar age in the Slaby & Frey study. An examination of the procedures used suggests that this discrepancy is related to Slaby & Frey's method, whereby each answer was followed by a cross-question

which children may have found confusing.

A problem shared by both the direct questioning method and transformational tasks is their failure to make explicit that the change being referred to is a temporary change and not a permanent one. In an attempt to overcome this problem Henshall (1983) embedded the direct questions within the format of a story. In this story a boy puts on his sister's clothes, he then meets some friends who recognise him, and then he meets some strangers who think he is a girl. It is emphasised that the child looks like a girl when he has his sister's clothes on. The story was illustrated with line drawings showing the child with medium length hair dressed as described at various stages of the story. At each point, putting the clothes on, meeting the friends, and meeting the strangers the subject was asked "Do you really think he is a girl?". A child was considered to have obtained gender constancy if they answered all three questions 'correctly'. Using this method Henshall found that 70% of 4-5 year olds 'passed'. Of course one problem of this particular form of questioning is the use of the verbal 'prompt' "he" in the question. Children may have been using this as a cue to what the 'correct' answer might be rather than extracting the answer from their understanding the concept of gender constancy.

#### 3.1.4. Toys and friends

An examination of the child's understanding of gender constancy leads us to an examination of the child's gender attitudes. Gender attitudes being the name given here to childrens notions

of what toys boys and girls play with, etc. Kohlberg states:

"We stressed the egocentric evaluation of the like-self in the young child's sex-typed preference. At the core of this general self-protective evaluation is the child's need to maintain his(sic) gender identity. Until the child, at around age seven, establishes an abstract, constant definition of gender based upon anatomy, his gender self-categorisation is related to every possible sex-typed attribute." (1966, pg.15)

There are two specific proposals involved here. The first is that pre-operational childrens egocentric view of the social world leads them to prefer indiscriminately all those things which they have learned to be associated with the like-self. The second proposal is related to Kohlberg's assertion, discussed above, that young children do not understand the constancy of gender; Kohlberg proposes that children under the age of 6 or 7 years identify rigidly with all aspects of their gender role in order to maintain a stable identity. These proposals would suggest that pre-gender-constant children make same-sex friendships and play with gender-stereotyped toys. These proposals are discussed below.

Piaget's concept of egocentrism has recently come under widespread criticism (eg. Donaldson, 1978). General, unfocussed assertions of the kind that Kohlberg is making here must therefore be very carefully evaluated. Evidence contrary to Piaget's proposal can be found from children on both race and gender. Studies of racial awareness and attitudes have shown that children under 6 or 7 seven years of age from black minority groups in Western societies often devalue themselves, their colour and their race, in favour of the white majority (Milner,

1975). Regarding gender, there are indications from various studies reviewed by Maccoby & Jacklin (1975, pg.279-285) that boys at this age tend to value and adhere more rigidly to their gender-role than girls do. These findings suggest that the extent to which children express a preference for the role associated with their own social group depends to a considerable degree upon the evaluations and pressures in the society around them, and does not arise in some automatic way from their learning about social divisions and roles.

Kohlberg provides no direct evidence in support of his second assertion about the relationship between the understanding of gender constancy and identification with gender-roles. Instead, he refers to the finding that children's attitudes become increasingly gender-stereotyped up to the age of about 7 years of age and subsequently become more moderate (Kohlberg & Zigler, 1967); and to his own finding that gender constancy is achieved at around 7 years of age. Ullian (1976) also reports that children become less prescriptive in attitudes towards gender-roles and adopt a more descriptive approach to gender differences between the ages of 6 and 8 years. Like Kohlberg, she attributes this, at least in part, to the development of an understanding of gender constancy. She also provides no direct evidence that this is indeed the case.

The only direct evidence currently available does not, in fact, support this proposed relationship between understanding and attitudes. Marcus & Overton (1978) found no significant

relationship between children's understanding of gender constancy as assessed by transformational tests, or the degree of gender-role preference as assessed by responses to questions about favourite games, friends, favourite television characters and what they would like to be when they grew up. Similarly Henshall (1983), using a method which required children to rate both photographs of a selection of toys as being used by boys or girls, *and* the observation of the children's actual toy use, found that whilst children of 2 years of age upward showed a generalised knowledge of boys and girls toy use, which increases with age up until the fifth year. However, there was a near zero correlation between this awareness and the actual toy use of any particular child. This finding is consistent with Eisenberg et al's (1982) study which reported that 3 and 4 year olds seldom referred to gender-stereotypes when explaining their own choice of toys during play. They conclude,

"It is questionable that children's sex-typed preferences are the results of conscious attempts to act in accordance with sex-role stereotypes." (pg.81)

These two later studies highlight one of the central problems with the Kohlbergian approach to gender development; the relationship between gender knowledge and gender behaviour. Indeed, it may be that these two aspects, knowledge and behaviour, have *different* developmental histories....

In summary, there appears to be little support for Kohlberg's proposal that an awareness of gender-roles *necessarily* lead young children to develop a preference for their own gender-role

or to organise their own behaviour accordingly. Nor is there any evidence that gender-role preference arises from an inability to understand the constancy of gender.

### 3.1.5. Rationale for the present study

The specific aims of this study are to investigate children's ability to gender-label; to understand the relationship between gender and genital form; gender constancy; and gender awareness in terms of friend and toy choice. Its function in the thesis is to demonstrate the research questions asked within the cognitive-developmental approach and the methods engaged to meet these questions.

In more general terms, the study is concerned with an examination of the gender knowledge possessed by the group of children who constitute the main subject pool for the research in this thesis. In doing this, the study is tackling several issues;

i) it acts as an example of the type of research promoted by the cognitive-developmental approach of Kohlberg

ii) it thus tests certain propositions of the Kohlberg (1966) argument

iii) in establishing the level of gender awareness in this particular group of children a comparison baseline is provided to which the case study children presented in Chapter Seven can be compared

iv) it enables comparisons to be made between this particular sample of children and the wider child population as represented in the gender research literature

v) finally the study performs a crucial function for me, the researcher, in allowing me to become familiar with engaging in child research and with working with this particular group of children.



## 3.2. Method

### 3.2.1. Subjects

The total sample for this study were 40 boys and 40 girls. These constituted two independent groups, 'nursery' and 'school', 20 boys and 20 girls in each. All 80 children came from working class homes and attended nursery or first school on the housing estate where they lived. The 40 nursery children (mean age of 4yrs 3mths, with the range 3yrs 9mths to 4yrs 11mths) were attenders of the nursery which acted as the base site for all the research in this thesis. The 40 school children (mean age of 5yrs 8mths, with the range 5yrs 2mths to 6yrs 4mths) attended the two first schools into which the nursery fed. In the particular local education authority in which these schools are sited, entry to full-time education occurred at the beginning of the term following the child's fifth birthday.

### 3.2.2. Procedure

A direct interview technique was used, with each child being interviewed individually. The interviews lasted approximately 15 minutes and took place in a side room of the nursery or school which the children were familiar with for small group work. The interview was divided into several sections, each probing particular areas of the child's gender knowledge. The interview schedule consisted of the following questions;

#### 'Gender labelling test'

This test consisted initially of a direct question, "Are you a boy/girl?". The child is then asked to name members of their

family. Having done this the child was then asked if each of the named family members are boys/girls.

#### 'Knowledge of genitalia'

Six black-and-white photographs were used. Each photograph showed a naked child and was printed so that the head was missing from the top of the photograph (these were the same photographs as used by Henshall, 1983). Three photographs were of boys and three of girls. All were of children playing outside with no clothes on during the summer. Care was taken to ensure that the form of the genitalia was clearly visible and that no other gender cues were present. Each child was asked by the experimenter if they could help out with sorting the photographs. They were told that the experimenter was "no good" at taking photographs and when these ones had been returned from the developers all the children's heads were missing from the photographs. So could the child help the experimenter and say which were photographs of boys and which were of girls? The photographs were presented to the child one at a time, with the order of presentation randomised. After the child had made a decision about each photograph they were asked to explain why it was a boy or a girl. Following the presentation and decisions on all six photographs the child was re-shown a pair of photographs, one boy and one girl, and asked to say which was like themselves.

#### 'Gender constancy test'

This test consisted of the following questions;

1. When you were a baby were you a boy or a girl?
2. When you are older will you be a boy or a girl?

3. If you changed your clothes and put on a dress/trousers would you be a boy/girl?
4. If 'X' (opposite sex friend) changed their clothes and put on a dress/trousers would they be a boy or a girl?

#### 'Favourite toys'

The child was asked to name two toys which boys liked playing with and two toys which girls like playing with.

#### 'Friends'

The child was asked to name their two best friends.

### 3.3. Results

#### 'Gender labelling test'

All 80 children in the study were able to correctly label themselves as a boy or a girl. They were also able to list their family members (including family pets) and correctly label them as a boy or a girl. As all 80 children were able to gender-label correctly no statistical test was carried out on this data.

#### 'Knowledge of genitalia'

All 80 children received a simple 'pass' or 'fail' score on this part of the interview. A child was coded as 'pass' only if they were able, i) to correctly identify each photograph as being a boy or a girl, ii) on being asked how they knew it was a photograph of a boy or a girl the child made reference to genitalia, either by pointing or naming the genitals in some way, and iii) correctly identifying an appropriate photograph as being like their own genitalia. A child was coded as 'fail' if they failed to reach any of these three criteria.

In the nursery group 11 children were coded as 'fail', whilst the

remaining 29 children were coded as 'pass'. A 2x2 Chi square showed there to be no significant difference between boys and girls on this measure ( $\chi^2(df=1)=0.0003$ , n.s.). However, a Stepwise Regression Analysis carried out on this data with age as a variable showed that there was a relationship between achieving a 'pass' and age ( $\chi^2(df=1)=28.498$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Looking at the data suggests that children below 4 years of age 'fail' on this measure and children above 4 years of age 'pass'. Indeed, a 2x2 Chi square performed on this data when it is divided on the criteria of "under and over 4 years of age" shows a significant difference ( $\chi^2(df=1)=25.418$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Although it must be noted that whilst no child over 4 years of age achieved a 'fail', five children under 4 years of age did achieve a 'pass'.

All children in the school group achieved a 'pass' on this part of the interview thus no statistical test was carried out on this data.

#### 'Gender constancy'

As above all 80 children were coded on this part of the interview as either 'pass' or 'fail'. A child was coded as 'pass' if they answered all of the questions correctly and coded 'fail' if any of the questions were answered incorrectly.

Of the 40 nursery group children 25 were coded as 'pass' and 15 as 'fail'. A 2x2 Chi square carried out on this data revealed there to be no significant difference between boys and girls on this criteria ( $\chi^2(df=1)=0.426$ , n.s.). A Stepwise Regression Analysis was performed on the data with age as the variable which

showed a relationship between achieving a 'pass' and age ( $\chi^2(df=1)=44.988, p<0.001$ ). As with 'Knowledge of genitalia' reported above, a split in the data occurs around 4 years of age. However, unlike above, only one child below the age of 4 years achieved a 'pass' on this part of the interview. A 2x2 Chi square carried out on the scores of this group when organised into "under and over 4 years of age" showed a significant difference between the groups ( $\chi^2(df=1)=44.223, p<0.001$ ).

Again, as with the section relating to 'Knowledge of genitalia' all children in the school group achieved a 'pass' on this aspect of the data, thus no statistical tests were carried out on this portion of the data.

#### 'Favourite toys'

In this section of the interview the child was asked to name two favourite toys of boys and two favourite toys of girls. Unlike Henshall (1983) it was decided that the child should be given the freedom to produce their own categories of toys and not ask the child to rate photographs of toys as being boy's toys or girl's toys. However, a number of children gave activities such as 'water-play' or 'running' rather than toys per se, or produced brand name toys such as *Sindy* rather than generic titles such as 'doll', which resulted in the production of approximately 24 categories. To allow statistical analysis to be carried out on this data the categories were re-organised into just three categories; Gross Motor Toys/Activities which covers such activities as 'running' or 'climbing' and toys such as bikes or

scooters; Fine Motor Toys/Activities which consisted of such activities as 'painting' or 'water-play' and toys such as puzzles or *Lego* building bricks; Pretend/Fantasy Play which consisted of such activities as the 'home-corner' and 'dressing-up' and toys such as dolls or model cars. However, before putting aside the original categories given by the children it is interesting to note that a 2x2 Chi square performed on the *amount* of categories produced by the nursery group gave a significant difference, showing that both boys and girls produced more categories for same- rather than opposite-sex ( $\chi^2(df=1)=4.01, p<0.05$ ). This was not found to be the case for the school group ( $\chi^2(df=1)=1.54, n.s.$ ), although it must be pointed out that this is because the girls in this group gave more categories for what boys played with than boys themselves did.

Figures 3.1. and 3.2. refer to the data produced by the nursery group. A 3x2 Chi square performed on the data presented in Fig. 3.1. shows there to be no significant difference between what boys and girls said boys played with ( $\chi^2(df=2)=1.8, n.s.$ ). A similar test carried out on the data presented in Fig. 3.2. shows that there is also no significant difference between what boys and girls said girls played with ( $\chi^2(df=2)=5.48, n.s.$ ). However, a 3x2 Chi square performed on the data presented in Fig. 3.5. does show a significant difference ( $\chi^2(df=2)=42.62, p<0.001$ ). Thus, both boys and girls agreed that boys and girls play with different activities/toys, and girls were thought to engage in more pretend/fantasy play than boys.

A similar pattern of results was revealed in analysing the data for the school group presented in Figs. 3.3. and 3.4.. 3x2 Chi square tests carried out on the data in these two figures shows no significant differences between what boys and girls said boys play with ( $\chi^2(df=2)=0.04, n.s.$ ) and girls play with ( $\chi^2(df=2)=4.56, n.s.$ ). As with the nursery group, boys and girls agreed that boys and girls play with different activities/toys ( $\chi^2(df=2)=38.6, p<0.001$ ), boys engaging in more gross and fine motor activities/toys than girls, and girls in more pretend/fantasy play than boys. (Fig. 3.6)

A comparison between the two groups showed that there was no significant difference between them on what boys play with ( $\chi^2(df=2)=5.16, n.s.$ ), and on what girls play with ( $\chi^2(df=2)=1.58, n.s.$ ). (Figs. 3.7 & 3.8)

To sum up this section; children in both groups were agreed on what boys and girls play with, and that what they play with is different, with boys being considered to engage in more gross and fine motor activities/toys, and girls being considered to engage in more pretend/fantasy.

#### 'Friends'

The data produced under this category was analysed in terms of the sex of respondent and the sex of the friends. Responses were coded as either; i) same-sex, where the two best friends given were of the same sex as the respondent, ii) opposite-sex, where the two best friends given were of the opposite to the respondent, iii) mixed-sex, where one best friend given was of

the same sex as the respondent and the other best friend given was of the opposite sex to the respondent.

The data on sex of friends is presented in Tab. 3.1. 3x2 Chi squares performed on this data revealed that there was no significant sex difference in the nursery group ( $\chi^2(df=2)=2.56, n.s.$ ) or in the school group ( $\chi^2(df=2)=0.228, n.s.$ ). However, a further 3x2 Chi square performed on the data of all 80 children did show a significant difference between the nursery and school groups ( $\chi^2(df=2)=51.44, p<0.001$ ). With the nursery group giving a majority of mixed-sex best friends and the school group giving a majority of same-sex friends.

#### 3.4. Discussion

The results of this study should come as no surprise to those people who have prolonged close contact with children. However, some of the findings do disagree with some of the previous research, and in particular with Kohlberg's proposals concerning his "cognitive-developmental analysis of children's sex-role concepts and attitudes" (1966).

All children taking part in this study were able to correctly label themselves and other people in terms of gender. This should not be unexpected in that the youngest child in the study was 3 years 8 months old, which is well above the age at which children gender-label correctly in previous studies (Kuhn et al., 1978; Slaby & Frey, 1975; Thompson, 1975). One cannot, of course, conclude from this that children have an irreversible 'gender



identity' as Kohlberg does. One can only conclude that by this age children have learnt to apply gender labels correctly, and can only speculate about the underlying relationships that the child is using as the basis for these categorisations.

Henshall (1983) in his study of children's knowledge of genitalia found that 79% of those children over 4 years of age showed an understanding of the relationship between genital form and gender. Using the same test materials the present study replicates Henshall's findings in that all children in the study over 4 years of age achieved a 'pass' on this measure. However, 4 years of age should not be seen as the 'magic' period for acquiring an understanding of this relationship, as five children under 4 years of age also achieved a 'pass' on this task. These results, along with the results of the work of Henshall, do *not* concur with the assertions of the kind Kohlberg (1966) makes,

"Children do not form clear general concepts of genital differences until age 5-7, even when they are extensively enlightened by their parents." (pg.104)

It seems that children *do* possess this knowledge but that the failure of previous studies (Butler, 1952; Conn & Kanner, 1947; Katcher, 1955; Thompson & Bentler, 1971; Levin et al., 1972) to find similar results may be due to, i) the subject matter being a taboo area, and/or ii) the use of ecologically invalid (often bizarre) tasks.

The results gained in this task, when using an ecologically valid method, pose problems for Kohlberg's theory. These problems lie not in the fact that at this age children should not have this

understanding of the relationship between genital form and gender, but in the relationship Kohlberg posits between knowledge of genitalia and gender constancy. The view that the attainment of gender constancy is dependent upon the child's realisation that their gender is determined by the presence of a particular set of genitalia rather than upon such social cues as clothing, hairstyle, etc..

As with the results pertaining to knowledge of genitalia a similar pattern emerges from the data relating to gender constancy. Those children over 4 years of age appear to have obtained gender constancy and those under 4 years of age appear not to have. This supports the findings of Henshall (1983) despite the use of a direct questioning method instead of the 'story-method' developed by Henshall. On the basis of these results one could suggest that Kohlberg is correct in assuming a relationship between knowledge of genitalia and gender constancy but that he simply made a mistake about the age at which this understanding is acquired. Evidence of this can be found if one compares the sets of data for 'gender constancy' and 'knowledge of genitalia'. No child who failed on the 'knowledge of genitalia' task obtained 'gender constancy', however, children who did not obtain 'gender constancy' did not necessarily fail on the 'knowledge of genitalia' task; ie. of the fifteen children who failed to obtain 'gender constancy' only eleven failed the 'knowledge of genitalia' task. This would support the argument that 'knowledge of genitalia' is a precursor to 'gender constancy', although on the basis of such few cases it is

impossible to be anything other than tentative on this matter.

It is also necessary to return at this point to the discussion raised in the introductory section of this chapter concerning the validity of the 'gender constancy' concept. Indeed, direct questions which would measure this concept were difficult to construct. For example, the questions used here were unbalanced, in that a girl wearing trousers is not seen as being as 'socially perverse' as a boy wearing a dress. It is interesting that in Henshall's (1983) gender constancy story the main character is a boy and not a girl. One could suggest 'gender constancy' studies reveal more about the child's understanding of social rules rather than about its understanding of the genital basis of gender.

Returning to the data presented here, it has been suggested that Kohlberg might have been correct in assuming a relationship between knowledge of genitalia and gender constancy, but that he merely misjudged the timing of this event. In Kohlberg's original formulation he asserts that the lack of gender constancy and the egocentric nature of the 5-7 year old leads the child to adhere rigidly to like-sex, thus like-gender attitudes and behaviour in order to maintain a stable gender identity; thus the child would prefer same-sex friends and engage in gender stereotyped toy choice. Once gender constancy has been obtained the non-egocentric, gender confident child adheres less rigidly to these gender characteristics. If Kohlberg is simply mistaken as to the age of acquisition of gender constancy, but his argument overall

is accurate, one would still expect the same developmental process to be in operation at this younger age. The data referring to friend choice and favourite toys should give some indication as to how rigidly the child adheres to stereotyped gender-roles, and thus the accuracy of Kohlberg's developmental process.

The results relating to favourite toys are similar to those presented by Henshall (1983) who found that children do possess an awareness of the differential toy use of boys and girls. Indeed, one could argue that as children produce more categories of toy/activity for their own sex than for the opposite-sex they are using 'stereotypes', especially as the few categories that are produced for the opposite-sex in the un-reorganised form tend to be an exaggerated match of that category produced by the same-sex.

A further problem with this data is that the wording of the task resulted in the child producing a generalised view of what boys and girls play with. A different picture may well have been gained if the child had been asked to name their own favourite toys. On the whole this set of data by itself throws little light on the accuracy of Kohlberg's proposed relationship between gender constancy and adherence to gender-role.

Looking at the friend choice data the majority of the nursery group children gave mixed-sex friends, whilst the majority of school group children gave same-sex best friends. Indeed, the most frequent comment elicited at this stage of the interview for

the school based group was "I hate boys/girls". If Kohlberg's original thesis is correct one would predict that the supposedly gender-insecure nursery group would be rigidly adhering to all like-gender things, ie. same-sex friends, whilst the school group would be less gender-insecure and engage in more mixed-sex friendships. The present data does not support this.

Alternatively, taking the argument that Kohlberg simply made an error in the age at which gender constancy was obtained but that his overall thesis was correct, one would predict that the now gender-confident nursery group would engage in mixed-sex friendships and that this would be *maintained* by the older school group. Once again the present data does not support this.

However, the current findings *do* support the findings of previous studies (Marcus & Overton, 1978; Eisenberg et al., 1982; Henshall, 1983) in suggesting that there is not a direct relationship between gender constancy and gender-typed attitudes or behaviour.

In order to make sense of this data one needs to step outside of the confines of the individual child. One needs to consider the social contexts in which this data has been collected; the differing worlds of nursery and school. This data suggests that changes in friendship structures are brought about by this transition in the child's social worlds. It is not that children before going to school do not have mixed-sex best friends, but that children appear to *stop* having them when they enter full-time education, and turn instead to making same-sex

friendships.

In summary, the results of the Kohlbergian-style study suggest that by 4 years of age this particular group of children can correctly label people by gender, they are aware of the relationship between genital form and gender, they also have an awareness of the social conventions surrounding gender, and of the differential toy use of boys and girls. This data is in agreement with recent research in the area, indicating that the population of children presented here is not 'abnormal'. However, as the 'best friend' data suggests, there appears to be very little relationship between the child's *knowledge* of boys and girls and their actual *practice* of being a boy or a girl. This work thus highlights the main difficulties with Kohlberg's theory relating to gender development; it attempts to explain the child's knowledge of gender, and hence the child's practice of gender, *without* recourse to the social world in which the child lives.

In conducting this experiment I have demonstrated the rationale supporting the questions asked, and methods used in a cognitive-developmental approach to studying gender development. The experiment presented in the following chapter engages in a similar process, but this time in respect of those studies which, being derived from social learning theory, have focussed on the social elements to which the child is exposed.

BEST FRIENDS	NURSERY GROUP	SCHOOL GROUP
SAME-SEX	3	35
OPPOSITE-SEX	2	0
MIXED-SEX	35	5

Table 3.1. Sex of 'best friends' named in interview by pre-school and school groups.

REQUENCY  
CATEGORY  
GIVEN

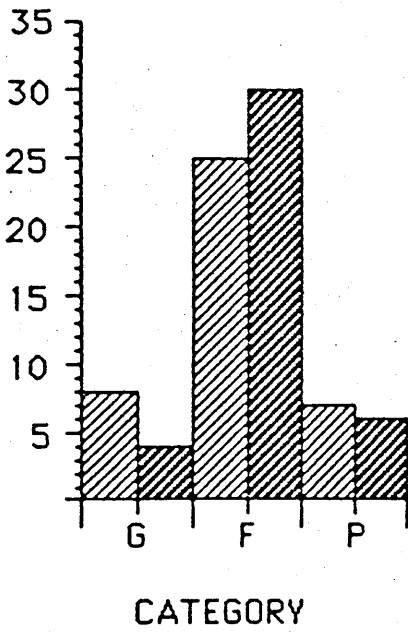


Fig. 3.1. What boys play with Pre-School Group.

FREQUENCY  
CATEGORY  
GIVEN

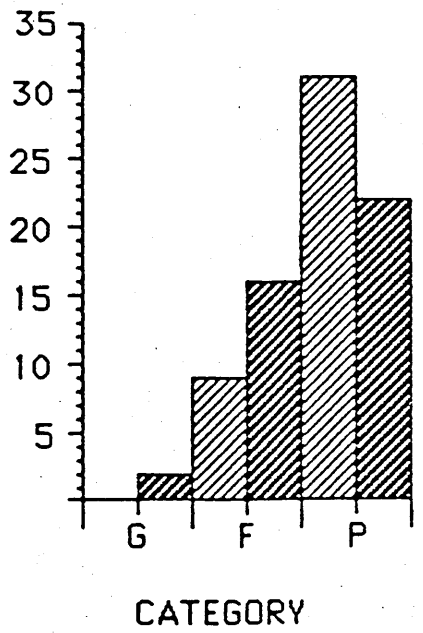


Fig. 3.2. What girls play with Pre-School Group.

REQUENCY  
CATEGORY  
GIVEN

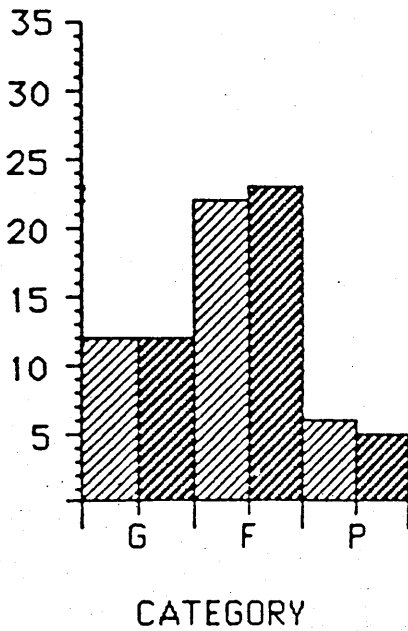


Fig. 3.3. What boys play with School Group.

FREQUENCY  
CATEGORY  
GIVEN

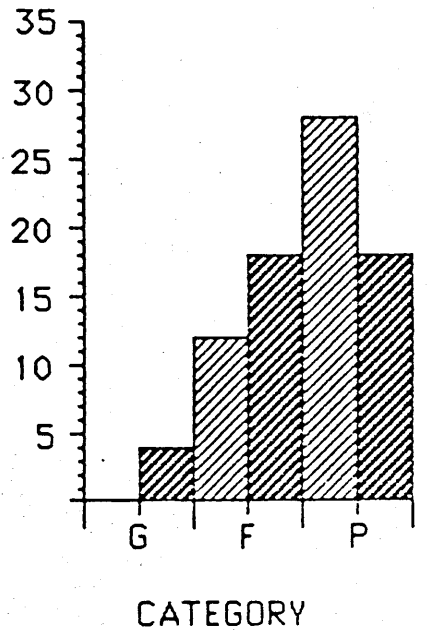




Fig. 3.4. What girls play with School Group.

Key:  = What boys said.  
 = What girls said.

G = Gross Motor Activities/Toys.  
 F = Fine Motor Activities/Toys.  
 P = Pretend/Fantasy Play.



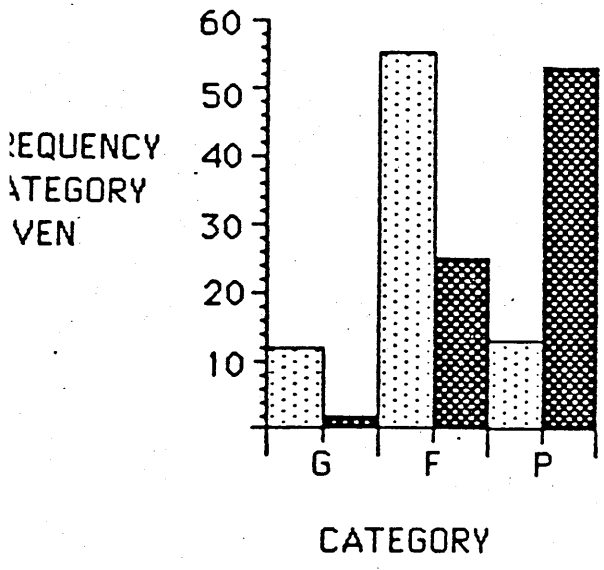


Fig. 3.5. What boys and girls play with - Pre-School Group.

