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

by

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ABSTRACT

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

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

With the theoretical insights gained from a semantic approach to the study of social life this culture is interpreted as a conceptual context whereby children themselves conduct their own rite de passage to adulthood. Through analysis of the concepts of time and space; linguistic performance and nickname usage; the body as an expressive medium and the social construction of gender, a distinctive cultural style emerges which represents an active deconstruction and reinterpretation of adult social order by children. This pervasive style of 'doing nothing' provides a single underlying form for a multiplicity of contents: motifs of transformation constantly reappear in different domains and provide a coherent semantic system through which children gain knowledge of their own futures. Within this approach, then, socialization is no passive imitation; rather, it emerges as an active and creative learning process in and about the world.
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The production of this thesis represents far more than the results of a research project. The fieldwork experience and subsequent writing has engendered a deep and very personal commitment to social anthropology and to all those who have helped and guided me. Here I acknowledge my debt.

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

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

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

But despite these problems access to my academic life, whilst doing fieldwork, was also beneficial. I could present papers, explore ideas and discuss problems with the knowledge that they could be verified or augmented, changed or abandoned through further and immediate immersion in the 'field'. To my post-graduate contemporaries in the Department of
Anthropology, Durham University, I express my gratitude for their assistance in helping me explore the immanence of my field data. To my supervisor, David Brooks, I remain indebted for his inspiration and guidance in helping me come to understand the nature of the fieldwork experience and for his tact and patience, his gentle probing and constant enthusiasm in the initial analysis of the field material.

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The constant tension of living and endeavouring to write in the 'field' finally persuaded us to leave and return to our other lives. During the long and often frustrating period of writing up there are many false starts and blind alleys. The presence of an active and enthusiastic group of post-graduate anthropologists was of great assistance in helping me come to terms with my field data. I am most grateful to Marie Johnson, Jennifer Hockey, Malcolm Young, Bob Simpson, Brendan Quayle and Jane Szurek for their comments...
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To the many people who have, over the years, invited me to present papers and to publish articles I am also grateful for it allowed me to explore and refine the ideas which now appear in the final draft of this thesis.\(^1\) Everybody has their own thoughts about children and the opportunity to speak mine in such a wide variety of contexts was a creative and constructive experience.

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

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

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\(^1\) These earlier versions of parts of the thesis which have already been published are listed in the bibliography.
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(1) When extracts from field notes are incorporated in the text these are signified by the use of double quotation marks.

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

(3) Glossary of terms:
(N.B. (n) - noun; (adj) - adjective; (v) - verb; (derog) - derogatory.)

Bag (n) - old woman or ugly female (derog.)
Bas (n) - bastard
Bray (v) - to hit
Bog (n) - toilet, usually plural, 'bogs'
Bug (v) - to annoy
Chowy(n) - chewing gum
Clemmy(n) - (dialect) small stone or pebble
Gadgy (n) - old man (derog.)
Gemmy (n) - a glance or look. Also a quick word or short conversation.
Gobby (adj) - chatty (derog.). From 'gob' meaning mouth.
Hacky (adj) - dirty
Hag (n) - old woman or ugly female (derog.)
Knacker (n) - useless person, from 'to knack', meaning to break or make useless.
Les (n) - lesbian
Lug (n) - ear
Manky (adj) - dirty
Mega (n) - rage or temper
Mug (n) - face
Pros (n) - prostitute
Sissy(n) - coward
Snacker (n) - swede
Soz (adj) - sorry
Spacca/(adj) - useless person, from 'spastic'
Spac (adj) - useless person, from 'spastic'
Spuggy (n) - (dialect) sparrow
Introduction

When is a child not a child?

The Opies, in their discussion of the verbal lore of schoolchildren remark that 'a curious feature about riddles is the way many children, when they hear them, like writing them down and making collections of them' (1977:93).

Posing the riddle - when is a child not a child - is, then, an appropriate starting point for discussing the structure and experience of childhood and adolescence, representing as it does one significant feature of the culture of children. In the following pages this culture is explored, based upon two years anthropological field experience amongst a group of young people in an ex-mining community in County Durham in the north-east of England.