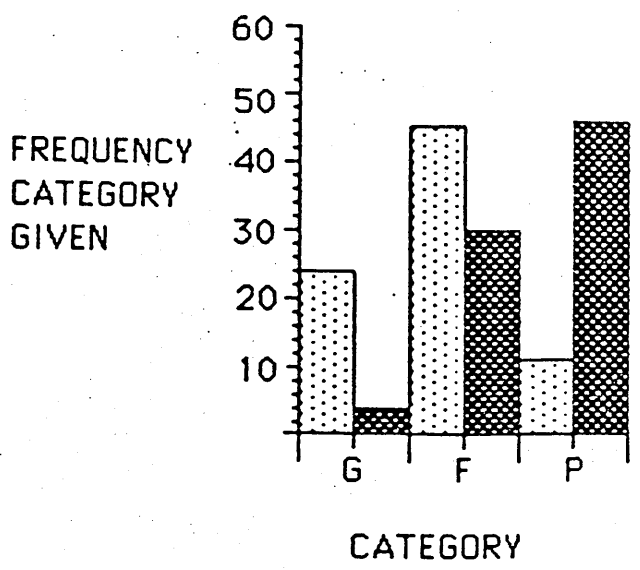


Fig. 3.6. What boys and girls play with - School Group.

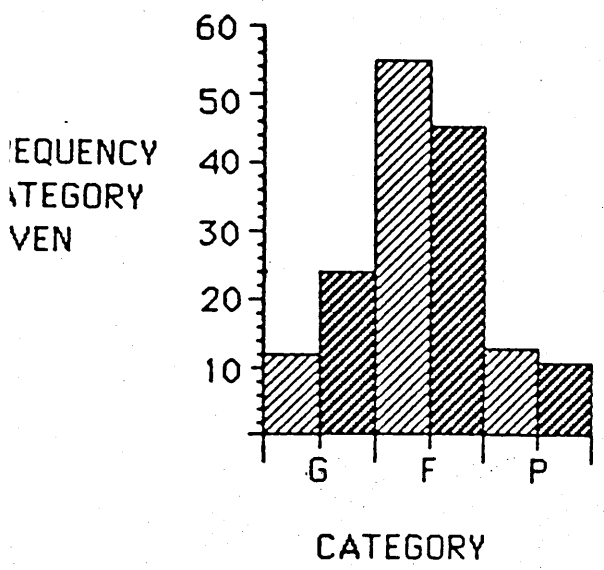


Fig. 3.7. What boys play with - Pre-School and School Groups.

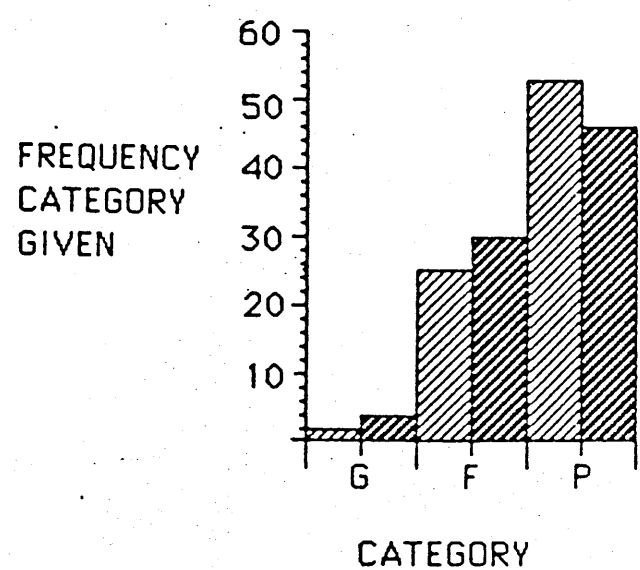


Fig. 3.8. What girls play with - Pre-School and School Groups.

Key:   
 = What boys play with.   
 = What girls play with.   
 = What Pre-School children said.   
 = What School children said.

G = Gross Motor Activities/Toys.   
 F = Fine Motor Activities/Toys.   
 P = Pretend/Fantasy Play.

## CHAPTER FOUR: A SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY APPROACH

### Contents

- 4.1. Introduction
  - 4.1.1. Rationale for the present study
- 4.2. Method
  - 4.2.1. Subjects
  - 4.2.2. Procedure
- 4.3. Results
- 4.4. Discussion

### 4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter we explored some of the basic propositions of the cognitive-developmental approach to gender development. In doing this we gained an understanding of what gender-knowledge is in possession of the child pre-, and post-entry into full-time education. We have also extracted certain problems inherent in this approach. In this chapter the focus is upon the most important of those problems; the relationship between the child's gender-knowledge and the child's gender-behaviour. As in the previous chapter the study presented here will also serve as a vehicle for discussing some of the problems raised by the social learning approach to gender development.

The general principles of modern social learning theory, utilised by Mischel (1966, 1970) in describing the acquisition of sex-typed behaviour, were evolved by Rotter (1954) and Bandura & Walters (1963) out of the behaviourist school of thought, where the child is viewed as a "vast potentiality that can be fashioned

by direct and vicarious experience into a variety of forms within biological limits" (Bandura, 1977). Priority in the behaviourist framework is given to measuring 'observable' behaviour, with the 'unobservable' cognitions and emotions being considered of little immediate importance.

The initial interest here is to demonstrate how particular stimulus-response relationships may be altered experimentally by altering the reinforcements. Bandura & Walters (1963), whilst continuing to regard direct reinforcement as a contributory factor in the learning of social behaviour, placed greater emphasis upon the process of *imitation* or *observational learning*. Here, direct rewards and punishments are not necessary to promote learning; for example one does not have to directly experience a punishment for stealing, to know that engaging in stealing behaviour will result in some form of punishment. This example also indicates that certain cognitive factors are alluded to in this emphasis upon observational learning, eg. attentional and retentional processes. Whilst Bandura & Walters do refer to cognitive processes they do not posit a causal relationship between these cognitions and the learning of behaviour.

Mischel's (1966) initial application of social learning theory to the acquisition of sex-typed behaviours, where 'sex-typed behaviours' are defined as behaviours that typically elicit different rewards for one sex than the other, occurred in Maccoby's (1966), *The Development of Sex Differences*. This volume also contained the previously discussed Kohlberg paper,

and taken together the two papers have been considered in the subsequent gender literature to be the classic position papers on the subject. (It is interesting to note that Mischel, like Kohlberg, uses the pre-fix 'sex-' indicating an underlying biological assumption.) Mischel went on to develop his ideas in a further paper published in 1970.

According to Mischel's (1966, 1970) approach, acquisition and performance of sex-typed behaviours can be described by the same learning principles used to analyse any other aspect of an individual's behaviour. Despite Mischel's focus upon sex-typed behaviour, the fact that this approach can be attached to any aspect of the child's social development is reflected in his refusal to be tied down specifically to the case of gender acquisition, preferring instead to talk about general mechanisms of the socialisation process, using sex-typed behaviour as an example of the mechanisms in action. This leaves both the reader of Mischel's work, and the theory itself, inadequately informed as to the exact order of events in the learning process.

In contrast to the syllogism he uses to describe his own theory, Kohlberg (1966) offers the following one for the social learning approach to gender development,

"I want rewards, I am rewarded for doing boy things, therefore I want to be a boy." (pg.89)

Unlike the cognitive-developmental approach, where the child actively employ their self-categorisation of boy/girl as the basis for organising the learning of gender attitudes and

behaviour, the social learning approach, as stated by Mischel, proposes that this self-categorisation develops out of, and is maintained by, the learning of the correct gender role. Thus, whilst Kohlberg places the emphasis upon the development of gender conceptual networks which provide the framework for the learning of gender role, Mischel focuses primarily upon the learning of gender behaviour.

Thus, the kernel of Mischel's argument centres around Kohlberg's notion of the way in which the child, after having made the self-categorisation of boy/girl, then goes on to identify with attitudes, acts and objects consistent with being a boy or a girl. Mischel (1970) doubts the direct nature of the relationship between self category and behaviour and suggests that this 'identify with' mechanism cannot by itself account for the child's behaviour for there is a vast array of behaviours that could be adopted as acceptable ways of being a boy or a girl. Thus, Mischel, pushing cognition into the closet, equates the concept of imitation, or observational learning, with the process of identification (Kohlberg's 'identify with' mechanism),

"Both imitation and identification refer to the tendency for a person to reproduce the actions, attitudes, or emotional responses exhibited by real-life or symbolised models." (1970, pg.28)

It should be noted that both Kohlberg and Mischel derive their notions of identification from the work of Freud, yet neither theorist place great emphasis upon affect.

After reviewing many of the attempts that have been made to differentiate between imitation and identification Bandura (1969)

concludes that there is little agreement over the differentiating criteria, with some theorists arguing that imitation causes identification, and others assuming that identification produces imitation. Bandura goes on to argue that, for the sake of simplicity, imitation, identification and observational learning should be used synonymously on the grounds that the same basic learning processes are involved in each. Thus with emphasis being placed upon imitation, Mischel is able to refute Kohlberg's (1966) claim that social learning theory neglects cognitive processes, for, as described above, an explanation of the observational learning of complex social behaviours is heavily dependent such cognitive processes.

A further role for cognition in social learning theory arrives in the form of the 'self-regulatory' process. During the course of development, sex differences in the value and acquired meaning of stimuli become increasingly independent of external reinforcement, direct or vicarious, and are regulated to a large extent by the person's own self-reactions. Thus for Mischel, the child is capable of learning many different behaviours, of which the majority will be sex-typed; but those which are *not* sex-typed will become excluded from the child's behavioural repertoire as the child gains increasing reassurance from their performed behaviour that they are a boy/girl. Eventually this self-regulatory mechanism will come to exclude the learning of inappropriate sex-typed behaviour altogether. Thus the self-regulatory mechanism initially imposes a disparity between the

learning of a behaviour and the performance of that same behaviour, and later comes to govern the learning of behaviour itself.

Despite a recognition of cognition, the focus firmly placed upon observational learning and with statements being made such as,

"People learn sex roles through their eyes and ears by observing other persons and events and not merely from the consequences of their own behaviour." (1970, pg.29)

Mischel *also* clearly locates the learning process firmly in the realm of the social world. Having done this he quickly retreats to the safe haven of biology:

"Cross-cultural consistencies in sex roles probably reflect differences in the role of men and women within the family and in the economic institutions of the society. These roles in turn, are linked to biological sex differences."  
(1970,pg.30)

It is these "biological sex differences" which provide the "biological limits" to the "vast potentiality" that can be shaped through observational learning.

In summary the social learning position is as follows. Despite the fact that the 2-3 year old can correctly gender-label self and others, this cognitive ability is not seen as the primary organiser for the learning of sex-typed behaviour. Instead, the child, for some mysterious (perhaps biological) reason comes to imitate certain 'models'. As a consequence of both this and the differential responses from those around the child to the performance of these learned behaviours, a gender identity, or gender self-regulation mechanism arises. The ages at, or order in which these events occur are not specified. Indeed, one becomes

extremely frustrated when reading Mischel's work for there appears to be so many 'let-out' clauses to his theory, eg. the numerous factors for why a model might be imitated, ranging from being of the same-sex as the viewer, through to the model's received reward/punishment for engaging in the behaviour, to the perceived power of the model. This has the effect of reducing the explanatory power of the theory.

For example, the most obvious hypothesis advanced with regard to the learning of sex-typed behaviours is that which deals with the variables of sex of observer and sex of model. This hypothesis, known as the like-sex hypothesis, predicts that children of the same sex as the model will display greater imitation than children of the opposite sex. Where models of both sexes are used, an interaction of these variables is predicted in which more children imitate same-sex models than opposite-sex models (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961); Grusec & Brinker, 1972; Wolf, 1973). Mischel does not refute this like-sex hypothesis, but suggests that the child's imitation of the model will be affected at any time by the reward given to the model's behaviour (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1963), and that the performance of the imitated behaviour can be broken down into many elements which can be re-combined into novel sequences of behaviour. Hence,

"Children's sex-typed patterns and preferences are not merely a child-sized version of those displayed by the same-sex parent." (Mischel, 1970, pg.31)

To determine the amount of support which has accumulated in the literature for this like-sex hypothesis, a review of previous research on imitation in children was undertaken by Barkley et



al. (1977). To be eligible for this review, each study had to;

- (a) use children of both sexes aged twelve years or younger,
- (b) use human models presented live or on film,
- (c) counterbalance the sex of the model with sex of observer when both sexes of models were used,
- (d) report results examining effects of sex of observer with sex of model.

A total of 81 studies were found which met these criteria. Of these only 18 supported the like-sex hypothesis in finding the predicted main effects or interactions for these variables. More than three times this figure, 59 studies, failed to support the like-sex hypothesis. Only 4 studies were inconclusive. The writers conclude,

"This review clearly indicates that the like-sex hypothesis is inadequate in accounting for the findings of these studies." (1977, pg.721)

Barkley et al. (1977), having conducted this review, go on to present a study in which it is found that it is the perceived appropriateness of the behaviour to the observer which has a greater impact upon imitation than the sex of the model. A male model engaging in 'feminine' behaviour is imitated by girls more readily than it is by boys, and similarly a female model engaging in 'masculine' behaviour is imitated more by boys than it is by girls. It is difficult for social learning theory to accommodate these findings without changing the definition of social learning theory. If this is done is it still social learning theory? For example, cognition must be given a greater standing in the theory if one is to consider the child making decisions about the

appropriateness of a specific behaviour in relation to their sex, for this would imply a causal relationship between cognition and the learning process; something which Mischel denies.

Social learning theory is important for the emphasis it places upon the role of the social world in determining gender development, an element which is at least forgotten, if not lost in Kohlberg's approach. In short, social learning theory provides a general mechanism, "observational learning", by which gender behaviour might be acquired, but cannot *in itself* give an adequate explanation of gender development.

It has already been stated that an enormous amount of research has been stimulated by Mischel's approach. This research varies considerably in its experimental design. Much of the early work, such as the studies reviewed by Barkley et al. (1977) above, use the original experiments of Bandura as their blueprint. Such an experiment places observational learning within a laboratory context; one group of children (the experimental group) are exposed to real-life, or film-presented, images of an adult (the model) engaging in some form of behaviour (eg. playing in an 'aggressive' manner) whilst another group of children (the control group) receive no exposure to such a model. Both groups are then placed in the context of the model, and their subsequent behaviour observed. The experimenter is looking for a causal relationship between exposure to the model and the child's subsequent behaviour. In the introduction to her 1959 paper *Learning by imitation in kindergarten children* Rosenblith states

the questions that these studies set out to answer,

- "(a) Does having a model lead to a greater improvement in learning than additional experience only?
- (b) Is the extent of a child's learning by copying an adult 'leader' or model affected by the sex of the leader?
- (c) Does the way in which the leader treats the child immediately before the copying session affect learning?"  
(pg.69)

However, as Barkley et al. (1977) suggest there has been many such studies accompanied by as many disparate conclusions. Fagot (1985) sums up,

"Existing studies imply that peers', parents' and teachers' differential reinforcement of sex-typed behaviour of young children does exist in the natural environment, but the process by which the children use such information is not at all clear." (pg.1097)

To a large extent this form of enquiry does not speculate upon the child's cognitions. However, if one is to gain some insight into Kohlberg's and Mischel's central disagreement - the order in which gender identity and gender role appear - one has to investigate the relationship between the child's knowledge of gender and its gender behaviour.

Henshall (1983) looked at the pre-school child's awareness of gender differences in toy use, and the child's behaviour with toys. His findings do not support Kohlberg's proposal that children of that age necessarily prefer and identify with the characteristics they have learned to be associated with their own gender. He presents a near zero correlation between children's awareness of gender differences in toy use and the extent to which their own use of toys actually conformed to that pattern of gender differences. This finding is consistent with that of

Eisenberg et al.'s (1982) finding that 3 and 4 year olds seldom referred to gender stereotypes when explaining their own choice of toys.

Attempts have also been made to look at how the child's gender behaviour might change in relation to its understanding of Kohlberg's gender concepts. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, concepts such as 'gender constancy' are fraught with problems, and the data reported by these attempts are clouded by this confusion. Smetana & Letourneau (1984) found that pre-gender-constant girls engage in more same-sex interactions than gender-constant girls. This did not appear to be the case for boys who engaged in the same level of same-sex interactions regardless of gender constancy. Similarly, O'Brian & Huston (1985) found that, independent of gender knowledge, girls play with 'feminine' toys increased with age, whilst boys play with 'masculine' toys remained constant. This view is confirmed by Henshall's study where once again the child's toy use for both boys and girls appeared to be independent of gender knowledge.

What is clear from these studies is that no simple relationship exists between gender knowledge and gender behaviour, and that the nature of such a relationship may be different for boys and girls.

#### 4.1.1 Rationale for the present study

The present study has its roots in the social learning tradition in that it focuses upon the child in its social world. The

specific aims of the study were to consider; who are children playing with; what toys are children playing with; the style of interaction experienced by the child; the relationship between the child's gender knowledge and gender behaviour.

As with the work reported in the previous chapter this study also performs a crucial function in allowing the researcher to become familiar with both the observation-style method, and this particular group of children. Furthermore, this experiment is important within the argument of the thesis in demonstrating the type of questions asked, and the methods used to address them, by the social learning theory approach.

## 4.2. Method

### 4.2.1. Subjects

The total sample for the study was 20 children, 10 boys and 10 girls. The mean age of the sample was 4yrs 5mths, with an age range of 3yrs 8mths to 4yrs 11mths. All 20 children in this study had been interviewed, two weeks prior to being observed, with respect to their gender knowledge. This group of children formed part of the 40 children in the nursery group reported in the previous chapter. All children were from working-class homes, and attended the nursery which acted as the base site for the research in this thesis.

### 4.2.2. Procedure

Each child was observed for a continuous period of 15 minutes.

The observation took place during a free play situation in the environment of the nursery. The nursery and its garden offered a wide range of toys and activities, eg. slide, sand tray, water play, painting, large wooden bricks, dressing-up box, home corner, jigsaws, books, Lego, baby dolls, scooters, dough play, sit-and-ride tractor, etc.. These toys and activities were freely available to all children. The child's behaviour, including sex of play partner(s) and activity/toy played with, were dictated by the observer into a mini-tape recorder at 10 second intervals throughout the 15 minute period.

#### 4.3. Results

The data produced by this study took the form of a series of frequency counts which were amenable to statistical analysis using the 't-test'.

Frequency counts were made of the dyadic interactions engaged in by each child during the 15 minute observation period. A dyadic interaction was judged to have occurred if one child engaged in verbal or non-verbal contact with another child. The form of dyadic interactions ranged from joint play with Lego, through comforting a child if upset, to hitting a child. All interactions were with peers, and not with adults.

There was a total of 111 such interactions for the boys group, giving a mean of 11.1 interactions per 15 minute observation period. For the girls group there was a total of 119 dyadic interactions, giving a mean of 11.9 interactions per 15 minute

observation period. A t-test showed there to be no significant difference between the two groups in the total number of interactions ( $t=0.46$ , n.s. ( $df=18$ )). However, when separate t-tests were carried out on both the boy and the girl groups it was found that boys interacted with more boys (mean=7.2) than girls (mean=3.8) ( $t=3.122$ ,  $p<0.01$ ( $df=9$ )), and girls also interacted with more boys (mean=7.8) than girls (mean=4.1) ( $t=1.91$ ,  $p,0.05$ ( $df=9$ )).(See Fig. 4.2.)

The dyadic interactions were then broken down into positive and negative interactions and by whether they were initiated or received interactions. Positive interactions were characterised by joint play and co-operation, whilst negative interactions were characterised by arguing, fighting, hitting, and non-cooperation. Initiated interactions were ones in which the target child initiated the interaction and a received interaction was one in which the target child was the recipient of an interaction from another child.

Once again t-tests were carried out on the frequency data. There was no significant difference between groups on the total amount of positive interactions ( $t=1.40$ , n.s. ( $df=18$ )); boys having a mean of 4.8 positive interactions per observation and girls a mean of 5.8. Similarly there was no significant difference between groups in the amount of negative interactions engaged in ( $t=0.06$ , n.s. ( $df=18$ )); boys having a mean of 6.0 negative interactions per observation and girls a mean of 6.1. On further analysis it was shown that boys initiated more negative

interactions with boys (mean=3.2) than with girls (mean=1.0) ( $t=3.01$ ,  $p<0.01$  ( $df=9$ )). On the same measure girls also initiated more negative interactions with boys (mean=2.2) than with girls (mean=0.9) ( $t=2.00$ ,  $p<0.05$  ( $df=9$ )). (see Fig. 4.3.)

To sum up this section, it appears that there is no overall difference in the amount of dyadic interactions that the two groups engage in. However, both boys and girls engage in more dyadic interactions with boys than with girls, and both boys and girls engage in more initiated-negative interactions with boys than with girls.

The children toy use was also analysed. As in the study reported in the previous chapter, a vast range of toys/activities were engaged in, but in order to carry out a statistical test on this data the toys/activities were categorised into three groups: Gross Motor Activities/Toys which consisted of activities such as running or climbing and toys such as bikes and scooters; Fine Motor Activities/Toys which consisted of activities such as painting and toys such as puzzles and Lego; Fantasy/Pretend Play which consisted of such activities as the home-corner and dressing-up. For the analysis a child scored a '+1' against a toy category if they played with, or engaged in that activity, at any point within the observation period. A child scored '0' if they did not play with that toy or engage in that activity. A series of 2x2 Chi squares could then be carried out on the data for each toy category. This revealed that there was no significant difference between the two groups on any of the toy/activity



categories; Gross Motor Play ( $\chi^2(df=1)=0.8$ , n.s.), Fine Motor Play ( $\chi^2(df=1)=0.002$ , n.s.), and Fantasy/Pretend Play ( $\chi^2(df=1)=0.001$ , n.s.). (see Fig. 4.1.)

As has already been stated all 20 children who participated in this observation study were also participants in the interview study reported in the previous chapter. Of the 20 children, only 5 failed to achieve a 'pass' on the gender constancy task. Although no statistical test can be performed on this data to compare these 5 with the other 15 children in the study, due to the smallness of the sample, looking at the raw data reveals no apparent deviation from the expected group means on the various dyadic interaction measures or in the toy use measures.

In terms of toy use there *does* however, appear to be a discrepancy between what children *said* boys and girls played with and what they themselves played with. The children said in interview that boys engaged in little pretend/fantasy play, whereas in practice they did engage in a large amount of this play. Similarly, the children said in interview that girls engaged in little gross motor activities/play, when, in fact, this turned out to be the highest frequency category for girls actual play.

It is important to note that there was no discrepancy between the sex of the child's interactional partners, and who they had previously said were their 'best friends'. The only exception to this was in the case of initiated negative interactions, where

both boys and girls engaged in this more with boys than girls.

#### 4.4. Discussion

The results of the study reported here present a very complex picture of the behaviour of children in a nursery context. An image far removed from the one that might be gained by recourse to the social learning theory literature.

On the basis of the argument proposed by Mischel (1966, 1970) the social learning theorist would predict that pre-school boys and girls should be engaging in sex-segregated behaviours. Remember Kohlberg's syllogism for social learning theory:

"I want rewards, I am rewarded for doing boy things, therefore I want to be a boy". (1966, pg.89)

According to this formulation, the children under observation here should be showing a preference both for same-sex interactions and for gender appropriate toys; they do neither. In their positive interactions, a category primarily consisting of co-operative play, sex of partner was not a significant factor. Sex of partner only became an important factor when it came to negative interactions; here the partner was more often a boy than a girl. This replicates the findings of Fagot et al. (1985), Eisenberg et al. (1984) and Roopnarine (1984). Similarly there was no difference in the toys and activities engaged in by boys and girls. This replicates the findings of Henshall (1983) and Eisenberg et al. (1982).

If these results do not concur with the proposals of social learning theory neither do they, when combined with the results of the interview data, support the proposals of Kohlberg. For

Kohlberg (1966) suggests that the child's learning of gender behaviour is guided by the child's self-categorisation of male or female. The interview data clearly shows that these children can gender label correctly and should thus show a preference for same-sex toys and friends. Which they do not do. One could account for this data if one accepted Kohlberg's notion of gender constancy. Kohlberg states that children only show a strong same-sex preference until they obtain gender constancy, that is an understanding of the genital basis to gender, at which point they become more relaxed in their attachment to same-sex toys and friends. Unlike Kohlberg's theory which proposes that children to not obtain gender constancy until the age of seven, these children obtained gender constancy at approximately four years old. So it is possible that these children had become more 'relaxed' in their gender behaviour. However, five of the children in this study had 'failed' the gender constancy task and yet did not vary significantly from the rest of the children in the study in their gender behaviour (no statistical test was carried out here but an examination of the raw data does not suggest any differences, see Appendix A). The results reported here replicate the findings of Henshall (1983) who concludes that "there is no significant relationship between gender concepts and gender-typing in behaviour"(pg.145).

Henshall and Eisenberg et al.(1982) also concur with the results of the present study over the absence of a significant relationship between awareness of gender differences in toy use and the child's actual toy use. It appears that children are in

possession of certain 'rules' of gender difference in toy use, that they can say "boys play with this" and "girls play with this" (this might, one could argue, be the child beginning to develop stereotypes); but the children did not appear to apply the 'rule' to themselves. The child's own toy use covered a whole range of toys, whilst play with a particular toy was governed by the particular situation the child found themselves in. Eisenberg et al. (1982) conclude,

"It is questionable that children's sex-typed preferences are the results of attempts to act in accordance with sex-role stereotypes." (pg.81)

Unlike the interview data relating to toy use, the interview data related to 'best friends' was more reliable. There was no sex-of-partner effect for either positive or negative interactions of both boys and girls. This data may have been a more reliable predictor of gender behaviour than that relating to toy use because the original request was to "name *your* two best friends". This form of request is more personal than the toy use question of "what two toys do boys/girls like playing with?" which requires the child to generalise (creating a stereotype?).

It is important to note that the children's descriptions of their 'best friends' as being mixed-sex only holds up for positive interactions. Sex of partner only becomes a factor when considering initiated negative interactions, thus boys engage more in same-sex initiated negative interactions and girls in more opposite-sex initiated negative interactions. However, when in the interview the children referred to friends one could argue that they would

not consider those who had negative interactions with as friends. If one had asked the children "who do you have most arguments with?" one may have obtained a bias towards both boys and girls responding with the names of boys.

The data presented here does not support the proposals put forward by either social learning, or cognitive-developmental theories of gender development. This does not mean that these theories should be considered to be redundant, but that they can only be seen to offer a partial understanding of a complex situation. This partial understanding is brought about through the use of a selective methodology, a methodology which only considers behaviour or cognition and ignores emotion/affect altogether.

In the type of study presented here, the dynamism of a particular event is lost due to the process of breaking the event down into codeable parts. In re-structuring a piece of action between two children into 'positive interactions' and 'negative interactions' one has no sense of the *meaning* of that event to the participants. This is particularly important when one is considering such a value-laden topic as gender. For example how does one possibly code the following;

- 1.50 - Tracy (girl) follows Leighton (boy) into playhouse both wearing police helmets
- 2.00 - Tracy picks up baby doll from cot and says "Lets kill the baby"
- 2.10 - Tracy throws baby doll on floor, they both stamp on it, Leighton says "Its dead"
- 2.20 - Leighton and Tracy get into imaginary police car

and 'screech' off

Whilst the above could be coded as 'positive interaction', as both children are co-operatively engaged in a game, this does not capture the dynamism of the event. The coding misses out on the fact that Tracy is pretending to be a policeman, and that she initiates the violent behaviour, etc. Similarly emotion/affect is also neglected in the coding process,

- 9.40 - Catherine (girl) is playing shops
- 9.50 - Graham (boy) knocks part of the shop counter down, Catherine hits him
- 10.00 - Graham retaliates by hitting Catherine back
- 10.10 - Adult intervenes, telling Catherine off
- 10.20 - Catherine, now upset, runs off to home corner and picks up and comforts baby doll

Again, does the code of 'negative interaction' sufficiently capture the emotional nature of this event? Is it important that Catherine, after having been told off for fighting (a 'masculine' activity), goes and seeks comfort not only by cuddling the baby doll, but also by engaging in a 'feminine' activity?

To conclude, one more example of an interaction which highlights both the inadequacy of even sophisticated coding systems and the complex, gender-ridden world of the under-five;

- 2.40 - Russell (boy) goes to Catherine (girl) to talk about shop game
- 2.50 - they have argument as to who should be shopkeeper, Catherine re-asserts that she is shopkeeper, Russell grabs the box of plastic money
- 3.00 - Catherine chases Russell, they fight over money, Russell retains the money
- 3.10 - an upset Catherine goes and stands at adult's feet

(adult talking on phone)

3.20 - Russell tries to appease Catherine by offering a coin, Catherine refuses it

3.30 - Russell offers a handful of coins, Catherine still refuses

3.40 - Catherine leaves the adult (still on telephone) and returns from other room with Jamie (boy)

3.50 - Jamie, on Catherine's instruction, fights with Russell

4.00 - Russell upset, Catherine looks on smiling

This observation raises a number of questions. Why does Catherine at first feel able to stand up to Russell? By standing next to the adult does Catherine become more powerful? Why does Russell try and appease Catherine? Why does she resist? Why does she go and fetch Jamie instead? It is not surprising that a social learning theory approach provides few answers to these questions because these are not the type of question it sets out to answer. Its methods, therefore, are unable to cope with this level of complexity.

By conducting the experiments presented in this, and the last chapter, an understanding has been gained of the inadequacies of the respective methods. These methods are *limited* by the questions they seek to address. If the questions are themselves limited, or inadequate - for example, by attention paid to cognition or behaviour at the exclusion of other factors - then the theories produced will also be limited. Changing the focus of the questions will result in having to construct new methodologies, which will in turn provide more adequate description and explanation of the complex phenomena that gender

development is.

The material and studies presented so far in the thesis have served to *inform* the shift in questions and methods that will be demonstrated in the remaining chapters.



Fig. 4.1. What Children Played With

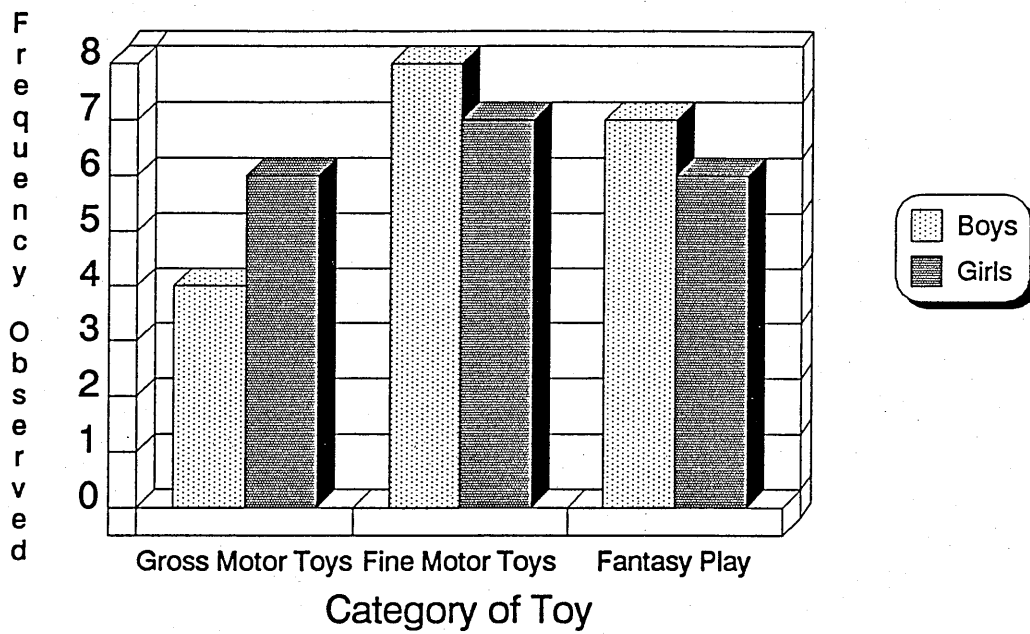


Fig 4.2. Sex of Partner in Dyadic Interactions

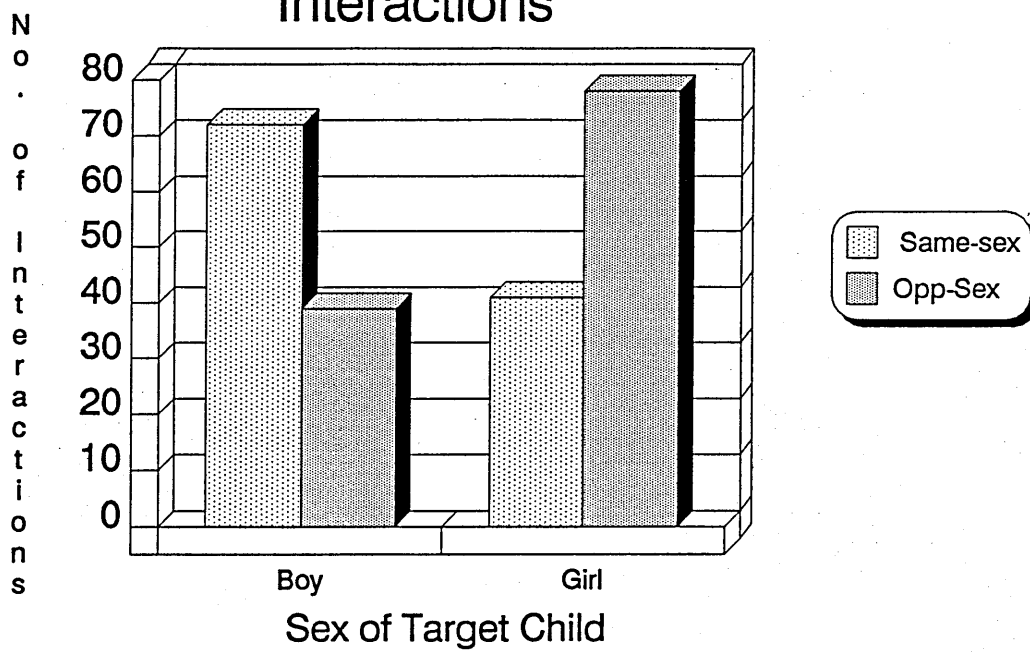
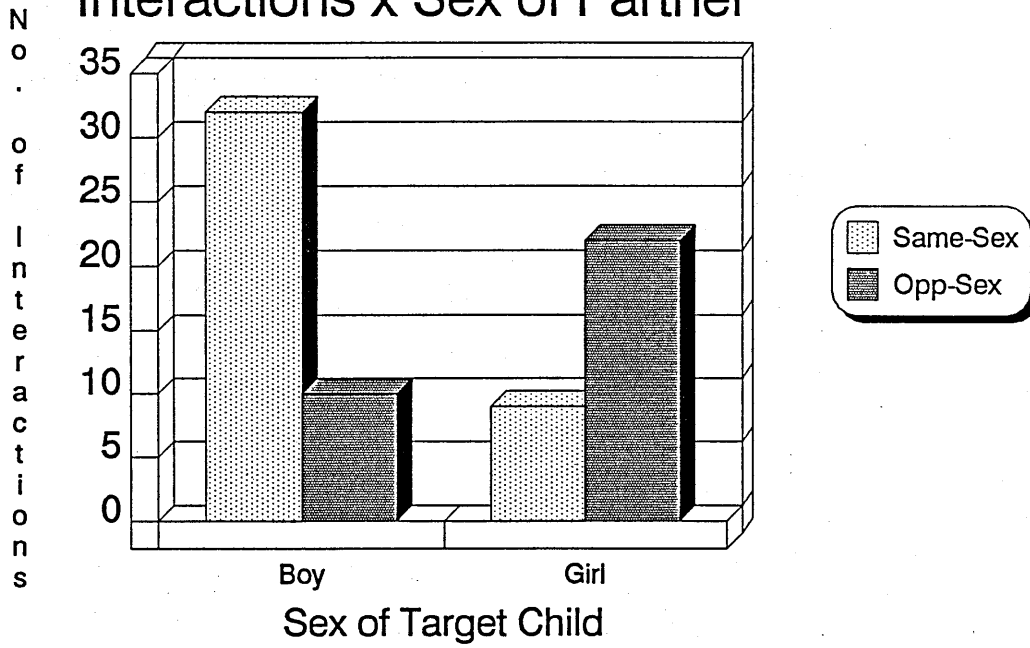


Fig. 4.3. Total Initiated Negative Interactions x Sex of Partner



CHAPTER FIVE: STRATEGIES USED IN THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF PRE-  
SCHOOL CHILDREN

Contents

- 5.1. Introduction
- 5.1.2. Rationale for present study
- 5.2. Method
- 5.2.1. Subjects
- 5.2.2. Procedure
- 5.2.3. Materials
- 5.3. Results
- 5.4. Discussion

5.1. Introduction

Cognitive testing and observing young children provide two windows onto the thoughts and behaviour of the developing child. Each of these approaches has been explored in the preceding chapters. However, it became clear that neither approach provided adequate description of the complex interactions seen between children, or between children and adults. Nor do these approaches provide a satisfactory framework for explaining the child's internalisation and practice of gender.

As has been discussed earlier, gender is a social construction. Its meaning for any individual only comes to light when that individual is considering itself in relation to other individuals. To return to our literary example of the opening chapter, for Orlando being a man or a woman only mattered in

terms of how other people perceived her and subsequently how she then came to perceive herself. The study presented in this chapter seeks to move the focus away from observing individuals to observing the ways in which individuals relate to each other. This picks up one of the interesting findings from the last study in which it was clearly shown that both boys and girls engaged in more negative interactions with boys than girls. The emphasis in the current study is placed upon looking more closely at those interactions, and what the relationship between those interactions and gender might be. Therefore, of concern are the strategies individuals use to relate to one another. Strategies which fill the gaps between individuals, and provide the arena in which people experience themselves.

Whilst in the past studies have taken place which do focus on the social behaviour of children, few have attempted to relate this to gender development; even those studies which have sought to look at the effects of the presence of a child of one sex upon the behaviour of a child of the same- or opposite-sex. The underlying assumption in such cases is still of two self-contained individuals who occasionally react to each other rather than using strategies for organising and maintaining the relationships between them. Yet, in this latter case both individuals are reliant upon each other; it is *not* simply a series of random events.

Studies which fail to take this concept into account are left wanting. Jacklin & Maccoby (1978) demonstrated that 33-month-olds

directed more social behaviour, both positive and negative, to partners of the same sex. However, they found difficulty in explaining how these children identified their partners's sex since the children were strangers and were given no obvious clues such as gender-marked clothes or names. Unfortunately, little attention was given to the nature of the relationship between each child pair. It may well have been the style of interaction, or strategy, which provided the "clue" for engaging in positive or negative social behaviour.

Credence is given to this hypothesis if one considers the variation of results in similar studies. Langlois, et al (1973) found that three-year-old girls and all five-year-olds displayed the pattern described by Jacklin & Maccoby, but that three-year-old boys, in contrast, engaged in more social behaviour in mixed pairs than in same-sex pairs. Phinney and Rotheram (1982) also observed children who normally played together and noted that the frequency of social overtures varied both with the gender of the instigator and the target child. Lloyd & Smith's (1986) dyad study with 19-42-month-olds found that the amount of social behaviour increased with age and was more common in same-sex pairs, except amongst boys in the oldest age group. Such variation in age, type of pairing and type of behaviour requires more explanation than can be afforded by an 'effect of sex of partner' model.

Indeed, in the more detailed analysis provided by Lloyd & Smith they reveal different patterns of behaviour. Prosocial behaviour was more common in mixed-sex pairs, and the frequencies of

assertion and withdrawal behaviour provided mirror images. Girls in the first three age groups and boys in the oldest group displayed more assertiveness but boys in the first three age groups and girls in the oldest group showed more withdrawal. At all ages boys appeared to be more successful in their assertive bids. Such patterns in behaviour may indicate the existence of strategies which children use for relating to each other. Whether the child puts a particular strategy into practice may be affected by a variety of situational and temperamental factors, and will be invariably linked to the strategy being used by the other member of the interaction.

One of the difficulties with this type of study is the question of how best to examine the nature of the relationship, or the strategies employed. In the studies quoted above the researchers have been working on a fairly broad canvas, observing children in an open play situation within a nursery or laboratory playroom setting. If one wishes to focus on the dyads' use of strategies within the relationship the number of variables has to be narrowed down. Further: it is important to ensure that the remaining variables throw the participant's use of strategies into bold relief.

The studies discussed above also consider the presence of an adult as a variable affecting the child's behaviour. However, as with the social learning experiments using adults as 'models' discussed in a previous chapter, the evidence on this matter seems inconclusive. The current experiment is structured in such a way

as to shed light on this variable.

### 5.1.2. Rationale for present study

The present study sets out to examine the differential behaviour patterns of pre-school boys and girls in relation both to sex of partner and presence of adult. In so doing the study also examines the differential behaviour of the adult to boys and girls. However, the study is not simply adopting the 'effect of sex of partner' model but, instead focuses upon observing humans, adults and children, *in relation* to each other and attempts to identify the strategies which participants may use to maintain the relationships between them.

## 5.2. Method

### 5.2.1. Subjects

The total sample population for this study were 24 children, 12 boys and 12 girls. The mean age of the group was 4yrs 5mths, with an age range of 4yrs 0mths to 4yrs 10mths. The mean age of the group of boys was 4yrs 4mths and for the group of girls 4yrs 6mths. The age range for each group did not differ from the overall sample. The children were organised into 4 x boy/boy pairs, 4 x girl/girl pairs and 4 x boy/girl pairs. Each pair was matched both for age and length of time attending nursery. All children had attended the nursery for a mean period of 11mths, with a range of 6mths to 16mths.

The adult working with each pair of children under observation was



the same experienced nursery worker. The worker was female, had worked in the nursery for approximately two years and all the children were familiar to her.

#### 5.2.2. Procedure

The nursery worker took each pair of children into a room off the main nursery area to read a story. The adult and the children were familiar with this procedure, it being a regular feature of the nursery day. The adult sat with the children and showed them a 'pop-up' storybook, giving the children the opportunity to ask questions and to become familiar with all the pop-up actions. When the adult had gone through all six pages in the book she asked the children to look through the book again, this time on their own. At this point the adult left the room stating that she now had to go and look after the other children.

The entire episode was recorded on video tape. A hand-held portable video camera and recorder were used for this purpose by the male observer who sat in the corner of the room. By this stage the children were very familiar with both the observer and the video equipment. The observer had been present in the nursery for a number of months and was accepted by the children. The children had all attended sessions where they had been able to handle the video camera, looked at their friends through it, and had seen both themselves and their friends on the television monitor. Throughout the observation period the observer remained silent and did not verbally communicate with either the adult or

children.

### 5.2.3. Materials

The pop-up book used in the study was *Robots* by Jan Pienkowski. The book was of A4 size and consisted of six double pages depicting in turn; mother and baby robot, father robot, grandad robot, sister robot, brother robot and finally the small twin robots. Each double page contained "tabs" to pull and "dials" to turn which enabled features on the page to move. The layout of the pages is shown in Figure 5.1. The book was chosen because i) in content it presented a balanced, if stereotyped, view of gender roles within the nuclear family, and ii) in form it provided the pairs of children plenty of opportunity to engage in both co-operative and competitive behaviours.

### 5.3. Results

The video observations were coded in several ways to try and build up an overall picture of the interaction strategies used by the children. As discussed in the previous chapter it must be noted that the sample size here is relatively small and thus the power of any statistical test used is diminished. Therefore it may be wise to consider some of these results presented as suggestive, rather than as significant. Where appropriate raw data is provided in Appendix B.

The childrens play with the book was coded for which member of each pair turned the pages most often and which pulled the tabs most often. Whilst the adult nursery worker was present she remained in control of turning the pages and ensured that each

child had the opportunity to pull each of the available tabs.

As there were six double page spreads in the book there were six opportunities for a particular child within each pair to be the first to turn the page (see Fig. 5.1.). Each child (identified as either "A" or "B" within the dyad) gained a scored "pass" for being the first in the pair to turn the page, and "fail" each time they were not the first to turn the page. Pass's and fail's were then totalled for each subject in the dyad, giving an overall frequency value. A 2x2 Chi square, with "pages turned" and "pages not turned" as the variables revealed that within the girl/girl dyads there was no difference between partners ( $\chi^2(df=1)=0.083, n.s.$ ). However, a similar test performed on the boy/boy dyad data ( $\chi^2(df=1)=24.08, p<0.001$ ) and the girl/boy dyad data ( $\chi^2(df=1)=36.75, p<0.001$ ) did reveal significant differences between partners. Thus, the girl/girl pairs shared the task of turning the pages whilst in the boy/boy pairs one partner dominated. In the girl/boy pairs it was the girls with mean of 5.25 pages turned first who took control of turning the pages. (see Fig.5.2.)

A similar coding system was used for each of the ten tabs which could be pulled throughout the book (see Fig.5.1.). Analysis revealed that within the girl/girl pairings there was no significant difference between partners as to who was first to pull the tabs ( $\chi^2(df=1)=0.051, n.s.$ ). However, as with the "pages turned first" there was a significant difference in the boy/boy pairings ( $\chi^2(df=1)=7.818, p<0.01$ ) and in the girl/boy pairings

( $\chi^2(df=1)=8.47, p<0.01$ ). Within this latter pairing it was the boys who pulled most tabs first, with a mean of 6.25 across pairs. (see Fig. 5.2.)

A comparison of the pages and tabs data suggests that within the girl/girl pairs the tasks of page turning and tab pulling are shared equally between partners. By contrast one partner within the boy/boy pairs dominates both of these activities. Indeed the dominating partner was so successful that in all of these dyads the non-dominant boys only scored one page turn first and two tabs pulled first between them. On the surface the girl/boy dyads seem to be similar with significant differences between partners in both page turning and tab pulling. However, closer examination reveals that unlike the boy/boy pairings where one partner dominates both activities, here different partners dominate different activities. Girls dominate turning the pages whilst boys dominate pulling the tabs. (see Fig.5.2.)

The amount of time that the teacher spent with each pair and subsequently the amount of time each pair spent alone going through the book was also measured. As each session took place the teacher seemed to spend less time with successive pairs. An analysis of variance suggested that this was significantly so ( $F=7.99, p<0.05$ ). As the order in which the adult worked with the different types of pairings was random this was not considered to have affected the results. An analysis of variance conducted on the amount of time each group spent alone with the book showed to be not significant ( $F=4.22, n.s.$ ). However, this test result was

approaching significance and the failure to do so may well be due to the score variations in such small sample sizes. An examination of the group means indicates that the boy/boy sessions were the shortest, 123.75 seconds, then the girl/girl sessions, 175 seconds. The girl/boy sessions were the longest at 232.5 seconds. (see Appendix B for raw data)

In addition to the above, frequency counts were made of the occurrence of certain types of verbal behaviour in each of the dyad sessions. Four categories were recorded;

- i) Directions (eg. "pull this tab", "don't do that", etc.)
- ii) Statements (eg. "what a funny picture", "he's big", etc.)
- iii) Questions (eg. "Who's this?", "What colour is that?", etc.)
- iv) Answers (eg. "that's a snake", "it's blue", etc.)

Each child was coded with +1 under the appropriate heading every time they made an utterance which conformed with the above categories. All of the observations were coded by the experimenter, although 25% were also coded by an independent coder. There was total agreement on the coding on all measures except 'answers' in which there was a discrepancy of one on one observation. (see Appendix B)

Having derived a frequency count for each child under the four categories individual scores on each item were divided by the number minutes of that pairs session alone with the book to obtain an item rate per minute. Each Analysis of variance test performed on the data showed that there was no significant difference between groups in the amount of statements and

answers. However, girls gave more directions when their partner was a boy than when it was a girl ( $F=18.98, p<0.001$ ), and also asked more questions when paired with a boy than a girl ( $F=7.29, p<0.05$ ).

The adult's verbal behaviour was coded in a similar way. However, because it is only a sample of one, no statistical tests were appropriate for this data (see Appendix B). An examination of the means for each category/minute suggests that more directions were given during boy/boy sessions (2.13) than in the girl/boy session (0.88) and the girl/girl session (0.80). The amount of questions also seemed to follow this pattern with more asked during boy/boy sessions (0.96) than girl/boy sessions (0.68) and girl/girl sessions (0.42). Similarly, statements follow the same pattern with boy/boy sessions (1.20), girl/boy (0.85) and girl/girl (0.86). Alternatively, frequency per minute of answers across the sessions does not differ; boy/boy (0.17), girl/boy (0.15) and girl/girl (0.24). (see Appendix B)

A summary of results are presented in Table 5.1.

#### 5.4. Discussion

The results indicate on a number of factors that boys and girls differed in their behaviour when left by the teacher, depending on whether they were paired with the same- or opposite-sex partner.

The girl/girl pairs spent longer than the boys looking at the book, taking their time over each page. As they did so they took

turns at turning the pages over and pulling the various tabs. Both partners also took an interest in each others involvement in the book by asking questions and giving directions. In these sessions the girls utilised a strategy which depended upon acknowledging the others existence. This could appropriately be called a person-centred strategy.

The boy/boy pairs, on the other hand, appeared to spend the least time on the book when left alone. Typically it seemed that one partner dominated the entire scenario by turning over the pages and by pulling all the tabs. These activities were conducted at the exclusion of the other party. This strategy could appropriately be called object-centred. In these sessions the book was the centre of activity with neither boy particularly acknowledging the presence of the other. The apparent aim of the session was to be in possession of the book, use it to one's own end and prevent anyone else from being involved.

The girl/boy sessions are the most important for here there is an interplay of strategies. These sessions were on average the longest out of the three pair types. The girls appear to utilise the same person-centred strategy that the girls in the girl/girl pairs engage in only more so. These girls dominate the session by taking the lead over turning the pages and by giving directions and asking questions of their boy partners. However, unlike the dominant page-turning boys these girls do not dominate the tabs but instead *allow* the boy to initiate the tab pulling. Indeed a closer examination of the video observations reveal that the

number of directions might be so high from this group of girls because they are telling the boy to pull the tab, etc.

This strategy being used by the girls provide a framework in which the boys can engage in an object-centred strategy. The boys are given time to consider each page and engage in all the various activities in an environment which does not challenge them.

This hypothesis does seem to be supported by evidence from previous studies. Galejs (1974) in an observation study of preschool children showed that girls in opposite-sex pairs engaged in more leading, demonstrating, assisting and sharing behaviour than their boy partners. Similarly, in a slightly different style of study, Berman & Goodman (1984) showed that 5- and 6-year-old girls showed more "nurturant" behaviour towards a younger child than boys of the same age did. The term "nurturant" was defined as talking to, demonstrating, offering, sharing, etc. It could be argued that these types of behaviour reflect the use of a person-centred strategy for maintaining relationships.

The concept of a person-centred strategy as a way of one individual relating to another is not new. It can be seen in constant operation in everyday life. What is more, this pattern of behaviour is classically identified with women. Thus, mothers employ it in relation to their children (hence the use of "nurturant" in the Berman & Goodman study), and members of



particular professions, for example teachers, are meant to use it in relation to their clients, in this case their pupils. It is interesting to note that these are usually professions seen as being allied to women. In the study in hand the nursery worker is female and it is important to realise, even if the evidence is weak, that she too gave more directions to, and asked more questions of, the boy/boy groups than any of the others.

The conclusions are not as clear cut here as they may appear. It is not simply a case that the girls in this study used a person strategy because that is what they always did or because they 'modelled' the female nursery worker. Neither is it the case that boys can only engage in object-centred strategies or that they were unable to 'model' themselves upon a female nursery worker. What is clear from the work of Barkley et al (1977) is that the sex of the 'model' in relation to the observer is not as important as how the observer construes the behaviour as being appropriate for themselves to engage in. Thus, *playing at teacher* may have been seen by the girls as being appropriate to them. The female nursery worker "opened the gate" for them to behave like that but this may have been only one factor. Certainly the extent to which the child took on that role appeared to be determined by how willing the other child was to *play at pupil*.

The context, the 'gate-opening' of the nursery worker and the willingness by the partner to be the 'pupil', does appear to affect the strategy adopted by the child to maintain the relationship. This finding has important implications for a

theory concerning the development and practice of gender, because it affords an opportunity to break away from the female-feminine, male-masculine gender-logic. There are two reasons for this;

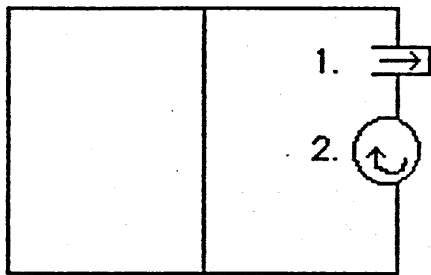
- i) 'to be' the pupil requires the knowledge of how 'to be' the teacher, because the two positions only exist in *relation* to each other.
- ii) if the child has the knowledge 'to be' the teacher, suggests that if the context was made appropriate, (ie. an opening by the nursery worker, the other child's willingness 'to be' the pupil), then the child could take up the position of the teacher, ie. employ a person-centred strategy.

Thus, whilst the majority of girls employed a person-centred strategy, and the majority of boys an object-centred strategy, this is not rigid. It is possible for boys and girls to employ alternate strategies at different times depending upon the context. The study presented in the next chapter will focus upon another way in which the context can be altered which enables pre-school children to take up various positions in relation to each other.

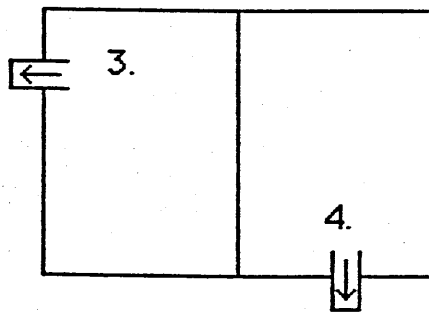
Tab. 5.1. Summary of main results.