However, the riddle is significant in other ways for it acts as a useful mnemonic in highlighting the main themes of this thesis. Firstly, it directs attention to the conceptual nature of the terms 'child' and 'adolescent', forcing them to be recognized as social constructions, as categories of cognition grounded in and arising from particular lived experiences, rather than simply as labelling devices for biological states. Throughout the thesis attention is given to the ways in which these social classifications are made meaningful in everyday life.
An interrelated theme is also illuminated by the riddle. Through questioning the universality of terms such as 'child' and 'adolescent' a comparative framework is created which allows the particularity of the culture I shall describe to be thrown into relief, to be seen as but one instance of 'childhood' and 'adolescence' in contemporary British society, generated and shaped by the socializing experiences of life in a northern semi-rural community.

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

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

That riddling of any kind should be a preoccupation of the young is not surprising, for riddles act as conceptual sieves. They are instructive and illuminating through their articulation and commentary upon the paradoxical: they think the unthinkable in us and explicate implicit orders. It...
is these orders which children must discover for themselves as they mature and it is through practical experience of processes of socialization that such knowledge is gained. As Hamnett suggests, the value of riddles is that they reveal 'some of the principles that underlie classification in social action and cognition generally and can, in particular, indicate the role that ambiguities play in the classificatory process' (1967:379). For young people the main ambiguity to be resolved is their position relative to others within the life-cycle: it is the classification of 'self' which is their constant quest.

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

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

The problem posed

The process of becoming human is social. It involves not only the biological processes of birth, life and death but, most importantly, the conceptual recognition and cultural perception of these events. Recognition of the humanity of others depends upon social definitions of what constitutes that humanity. In the context of contemporary British society I trace some of the ways in which the humanity of the young is conceptualized and examine the classificatory processes through which childhood and adolescence as conceptual states have been and are structured; most importantly I consider the impact of these processes in the experience of young people themselves for, as Francis Huxley remarks newborn infants are 'merely candidates for life; they become human only when everyone recognizes them to be so' (1980:61).
It is, then, through focusing directly upon the paradox laid bare in the riddle that the life-cycle can be examined as one process of social classification, one implicit order, with which young people must daily contend. In contemporary Britain the use of terms such as 'child', 'adolescent' and 'adult' represent an attempt to classify, and thereby conceptually control, the process of physical maturation. Through locating each individual within a specific social category his or her place in society is conceptually ordered: as Burridge (1979) argues, an individual only becomes someone, a person, through their conformity to culturally prescribed sets of attributes cognitively established for that particular category of social beings. What kind of people then are children and adolescents? What expectations do we have of them?

The terms 'child' and 'adolescent' are, however, only two amongst many used to categorise the younger members of our society. It is important, therefore, to first consider their effectiveness and import as labelling devices: of whom, by whom and using what criteria are these terms applied? As part of a syntagmatic linguistic chain what relationship do these classificatory terms bear to other category labels; what internal relationship do they have with one another? What logic governs the construction of conceptual boundaries to ideas of childhood and adolescence and from whose perspective is it operative? Are the categories 'child' and 'adolescent' fixed and immutable social classifications, amenable to precise and definitive description, or do they...
on closer scrutiny elude such rigid containment? These are some of the issues explored in the following chapters, themes which have emerged from analysis of the participative experience of a particular group of children and adolescents in contemporary Britain. These questions are not, therefore, purely academic. Arising as they do from the analysis of field data they are issues which the young people themselves constantly explore in their daily lives. They are questions which reveal a need to examine the dynamics of one process of social classification as it affects, and indeed is effected by, the younger members of our own society.

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

Mary Douglas seems to throw some light on the problem in her suggestion that 'there is energy in (society's)
Is it possible that such terminological confusion symbolises the insolubility of the riddle, mirroring the very real ambiguity of becoming adult? Do the numerous labels we employ to describe children and adolescents in fact reflect attempts to order and control, to pin down and contain, that which is perceived to be anomalous and disordered?

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

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

¹. This discussion is extended later, see pp 398 - 400.
labelling the young in such a multitude of ways socialized adults appear to be attempting to control and order their overt energy: as I shall argue, being between times and statuses it is 'adolescents' who threaten adult order precisely through becoming adult.