	PAIRS		
	Girl/Girl	Boy/boy	Girl/boy
Page Turning	Shared	Boy 1 turned majority of pages	Girl turned majority of pages
Tab Pulling	Shared	Boy 1 pulled majority of tabs	Boy pulled majority of tabs
Directions	Similar amounts	Very few	Girls gave many to boys
Questions	Similar amounts	Very few	Girls asked many of boys

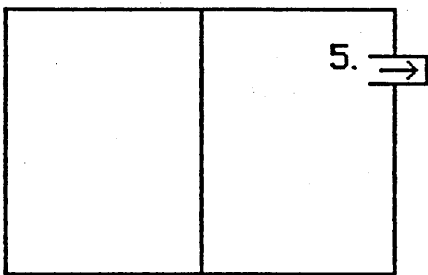
FIG 51. PAGE LAYOUT



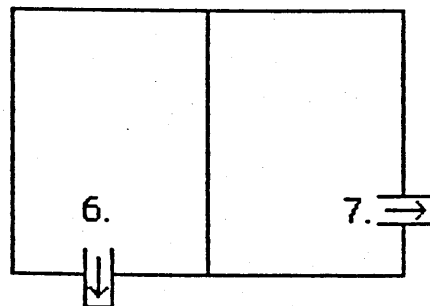
Page 1



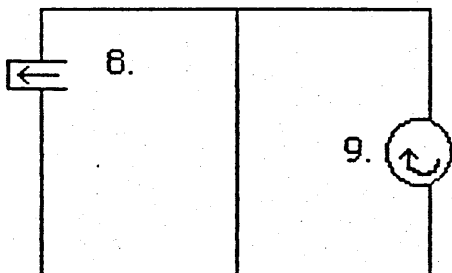
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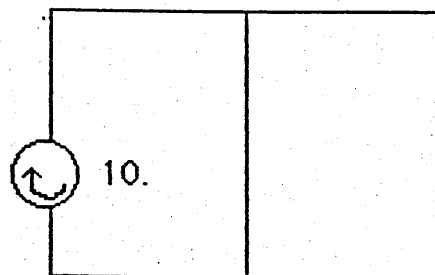
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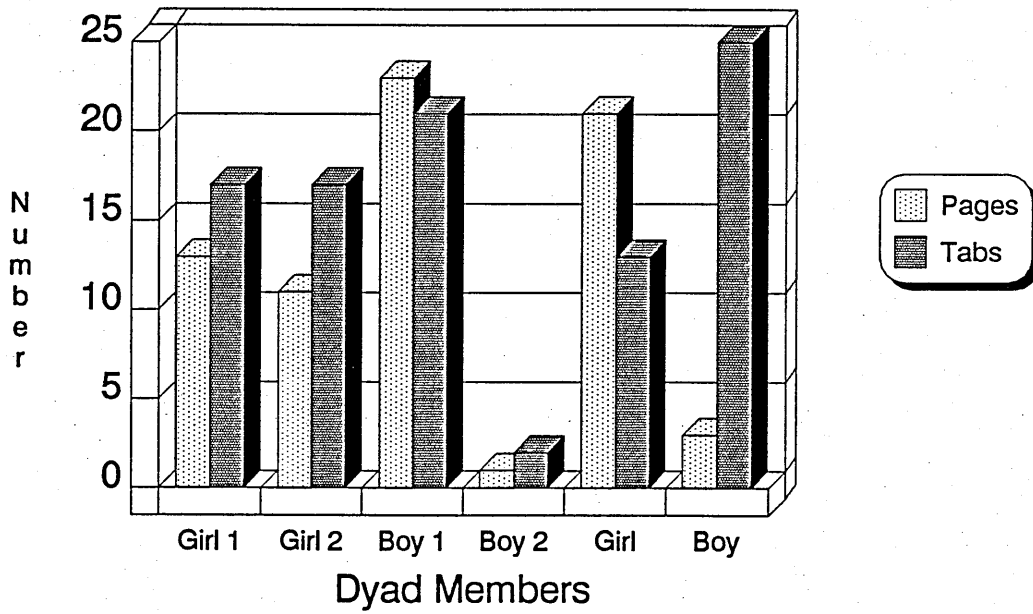


Page 5



Page 6

Fig. 5.2. Pages Turned First and  
Tabs Pulled First



## CHAPTER SIX: CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS ON THE STRATEGIES USED IN THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

### Contents

- 6.1. Introduction
  - 6.1.2. Rationale for Present Study
- 6.2. Method
  - 6.2.1. Subjects
  - 6.2.2. Procedure
  - 6.2.3. Materials
- 6.3. Results
- 6.4. Discussion

### 6.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter it became apparent that the children in question used various strategies to order their relations with others. Children were perceived as using either person-centred or object-centred strategies to gain control of the situation. The gaining of control in this context should not be seen as a manipulative exercise by the child but simply as a way of providing a framework in which relations with others can be constructed. These relationships could be described, in a Foucauldian sense, as being about the production of power. The initiation by one partner of a particular strategy depends upon the willingness of the other partner to be incorporated into the strategy.

The use of either one of these strategies depends upon both parties within the relationship. One child cannot take up the

person-centred strategy, by *playing at teacher* , without the other person acknowledging this and reciprocating the relationship, that is by *playing at pupil* . The metaphors of teacher and pupil may appear simplistic but they nevertheless provide a useful description of the style of relationships at issue. Within this relationship framework the children, as individuals, are located. They place themselves, indeed find themselves, in relation to others. How they might appear within that relationship may well be in contradiction to how they might appear in another type of relationship simply because they are then utilising a different framework to facilitate the relationship. Such an approach is similar to Walkerdine's (1981) argument of people experiencing themselves through a variety of potentially contradictory subjectivities.

The following two examples taken from everyday life and the psychological laboratory both serve to further illustrate this idea.

The female teacher relates to the children in her classroom, the pupils, in a particular way. Both the woman and the children take up their appropriate roles within the relationship. These roles inform the person as to what the correct rules, attitudes and behaviours are in order to maintain the relationship. Whilst in that relationship the participants define themselves in that way. At home, a new context, the woman is no longer the teacher but in relation to her own child she is the mother. Here the participants take up new appropriate positions within the

relationship. For the woman there may be many factors within the roles of mother and teacher which remain very similar but equally there are some factors which can be very different and in contradiction. That is the behaviour as mother at home may well be in contradiction to the behaviour of the teacher in the classroom even though they are considered to be the same person or individual.

Similar contradictions can be seen in the findings of the work of Davies (1983) discussed in an earlier chapter. Davies presented the fairground task of manipulating a small metal hoop along a wiggly electric wire, a bell being set off if the two items made contact, to groups of adolescent boys and girls. The only variable was the instructions to the groups who were told that the task either tested their needlework or their electronic skills. When the instructions were gender-appropriate the group did well and when it was gender-inappropriate they did not. Thus when girls were told needlework they scored high, when told electronics they scored low. This suggests that girls could in fact do the task well but because in some cases they thought it inappropriate, that is something which they perceived as not fitting into the role of girl, they scored badly. This again presents as a contradiction.

In the present study attempts are made to explore this area of contradiction. Following on from the previous study which considered how relationships were constructed, this study will utilise the same dyadic arrangements and will alter the context



in a different way, that is by altering the toy that the children are given to play with. One toy is seen as being more girl-appropriate (a playhouse) and the other more boy-appropriate (a space station).

### 6.1.2. Rationale for Present Study

The present study looks at how the relationships in same-sex and opposite-sex pairs of children are affected by the toy they are asked to play with. At issue are the strategies the children use to construct the framework in which the relationship takes place. Unlike the previous study no adult is present and thus there is no immediate adult 'model' on which the child may base their strategy.

## 6.2. Method

### 6.2.1. Subjects

The total sample for this study was 24 children, 12 girls and 12 boys. The mean age of the sample was 4yrs 6mths, with an age range of 4yrs 3mths to 4 yrs 10mths. The mean age of the 12 girls was 4yrs 7mths, with a range of 4yrs 4mths to 4yrs 10mths, whilst for the 12 boys the mean was 4yrs 6mths, with a range of 4yrs 4mths to 4yrs 8mths. All 24 children had attended the nursery which acted as the base site for the research in this thesis for at least six months prior to the study taking place.

The 24 children were divided into 12 pairs; 4 x girl/girl pairs, 4 x boy/boy pairs and 4 x girl/boy pairs. Within each group of 4 pairs two were labelled "A" and two were labelled "B". Each pair

was matched for age and for length of time attending nursery.

### 6.2.2. Procedure

Each of the 12 pairs (randomly ordered) were led by the experimenter into a side room of the nursery. This room was familiar to the children as it was often used as a room for small group activities within the daily routine of the nursery. Having arrived at the room each pair, dependent upon them being an "A" or a "B" pair were given either a "playhouse and people" to play with or a "space station and people set" to play with. The children were asked to play together with the toy. No other toys were on display in the room. One minute was allowed for the children to settle and then the subsequent ten minutes of play was observed. The event was recorded on video tape. A hand held portable video camera and recorder was used by the experimenter who sat motionless in the corner of the room. The experimenter did not communicate with the children after their entry into the room. All the children taking part in the study were familiar with the video equipment. Taping continued for the full ten minute period, even if the children appeared to lose interest and stopped playing with the toy.

All the initial sessions took place within a two day period. The following week all the pairs went through the same procedure again, although this second time they were presented with the toy they had not played with first time round.

### 6.2.3. Materials

The two toys chosen for this study were both from the Fisher

Price range. One was the Playhouse which is in essence a dolls house. This comes complete with furniture, garage and car, father, mother, son and daughter dolls and a pet dog doll. The other toy selected was the Space Station. Whilst a different shape and size to the Playhouse it is essentially the same, containing equipment and a cast of four characters.

Neither of these toys were available in the nursery and despite being commercially available none of the 24 children, on questioning, had either of these toys at home.

The toys were selected because they were seen by the experimenter, the nursery workers and the parents as being commercially targetted in a gender stereotyped fashion. Thus the Playhouse was perceived as a girls toy and the Space Station perceived as a boys toy.

### 6.3. Results

The ten minute video observations were broken down for analysis into ten second sections and then coded per section for various verbal and non-verbal behaviours. The number of ten second units were totaled under each item and subsequently it was possible to calculate the percentage time, out of the overall time of ten minutes, that a child had engaged in a particular activity.

#### **Involvement with Toy**

A child was said to be involved with the toy if he/she was actively engaged in playing with it and its associated characters. Such activity was calculated as a percentage of the

overall observation time. This was a measure of the child's own involvement with the toy, and therefore it was possible for each child was coded separately. An independent coder, coded 25% of the sample. There was no difference between coders on this measure (see Appendix C).

A two-way analysis of variance indicated that the amount of time spent playing with each of the toys did not differ significantly by group ( $F=0.02$ , n.s.); or by toy ( $F=0.399$ , n.s.). However, this result may be because of the small sample (see Appendix C for raw data). An examination of the means suggest that boys spend less time involved with the toy when paired with a boy than with a girl (64.8% and 100% respectively for the playhouse; 74.4% and 100% respectively for the space station). A similar examination for girls suggest that girls when paired with girls spend less time with the space station than the playhouse (66.7% and 98.75% respectively), but when they are paired with boys the girls involvement with the space station rises to 99.2%. (see Figs. 6.1. and 6.2.)

### Joint Play

The above data concerning involvement with the toy tells us about the individual child's engagement with the toy. It does not tell us whether both members of the pair were involved with the toy. To establish what percentage of time during the ten minute session was spent in joint play each pair was coded by ten second unit for joint play activity. To qualify for this coding the pair of children had to be actively focused on the toy, this would

involve such activities as sharing a storyline or sharing actions related to the toy. As above an independent coder, coded 25% of the sample. No differences appeared between coders (see Appendix C).

A two-way analysis of variance carried out on this data showed no significant difference amongst the sample either for effect of group ( $F=0.068$ , n.s.), or for the effect of toy ( $F=0.71$ , n.s.). However, as with above one of the difficulties of working with such small samples is that there is some variance within each group, thus one deviant score within a group of four can detract from the trend within the group (see Appendix C for raw data). Looking at the means it could be suggested that boys paired with boys engage in less joint play than girl/girl pairs (85.75% and 98% respectively for the playhouse; 70.75% and 100% respectively for the space station). (see Fig. 6.3.)

The remaining data focuses upon the contents of the joint play and thus percentage scores are given of the joint play rather than of the whole ten minute session. Twenty-five percent of the observations were double coded by an independent coder for each of the content variables. There was no apparent differences between the frequencies observed (see Appendix c), this may well be because the categories being coded were clearly defined during the coder's training.

### Storyline

The narrative constructed by the children around the joint play with each toy was coded as "action", where storylines centred

around chases, bombs, guns, violence, police, fighting and exploring, etc., or as "domestic", where the themes were shopping, caring for baby, changing clothes, cleaning, family structures, etc. Each ten second unit was coded for each child of the pair during joint play. The storyline constructed by each partner did not necessarily agree with that of the other, with each child having their own themes within the overall scenario.

A two-way analysis of variance carried out on the data relating to the use of a storyline with the playhouse indicates that there was a significant difference in the type of storyline used within each pairing ( $F=6.044$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Boy/boy pairs used less domestic storylines than action storylines (means of 7.2% and 85.13%). In the girl/girl pairs the reverse was seen, with domestic being employed more than action, (means of 97.5% and 0.21%). When paired with a girl, boys still focused on action storylines (83.5%). On the other hand girls when paired with boys engaged in less domestic and more action storylines than had been seen in the girl/girl group (a mean of 50.5% compared to 0.21%). (see Fig. 6.4.)

A similar analysis conducted on storylines used with the space station also showed a significant difference in the type of storylines constructed by each group ( $F=8.27$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). A similar pattern emerges to that seen with the playhouse. Boy/boy pair employ predominantly action rather than domestic (means of 86.4% and 2.57%). Girl/girls pairs do the reverse, employing more domestic than action (means of 89.35% and 1.25%). Boys paired

with girls used more action storylines (72.29%), whilst girls in these pairings also employed a majority of action storylines (mean of 53.49%). (see Fig. 6.5.)

### Initiating Verbal Behaviour

The percentage time spent in two different types of verbal behaviour were measured. The first of these was initiating verbal behaviour. This category was defined as suggestive-type comments such as "you be mummy and I'll be baby", "you blow the car up" and "this is where they sleep, right". Such comments varied in length and their elaborateness and thus rather than conducting a frequency count of such comments a child was coded as initiating in a ten second unit if they engaged in this behaviour within that time frame.

A two-way analysis of variance was conducted on this data and it appeared that there was no significant difference on this measure either between groups, or dependent upon the toy being played with ( $F=0.03$ , n.s.). This result is surprising given the means of the groups for both playhouse and the space station; boy/boy pairs, 26.23% and 30.65% respectively; girl/girl pairs 9.49% and 5.55% respectively; boys with girls 17.4% and 16.62% respectively; girls with boys 9.29% and 5.60% respectively (see Fig. 6.6.). This result may once again be accounted for by the small sample size and large variation in score (see Appendix C for raw data).

Not only was the amount of behaviour coded but also whether the

outcome of such behaviour was successful. 'Successful' in this case was defined as the other child of the pair positively responding to the initiating behaviour, ie. the suggestion being taken up. For this the results from groups for both toys was put together. A percentage success rate was identified, and, using a one-way analysis of variance, the rates of children in each type of pairing were compared. There was found to be a significant difference between children dependent upon sex of partner ( $F=16.2$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This provides interesting viewing for whilst boys paired with boys appeared on the basis of means to engage in more initiating behaviour than girls they were seldom successful (mean of 13.2%). Girls when paired with girls, on the other hand, despite appearing to engage in little of this behaviour are very successful (mean of 87.2%). When paired with boys the amount of behaviour does not appear to change but the level of success is lower (approx mean 28.35%), whereas for boys paired with girls the apparent amount of behaviour falls but the level of success rises (approx mean of 67.75%). (see Fig. 6.7.)

#### Maintaining Verbal Behaviour

The other category of verbal behaviour recorded was that of maintaining behaviour. This was defined as behaviour which did not initiate but instead maintained the the joint play and consisted of items such as dialogue which maintained the theme or plot, or behaviour which supported the theme (eg. "thats right, you are the daddy" and "yes, the space station's taken off", etc.). The percentage time involved with this activity was calculated as above. A record was also kept, as above, of the



success of such behaviour. Here 'success' was defined as a positive response from the partner child either verbally or non-verbally.

A two-way analysis of variance conducted on this data indicated that there was no significant difference between children in their display of maintaining behaviour regardless of sex of partner ( $F=0.19$ , n.s.) or toy being played with ( $F=0.02$ , n.s.). However, as with initiating behaviour the means do suggest a trend, thus the result gained may be due to the small sample size (see Appendix C for raw data). Looking at the means (see Fig. 6.8.) neither boys paired with boys or boys paired with girls appeared to spend time on maintaining behaviours regardless of playhouse or space station; boy/boy, means of 8.25% and 6.95% respectively; boy/girl, 6.86% and 6.85% respectively). On the other hand girls regardless of partner appeared to engage in more maintaining behaviour with both the playhouse and the space station; girl/girl, 43.96% and 29.58% respectively; girl/boy, 27.17% and 29.68% respectively).

As with the initiating behaviour data discussed above, the maintaining behaviour was also coded for its successfulness. A one-way analysis of variance on this data showed that there was a significant difference between children ( $F=15.99$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Girls paired with girls displayed a mean success rate of 93.76%, whilst those girls paired with boys had a mean success rate of 92.7%. However, boys paired with boys were the least successful with a mean success rate of 25.6%, whilst those boys paired with

girls were much more successful, with a mean rate of 60.9%. (see Fig. 6.9.)

#### 6.4. Discussion

It must be said that the statistical findings of this study are not clear. With such a small sample there is considerable room for the 'natural' level of variation in the results obtained, from this style of study, to overshadow any genuine trends. Therefore, whilst some significant results were found one is left having to consider the mean results and looking for any suggestive trends.

Taken as a whole the results of this study suggest that for girls the presence of a male partner does appear to make an inappropriate context for the girl, the space station, an appropriate one. That is in the girl/girl pairs there is less involvement with the space station than with the playhouse. However, in the girl/boy group the girl becomes shows no lack of involvement. Indeed, whilst the girl does appear to be more involved in the presence of the boy, it is important to note the type of behaviour she is engaging in.

#### The Girl/boy Pair

Here the girl engages in less initiating behaviour than the boy and appears to have less success with them than the boy. However, the girl does engage in more maintaining behaviour than the boy, and this behaviour is very successful. Boys in this pairing engage in less initiating behaviour but more maintaining behaviour than boys who are paired with boys. Further to this the

boys paired with girls are much more successful at both these behaviours than those boys paired with boys.

#### The Boy/boy Pair

The boy/boy pair engage comparatively in a large amount of initiating behaviours, however the success rate of these is very low. In addition to this the boys here do not engage in very much maintaining behaviour, and that they do do is not very successful.

#### The Girl/girl Pair

A very different pattern emerges here compared to that found in the boy/boy pairs. Very little time is spent in initiating behaviour but those which do occur are on the whole successful. However, this pairing do engage, comparatively, in a large amount of maintaining behaviour, again this behaviour is on the whole successful.

In summary, the picture which can be built up is one in which the girl/girl pairs are responsive to each others needs, and they happily play together. On the other hand, the boy/boy pairs are not as responsive, making many new suggestions, very few of which are successful. What happens in the girl/boy pair is that girl is responsive to the needs of boy, thus both the initiating and maintaining behaviour of the boy become more successful.

What appears to be going on in each of these pairings is very similar to that behaviour seen in the book study of the last chapter. The girls could be characterised as employing person-centred strategies, whilst the boys employ object-centred

strategies. In this respect it could be argued that the material presented here is further support for the argument posited in the last chapter. However, two other points emerge from these results;

1. Firstly, there is evidence here for children taking up contradictory positions. The storyline data suggest that when on their own girls develop domestic storylines, whilst boys develop action storylines. This may be for many reasons, but what is interesting here, is that when girls were paired with boys they did develop action storylines. Therefore it becomes acceptable, or appropriate, for the girl to play with the toy in a certain way in the presence of boy. Thus, I claim, the girls here find themselves in a comparable situation to girls in Davies (1983) study. In that situation the girls differential performance on a specific task was affected by the instruction given; here it is by the presence of a boy.

2. Following on from this, it is not only the presence of the boy, but the boys's willingness to be the 'pupil', ie. engage in initiation and maintaining behaviours for the girl to respond to, which makes the context appropriate for the girl. It could be argued that in this situation the girl is in some way 'losing out' on something in interaction with the boy. Thus it might be argued that the girl is being 'used' by the boy, or being put at the negative end of a power relationship with the boy. This is not the case, for as has already been argued power relationships do not operate in a unitary way. Therefore whilst at one level the girl appears to be being abused, ie. having to respond to the

boy's initiatives, ie. go along with the boy's storyline, etc., at another level this makes her very *powerful* and not *powerless*. The girl's position, produced by this relationship, allows her to *play* with the boy while he plays with the toy.

Lieven (1983), along with others, has, in her work in language development, commented upon the great pleasure that children appear to gain from playing with language, trying out new words, attempting new phrases etc. A similar process can be seen in these girls as they try out new ways of engaging in relationships, as they try 'playing at teacher'. Unfortunately, this emotional experience cannot be codified in this type of experimental approach.

In considering these types of elements the truly complex nature of social relations, and of gender, becomes apparent. So far we have moved from the traditional experimental approaches of Kohlberg and Mischel to studies which place their emphasis on social relations. In doing this we have unearthed some tools, some new ways of looking at the situation, eg. object-centred and person-centred strategies, but it has also become increasingly apparent that the existing theories of gender development are inadequate. They simply do not account for the reality of people's lives.

In the next chapter we take what we have discovered so far and attempt to build up a more focused picture of the gender history of four children. In doing this I will be abandoning the

experimental method for the time being in favour of a detailed case-study approach. This is not to say that the experimental method is not useful, but that its usefulness is dependent upon the situation. So as has been illustrated by this study the more small-scale one becomes, ie small samples, the less reliable statistical tests become. Yet, if one is going to develop new theories which will adequately describe gender development one has to first gain a very detailed image or description of the phenomenon.

Fig. 6.1. Time Spent Playing with House

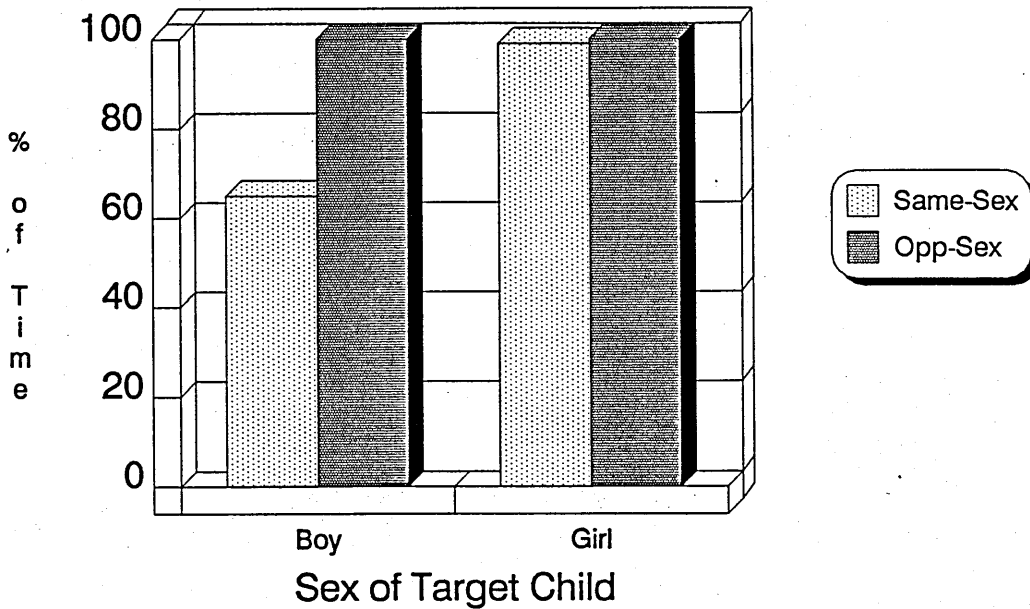


Fig. 6.2. Time Spent Playing with Space Station

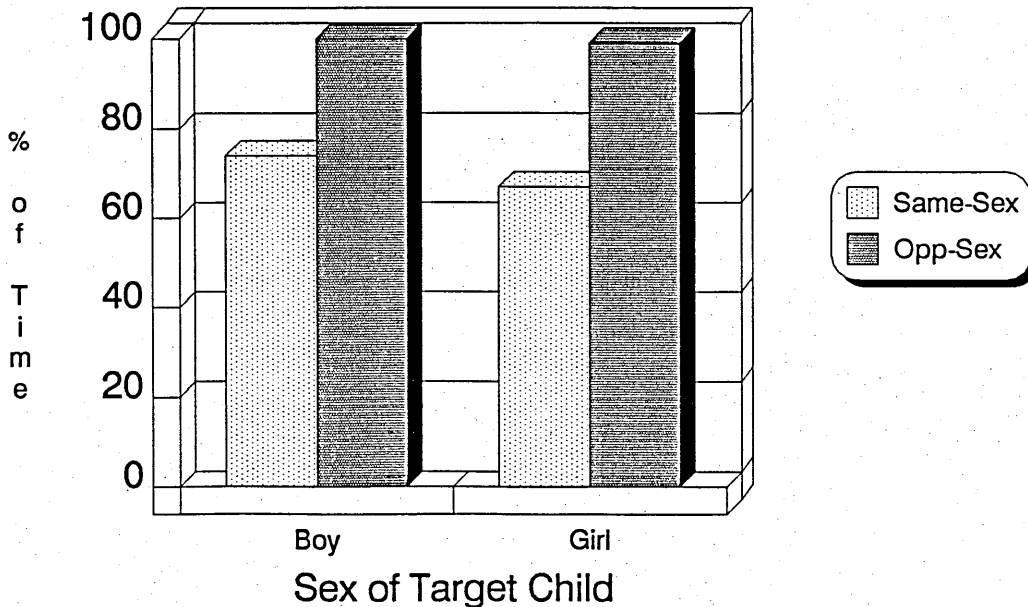


Fig. 6.3. Time Spent in Joint Play

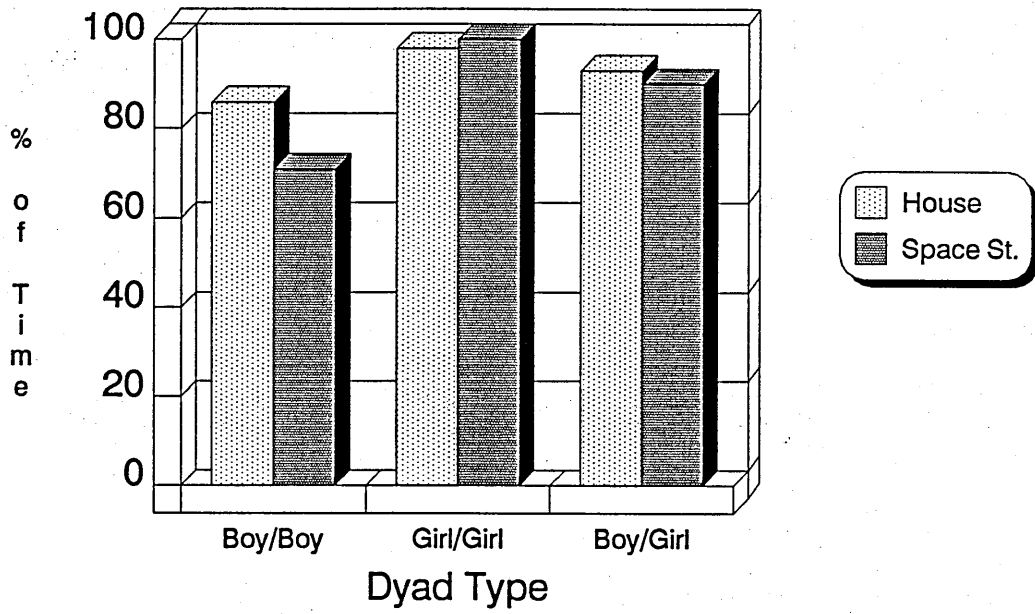




Fig. 6.4. Time Spent on Each Storyline with House

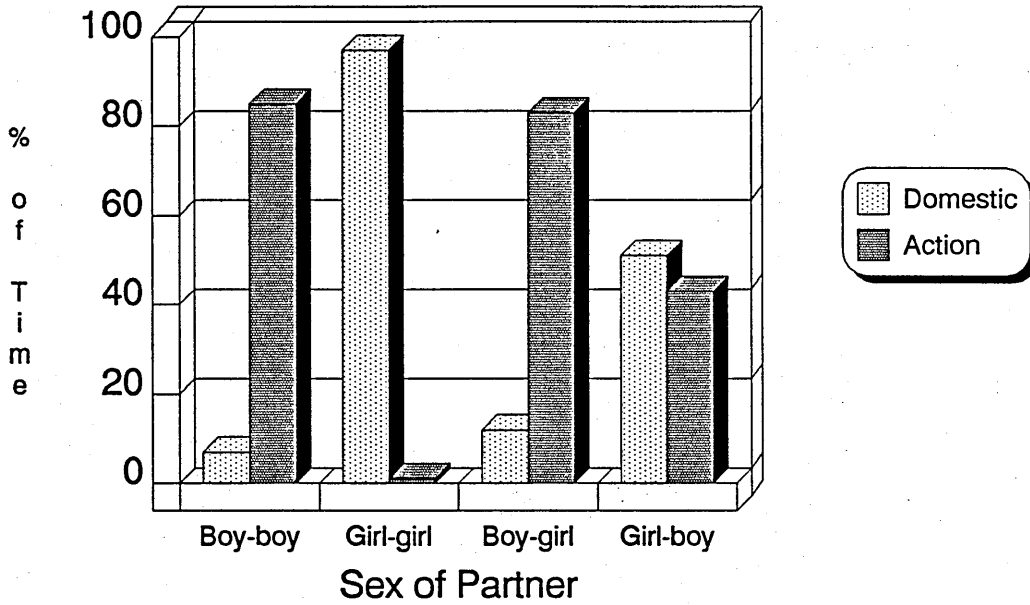


Fig. 6.5. Time Spent on Each Storyline with Space St.

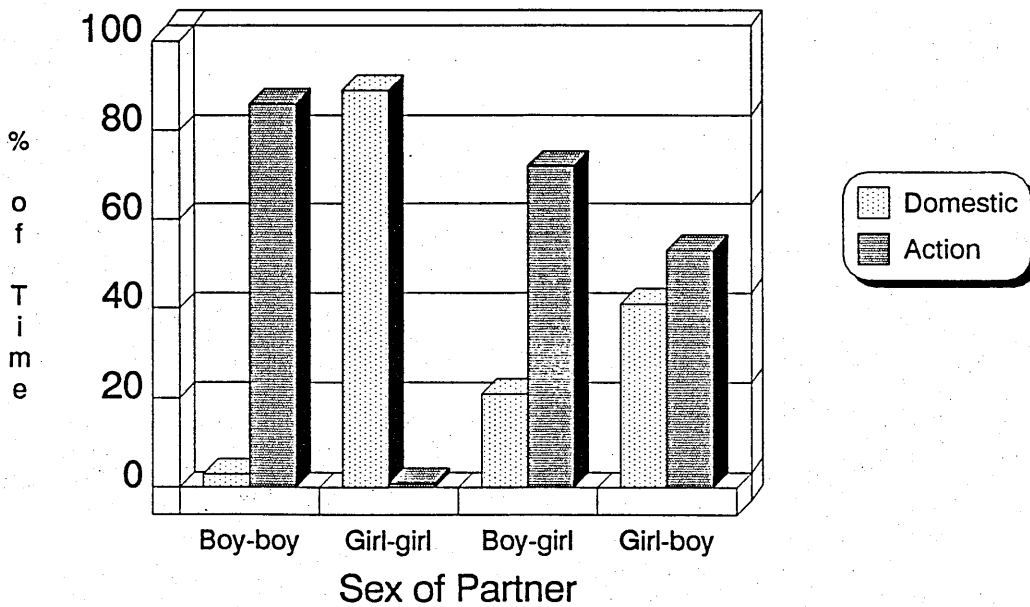


Fig. 6.6. Time Spent on Initiating Behaviour

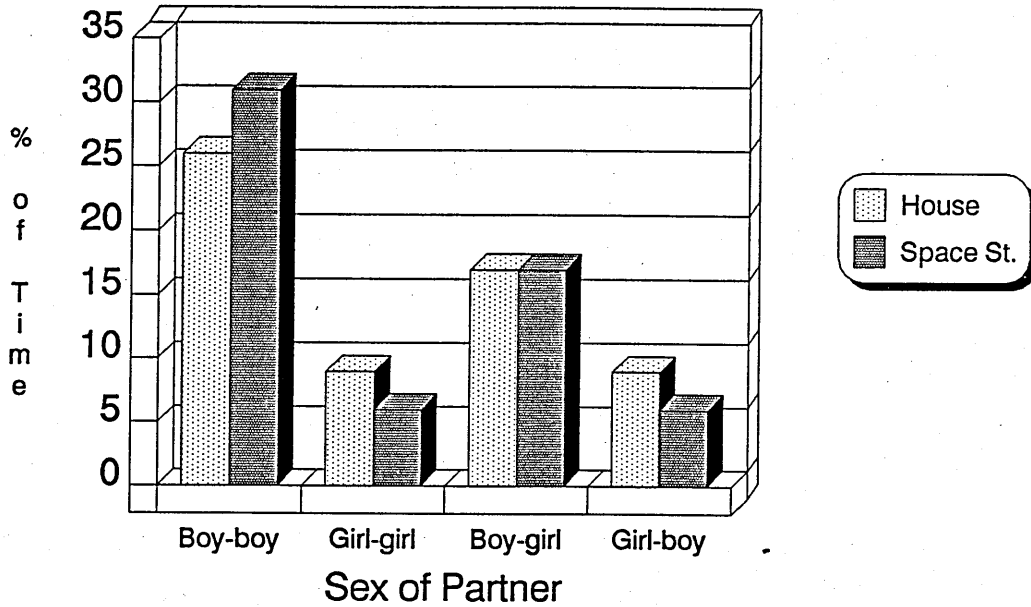


Fig. 6.7. Success Rate of Initiating Behaviour in %

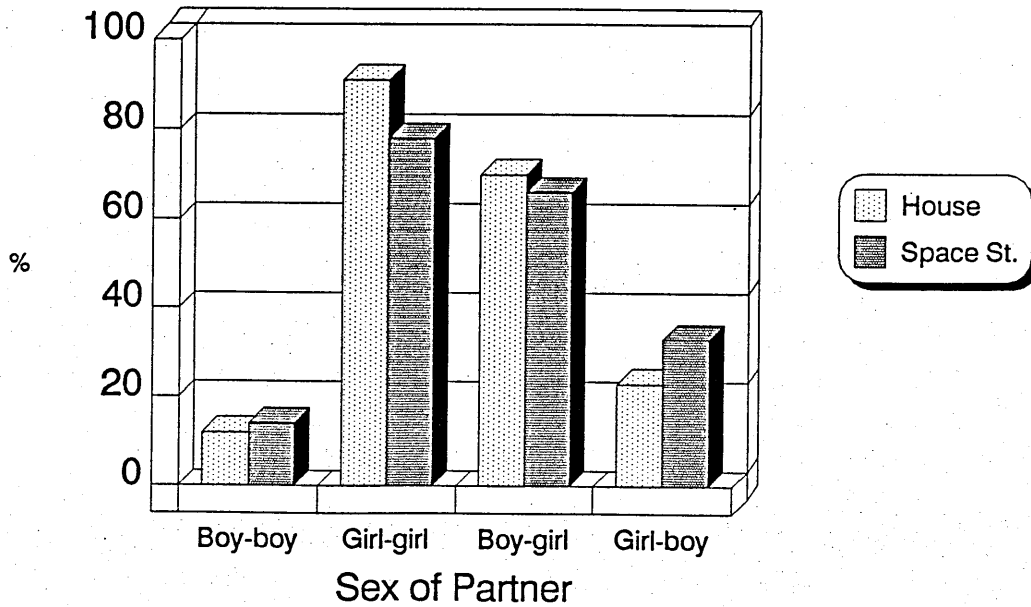


Fig. 6.8. Time Spent on Maintaining Behaviour

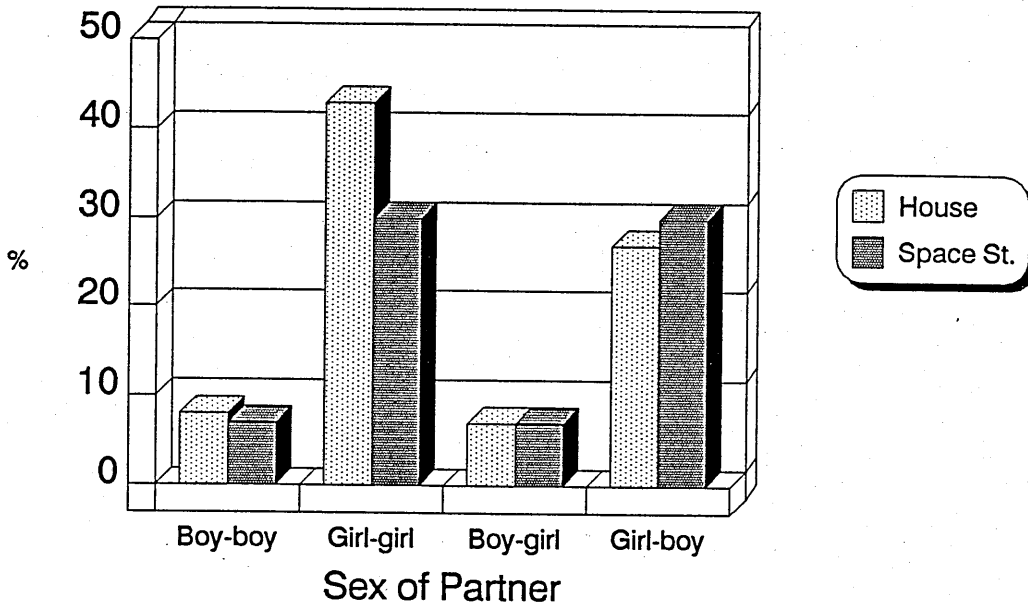
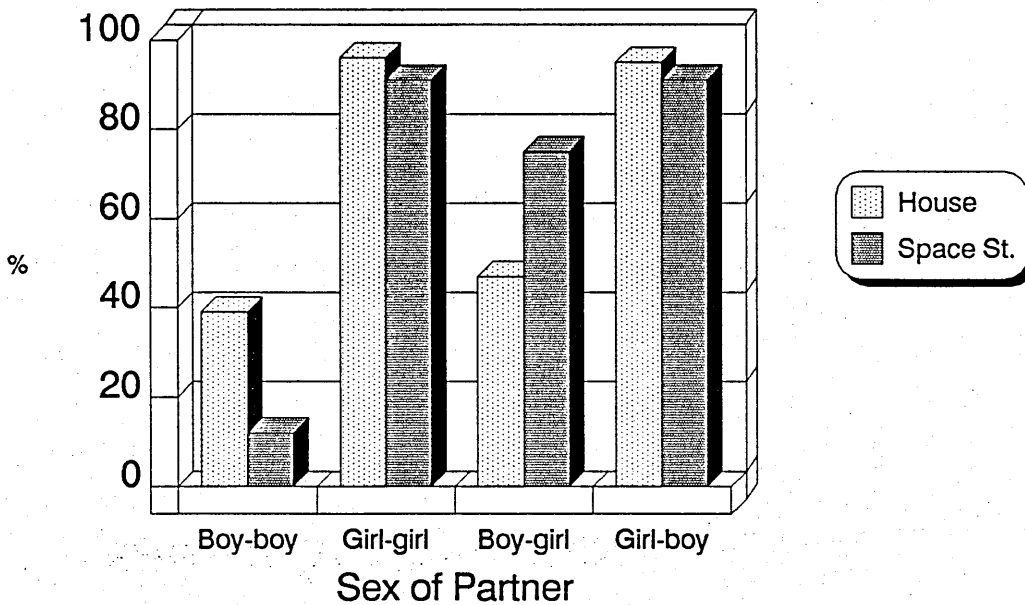


Fig. 6.9. Success Rate of Maintaining Behaviour in %



## RESUME

In the introduction to this thesis I explained the rationale for why I chose to approach the question of gender development in the way I have. At this point in the thesis it is appropriate to reiterate that starting position, and place the studies so far reported and those to come in Chapter 7 & 8 within the context of that choice.

My original concern at the beginning of this thesis was to demonstrate that the theoretical bases for the clinical construct of gender dysphoria (transsexualism in adults and gender 'problems' diagnosed in young boys) were unfounded. Furthermore, I wanted to begin to explore what an alternative theory of gender development, one which was dynamic, might look like.

In Chapters 3 & 4 I have critically examined the theories of gender development proposed by both Kohlberg and Mischel. Neither theory adequately explains the child's knowledge of gender concepts or their display of particular behaviours which may be associated with gender. For example, Kohlberg fails to define the concepts he is discussing thus he quite happily talks of child's understanding of genital differences and never makes it clear whether he means physical, cognitive or behavioural differences. Equally Mischel relies upon rather simplistic notions such as 'modelling' to describe a complex process. Despite these problems in their texts I still felt that it was important to demonstrate these inadequacies not only through critique but also through the use of empirical evidence. In a sense this was in an attempt to

'play' these theorists at their own 'game'. They draw evidence to support their theories from empirical data or by recourse to biology, thus to counter their claims it was important to empirically demonstrate that their theories did not explain the reality as measured in cognition or behaviour.

In addition to providing this empirical refutation these empirical studies were also important in building the bridge, both for myself and other experimentally-based psychologists, away from studies grounded in the notion of 'objectivity' to considering alternative methodologies.

However, the studies presented in Chapters 5 & 6 remain firmly within the experimental tradition. Here the aim, having discredited Kohlberg's and Mischel's theories, was to begin to develop a new theory, one which focused upon the child's experience and practice of gender within their relationships with others. I felt unable at this stage to retreat from the notion of 'objectivity', still feeling that it was of some value in giving a study credibility amongst most quarters of the psychological community.

As it transpired the maintenance of an experimental approach was not particularly worthwhile. The studies, as you will have already read, did raise some interesting issues but because of the methodology employed were limited in the level of analysis. I found myself falling into the same experimental trap as Kohlberg and Mischel. Thus the findings presented in these chapters,

particularly the concepts of 'person-' and 'object-' centred strategies, conform to an essentialist view of the world where girls do one thing because they are girls and boys do another because they are boys. This did not in fact reflect the observed reality, where sometimes boys did things which girls did and vice versa. This is not immediately apparent from the results because of the 'normalising' factor of the empirical approach. The generalisable rule overwhelms the variation between subjects. Thus, this methodology fails to identify the cross-over in behaviour which is traditionally gender-associated.

In fact a further study, not reported here because of it remained incompleated due to the small sample population available within the nursery, tried to experimentally explore the possibility of encouraging the adoption of particular strategies. Here the setting was a group of children playing 'lotto' with a nursery worker. When the worker left the group, after several rounds of the game, she varied the instructions to the group between "see what you can do with the cards that X is holding" and simply leaving the cards in the middle of the table. It appeared on the basis of the incomplete sample that the former statement encouraged the use of the person-centred strategy regardless of whether X was a boy or a girl, and the latter encouraged the use of an object-centred strategy. This incomplete data set seemed to indicate a certain flexibility in terms of strategy used dependent upon the context made by the workers cooments to the group, reinforcing the idea of individual differences dependent upon context.

The study reported above, whilst incomplete, affected my thinking such that I thought it was appropriate to move on to look at individual differences in the experience and practice of gender. To do this I decided to follow four children through the process of leaving nursery to enter full-time education. In doing this I wanted to employ a methodology which would enable me to get to grips with the individual differences between children in terms of gender and to find explanation for this variation within their own histories - this involved observing children at home, in the nursery and at school. This study is described in Chapter 7. In the study described in Chapter 8 I attempt to use another methodology, childrens creative story-writing, to examine the child's awareness of this process of starting school and the effects this may have had upon them.

In developing these non-experimental approaches I am attempting to move away from notions of 'objectivity' to try and capture the emotional dynamics of the child's struggle to come to terms with gender. It may have been more appropriate to have adopted a discourse analysis approach in this studies however, I have not done so for two reasons;

- i) my own resistance to giving up the notion of 'objectivity' altogether.
- ii) my own lack of confidence in my ability to conduct such a form of analysis, given my background and experience.

The consequences of having adopted the methodologies I have done in Chapters 7 & 8 instead of a discourse analysis approach are discussed in the Chapter 9.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: STARTING SCHOOL: FOUR CASE STUDIES

### Contents

- 7.1. Introduction
- 7.1.2. Rationale for Present Study
- 7.2. Method
- 7.2.1. Subjects
- 7.2.2. Procedure
- 7.2.3. Analysis
- 7.3. The Home
- 7.4. The Nursery
- 7.5. The School
- 7.6. The Case Studies
- 7.6.1. Adam
- 7.6.2. Lisa
- 7.6.3. Darren
- 7.6.4. Michelle
- 7.7. Discussion

### 7.1. Introduction

The studies described so far suggest that the strategies which children use to structure their relations with others are affected by the context in which those relations are placed. As has been shown, the contextual changes can be as little as the toy the children are playing with, or the casual remark of an adult. These contextual changes allow the child to take up new positions in relation to each other. Different subjectivities are brought to bear. Once this point is accepted then it can be seen



that a complex web of expectations, attitudes, environments and emotions come into force around the child. Indeed, this force not only surrounds the child but *is* the child; all are intimately linked.

Such a perspective is not new. The work of Walkerdine discussed earlier hinges on this view. The social is not 'outside' and the individual 'inside': they are part and parcel of the same identity. This approach is not without its difficulties and is in fact opposed to much which has gone before in developmental psychology but if a greater understanding of gender development is to be gained it must be confronted.

This view is important when considering any behaviour, but is particularly so when it comes to behaviour which is socially defined in gender terms. Earlier in a discussion of the clinical work on transsexualism it was clear that the clinical and surgical treatment of transsexuals was based upon the notion that a person developed a stable and consistent gender identity. It was speculated that this acquisition occurred at around 18 months (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972) and that if this process was not successful the result was a gender dysphoric individual who required treatment. This model does not hold if one deprives it of the notion of a stable and consistent gender identity. If one instead begins to focus on a model in which the persons experienced gendered subjectivity is affected by a host of contextual situations and is therefore flexible then the whole concept of gender dysphoria becomes questionable.

Furthermore it may be that this stable and consistent gender identity is nothing but a reality created by a particular psychological methodology. In much the same way as Piaget's studies give a particular view of the child's cognitive abilities, eg. conservation, which may not accurately reflect a child's ability, gender development research may not accurately describe a child's gendered experience. For example, it has been claimed experimentally (Erikson, 1965), and has since become part of the popular imagination, that when children are left to play with Lego construction bricks boys and girls build different types of structures; boys made towers and exterior scenes supposedly indicating outwardness and action, whilst girls, on the other hand, made rooms or enclosures of some kind supposedly indicating inward looking or non-action. However, a study conducted by Walkerdine & Walden (1982) in which clear and explicit permission was given to a mixed-sex group of children to build what ever they liked with the Lego bricks revealed no difference between boys and girls in the types of structures they built. It may have been that in the work done by Erikson no such permission was given. As with the Davies study (1983) and that described in the previous chapter children may behave in contradictory ways in different contexts. Despite - because of - the contradictions, each form of behaviour is valid and a legitimate part of that persons subjectivity.

Part of the responsibility for our present distorted view of gender development must lie with the objective methodological

approach. Within such an approach the experimenter is set on course looking for a number of specific behaviours or verbal utterances. In this process the abnormalities get ironed out, overcome by an adherence to an implicit "norm". As has been indicated even the studies described in the last two chapters have failed to capture the variation in responses. Not all the girls used person-centred strategies all of the time and neither did all of the boys use the object-centred strategy all of the time. However, this is the type of conclusion that objective, experimental methods lead one towards.

The study reported in this chapter tries to get to grips with this sort of variation. In doing so it does not lose sight of the importance of context but does however focus upon a different form of contextual change. A perspective suggested by the work of Dunn & Kendrick (1982) on siblings; an important milestone in the history of developmental psychology. For the first time within mainstream developmental work a valid alternative to age as a marker of developmental change in children was provided.

Dunn & Kendrick, focused on the affect of the birth of the second child upon the cognitive and emotional development of the 18-month-old sibling. The results indicated that cognitive and emotional development was encouraged by the second child's arrival. The second child provided a change in context which in turn brought about the development in the first-born. The authors claim that it is the emotional 'jolt' of the second child's arrival which acts as the trigger. Such *emotional* transitions,

in this case from being the only child to being one of two, may provide a useful focus for work around gender development. For when such things happen, people's expectations, attitudes, emotions and behaviours all change thus ones relations with them, and in turn oneself, also change.

Within the early life of the child there are a number of important markers, eg. the birth of a sibling, the first birthday, etc. But perhaps the most significant is the fifth birthday. Much emphasis is placed upon this age. People, whether workers or parents, around young children fixate on this time; "you'll soon be five, you'll be a big girl then", "when you're five you'll be going to big school", "don't do that, you're almost five", etc. Indeed, this time is so important that there is a whole educational strategy aimed at the "rising fives". At the same time the child is in reality taking a very big step; going from spending the large majority of time at home with parent or child-minder or at nursery where that adult is close to hand, to spending the entire day away from home in full time education. For the child this is a new experience which is potentially extremely stressful. Following Dunn & Kendrick's sibling work, this 'transition point' might provide a useful framework in which to look at the child's development and in particular their gender development.

#### 7.1.2. Rationale for Present Study

The present study charts, through the use of observations and

interviews in the nursery, school and at home, the child's transition from nursery to full time education. In doing so emphasis is placed on the child's experience of a gendered subjectivity. In doing this we have moved away from the very specific research questions, and their accompanying methods, raised by the cognitive-developmental and social learning theory approaches. Here the focus is placed upon generating description which may help formulate more appropriate research questions.

## 7.2. Method

### 7.2.1. Subjects

Four children, two boys and two girls, were selected from the nursery population to act as case studies for this part of the research program. Each of these children had attended the nursery acting as the base site for the research for at least twelve months prior to the first case study interview. All of the children were due to leave the nursery to enter full time education in the near future. At the start of the case study period the mean age of the children was 4yrs 8mths, when they entered full time education it was 5yrs 2mths and at the final case study interview the mean age was 5yrs 5mths.

All the children were from white, working class families. Due to the small sample base from which these children were selected it was not possible to match for other family criteria such as birth order, number of siblings, etc.

### 7.2.2. Procedure

The purpose of the case studies was to follow the children through the transition from nursery into full time education. Within the County of Buckinghamshire children do not enter full time state education until the first school term after their fifth birthday. Thus the case studies commenced in the child's penultimate term of nursery and concluded at the end of their first term in school.

During this period the data for the case studies was drawn at different points from a number of sources:

#### **Penultimate Nursery Term**

1. The case study period commenced with an interview with the target child. This followed the same interview schedule as that described in Chapter Three. It included asking the child about gender labelling, knowledge of genitalia, gender identity, gender constancy, favourite clothes, hairstyles, toys/activities and friends. A further section was included about the child's thoughts on the nursery, being five and going to school. The interview was recorded on audio tape using a portable tape recorder and later transcribed.

2. A video observation was conducted of the target child relating to other children and an adult worker in the nursery setting. A group of children, including the target child, were taken by a nursery worker into a side room of the nursery which was familiar to the children. The children were then introduced to a "picture lotto" game, which they played with the adult for several turns.

At this point the worker explained that she must return to the nursery to look after the other children and, placing the lotto cards on the table, she asked the group to continue playing the game on their own. This group activity was chosen because it was felt that, like the book and toy scenarios reported above, it placed the target child in a situation which would throw the strategies they were using to order their relations with others in to bold relief. This entire scenario, which lasted thirty minutes, was videoed by the experimenter using a portable video camera and recorder. All the children were familiar with the video equipment. The experimenter did not communicate with the group throughout the session.

3. After viewing by the experimenter the nursery-based video was shown to the nursery workers for comment as part of an in depth interview with them. The interview schedule included the workers thoughts and feelings on the target child, their interpretation of the events in the video, their view of the child's life outside of nursery, the philosophy of the nursery, their thought on gender development, how they perceived children in general reacting to the nursery and how prepared they thought the children were for entry into school. The interview was recorded onto audio tape using a portable tape recorder and later transcribed. (see Appendix D for Interview Schedule)

4. A video observation was conducted of the child at home. The observation took place at a convenient time for the whole family, thus enabling all the household members to be present. In all

cases these took place in the family's living room and consisted of the target child, their siblings and their parents playing together with Lego building bricks. Each observation was of thirty minutes duration and after the first fifteen minutes the adults were asked to leave, allowing just the target child and siblings to play together. The same video equipment was used as described above. As in the nursery video sessions the family members were given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the video equipment. The experimenter did not communicate with the participants during the observation period.

5. Several days after the home observation the family was given the opportunity to watch the video recording, again following viewing by the experimenter as part of an in depth interview. The interview schedule included a family history, their interpretation of the video observation, their thoughts and feelings about the target child and their siblings, their thoughts on gender development, comments on the nursery and a consideration of the family's thoughts and feelings around the target child entering school. All members of the family were encouraged to participate in the interview. The interview was recorded on audio tape using a portable tape recorder and later transcribed. (see Appendix D for Interview Schedule)

#### First Term in School

A comparable set of observations and interviews took place during the target child's first term at school.

1. The initial interview with the target child was repeated



although the interview schedule was amended to include a section on how the child felt about being at school. The interview was recorded on audio tape using a portable tape recorder and later transcribed.

2. A video observation was made in the school setting. The class teacher took a group of children, including the target child, into a side room off the main classroom and introduced them to a game which was a variation on "picture lotto" and involved throwing a dice with coloured faces and then matching the thrown colour with a coloured item to place on their scorecard. The aim of the game was to complete the scorecard. This became increasingly difficult because the progress of each child became dependent on them throwing a particular colour. After several turns the teacher left the children to return to the classroom and asked the group to continue with the game. The thirty minute observation was video recorded using the same equipment as reported above. The teacher and the children were all familiar with the equipment. The experimenter did not communicate with the group during the observation period.

3. A similar in depth interview took place with the teachers as had taken place with the nursery workers. This again was audio recorded and transcribed. (see Appendix D for Interview Schedule)

4. The home observation was repeated.

5. A second interview took place with the parents and siblings of the target child following the second home observation. The

interview schedule was ammended such that the focus was on how the child and family had responded to their move into full time education and whether any changes had taken place in the child both generally and in respect of gender development. This interview was also audio taped and transcribed.(see Appendix D for Interview Schedule)

### 7.2.3. Analysis

"An expression only has meaning in the flow of life"  
(Wittgenstein)

As has been noted elsewhere in this thesis research within developmental psychology has tended to be conducted through measuring concepts or observing behaviour. Thus the researcher constructs a bank of questions which require a single response from the 'subject', or they devise a coded window through which behaviour can be observed. These features are the product of psychology's historical allegiance to a positivist idea of science derived from the natural sciences.

Using a hypothetical/deductive method a hypothesis is formulated, on the basis of a theory, and then, independently, data is collected which will test the hypothesis. Within positivist terms a null hypothesis is constructed and then the researcher attempts to falsify it. However, this begs the question of how theory is formulated in the first place. This separation between methodology and theory suggests that practice is about the statistical handling of quantative data, whilst theorising is deemed more suitable to the fireside than to the research process.

Psychology, at least as practiced by some (eg. Walkerdine (1981), Dunn (1982), Shotter (1986)), is gradually coming to recognise that the collection of facts in an isolated, experimental manner will not automatically add up to the production of theory.

The work described here is not necessarily concerned with the collection of facts, but instead is intended to provide a rigorous description of events. The gaining of such descriptive material is part of the research process and is acknowledged as such and used by other practitioners. Thus Dunn & Kendrick (1982), in their work on siblings, initially focused upon looking in detail at a small number of families. This groundwork, a piece of research in itself, provided the insight for later work with a larger group of families. It would be wrong to confuse this small-scale work with pilot-work because it is more than simply testing out the viability of particular methods; it is concerned with generating the theory itself.

In the work presented here no statistical tests have been carried out on the case study data. This is not only because of the sample size but also because, as suggested above, the purpose of the studies is to build up a picture of how these children dealt with the transition from nursery to full time education. This is not to say that no analysis has taken place. The observation material was shown to the participants of each video during the interview phase and through discussion between the experimenter and the participants a negotiated meaning was arrived at. This negotiation process is extremely important in producing a

description of the complexities of the process under investigation. It must be acknowledged that the people who populate the child's social world, especially the family, have had along historical connection with the child. One of the difficulties the researcher has is deciding whether the behaviour/activities of the child displayed in an half hour observation is typical or atypical of the child's 'normal' behaviour. In an experimental method the researcher tries to overcome this problem by working with a large sample population. Even so vital clues to understanding the child may be overlooked. Thus the experience of those people in regular contact with the child could prove to be very useful. This is illustrated by an example discussed earlier: in Chapter One the case of Rae having her hair cut and the effects this had upon other peoples perceptions of her was put into focus by her mother's own experience and perceptions of her daughter. In the present study I am trying to build up a picture, layer by layer, of the case study children by collecting information from a variety of sources and therefore sharing the task of analysis of the video material is useful. It is not an attempt to develop an 'objective' appraisal of the issue which has both enormous explanatory power and is generalisable to other groups of young people. However, it is about that process, showing "how one came to hold the opinion one does hold", which Woolf (1928) discusses. Whilst this method of inviting the 'subject' to participate within the analysis of the material is not common within

psychology various precedents can be found. In the early days of psychology 'introspection' was considered to be a valid method. Similarly, the Repertory Grid method (Kelly, 1955) allows the 'subject' to generate various constructs, thus enabling the person under investigation to have some control over both the experimental method and the analytic process. In more recent times Hollway (1984) looked at gender differences in adult women through a similar analytic process of negotiation with the participants. Unlike the work of Hollway, who's participants were chosen because they were articulate and used to self-reflection, the families involved here in the analysis of the case studies were not used to organising their thoughts in such a way. This did not present itself as a problem however as all the participants, once introduced to the idea of participant analysis, conducted the task in hand with little difficulty. It is important to note that in constructing such a method of analysis the knowledge and abilities of each participant, adults and children alike, were acknowledged. This process ensured that each of the participants' right to self-determination was also credited.

### 7.3. The Home

As will become apparent in the case studies themselves the home backgrounds of the four children in many ways were different. However, there were some commonalities which are worth noting. All of the children came from working class families with only one of the parents, the father, being in full time employment. All of the parents had left school at the age of sixteen and had

married in their late teens. Two of the mothers had part-time/casual employment.

All of the families lived in houses which were rented from Milton Keynes Development Corporation and these were situated on three small neighbouring housing estates. All of the mothers were regular attenders at the nursery and two had other children who had previously attended the nursery.

#### 7.4. The Nursery

The nursery which acted as the base site for the research presented in this thesis is situated in Moorlands Family Centre. In total approximately 48 children attend the nursery, 24 in the morning session and 24 in the afternoon session. For each session there was 2-3 qualified nursery workers and at least two parent volunteer helpers. This provided an average adult/child ratio of 1:5.

The nursery was housed in two converted prefab-style houses on a small housing estate in the south of Milton Keynes. Whilst the nursery and Family Centre was primarily funded by Milton Keynes Development Corporation it was managed by a management group on which there were parent representatives. This management group was responsible for employing staff and providing policy on the day to day running of the Centre. The nursery had a long waiting list and criteria for a place usually centred around the needs of the particular child and their family. The Centre employed one member of staff to make home visits and assessments prior to

allocation of a place and to continue visits after a place had been obtained to monitor the child's and the family's progress. No child attended the nursery for a whole day but was usually offered an 'all mornings' or 'all afternoons' placement.

The daily routine of the sessions was kept as flexible as possible. When children arrived they were able to choose from a large range of activities. These activities were usually table-based, eg. puzzles, glueing, construction bricks, water play, etc. A table was set aside in the kitchen so that when a child wanted to they could go and get a glass of milk or orange juice and a biscuit. At some point during the session the children were gathered together for some form of joint activity such as listening to a story, singing or dancing. Towards the end of the session the table-based activities were put away and the children were encouraged to participate in free play. If the weather was fine this might include playing out in the garden. During this time the children occasionally went out on short trips, eg to the library or to the shops. This routine was designed to be as flexible as possible and was very much guided by the individual child's needs and desires.

The staff of the nursery met regularly to discuss the progress of individual children and to discuss and develop the overall nursery curriculum.

The majority of children attending the nursery were caucasian with only one or two coming from asian or afro-caribbean families. This racial mix reflected that of the surrounding

housing estates. All of the nursery staff were caucasian women. The majority of parent helpers were the mothers, although two fathers also occasionally helped out.

### 7.5. The School

Children who attend the nursery at Moorlands Family Centre leave to enter one of two local infant schools. These schools are very similar, both being run by Buckinghamshire Education Authority and located on neighbouring estates. Amongst the four case study children one boy and one girl left to go to Moorlands Infant School, whilst the other boy and girl left to go to Cornhill Infants School. Both schools accepted local children the term after their fifth birthday and the children remained there until they were eight. At this point they would leave to go to the local primary school. Each school had a population of approximately one hundred pupils which were split into three age bands (5-6yrs, 6-7yrs and 7-8yrs), with approx 30-35 pupils in each one. Each band was assigned two teachers giving a teacher/child ratio of approx 1:17. This ratio was occasionally reduced by the addition of a teacher helper who several times a week would take some of the children for art or craft activities.

The schools worked on a weekly curriculum with set times in the week for particular activities. These included the development of preliminary literacy and numeracy skills, art/craft sessions, physical exercise and particular project work, eg. wall paintings to accompany fairy tales. Beyond this weekly curriculum the school day followed a regular routine. Children arrived for



9.00am, went to their classroom where they were registered by their class teacher, and would then attend assembly (this might be for their age-band only or for the whole school). After assembly the children would work until mid-morning at which point there was a playtime break and if the weather was fine the pupils would go and play in the playground. They would then return to work until the end of the morning when it was time for lunch. Some children were collected by their parents and taken home for lunch, whilst others stayed at school and ate either a packed lunch or a hot meal from the school kitchen. The afternoon session followed a similar routine with a mid-afternoon playtime break and a return to the classroom to work until the end of the school day at approx 3.30pm.

Similar to the nursery staff the teachers met on a regular basis to review the performance of particular children and the weekly curriculum.

As with the nursery the school population was predominantly caucasian with only a small minority of children from asian or afro-caribbean families. All the school teaching staff were caucasian women with the exception of one of the headteachers who was a caucasian man.

## 7.6. The Case Studies

### 7.6.1. Adam

Adam was born in May 1980. He is the youngest of three children born to Julie and John. Adam has a sister, Lisa, aged nine years

and a brother, Austin, aged seven years. Julie has part-time employment as a cleaner whilst her husband, John, works full-time in a food processing plant.

Adam was first interviewed at the nursery when he was 4yrs 10mths old. At this age he was quite clear about being a boy and knew that this was because he had a penis. Adam was also able to correctly gender label members of his family and friends. His favourite clothes were jeans and jumpers and whilst he believed these to be boys clothes he did know girls who wore them as well. Adam's favourite toys were the 'HE-Men' action dolls and he cited a long list of friends from the nursery which included both girls and boys. Overall Adam showed a good awareness of gender concepts and gender rules but also indicated that these rules were not binding, in that girls and boys often wore and did the same things as boys.

In the second part of the interview Adam stated that he was happy in the nursery but was aware that he would shortly be five and would be going to school. He was not sure what school was going to be like but both his brother and sister went and they seemed to like it.

Adam's second interview took place when he was 5yrs 7mths and had been attending school for approximately eight weeks. Before the interview proper started Adam insisted on describing what he wanted for Christmas, which was still some weeks away. He had decided that he would like some Lego building bricks for both

himself and his brother. When asked what he thought his sister would like he said that he did not know but that it would be "girls stuff". The distasteful tone in which this statement was made remained throughout the interview. Thus when Adam was asked to name his friends at school he cited several boys but no girls although when prompted for any possible friends which were girls he declared "don't like girls, hate all girls". Even television programmes were divided on this basis. Therefore he liked cartoons like *Dangermouse*, *Superman* or programmes like the *A-Team* and not soap operas such as *Coronation Street* which is what his sister and mother watched. These were also labelled as "girls things". It became apparent that Adam now saw the world as consisting of two halves, girls things and boy things, and clearly identified with the latter half.

Adam still displayed an understanding and awareness of the gender concepts described previously. However, it is worth noting that in the task which centred around the child's knowledge of genitalia Adam was now reluctant to mention the word 'penis', or any euphemism, preferring instead simply to point between the legs of the child in the photograph.

When discussing school Adam said that he now liked going to school despite the fact that at first he had been "unhappy". He explained that when he had first started that he "didn't know anyone's names, but now I do".

This change in Adam's attitudes around gender was also matched by change in his behaviour. The initial video observation conducted

in the nursery had been extremely difficult. Three attempts had been made to carry out the observation for a full thirty minutes as required but on the first two occasions Adam left the observation room shortly after the worker had left the room. On the third try he became disruptive after the worker left but did not leave the room.

With the worker present the group of three boys and one girl played the lotto game in an orderly fashion. The children listened to what the worker was saying and asked her questions. The worker was using a person-centred strategy in this context. When the worker left the room Eve tried to gain control of the situation by developing her own person-centred strategy in which she held up the lotto cards one at a time asking "who has this picture?", etc. Unable to physically get hold of the lotto cards Adam employed an object-centred strategy by grabbing hold of the low table on which the game is being played. Adam successfully disrupted the game by moving the table and thus disturbing the cards laid upon it. Having done this Adam stood up and announced that he is going to play "shops". In doing this the lotto game is forgotten and Adam has successfully placed himself at the centre of the other children's attention. He then proceeded to extend his object-centered approach, commanding the other children around as objects. Thus Eve is told to do this and Michael told to do that. Contrary to appearances this is not a person-centered strategy despite people being involved, because the people are treated like objects with Adam giving no thought to listening to

answers, dealing with questions, etc. He simply ploughed on with the game he wanted to play regardless of what others want to do.

This observation is in striking contrast to the school video where order is maintained almost throughout. Here the teacher takes Adam and three other children, one boy and two girls, into a side room and they all play a game involving matching shapes and colours. This game is more sophisticated than the lotto game and requires the children to play in strict turn rotation. After one round the teacher leaves. At this point one of the girls, Katy, takes over from the teacher in using a person centred approach. She keeps people to their turn, ensuring that nobody misses their turn, and enquires after how the others are enjoying the game, etc. This turn of events carries on for some time. However, Katy's intentions are not entirely honourable and when it comes to her turn and that of the other girl, Carolyn, began to cheat by turning the face of the dice over after it had been thrown. Despite this Katy corrected the boys when they throw the dice to ensure that they do not cheat. At this point Adam began to become disruptive, not as before by trying to establish a different type of game of his own, but by both employing an object-centred strategy, ie. grabbing hold of the dice and not passing it on, and by becoming verbally abusive to Katy, eg. "you're no good", "you're stupid you are", "silly girl", etc. Adam encourages the other boy to join in on this assault of Katy and the boys subsequently extend the campaign to include Carolyn. Katy and Carolyn supported each other but the boys become more and more disruptive and eventually get up from the table and run

around. Katy attempted to maintain order by telling the boys to sit down. However, they ignore this demand and thus the game came to an end.

In the home observations there are also interesting changes to be noted. In the initial video the entire family play happily with the Lego with Adam relating more to his mother than to his father. In return the mother directs a lot of attention towards Adam although this is mainly physical, with mother helping Adam out with his construction; there is little verbal contact between the two. The father interacts very little with Adam, directing most of his attention towards Austin, Adam's older brother. Adam's sister, Lisa, does not interact with the mother or father but instead communicates a great deal with Austin. When the parents leave the observation room the three children carry on playing with the Lego. Adam tries to gain control through the use, once again, of an object-centred strategy, ie trying to collect all the bricks and only allowing his brother and sister to have specific ones. On the other hand his siblings both try to gain control by utilising person-centred strategies, as both vie for Adam's attention. Thus, Adam says, "I want a spaceship" and Lisa replies " I'll make you one, just like mine" and Austin competes with, "I'll make you a motorbike". The observation continues in this manner for the remainder of the session.

In the second home observation the dynamics within the group appear to have changed. The relationship between Adam and his mother appears to have grown stronger and thus rather than the

mother simply physically helping Adam in his constructions she also has more verbal interactions with him, asking questions and sounding out feelings. The contact between Adam and his father has also increased. This leaves Lisa and Austin having little contact with their parents, thus both play in a solitary manner. Once the parents have left, the dynamics change and alliances are automatically established between Adam and Austin in opposition to Lisa. The two boys share bricks and constructions, gradually stealing pieces they want from Lisa. Lisa asks "Who's pinched it?" and the boys respond in unison chanting "Who's pinched whatsit?, Who's pinched whatsit?". This chant gradually changes and is replaced with them taking turns in verbally abusing Lisa;

Adam: "Lisa is a wally"  
Austin: "Lisa is a womble"  
Adam: "Lisa is a witch"

This continues until the end of the session.

Both nursery workers and the teachers felt that the respective video observations were typical of Adam's behaviour within those two environments. The nursery workers felt that Adam "sought a lot of attention" and that "if he does not get his own way he's likely to become upset or have a tantrum" and "on occasion he can be stubborn, holding out for what he wants". This characteristic was recognised by his mother who felt it has its positive sides, however his father viewed the tantrums and accompanying tears as indicating that Adam "was a bit soft".

Adam's stubbornness was also reported by the teachers at school. They said,

"He was troublesome for the first few days, he wouldn't line up in the morning and insisted on coming in with his mother. He was very stubborn but we couldn't have children wandering in, he had to learn to line up."

This situation lasted for some time but was eventually resolved by making Adam the leader of the line-up for one week. The teacher suggested that "perhaps he wanted to be first, and hadn't learnt that in school you just can't always be first".

This was obviously an emotional time for Adam, putting much stress on him, as his mother recalls:

"I was surprised at his fears when he started school. I had fears about him going off and leaving you know. but he had fears of death and dying. He got it into his mind that he was growing up, and that when you grow up you die. So, he wasn't going to eat any more food, because if he didn't he wouldn't grow old and he wouldn't die."

These problems appeared to be associated with starting school and subsided at about the same time as the line-up problems were sorted out.

The teachers felt that the observation was typical of the reformed Adam because "he had changed a lot in the control of his behaviour since he had started school, although he still liked to occasionally show off". It certainly appeared, comparing the two videos that Adam was now able to follow the rules of game playing, ie. taking turns, even if he eventually still ended up being disruptive.

Apart from the more controlled behaviour the other striking difference about Adam was his acute awareness of gender divisions. Thus everyday life became about boys things and girls



things. Correspondingly his friendships had changed. He now "hated girls" and played at "boy things" with boys. In the school video he forms an alliance with the other boy against the girls and in the second home observation he forms an alliance with his brother against his sister.

This change had also been noticed by his parents. His father felt that since beginning school Adam was "getting bigger and noisier" whilst his mother felt him to be "more confident". His father also commented that Adam "was better at fighting now". The father was pleased with this shift because he had been worried about Adam's play with dolls for he believed that "if a boy plays with a Sindy doll you think he's going to grow up into a poof". Since starting school this play had stopped.

Overall Adam found the transition from nursery to school an emotional experience and whilst there were some initial difficulties he has, as far as his parents and teachers are concerned settled down. Beyond this he is perceived as being more noisy and confident since starting school and this is characterised in his behaviour. In terms of gender subjectivity he appears to experience himself in more gender specific ways than when he was in the nursery. He now identifies with boy things and builds alliances with other boys against girls.

#### 7.6.2. Lisa

Lisa was born on the 17th August 1980. She is the only child of Janice. Janice is single and lives with her mother and teenage sister, Maxine (14-years-old) but frequently saw Lisa's father,

Tony. During the case study period Janice became pregnant and she and Tony decided to get married. Lisa's grandmother was in full-time employment whilst Janice had part-time employment.

Lisa was first interviewed when she was 4yrs 7mths. At this time she had a good understanding and awareness of gender concepts and rules. She was well aware that she was a girl and that that was because she had a vagina. Lisa liked wearing dresses and having long hair, she enjoyed playing with dolls, building bricks and on the slide. Her list of friends included both boys and girls. On being asked about nursery and school Lisa said that she liked being at nursery and "liked playing with all the children" and did not want to go to school.

The second interview took place when Lisa was 5yrs 4mths old, several weeks after she started school, and was dominated by her parents impending wedding. Lisa was going to be a bridesmaid and went into great detail about her dress which she wanted to be pink. On being asked why pink she replied that "I like pink, it's better than blue, blue is for boys". Lisa still has the same awareness of gender concepts and rules that she displayed in the first interview but is embarrassed about referring to the genitals on the photographs. Her favourite activities are now skipping and hand-clapping games. At this point Lisa sang the following hand-clapping song;

"My boyfriend took me to the baker shop  
To buy a loaf of bread, bread, bread  
They wrapped it up in a five pound note  
And this is what they said, said, said.

Girls are sexy  
Boys drink Pepsi  
What's for dinner  
Chicken!"

Lisa is also concerned about her mothers pregnancy and proudly states that she is "going to have a baby boy brother". She adds that she likes playing with Barbie dolls but that she will "buy Action Men for my brother". When asked about her friends she is quick to reply that "I hate boys, they're horrible" but quickly supplements this with "except for one, he's my boyfriend, he kisses me".

Lisa anticipates being asked questions about the nursery and says that she "can't go back there now". As far as school goes she likes "doing painting and colouring and P.E.", she also adds that "there are more children here than in the nursery" and that when she first came to school she "didn't know a lot of people".

In the nursery video Lisa appears to get on well with the other children and the nursery worker. She has good verbal skills and is able to interact well with the worker, asking questions, providing answers and participating fully in the game. When the worker leaves the game continues for the full thirty minutes of the observation period, but only after initial bids for control are made by Lisa and Carly. When the worker leaves Carly picks up the lotto cards and attempts to use an object-centred strategy to control the game. Lisa, on the other hand, steps in and whilst Carly is collecting the cards takes up a person-centred strategy and says, "right, lets see what we can do with the cards that Carly is holding"; thus Lisa gives *permission* for Carly to take

the lead. After a short while Carly is seen to be in control and Lisa challenges this by slipping into an object-centred strategy, grabbing hold of the table and rocking it gently disturbing the cards and the game. As a result of this Carly suggests that Lisa and herself should share the task of holding the lotto cards. This they do and the game continues. The other boy and girl in the group remain passive and play the game responding to Carly and Lisa's joint lead.

Within the school video a different pattern of events emerge. The group of two boys and two girls play the colour/shape game for several turns before the teacher leaves. Once the teacher has left Tracy takes the lead with a person-centred strategy in which she prompts the others to have their go in turn. However, very quickly, the two boys begin to respond to this by becoming verbally abusive saying "shut up" and challenging the turn order;

James: "My turn, my turn"

Tracy: "No. Its just been Lisa'a turn and so it's my go".

The two boys begin to giggle and tease Tracy with the dice by throwing it to each other. Lisa offers no support to Tracy, but instead smiles at the boys and giggles with them. The boys continue their abuse of Tracy with calls of "you're stupid, you're stupid". Tracy tries to maintain some order to continue the game but fails as Lisa begins also verbally to abuse Tracy and the two boys get out of their seats and hit Tracy. Throughout this Lisa smiles and mouths words of encouragement to the boys. The boys say and do nothing to Lisa.

Relations between Lisa and her teenage aunt were strained; Maxine refused to take part in the observation. The grandmother described the relationship between the two as "sometimes her and Maxine get on, sometimes it's murder". Thus the observation was conducted with only the grandmother, mother and daughter as participants. The home observations are both similar. With grandmother and mother present there is much conversation. Whilst this is not always aimed at Lisa the adults were always mindful of her presence. Occasionally there are squabbles over particular bricks between Lisa and her mother, at which point the grandmother would intervene. In many ways the grandmother treats both Lisa and her mother as daughters and they treat each other as sisters. The only difference between the observations lies in what happens after the adults have left the room. In the first observation Lisa carries on playing with the Lego on her own and whilst she does this she makes up stories and discusses these stories with a toy dog. However, in the second observation Lisa sits quietly playing with the Lego.

Both the nursery workers and the school teachers considered the observations to be typical of the behaviour they saw Lisa displaying on a day to day basis. They all agreed that her verbal skills were well developed. At the nursery it was felt that Lisa "often tried to grab the attention of the adults" and this was also noticed at school initially, the teacher stating that she was "very demanding of adult attention when she first came to school". It became clear from the home observation that this may be due to the way in which Lisa is surrounded by adults at home.

Certainly the adults at home appear to speak to Lisa as a fellow adult rather than as a child.

One of the biggest changes noted by the family in Lisa since being at school was how much older she looked and behaved. Thus the grandmother suggests that "you can see the difference in just nine months, she has matured more". Maturity is defined in a very particular way which has to do with self control. The family suggest the following evidence;

Grandmother: "she's a lot quieter"

"I've never known her to be so quiet"

Mother: "the first thing we noticed when she was in school was how much she calmed down"

Grandmother: "she has more interest in what she's doing now, takes her time"

However, this quietening-down process is also seen by the family to have negative consequences as well. There are complaints that "she don't stick up for herself" and "that she was afraid of the boys".

These things were also picked up by the teachers who said,

"we were constantly saying 'hasn't that Lisa got a loud voice' it was high pitched and jarred, it stood out in the group...it's stopped now".

Several weeks after being in school the teachers described Lisa as "sullen and quiet, she's gone from being talkative to withdrawn".

The other striking difference in Lisa before and after entry into school is her interest in boys. After entry to school she claims to hate all boys except for one who is her boyfriend, whereas

at nursery she quite happily numbered boys amongst her friends. This change was also noted by the family who commented on her "having a boyfriend" and provided fascination for the teacher who stated that "whenever you see her playing in the playground she's always playing 'clapping songs', holding up her skirt for all to see or chasing the boys, she's very much that sort of child." Certainly, one can describe the effective person-centred strategy she used in the school observation to control the boys as almost a 'flirting' strategy. This was successful because she got the boys on her side and did not receive the verbal and physical abuse that Tracy did. The use of such a strategy might also explain why the teachers found that "boys related to Lisa but not to other girls, the boys included Lisa in their talk". This also had some resonance within the home life of Lisa where 'romance' was very much in the air for both her parents and for her adolescent aunt. Indeed, on the visits that her father made to the home the grandmother reported that Lisa "played her mum and dad off against each other" and "managed to get her dad to do things such as take her for drives and buy her things". Equally, when Lisa and Maxine were getting on Maxine would let "Lisa put on make-up and put her hair up for her".

Overall Lisa, during the transition period, had come to see the world in a much more gendered way. She liked being a girl and intended to adhere to what being a girl meant socially, even if that meant unquestionably preferring pink to blue. Similarly her choice of play activities and mates had become more gender orientated. In her behaviour at school and at home Lisa had gone

from being loud and robust to being shy, quiet and withdrawn. The only area in which this did not seem to be the case was in her relationships with boys who were seen as potential boyfriends, something to be flirted with.

### 7.6.3. Darren

Darren was born on 16th August 1988. He is the third child of Zena and Ron who have three other children, Mark aged 9 years old, Tony aged 8 years old and Sarah aged 3.5 years old. Both Mark and Tony went to the nursery at Moorlands, Sarah started after Darren left. Neither Zena or Ron are in full time employment.

Darren was first interviewed in the nursery when he was 4yrs and 7mths. In the interview he demonstrated a good understanding and awareness of gender concepts and gender rules. As with the other children in the initial interviews he was able to distinguish between such facts as boys being depicted with short hair and girls with long and the reality that both boys and girls can have short or long hair. Darren's favourite toys were cars and Smurf dolls and said that his sister also liked these. When asked to name his friends he produced a long list of boys and girls. Darren liked being at the nursery but had some reservations about going to school, particularly around being away from home all day.

The second interview took place when Darren was 5yrs 4mths old and had been at school for several weeks. Once again Darren displayed a good understanding of gender concepts and rules. It



should be noted that there was some reticence to talk explicitly about genitalia. Despite this it was established that Darren was confident about being a boy and that this was because he had a penis. Darren was quite clear about the activities he now enjoyed, eg. cars, computers, motorbikes, etc., his clothes and the television programmes he watched, eg. *Knightrider* , *Streethawk* , *A-Team* , etc.; all were seen as being "boy things". Darren also spent a long time talking about how his dad, brothers and himself all went off together to play leaving mum and sister at home. On the subject of driving he was also explicit that "mums don't drive, they just crash!". On being questioned about the school he said that he did not like it because you had to do work and that he liked being at the nursery better.

There was a very large difference between Darren's involvement in the nursery and school observations. In the nursery observation Darren is extremely withdrawn and shy. When the worker is there she makes a special attempt to draw Darren into the action but this is not met with much success. When the worker leaves the observation room the scenario follows the pattern seen in the other observations with one child, a girl, establishing control of the situation through the use of a person-centred strategy and this being challenged by another child, a boy, using a object-centred strategy. The situation soon becomes out of control with two of the boys fighting in the middle of the room and the other members of the group pressed back out of the way. Throughout this half of the session Darren remains silent bar one comment which was ignored.

By contrast the school observation remains ordered and Darren is a full participating member of the group. With the teacher present all goes smoothly and this routine is maintained by one of the girls upon the teacher leaving. The girl in question uses a person-centred strategy to progress the turn-taking in the game. As the game progresses the other members of the group submit to this girl's control. The other girl in the group supports and helps maintain the role taken by the first girl, whilst the boys begin to assert themselves in opposition to the girls. This is particularly so in Darren's case who asserts himself both by trying successfully to take his turn out of sequence and by him being mildly abusive to the girl, "I won't stop it", "you're stupid", etc. Darren's behaviour in this respect is not as marked as some of the boys in the other school observations.

This change in Darren's involvement can also be witnessed in the home observations pre- and post-entry to school. In the initial home video there is very little interaction between the parents and the children with the exception of the mother, focusing quite a lot of attention upon the young daughter Sarah. After the parents have left the room this attention to the daughter is replaced by Mark and Tony's attention, who both ensure that Sarah is happy and able to build objects. Darren spends all thirty minutes of the observation sitting quietly on his own away from the other family members.

As in the school observation, the second home observation provides a stark contrast to the initial one in how much more assertive Darren has become. He is more vocal and asks questions, demanding attention from those family members around him, and duly receiving it. When the parents leave the observation the dynamics are very different to those before when Darren was left with his siblings. This time he makes a very strong alliance with his brothers against his sister. The three boys sit close together sharing ideas and swapping pieces whilst their sister sits neglected.

Parents, nursery workers and teachers all seemed to be agreement about Darren being shy and withdrawn in nursery and becoming more outward going once he got to school. As his mother said,

"He's started to come out of shell now he's started school". He was also described by his family and by the teachers as being "more cheeky and talkative" since he went into full time education. This shift is paralleled with a shift in attitudes towards gender rules. Thus Darren identifies more heavily with boys and positively promotes boy things.

It was also clear that the alliance portrayed in the second home observation was becoming more and more typical as his father made clear,

"The three boys do things together now, they all get their bikes out, Sarah tries to follow but gets left behind".

Darren has also been seen to grow in confidence. His mother noted that,

"In the nursery he ignored things and always stood aside, whereas now if he doesn't think something's right he'll do something about it".

This change in behaviour and attitude was noted by his teachers and seen by them as being necessary in Darren if he was to develop at school. Thus, they were clear from the outset that they "wanted to build his confidence".

Yet Darren stated quite clearly that he did not like school, even after several weeks, and this was confirmed by his parents who said they had difficulty getting him out of bed each morning to go to school.

At the time of this observation Darren was clearly still going through the transition from nursery to school and had not yet fully adjusted or "settled down". However, he had certainly changed during the case study period from being shy and withdrawn to being loud, confident and sociable. His attitudes about gender had also changed and, like Adam and Lisa, Darren fully believed in and adhered to a world of boy things and girl things. His brothers said that Darren was now "a good fighter" and was certainly "one of the boys".

#### 7.6.4. Michelle

Michelle was born on the 26th November 1980. She is the eldest child of Jane and Den. Michelle has a brother, Michael, aged 3 years old, and Tracy aged 6mths, born during the case study period. Michelle's father does have a full time job; her mother does not go out to work.

Michelle was first interviewed at the age of 4yrs 7mths whilst she was in her penultimate term at nursery. During this interview she displayed a good understanding and awareness of gender concepts and gender rules. Michelle showed no embarrassment around naming genitalia and was confident that she was a girl and that this was because she had a vagina. When asked about her favourite clothes and hairstyle she simply stated that her favourites were the ones she was wearing, giving no further explanation. Her favourite activities in the nursery were the 'home corner', the 'water play' and large building blocks. She stated that both boys and girls liked doing these things. When asked to name her friends she produced a list including both boys and girls. Michelle said that she "had lots of fun in the nursery" and wasn't sure if she would like going to school. This was partly because "no one else from nursery is going to the same school as me so I won't know anyone".

Michelle's second interview took place when she was 5yrs 4mths old and had been attending school for several weeks. During this interview she displayed the same level of gender understanding as she had in the initial interview. However, as with the other case study children, Michelle appeared to be markedly sensitive about gender divisions. The roller skates she had for her birthday were "specially for girls" and she had developed a dislike for boys,

"I like Kerry, I play with her most of the time.  
She's better than the boys, I don't like boys".

Michelle had also decided that, despite missing the nursery, she liked school because she could "play at different things and

work".

In the nursery observation all four children in the group, two girls and two boys, participated in the game with the worker. When the worker left the observation room Michelle, announced "I'll do that", picked up the lotto, and carried on with the game where the worker had left off. Michelle's lead was reinforced by one of the boys who said,

"Michelle's going to do that".

Michelle managed the situation by using a person-centred strategy. At one point, as the game continued, the three others became noisy but, following an assertive "Be quiet please" from Michelle the noise ceased. The game continued for several more rounds with Michelle asking questions and prompting the turns of the others. However, the boys eventually lost interest in the game, stopped playing and moved off into another part of the room. Michelle simply excused them and recommenced the game with the remaining child.

The school observation followed a similar pattern to the nursery observation although the outcome was not as successful. Whilst the teacher was present the group, two boys and two girls, all paid attention and participated in the game. When the teacher left the observation room Michelle took up a person-centred strategy to take control of the game. However, this was flawed because neither Michelle or the other children could remember the rules of the game and thus Michelle found it difficult to take a lead. Kerry, the other girl, sided with Michelle and tried to help her work out the rules. On the other hand the boys formed an

alliance and began to abuse verbally the two girls saying "no, no, it's not your turn, you've got it wrong, you're idiots, girls are stupid". At one point one of the boys swears at the girls and Michelle tries to reprimand him saying, "you're not allowed to say that naughty word". This goes ignored. The observation continues with Michelle and Kerry trying to work out the rules and the boys calling them names. The girls do not make comments back.

This shift of behaviour, from assertiveness to passiveness, is paralleled in the home observations. Again both are similar with all the family sitting on the floor playing with the Lego. (The only addition in the second video is the new baby, Tracy). The family members appear to communicate well with each other, and much attention is placed on the children by the adults. In the second home observation Michelle communicates less to the parents. This lack of communication is upheld by Michelle in the second half of the latter observation. In the first observation when left alone with her brother she is very talkative and boisterous, moving around the room and continually checking on Michael's involvement with the bricks. Michelle does not do this when she is left with her siblings in the second observation. Instead she sits quietly playing with the bricks occasionally seeing to the needs of her baby sister and to ask questions of her brother.

Both the nursery workers and teachers felt that the respective observations reflected a view of Michelle that was typical at

those times. The teachers admitted to having made a "conscious effort to get her to quieten down". They felt that in the school observation that Michelle "seemed to have grown in the understanding of the importance of the rules of the game". In the nursery observation the workers were clear "that Michelle had taken the lead by picking up the cards and leading the game" and were also "surprised that she seemed to be doing it fairly". The nursery workers saw Michelle as "confident", "assertive" and a "sometime show-off". On the other hand the teachers saw her as someone who was initially "loud" and "aggressive" but was now "more in control now that they had quietened her down".

Michelle's parents were also aware of this change. Her dad felt that she had "grown up" whilst her mother thought that "her ability to stay and play had got better". Mother also states that Michelle has "quietened down". Father blames this on school,

"But that's the school, I mean she was the oldest in the nursery and in the school she's the youngest, bound to quieten her down".

Overall Michelle appeared to have coped with the transition from nursery to school. Her view of the world had become more gendered and she closely identified with girl things and other girls. Michelle's behaviour had also changed, she was no longer noisy and assertive but had become quiet and almost timid in some of her ways.

### 7.7. Discussion

The four case studies presented above each follow a similar



pattern.

All the children, both the boys and the girls, display a shift in their gender attitudes. Their general awareness and understanding of gender concepts and gender rules did not change; what did appear to change was the way those concepts and rules were applied to themselves and the world. In this respect these children were no different to the large sample of children interviewed in Chapter Three. That is, both the pre- and post-entry to school age groups could gender label, understood the relationship between gender and genitalia and understood the stability and constancy of gender. However, whilst the younger age group were able to differentiate between boy and girl toys/clothes they did not adhere to these differences themselves either in their behaviour or their attitudes. On the other hand the older children, and the case study children, *did* appear to adhere to this divisions in their attitudes and in their behaviour. Therefore the world was divided into boy things and girl things with the one they identified with being seen as the best. Further to this, the children only cited same-sex friends, all saying readily that they "hated" the opposite-sex. This was carried through into the children's behaviour, as when observed they were observed in group sessions at school or at home they consistently formed same-sex alliances in relation to the opposite-sex.

Changes also seem to take place in the temperament of the case study children. Both of the boys were described as becoming more noisy, aggressive and confident. This was particularly noted in

Darren who went from being withdrawn and shy to being talkative and outward going. On the other hand, the two girls seemed to go through the reverse process. Both were labelled as loud, assertive and boisterous when in nursery but several weeks after school they were described as having quietened down to the extent that certainly in Lisa's case the teachers were concerned that she was becoming withdrawn. These changes in temperament were translated into the behaviour displayed in the group observations carried out at school and at home.

It could be argued that these shifts in attitudes and behaviour are not associated with the transition from nursery to school but instead indicate some cognitive-developmental change associated with age. Indeed, Kohlberg (1966) claimed that children did go through a period when they identified heavily with gender-appropriate activities and showed a preference for same-sex friendships. However, Kohlberg associates this as a stage corresponding to an insecurity that the child has about their gender identity. The child does not have a stable gender identity and therefore clings to the outward signs of the appropriate gender, conforming to the stereotype. This is not the case here; these children are all confident about being a boy or a girl and that this is a permanent consequence of having a penis or vagina. In fact the children here appear to be going through the reverse process to that expounded by Kohlberg who suggests that children, once secure in their gender identity, become more flexible in their gender attitudes and behaviour. These children, however,

moved from a position of flexibility to one of rigidity. This is a discontinuity in development which is analagous to the argument posited by Walkerdine & Walden (1981) about girls performance in mathematics. Here girls are seen to do well at mathmatics, averaging higher attainment than boys, in primary school but, on entry to secondary they do less well, with boys eventually overtaking them in attainment. The authors argue that the lack of attainment in teenage girls in mathmatics is not because they are unable to do maths, because they were doing so well before, but that there must be some other factor to do with teenage girls and maths to account for this discontinuity in ability. With the case study children, factors other than the child's understanding of gender concepts and rules must be looked at to explain the discontinuity in gender attitudes and behaviour.

A useful starting point would be to examine how the teachers perceived their role in relation to the children who are starting school. All of the teachers said that embarking on a school career was traumatic for the five year old. They saw their role as,

"easing the child through the transition, trying to get them used to having one adult around. That in itself can be traumatic",

This was elaborated,

"We need to get the child used to the routines of school. Whether we want them or not there has to be routines in school, there has to be some sort of order".

This order also extends to the child's own behaviour,

"We want them to follow a certain code of conduct. This is necessary because there's another twenty four children in the class".

Indeed, starting school brings the child face-to-face with a

whole range of new experiences; one adult, more children of greater ages, a new building, a daily routine, formal lessons, being away from home all day, no choice over attending, etc. This can be daunting to the new starter even if they have already been introduced in a relaxed way to the school environment. This had happened in the case of the case study children who had taken part in an home/school link programme. Here the children spent one or two afternoons in the school with their parents prior to starting full time. It would have been interesting to have observed the children in these sessions but unfortunately permission was not forthcoming from the authorities to allow this. Yet, despite this experience, all the children in their school based interview reported feelings of anxiety and fear around starting school.

This anxiety is provoked by the stark contrast between school life and life at home or in the nursery. In the latter cases life does not have formal routines, the majority of things are negotiable. There is no formal time for doing this or that, there are no work sessions which have to be done by certain times and certainly by the time the children leave nursery they are familiar with the people around them and the environment. This element of negotiation was seen as being crucial by the school teachers,

"When you say 'It's time to stop' we've all got to stop now but there's always the child who says 'I just want to...', or 'I haven't quite finished...'. In the nursery where maybe they're not tied to times this is alright but when we've got to do P.E. in the hall now we have to do it now because that's when the hall's free, so we've got to

clear up now . . . .I mean at home and in nursery when it's time to pack up it is all negotiable, whereas here it's different".

This stance was also regretted,

"We find it the frustrating thing about teaching. Yes, we know it's not how ideally you would like to treat children, but it's the job".

On top of this school structures and routines are often implicitly based upon gender divisions. For example school will provide the first experience of separate male and female toilets, and gender becomes used to segregate tasks to be done about the classroom, eg. tidying up or moving desks. Teacher's differential expectations of boys and girls, both implicitly and explicitly, may be no different from other adults but, because of their position in relation to the children, may be more significant. Certainly the teachers were at pains to point out that active encouragement of confidence building in the boys and quietening down in the girls was "not to do with being a boy or a girl but to do with different types of child". This process of encouraging boys to be vocal and silencing girls, in an educational setting, is already well documented (Spender & Sarah, 1980; Stanworth, 1981).

It is important to note at this point that in the nursery the older girls were on the whole physically bigger than their male counterparts. As a result of this the girls tended to be at the top of dominance hierarchies within the nursery friendship structures. As a consequence girls also tended to be more vocal and outgoing, and by comparison the boys seemed quieter and lacking in confidence. This situation will obviously affect the

teachers perceptions of the needs of the children entering school. Thus whilst the teachers might believe that they are legitimately basing their assessments of the children on types of person they may in fact be conspiring in the furtherence of gender stereotypes.

In summary the transition from nursery to full time education is an emotional period for the five-year-old. They are faced with many new experiences and challenges. The net result of this, particularly if they are leaving a very stable environment, is that the child becomes insecure. This insecurity is further reinforced by the lack of control, through not being able to negotiate, that the child is also experiencing. The child therefore attempts to re-establish some security for themselves by retreating to a social world which is safe and reinforced on a daily basis. Given that this is also happening at a time when children are being convinced of the need for routines, rules and order, both within the structure of the school and also within the contents of lessons (eg. maths, reading and writing are all about learning and using rule systems) it seems entirely appropriate that the children also see some importance in applying social rule systems. Gender is such a rule system and one which, as they display in interview, they know very well. Applying the rule system to both themselves and others lends confidence and security particularly in a social world which still looks favourably upon people who do adhere to the gender rules. There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that children

of this age often over-apply the rules even in the face of a contradictory reality. Thus, for example, they will say "mums don't drive cars" whilst they are being driven in the car by mum, or they will say "mums don't write cheques" while they watch mum write a cheque.

This process, brought about by the context in which the child is placed, is supported by other experimental evidence. Stoddart & Turiel (1985) looking at children's concepts of cross-gender activities found their results fell into a U-shape curve; children were extremely critical of cross-gender activities at the age they started school, becoming more flexible during middle-childhood, and then becoming more critical once again at adolescence. Similarly, work conducted on children's understanding of sex-role stereotypes and social etiquette, eg. table manners, by Carter & Patterson (1982) also indicate, that children become more rigid in their appliance of these rules at about the time they enter full time education. Neither of these studies make reference to the contextual changes that are occurring to the child, but do instead try to explain them in terms of age. It may be beneficial to reconsider their results, and those of the gender knowledge studies presented in Chapter Three, in reference to the context in which the child is being studied, rather than the age of the child.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: CHILDREN'S AWARENESS OF TRANSITIONS

### Contents

- 8.1. Introduction
  - 8.1.1. Rationale for the Present Study
- 8.2. Method
  - 8.2.1. Subjects
  - 8.2.2. Procedure
- 8.3. Results
- 8.4. Discussion

### 8.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter the histories of four children were charted as they progressed from nursery school into full-time education. For each of them this transition proved to be important, bringing about changes in both their gender attitudes and their gender practice. It has been argued that this period was also important for those around the child; the family had expectations of the child going to school, the nursery would be sorry to see the child leave, and the teachers saw their role as 'settling the child down to school life'.

It appeared from the interviews conducted with the case study children pre- and post-entry to school that the children themselves, not surprisingly, had expectations and anxieties concerning the experience of starting school. The children also demonstrated in the latter interview some notions of how they had coped with this transition into school. This all suggests that each child possessed knowledge of the process they were going



through.

This knowledge the child has of the social world is often overlooked. In Chapter Two it was argued that the models of the child inherent in traditional approaches within developmental psychology conspire to ignore the knowledge and abilities the child does possess. Instead the emphasis is placed upon measuring the capacity of the child's knowledge by 'testing' the child on various tasks. In the last chapter the value of collecting several viewpoints on the child was demonstrated. The comments and analysis provided by those around the child, including siblings, and from the child themselves proved useful in constructing an appropriate history of the child. The child's remembered experiences of an event provide another viewpoint.

Shortly before the period in which the research for this thesis was being conducted the work of Carolyn Steedman (1982) was published. In her book *The Tidy House* she discussed an imaginative technique for accessing the child's social knowledge. This method, which apparently came about by accident, focuses on the creative writing of children. Steedman audio tape-recorded, over several days, three young girls jointly writing an elaborate story which they called "The Tidy House". The girls were seven and eight years old and from working class backgrounds. Their story focuses on two couples who are friends and who engage in different child-rearing methods to see who bring up the best children. Within the story, which is several pages long, the authors describe a wide range of social activities, eg going to

the pub, shopping, schools, bringing up children, as well as a list of private activities, eg. family squabbles, sex, rivalry, etc.. Steedman claims that in order to write this story the children must have the appropriate social knowledge. A level of knowledge of the social world which most psychological studies of children would not suggest.

This takes us back to the issue of research questions and the methods that they dictate. If one's research questions are specific, one is interested in one particular cognitive concept, or one set of behaviours, then one's question will set the parameters for how the question is answered. What Steedman has done is to, albeit by chance, placed an open question before these girls, "Why don't you write a story?", and then waited to see what data this threw up. The data, both the story and the audio-tape, could then be analysed, or trawled, for information.

It appeared to me that this was quite an interesting methodology, not too dissimilar from therapeutic techniques such as art therapy or representative doll play, that could be utilised to examine the awareness that children might have of such major transitions in their life, eg. going from nursery to school.

#### 8.1.1. Rationale for the Present Study

The short study examines, via a similar technique to that of Steedman, the awareness that 7 and 8-year-olds have of the transition from nursery to school. The purpose of conducting this work is to add another layer, another viewpoint, on to the

position stated in the last chapter. It is also concerned with assessing the viability of this methodology.

## 8.2. Method

### 8.2.1. Subjects

The four subjects participating in this study were selected from the pupil population of one of the infant schools participating in the research presented in this thesis. The subjects were Calvin, aged 8-years-old, Jenny, aged 8-years-old, Gary, aged 7-years-old, and Michelle, aged 7-years-old. All of these children had attended the nursery at Moorlands Family Centre. In addition to this criteria all the children were felt by the teacher to have the verbal and literacy skills necessary for the study.

### 8.2.2. Procedure

The four children were taken by the experimenter into a side room of the classroom. The room contained a table with four chairs around it. On the table was some paper and pencils and a small portable tape recorder. The experimenter settled the children down at the table and explained to them that they were going to write a story for a special project which was about starting school. In particular they were to write a story about a child leaving the nursery that they had been going to for some time and were now going to start school. The children were asked to talk about this and write the story together. The children were told that they could spend as long as they liked carrying out this task.

The entire episode was recorded on audio tape and later transcribed.

### 8.3. Results

The study was examined in terms of the story and the process of writing it.

#### **The Story**

Once upon a time there was a small nursery in Beanhill, and the teachers were very kind. Their names were Kay and June. One day there were two children called Ben and Katy. They were four years old and they had just started nursery. Ben was interested in space and so was his twin sister. Ben liked playing with the railway set, the sand pit, the home corner and plasticine. Katy liked playing with dolls, the home corner, big blocks and reading books. Ben and Katy did not have to do boring writing or stupid maths but they did have to tidy up when they had finished everything. They sat on their chairs and had milk and biscuits. When it was their birthday they could take in cakes and jelly to have with their friends. Ben and Katy could play with whatever they wanted to, but they were told off sometimes. Ben and Katy's mum used to take them to nursery every day and sometimes she would stay.

One day when they were five years old they started school and hated it. But they got used to it in the end. Their teacher's name was Miss Ellard. When they got to school

they had to take off their coats, get out their 'busy-books' out and sit on the carpet for register. The teacher tells them what to do. She bosses them about. They had to do writing, maths, tracing, model-making and painting. They liked school because they could do projects and even though in the nursery they could do what they liked, it was boring.

On their first day at school Ben and Katy felt shy because of all the big boys and girls. They felt excited but were frightened of the new class. After a few days Ben and Katy felt happy about being at school. When they got to the top class they were both very happy and did not want to leave.

### The Process

The group of children settled down to the task of writing the story well. They appeared both keen and interested. However, the writing of the story got off to a difficult start as the children had some problems in finding a name for the central character. Thus Gary suggested that the character should "be a boy like me and be called Gary", followed by Jenny suggesting "no it should be a girl, lets call her Jenny". Each of the children wanted the central character to be named after them. This situation was only resolved by the experimenter stepping in and suggesting that the central characters could be twins, one boy and one girl, and that they should not be called after any of them. This solution was accepted and the names of the twins were then decided. Following this initial difficulty the children progressed very quickly with

their story writing. In writing the story the children did appear to be constantly drawing upon their own experiences. Thus;

Michelle: "they're going to go to school, what shall we put"

Jenny: "I felt shy"

Michelle: "yeah, let's put that, that's good"

Calvin: "ok, 'they felt shy because of all the big boys and girls"

This was the manner in which the story was constructed. All of the children were involved, and all took turns at writing it down.

The entire story took approximately 45 minutes to write.

#### 8.4. Discussion

The story produced by the four children does manage to convey, in some ways, an awareness of the process they have all been through in making the transition from nursery into full-time education. They are quite accurately able to write about a nursery they have not seen for two years, including some remembrance of the workers. They also describe the activities they engaged in there, and are able to make comparisons with their life as they now experience it at school.

As for the transition point itself, the four children, through the persona of Ben and Katy, are able to describe the feelings of anxiety and excitement of their first day at school.

Methodologically the study was very straight forward to carry out. The children were willing to work together on writing the

story, and this was to be expected given that such an activity was regular part of school life for these children. The children's dialogue during the writing of the story was informative because it indicated that the content of the story was being drawn from their own experiences. It should also be noted that whilst one cannot be certain that this is what the children actually experienced at the time they did start school, it does bear some similarities to the comments elicited in the interviews with the case study children.

It does appear that this approach is useful as another way of shedding light on a particular issue. Of course the way in which this study has been carried out is in a much more limited way than as used by Steedman. The children writing the story in her study worked for a much longer period of time, several days, and had no structure placed upon them to direct the course of the story. In respect of this I think that if I were to use this method again I would give the children much more time, and much less brief to follow. Removing these limits would perhaps enable the children to be more wide-ranging in their discussion and story.

An interesting feature that should be noted in the light of what has been said in the preceding chapters, is that all the children participated in the writing of the story, co-operating both in the discussion and the physical task of writing. In this sense all four children were using person-centred strategies, and thus within this taking turns to act and respond.

Finally, it should also be noted that these children are nearing the end of their time at first school, and will shortly be leaving to enter primary school - in the story they make a point of saying about Katy and Ben that,

"When they got to the top class they were both very happy and did not want to leave."

This raises an interesting question. Will they, in the light of their knowledge of a past transition, fare better or worse in the transition they are about to embark on?



## CHAPTER NINE: CHILD SOCIAL RELATIONS AND GENDER

### Contents

9.1. Introduction and Summary

9.2. Dynamic Gender

9.3. Gender in Context

9.4. Future research

9.5. Conclusions

### 9.1. Introduction and Summary

Wittgenstein (1953) described language as a game that is played in a context for a purpose. In many ways this might also be a description of gender. In the first chapter of this thesis it was argued that gender is perhaps best seen as a set of social rules which provide a framework on which to hang our relationships with others. A game is just that, a rule system for ordering a playing environment - as the rules change, the playing environment changes; as the playing environment changes, the rules change. To understand a game one needs to have an awareness of both the rules and the playing environment. In addition one also needs an awareness of the relationship between the two. Equally, if one is to understand gender, one needs to have an awareness of the child's knowledge of the rules, the context which allows practice of the rules, and the relationship between the two.

Using a direct interviewing technique the study presented in the third chapter describes the knowledge of gender rules that the pre-school, and school-age, child possesses. Each of the

cognitive concepts proposed by Kohlberg (1966) were placed under scrutiny. Following Donaldson (1978) and Henshall (1983) the results obtained here suggest that if ecologically valid methods are used children are able to display knowledge of these cognitive concepts at a much earlier age than that predicted by Kohlberg.

Perhaps the most interesting results obtained from this study are those relating to choice of 'favourite toys' and 'best friends'. It can be seen from the toy data that even very young children believe themselves to have a clear idea of what boys and girls play with. With the friends data it is significant that the nursery group gave mixed-sex best friends compared to the school group who only gave same-sex friends. These results, which replicated other research, failed to support Kohlberg's theory of gender development.

In Chapter Four we moved from a consideration of the child's knowledge of the rules of gender, to focusing upon the child's practice of gender. Thus it was the turn of social learning theory to be scrutinised, and subsequently called into doubt. In this study, with pre-school children, it became clear that a focus purely on the behaviour of the child did very little to provide an adequate description of gender practice. The interesting result here though, again replicating other research, was the observation that there was no difference in toy/activity use between boys and girls. This was contrary to what we had been led to believe from the study in chapter three where children had reported that boys and girls played with different toys. This

discrepancy suggests that in studying the child's knowledge of gender, and their practice of it, we may be tapping into different phenomena which may, in turn, have different developmental histories. This is not a factor considered by either Kohlberg (1966), or Mischel (1966, 1970). They both consider themselves to be studying the same concept.

Both of these studies are restricted by the methods which they use, which in turn are structured by the research questions being asked. Thus the cognitive-developmental is concerned with the child's cognitions and therefore employs methods which will allow access to them. Similarly, the social learning theorist's interest lies in the contingencies between the behaviour of the child and the behaviour of others. This again has implications for the methods used. It is clear at the end of Chapter Four that if one has different questions, for example the ontological question of 'how to be' a boy or a girl (or put another way, the connecting element between the rules and the playing environment) raised by Shotter (1982), then different methods will have to be employed.

In Chapter Five an empirical method is used which attempts to focus upon the child's experience and practice of gender. It does this by examining, within a particular context, the child's social relations with others. Given the argument that people experience themselves *in relation* to each other, then this seems to be a useful point at which to explore the 'how to be' question.

By looking at children in same- and opposite-sex pairs engaging in a task which required them to relate to each other proved to be useful. On the basis of the results from this study it was apparent that children used at least two strategies to relate to each other, a person-centred strategy and an object-centred strategy, with girls engaging mainly in the former and boys engaging mainly in the latter. The consequence of using these strategies was that in the boy/boy pairings one boy dominated; in the girl/girl pairings both members were responsive to each others needs; and in the girl/boy pairings the girl accomodated to the needs of the boy. It was suggested that the girl and boy took up the positions of 'teacher' and 'pupil'. This is not to say that these positions are fixed but that the situation afforded their use. This was the mediating factor between the rules and the playing environment.

In relation to this study it must be noted that the analytic categories devised of 'person-' and 'object-' centred strategies are limiting. The adoption of such terms suggest an essentialist interpretation which is not intended. These terms are intended to sum up differing approaches which focus around caring/non-caring for others. What the experimental approach does is to pose them as opposites which reside in boys or girls, not in both. Thus, girls become person-centred and boys object-centred as the general rule. This is not the case as there were boys who engaged in person-centred strategies and vice versa. However, because in this particular context, this pattern of use was not the 'norm'

it goes unremarked upon. As a result the meaning of a strategy to a particular child is not the focus and thus becomes lost.

In Chapter Six this notion was expanded and it was shown, with similar pairings, that girls would appear to play with a certain toy more if their partner was a boy rather than a girl. The child was thus seen to be engaging in contradictory behaviour dependent upon context. However, a closer examination of the relationship revealed that the girls played with the toy more when a boy was there because they were in reality *playing* with the boy. Thus their increased involvement with the toy was a secondary result of their enabling the boy to play with the toy. This observation also made clear that there was no simplistic uni-directional power relationship at work here, as might have initially been suggested by the girl being seen to be 'servicing' the boy's needs. In fact the boy's willingness to become subject to a person-centred strategy produced for the girl a powerful position of 'control'.

In the next two chapters I tried to move away the experimental approach in which I had been trained and attempted to employ two different methods with which I was unfamiliar. It became necessary to do this because it had become apparent that an approach which relied upon measuring baseline behaviour against which others could be compared failed to capture, and give weight to, the differences between individual children. It was essential to grapple with these individual differences because it was the cross-over in gender stereotyped behaviour which was important to

me, given my original starting point of undermining the theoretical perspective which made the clinical diagnosis of gender dysphoria possible. Unfortunately, the studies reported in Chapters 7 & 8 still fail to get to grips with this issue because the level of analysis does not go far enough. I chose, partly because I still wanted to hang on to some form of 'objectivity' and partly because I felt unsure of my own abilities, not to adopt a discourse analysis approach but instead to use a case-study approach. Due to the way in which the material for these case studies was gathered, only a limited form of analysis was possible. Thus, whilst these studies are worthwhile in that they provide some pointers, or 'hunches' for future work, they do not in themselves engage in an examination of the meanings of gender for each child, and their relation to a wider ideological perspective, which a process of discourse analysis might offer. In making connection with this ideological framework one can begin to deal with power in relation to a person's experience and practice of gender. Whilst making reference to 'power' on several occasions within this thesis it is a subject which has not been dealt with in any depth due to the form of analysis chosen. This inability to deal with power in a significant way again points towards the need to adopt a discourse analysis approach in future work.

In addition the form of analysis I have undertaken does not enable me to take account of myself, my own presence as researcher, in relation to the children and their families. My

presence within the lives of these children obviously had an effect upon them. The very fact that I was interested in them would not have gone without it's consequences. Whilst elsewhere in this thesis I have acknowledged the researcher/subject relationship this is not enough, one has to move beyond this to include oneself in the analytic process. This I have failed to do here and again is something which I would try to do in future work.

Thus, Chapter Seven, building on the finding of the previous two studies, provides four case studies of children undergoing the transition from nursery to full-time education. This transition was chosen because the earlier work showed that the context the child was in was a significant factor in the construction of their social relations. The transition from nursery to full-time education is a major emotional and contextual change for the child. It was also felt that this was a useful period to focus upon because of the strong split in the interview data of the first study around reported 'best friends'. This indicated that at this time children may be beginning to experience themselves as gendered beings differently.

The case study material does, in fact suggest such a shift. Each of the four children do appear be experiencing themselves as gendered beings in a different way from before. Thus all the children became more rigid in both their knowledge of the rules of gender and their practice of gender. This change in both knowledge and behaviour cannot be explained by the traditional

theories of gender development. However, it can be accounted for by the new physical and social contexts that the child now finds themselves in.

The case study work was a success in that it achieved what it set out to do, that is provide a detailed description of this transition process. It was never intended to provide a generalisable theory of gender. but instead provide pointers as to what such a theory might look like. This it has done in highlighting the cognitive, social and emotional change brought about by a major contextual change.

The final study of the thesis was an attempt to gain a different perspective on this process of transition. That is, to see if the children themselves were aware of the process they had gone through. Using the story-writing method developed by Steedman (1982), four children wrote a story about two children going from nursery to school, and the children concerned did appear to show some awareness of their own experiences of undergoing the same transition.

Unfortunately, this study is not as revealing as it might have been. Due to shortage of time this study was really an afterthought, a quick stab at trying to use a different methodology. Thus too many constraints were placed upon the task given to the children. The time allowed for the task, 45 minutes, was too short and the brief for the story was too specific - indeed my own lack of confidence added to this when I intervened to resolve the problem of who the central character



should be. As a result the story itself and the accompanying audio tape of their conversation did not supply me with enough material to do an analysis of any depth. If I were to use this approach again, which in the hands of someone like Steedman can be worthwhile, I would make the task much more open-ended in terms of both the brief given and the time period.

Overall this series of studies help sketch out in more detail the complex relationships between the child's knowledge of the rules of gender and the child's actual practice of gender. In addition, a number of other issues have been raised which are outlined in the sections below.

### 9.2. Dynamic Gender

The question posed at the beginning of this thesis was "What is gender?". This was not an easy question to answer, but in the first chapter, by surveying material from a variety of sources, the following points were concluded;

1. Gender is part of the fabric of the social world. As participants in that social world we are caught up in gender; we all have a gender, and we all view the world through the framework of gender.
2. Gender is a tool of social regulation. This is apparent from the ways in which we attempt to deal with those who appear to violate the gender rules (eg transsexuals, gay men, feminist women, etc.).
3. Gender also presents us with a contradiction. We all make gender assumptions about ourselves and others despite the fact

that our own lived experience refutes those very assumptions. We are entangled in gender-logic.

The difficulty of defining, or at least adequately describing, gender has resulted in workers within different areas of psychology studying various behavioural and cognitive elements, all under such titles as gender, sex-role, gender behaviour, sex-typed, etc., and have assumed they have been studying the same phenomenon. It may well be the case that, a) they are not all the same phenomenon, and, b) even if they are, they may not be directly related. For example, the studies presented in Chapter's Three and Four clearly show that what a child *says* boys and girls play with does not relate to what, in reality, they *do* play with. The child's knowledge of gender appears to have a different developmental history from the child's practice of gender. Indeed, it may be more profitable to consider this sort of knowledge-possession-by-the-child as 'attitudes' or 'stereotypes', and thus may be better placed under the banner of 'attitude research' rather than 'gender research'.

It must be stressed that both Kohlberg and Mischel were asked to write their respective treatises on gender, which quickly became the seminal works on gender development, for Maccoby's *The Development of Sex Differences* in 1966. They were asked to do this, not because they had any direct experience of working in the field of gender, but because they were, at the time, leading exponents of two different theoretical perspectives. It must be asked at this point if this was some quirk of psychological

history or did the theories they propose result from some more worrying deficiency. It is relevant here that Gilligan (1982), in her work on moral development, severely criticises Kohlberg for basing his own pioneering theory of moral development on the results of experiments in which all the subjects were male. This has produced, Gilligan argues, a theory which only applies to men, and her own work suggests that women may well operate within a different moral framework. Similarly, as argued in Chapter Three, Kohlberg's theory of gender development is flawed because he simply transposes all the elements of the Piagetian model of development to the area of gender. He does this without support from experimental evidence. The result is the creation of a concept, "gender constancy", which appears, from the empirical data, to be spurious in gender terms.

What the work of Kohlberg, Mischel and others has served to do, is to have given credibility to the notion that the child develops a gender. Kohlberg argues that the child comes to realise that they are a boy or a girl, that is develop a gender identity, which then becomes the organising factor for learning appropriate behaviour, or gender role. Equally, Mischel posits that the child is reinforced for behaving in a certain gendered way and out of this experience develops a gender identity. However, this concept of acquisition is false, the child may acquire gender knowledge and they may learn that certain behaviours which are associated with gender bring them rewards, but *their* gender is *given* to them. As Kessler & McKenna (1978)

point out, at birth the genitalia is inspected, the judgement of penis or vagina made, and the child becomes a boy or a girl. From that point onwards everyone around the newborn interacts with them as a boy or a girl. As the work of Lloyd and Smith (1978) with babies dressed in pink or blue clearly demonstrates, people around the child do not have to wait until the child decides for itself whether it is a boy or a girl before they behave differently towards it.

If this view is accepted gender can quite easily be located within the social relations between people. In doing this it stops being a concept which is acquired by the child and maintained for life. Instead gender becomes a dynamic concept, which has the ability to change over time and in different situations. This allows us to escape the web of gender-logic, that is of male-masculine and female-feminine. It becomes possible for boys and girls, men and women, to behave and experience themselves in many different ways. This aspect is essential because, as I explained in the introductory chapter, part of my motivation to conduct research in this area was to get to a point where theoretically it was possible for cross-over in gender behaviour, ie. boys displaying what are considered to be girl traits and vice versa, to occur. I stated that peoples lived experience, including my own, acknowledged this and yet the 'classic' theories on gender development deny it. For Kohlberg and Mischel the newborn is gender-less and that it is only after a certain time has passed, or cognitive concept obtained, that the child has an unchanging gender identity. The result of this is

that boys and girls then begin to develop along separate paths, never to meet, thus making possible the clinical construct of gender dysphoria.

In putting forward two different and separate developmental paths these theories are denying the potential for cross-over in attributes and behaviours. In addition they also do not acknowledge the struggle involved in the gender process. As I have shown in Chapter 5 some boys did employ 'person-centred' strategies. This was inspite of these behaviours being identified with 'nurturance' and therefore with women, inspite of it being mainly the girls around them who used such strategies, and inspite of the fact that most boys did not use them. This would seem to indicate that other factors are at play and that engaging in particular strategies may be due to an individuals history. One needs to consider the 'meaning' of such strategies for that particular child at that particular context.

### 9.3. Gender in Context

As stated above a dynamic view of gender places emphasis upon social relations. It is through poeple's social relations that they experience themselves as a gendered being. A consequence of this position is that a persons experience of gender can change over time and across environments. In the work presented in this thesis I have shown that the child's practice and experience of gender is effected by contextual changes such as the presence of an opposite-sex playmate, a particular toy, or a major change such

as the transition from nursery to full-time education.

This evidence supports the concepts proposed by Walkerdine (1981), in which emphasis is placed upon subjectivities which can be different according to time and place, rather than focusing upon identities, which imply stability. Thus the research presented in this thesis argues against the concept of a stable gender identity in favour of developing a notion of gendered subjectivities, positions we take up in relation to each other. Because they too are contained, indeed are the substance of, social relations they can be constructed along ideological lines. Thus within relations persons can be powerful, powerless, or both, but this is not fixed, changing from situation to situation. Equally the position taken up in one instance may be contradictory to that taken up in the next.

Thus the ways in which people experience themselves as gendered beings can be contradictory and change from context to context, but each experience is, nevertheless, a valid component of that person.

#### 9.4. The Future

Before presenting a list of final conclusions it is worth briefly stating some of the implications of the work presented in this thesis for future research.

1. The material presented in this thesis clearly locates gender within the realms of social relations, and not as residing per se in the individual. This is not to say that a child, or indeed an adult does not perceive themselves as a coherent whole, after all

it was shown that a child does identify as a boy or a girl. However, the child's experience and practice of gender is embedded within their relations with other people. Gender is within the individual as well as being social. Future gender research should consider this relationship between the individual and social by developing this concept and studying the nature of social relations in more detail. It is only by focusing on the experience and practice of gender within social relations that we can come close to engaging with the ontological question posed by Shotter (1982).

2. It appears from Chapter Seven that 'transition' points may be a useful area to focus upon. It is at times of transition when social relations are thrown into bold relief, because it is at these points that major changes are taking place. This may be a useful diversion from traditional notions of research within development psychology because it takes the emphasis away from development as a process which occurs in childhood and stops at adulthood. Transitions happen throughout life, whether it be from school to employment, employment to unemployment, single to married, married to divorced, employment to retirement, the list goes on, and at each of these points one's social world changes. In effect people's attitudes, expectations and behaviour may all change with the result that one begins to experience oneself in a different way, and are through the process changed. An example of work which focuses on a transition point is the work on sibling by Dunn & Kendrick (1982). Here, the transition is that of the birth of a second child, and what is at issue is the effect this

has upon the life of an eighteen month old sibling. Their results suggest that to the elder child this is a highly significant event bringing about many developmental changes.

3. Greater emphasis should be placed in research upon the *emotional* world of the person. In particular the incorporation of psychoanalytic ideas, concepts and theory into the study of social relations. Psychologists seeking to be 'objective', including myself within this thesis, have consistently failed to meet the challenge presented by psychoanalytic thinking because the realm of affect is not as tangible, or quantifiable, as that of behaviour or cognition. Thus affect is relegated in importance in the developmental process. This is a mistake because emotion/affect, whatever it is that one wants to call that experience with which psychoanalytic theory grapples, is at the heart of the matter. For the child is engaged in a struggle, a struggle to come to terms with the phenomenon of gender, a gender that is 'given' at birth by those around the newborn. Unless one enters into an analysis of what the meanings of this are for the child/the adult no amount of theorising can explain the process. The forms of discourse analysis employed by Walkerdine et al. which draw heavily upon Lacan's process of signification described earlier attempts to gain access to this set of meanings. This concept is difficult for a person trained within an experimental tradition, which relies upon notions of objectivity, to deal with because it entails setting those ideas of objectivity to one side. In doing this one is also setting to one side the concept of a 'baseline'



response/behaviour/utterance/etc - a norm - to which others can be compared. Instead one is focusing upon a history of signification for a particular person which whilst it may have a certain resonance for others is also unique for that person. The reality of this situation for the experimental psychologist, including myself, can be frightening because suddenly the basic foundations of our practice is questioned and possibly dispensed with. To engage in this process is difficult but it is essential if one is to attempt to come to terms with emotion/affect and in so doing come to terms with a person's experience and practice of gender.

4. Within this thesis a variety of methodologies have been employed, ranging from experimental to small-scale case study approaches. Each have their merit and are thus useful tools for the researcher. However, this is not always recognised and there is a tendency within psychology to promote experimental methods above all else. This may not be beneficial, as the testing of hypotheses can only be of value if those hypotheses are grounded in the reality in which people live. Thus the small-scale work, as described in Chapter Seven helps provide a detailed description of that reality, and by using a participant analysis method the description becomes only richer. Such work becomes a generator of theory, of hypotheses which can subsequently be 'tested' out in an empirical manner. One possible next step, in terms of the research presented in this thesis, would be to devise an experimental method to be used with a large sample to test out the findings, or 'hunches' provided in Chapter Seven (cf Dunn &

Kendrick, 1982). It is worth noting that small-scale work is also of use to the participant. In this particular case the case study families, nursery workers, teachers, etc. all gained from their experience of participating in the research, such that their experience and practice was changed. Thus it is legitimate for the research process itself to be 'transformational'. That is it can bring about changes in the lives of the participant which are beneficial to them. Their quality of life is changed. For example, as a result of the research the nursery decided to stop its regular 'milk break' in the middle of the morning, in favour of a system whereby children could go and sit at the table and ask for milk when they wanted it. On the surface this is a small change, but in the lives of the children and nursery workers it was very significant. However, another, and perhaps more useful next step, would be to develop the use of discourse analysis techniques for analysing the case study material in presented in Chapter 7. To do this would require the thorough transcription of the video tapes in such a way as to be able to capture both utterance and behaviour. With these particular tapes, which were not recorded for this purpose but for playback to myself and to provide the focus for discussion in the participant analysis this would be difficult. Therefore, the real next step would be to carry out further observations, perhaps using radio-microphones as well as video recording techniques, and subject this material to discourse analysis. Having, with the research presented here, built this bridge away from the experimental tradition in which I was trained as a psychologist, I would now feel more confident,

and competent, to utilise such a methodology. Adopting such a methodology would enable me to more readily make connections to ideology. For in utilising discourse analysis as a tool one is not only focusing upon the meanings of gender, the process of signification, but also on placing those meanings within an ideological context. In so doing one is more able to examine the concept of power in relation to a person's experience and practice of gender.

### 9.5. Conclusions

The main conclusions of this thesis are;

1. Gender is not a static phenomenon, but is a dynamic process located, and experienced, not only by the individual, but also within social relations.
2. The child is born to a gender, it is not something which they have to develop, or acquire. This is not to say that it is genetic, but that it is assigned at birth by those around the newborn. The child then spends the rest of their life struggling with this 'given' gender trying to come to terms with what it means for them. This being the case the traditional theories of gender development discussed in this thesis are inadequate as this is not their starting point, for them the newborn is gender-less.
3. An alternative to to existing approaches is to focus upon child social relations and gender.
4. Such an approach reveals that children take up different gendered subjectivities in relation to other people (person-centred and object-centred strategies are two examples).
5. The employment of particular strategies, or subjectivities are effected by the context in which they occur.
6. The transition from nursery to school is a good example of such a contextual change which brought about many changes in the ways in which gender was experienced and practiced by the case study children.

7. The research presented in this thesis builds a bridge away from theories of gender development derived from experimental methodologies to a position where alternative, non-experimental, methodologies are needed, out of which a new theory of children's changing experience and practice of gender, based upon their social relations, can be constructed.

Finally, returning to Woolf;

"When a subject is highly controversial - and any question of sex is that - one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold the opinion one does hold." (1928, pg.8)

In the presentation of this thesis I hope I have shown, at least, how I came to hold *my* opinion.

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APPENDIX A

DATA RELATING TO CHAPTER FOUR

Raw Data for Frequency of Positive Dyadic Interactions

Subject	WITH BOYS		WITH GIRLS		Total
	Initiated	Received	Initiated	Received	
Girl 1*	3	1	0	0	4
Girl 2*	4	0	1	0	5
Girl 3	4	1	2	1	8
Girl 4	4	0	3	0	7
Girl 5	1	1	2	1	5
Girl 6	1	0	1	1	1
Girl 7	2	0	3	0	5
Girl 8	7	0	1	0	8
Girl 9	0	1	4	0	5
Girl 10	5	1	2	0	8
TOTAL	31	5	19	3	58
Boy 1*	2	0	3	0	5
Boy 2*	5	1	3	0	8
Boy 3*	1	0	0	1	2
Boy 4	2	0	0	0	2
Boy 5	3	0	3	0	6
Boy 6	3	1	0	0	4
Boy 7	1	0	1	0	2
Boy 8	1	0	5	0	6
Boy 9	4	0	1	0	5
Boy 10	2	0	6	1	9
TOTAL	24	2	22	2	50

\* = failed gender constancy task

APPENDIX B

DATA RELATING TO CHAPTER FIVE

Time Spent by Worker with each Pair in Seconds

Pair	Type	Time
1	Girl/Boy	690
2	Girl/Girl	330
3	Boy/Boy	340
4	Girl/Girl	340
5	Girl/Boy	350
6	Boy/Boy	270
7	Boy/Boy	250
8	Girl/Boy	310
9	Girl/Girl	360
10	Girl/Boy	210
11	Boy/Boy	230
12	Girl/Girl	240

Time Spent Looking at Book Alone Pair in Seconds

	Girl/Girl	Boy/Boy	Girl/Boy
	135	110	270
	170	145	305
	155	170	160
	240	70	195
Mean	175	123.75	232.5

Comparisons of Frequency Counts of the Two Coders

1.Directions;	Subject	Coder 1	Coder2	Difference
	1	15	15	0
	2	5	5	0
	3	8	8	0
	4	9	9	0
	5	6	6	0
	6	0	0	0

2.Statements;	Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
	1	7	7	0
	2	7	7	0
	3	7	7	0
	4	10	10	0
	5	9	9	0
	6	6	6	0

3. Questions;	Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
	1	4	4	0
	2	6	6	0
	3	5	5	0
	4	4	4	0
	5	3	3	0
	6	1	1	0

3. Answers;	Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
	1	7	7	0
	2	1	1	0
	3	0	0	0
	4	3	4	+1
	5	0	0	0
	6	6	6	0

Nursery Workers Verbal Behaviour: Rate Per Minute of Observation

1. Directions;

Pair	Girl/Girl	Boy/Boy	Girl/Boy
1	0.72	1.78	0.60
2	0.54	2.00	0.51
3	1.00	2.40	0.97
4	1.00	2.35	1.43
Mean	0.80	2.13	0.88

2. Statements;

Pair	Girl/Girl	Boy/Boy	Girl/Boy
1	0.90	0.71	0.60
2	0.89	1.33	0.69
3	0.66	1.44	0.97
4	1.00	1.31	1.14
Mean	0.86	1.20	0.85

3. Questions;

Pair	Girl/Girl	Boy/Boy	Girl/Boy
1	0.18	0.71	0.17
2	0.18	1.11	0.34
3	0.33	0.96	0.78
4	1.00	1.04	1.43
Mean	0.42	0.96	0.68

4. Answers;

Pair	Girl/Girl	Boy/Boy	Girl/Boy
1	0.36	0.18	0.09
2	0.18	0.22	0.51
3	0.17	0.00	0.00
4	0.25	0.26	0.00
Mean	0.24	0.17	0.17



APPENDIX C

DATA RELATING TO CHAPTER SIX

Comparison of the codings made by the two coders on 'Involvement with Toy' Data

1. Playhouse;

Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	54	54	0
2	60	59	1
3	53	53	0
4	52	53	1
5	60	58	2
6	60	60	0

2. Space Station;

Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	60	60	0
2	60	60	0
3	34	34	0
4	34	35	1
5	60	60	0
6	60	60	0

Comparison of Codings of Joint Play by the Two Coders

1. Playhouse;

Pair	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	53	53	0
2	60	60	0
3	53	53	0

2. Space Station;

Pair	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	60	60	0
2	60	60	0
3	32	32	0

Comparison of Codings of Domestic and Action (in brackets)

Storylines by the Two Coders

1. Playhouse;

Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	14 (32)	12 (30)	2 (2)
2	11 (42)	11 (43)	0 (1)
3	56 ( 0)	56 ( 0)	0 (0)
4	56 ( 0)	56 ( 0)	0 (0)
5	15 (31)	15 (34)	0 (3)
6	18 (32)	17 (31)	1 (1)

2. Space Station;

Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	3 (28)	3 (28)	0 (0)
2	4 (25)	5 (25)	1 (0)
3	54 ( 0)	54 ( 0)	0 (0)
4	55 ( 0)	55 ( 0)	0 (0)
5	43 (13)	43 (12)	0 (1)
6	26 (33)	26 (29)	0 (4)

Comparison of Codings of Initiating Behaviour by the Two Coders

Number of Initiating Behaviour Successful Given in Brackets

1. Playhouse;

Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	3 (2)	3 (2)	0 (0)
2	6 (0)	5 (0)	1 (0)
3	6 (5)	6 (4)	0 (1)
4	14 (2)	15 (1)	1 (1)
5	9 (1)	9 (1)	0 (0)
6	12 (1)	12 (0)	0 (1)

2. Space Station;

Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
2	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
3	4 (3)	4 (3)	0 (0)
4	3 (2)	2 (2)	1 (0)
5	17 (3)	17 (3)	0 (0)
6	1 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)

Raw Data for Percentage of Time Spent on Initiating Behaviour  
and Percentage Success Rate

Group	PLAYHOUSE		SPACE STATION	
	% Time	% Successful	% Time	% Successful
Boy/Boy	25.00	20.00	41.66	20.00
	36.66	45.45	43.33	34.62
	22.22	8.33	2.56	00.00
	16.66	11.11	41.02	18.75
	18.18	00.00	13.88	00.00
	21.21	00.00	36.11	00.00
	55.00	12.12	46.66	21.42
	15.00	00.00	20.00	16.66
Mean	26.23	12.13	30.65	13.93
Girl/Girl	05.00	100.00	5.55	100.00
	10.00	100.00	5.55	100.00
	3.33	100.00	3.33	100.00
	6.66	100.00	3.33	100.00
	15.00	44.44	13.33	37.50
	20.00	83.33	11.66	85.71
	11.66	100.00	1.66	100.00
	5.00	100.00	00.00	00.00
Mean	9.49	90.97	5.55	77.90
Boy/Girl	13.46	28.57	14.81	25.00
	12.82	80.00	21.86	69.23
	31.66	100.00	23.33	92.86
	11.66	71.42	6.66	75.00
Mean	17.40	70.00	16.62	65.52
Girl/Boy	00.00	00.00	7.41	00.00
	2.56	00.00	5.00	33.33
	6.66	00.00	5.00	33.33
	27.77	93.33	5.00	66.66
Mean	9.29	23.33	5.60	33.33

Comparison of Codings of Maintaining Behaviour by the Two Coders

Number of Successful Maintaining Given in Brackets

1. Playhouse;

Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	15 (15)	16 (15)	1 (0)
2	23 (23)	23 (23)	0 (0)
3	8 (7)	8 (6)	0 (1)
4	24 (22)	24 (22)	0 (0)
5	8 (2)	8 (2)	0 (0)
6	8 (3)	7 (3)	1 (0)

2. Space Station;

Subject	Coder 1	Coder 2	Difference
1	31 (31)	32 (30)	1 (2)
2	27 (21)	26 (21)	1 (0)
3	7 (7)	7 (7)	0 (0)
4	9 (8)	9 (8)	0 (0)
5	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
6	5 (0)	5 (0)	0 (0)

Raw Data for Percentage of Time Spent on Maintaining Behaviour  
and Percentage Successful

Group	PLAYHOUSE		SPACE STATION	
	% Time	% Successful	% Time	% Successful
Boy/Boy	8.33	100.00	1.66	00.00
	16.66	90.00	18.33	00.00
	14.81	25.00	00.00	00.00
	14.81	37.50	12.82	40.00
	00.00	00.00	2.77	00.00
	3.03	00.00	8.33	00.00
	8.33	60.00	11.66	57.14
	00.00	00.00	00.00	00.00
	Mean	8.25	39.00	6.95
Girl/Girl	50.00	100.00	33.33	100.00
	53.33	100.00	33.33	100.00
	80.00	100.00	20.00	33.33
	70.00	100.00	16.66	100.00
	10.00	83.33	18.33	100.00
	25.00	86.66	26.66	100.00
	38.33	100.00	35.00	100.00
	25.00	100.00	53.33	96.88
	Mean	43.96	96.25	29.58
Boy/Girl	3.85	100.00	7.41	00.00
	10.26	00.00	6.66	100.00
	00.00	00.00	1.66	100.00
	13.33	87.50	11.66	100.00
Mean	6.86	46.88	6.85	75.00
Girl/Boy	15.38	87.50	20.37	90.91
	20.51	100.00	35.00	71.43
	28.33	100.00	50.00	100.00
	44.44	91.66	13.33	100.00
Mean	27.17	94.79	29.68	90.59



APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULES FOR CHAPTER SEVEN

## Interview Schedule for Family: Interview 1

### 1/ The Family

- Introduction to family members. (Age, occupations, etc.)
- Brief family history (e.g. how long lived in area, general well-being, etc.)
- Short histories of family members (nursery, school experiences, etc.)

### 2/ Target Child

- History of target child (e.g. birth, general development, etc.)
- Relationships to siblings, parents, other family members.
- Description of general temperament and attitudes.

### 3/ Nursery

- History of contact with nursery (e.g. did siblings attend, which parents help out, etc.)
- Perception of target child in nursery (e.g. how do they get on with the other children, etc.)
- How did the target child adapt to the nursery.
- How did relationships with family members change.
- How do family feel the target child has changed/benefitted from going to the nursery.

#### 4/ School

- How does the target child seem to be coping with the prospect of going to school
- What are the expectations of family members in regard to this

#### 5/ Home Observation (General response to video)

- What do the family members think is happening in video
- Is this typical of their experience of family together
- Are parents surprised about how sibling/target child play when left alone
- What do the family members think about experimenters interpretation of video
- How does this compare with the family's interpretation
- Negotiate a mutual interpretation
- Does this accurately reflect what is happening in the video
- How satisfied are the family members with the final interpretation

#### 6/ Nursery Observation

- What do family members think of video
- Does it meet their expectations of target child

- Is there anything surprising about target child's behaviour
- What do family members think of the experimenter's and nursery worker's negotiated interpretation

## Interview Schedule for Nursery Workers

### 1/ The Workers

- Introduction to the workers. (Age, length of employment, etc.)
- Brief work and personal history (e.g. how long lived in area, general well-being, etc.)

### 2/ Target Child

- How child got nursery place.
- Perception of relationships outside nursery to siblings, parents, other family members.
- Description of general temperament and attitudes.

### 3/ Nursery

- History of contact with nursery (e.g. did siblings attend, which parents help out, etc.)
- Perception of target child in nursery (e.g. how do they get on with the other children, etc.)
- How did the target child adapt to the nursery.
- How did relationships with family members change.
- How do workers feel the target child has changed/benefitted

from by going to the nursery.

#### 4/ School

- How does the target child seem to be coping with the prospect of going to school
- What are the expectations of workers in regard to this

#### 5/ Nursery Observation

- What do workers think of video
- Does it meet their expectations of target child
- Is this typical of their experience of the target child.
- Are workers surprised about how childre/target child get on with the game after the worker has left them alone
- Is there anything surprising about target child's behaviour
- What do the workers think of the experimenter's interpretation
- Negotiate a mutual interpretation
- Does this accurately reflect what is happening in the video
- How satisfied are the workers with the final interpretation

## Interview Schedule for Family: Interview 2

### 1/ The Family

- Introduction to family members. (Age, occupations, etc. recap on details from first interview)
- Check family history (e.g. how long lived in area, general well-being, etc.)
- Update histories of family members since last interview (nursery, school experiences, etc.)

### 2/ Target Child

- History of target child recap (e.g. birth, general development, etc.)
- Recent changes in relationships to siblings, parents, other family members.
- Description of general temperament and attitudes.

### 3/ School

- History of contact with school (e.g. do/did siblings attend, which parents help out, etc.)
- Perception of target child in school (e.g. how do they get on with the other children, etc.)

- How did the target child adapt to the school.
- How did relationships with family members change.
- How do family feel the target child has changed/benefitted from going to the school.

#### 4/ Nursery

- How does the target child seem to be coping with having left nursery
- What are the expectations of family members in regard to this

#### 5/ Home Observation 2 (General response to video)

- What do the family members think is happening in video
- Is this typical of their experience of family together
- Are parents surprised about how sibling/target child play when left alone
- What do the family members think about experimenters interpretation of video
- How does this compare with the family's interpretation
- Negotiate a mutual interpretation
- Does this accurately reflect what is happening in the video



- How satisfied are the family members with the final interpretation

#### 6/ School Observation

- What do family members think of video
- Does it meet their expectations of target child
- Is there anything surprising about target child's behaviour
- What do family members think of the experimenter's and nursery worker's negotiated interpretation

## Interview Schedule for Teachers

### 1/ The Teachers

- Introduction to the teachers. (Age, length of employment, etc.)
- Brief work and personal history (e.g. how long lived in area, general well-being, etc.)

### 2/ Target Child

- What were initial impressions of target child on pre-start visit.
- Perception of relationships outside school to siblings, parents, other family members.
- Description of general temperament and attitudes.

### 3/ School

- History of family involvement with school (e.g. did siblings attend, which parents visit, etc.)
- What were the target child's first days at school like.
- Perception of target child in school (e.g. how do they get on with the other children, etc.)
- How did the target child adapt to the school.
- How did relationships with family members change.

- How do teachers feel the target child has changed/benefitted from by going to the school.

#### 4/ Nursery

- What are teachers perceptions of nursery.
- Do they have much contact with workers.
- Has the child gained from being at nursery.
- Does the target child talk about nursery.

#### 5/ School Observation

- What do teachers think of video
- Does it meet their expectations of target child
- Is this typical of their experience of the target child.
- Are workers surprised about how childre/target child get on with the game after the teacher has left them alone
- Is there anything surprising about target child's behaviour
- What do the teachers think of the experimenter's interpretation
- Negotiate a mutual interpretation
- Does this accurately reflect what is happening in the video
- How satisfied are the teachers with the final interpretation