Through focusing upon the totemic quality of labelling devices the riddle serves a further purpose in directing attention to the complex interplay between conceptual category and social group. This is not simply a theoretical debate but is a problem daily faced by the young themselves: am I a child or an adult, to which category do we belong? It is significant that the group I was working with had no collective term for themselves but merely talked of 'lads' and 'lasses', distinguishing according to gender but avoiding categorising themselves in terms of the life-cycle. This suggests that they see themselves as displaced or placeless people belonging nowhere.\(^1\) The riddle, then, pushes the analysis towards exploring the subjectivity of such

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\(^1\) This lack of a collective term points to the central issues of this thesis. That the children see themselves as being outside the major life-cycle classifications, as marginal to the social order, is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. That they only distinguish themselves according to gender is reflected in their concern with the changes in the physical body which accompany their transition towards adult status, see Chapter 6. This also poses a problem for me. I literally have no appropriate language with which to refer to the young people I worked with. Ostensibly they belong to the 'adolescent' age group but they would never use this description of themselves. For clarity, therefore, I have chosen to use the term 'children': when speaking of them in particular, rather than the category, I use the definite article-viz. 'the child' or 'the children'.
objectified logic through examining one particular instance of the ' homology of structure between human thought in action and the human object to which it is applied ' (Lévi-Strauss, 1969:164).

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

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

A comparable dialectic can be outlined for children and adolescents.

In this respect Nicholas Tucker's attempts to define children in his book, What is a Child? (1977) is instructive. Although Tucker admits that childhood can be seen largely as a 'function of adult expectations and practices' - which accounts for historical and cross-cultural variations in child-rearing practices - his aim is to uncover some definitive criteria of universal application for the incumbents of this conceptual state (1977:9).¹ His arguments, however, are unconvincing precisely because

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¹ For a discussion of the historical development of the concept of childhood and examples of cross-cultural variation, see Chapter 1.
he fails to appreciate the interplay between conceptual thought and social action outlined by Ardener (op.cit.) for the position of women.

From the outset Tucker equates the nature of children with the idea of childhood and the category of child. His main argument is directed against those who would argue for the primacy of social factors and, thus, he states that

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

These 'universals', described later as 'childhood's basic characteristics' are, he suggests, to be located in particular physiological and psychological states of children (ibid:20). Tucker's confusion stems from a failure to recognise that such biological facts may themselves be subject to social perceptions; that they may be used in a variety of different ways to shape ideas of the child and the concept of childhood and therefore, in turn, to recast perceptions of the nature of children. As in the case of women, there is a tendency to think of the category of child 'as some kind of universal, with a place in a cross-cultural frame of reference' (Ardener.S, 1978:11).

We need reminding, as Ardener does for women, that

'our own cultural model of (children), and the adventures of the beings who realise that model, are very special examples from a wider category called ('children')' (ibid:11).
Through further analysis of Tucker's argument this point can be elaborated. Our selective perception of the biological condition of children affects our understanding of the category of 'children' and ideas of 'childhood' which, in turn, feed back into our perception of the biological nature of children.

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

Lack of height is, therefore, characteristic of children and is used as a symbolic marker of our category 'child'. But it is not, in itself, a definitive boundary for social perceptions intrude. We cannot say, like the King to Alice, that all persons more than a mile high should be classed as adults, that they should have no place in the category of
'child'. Gulliver experienced similar disturbing facts about height: little people can rule and wield great authority.

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

Senility is child-like and adults are said to enter a second childhood during their declining years; but they are not classed as children. Piaget (1929) has amply demonstrated the cognitive development of children during
their early years of life, which mark them off from adults at certain distinctive stages, but those who never fully extend their mental and intellectual capacities are conceptualised as peripheral adults. They are not seen as children. Lunatics and old people may be childish but they are classified on the adult side of the conceptual boundary.

Clearly, therefore, physical and psychological differences between adults and children are used as symbolic markers for social classifications but these 'facts of life' are selectively perceived. Even in the 'scientific' mode of thought of Western cultures biological conditions vie with social factors - such as age, occupation or marital status - during the practical process of classification as the above examples have shown. Cross-culturally, as Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) indicate, biological factors receive less attention and, in particular, physical puberty must be marked by a rite of passage (social puberty) before a child conceptually and physically participates in the adult world. As La Fontaine argues, therefore, the facts of life are 'on the contrary, facts of culture' (1978:2). Their interest for the social anthropologist lies in analysing 'how socially significant distinctions are mapped onto basic biological differences, and vice-versa'. (ibid:2) They are also important for exploring the ways in which these facts 'take on a particular cultural meaning and a specific social significance in different societies' (Hastrup, 1978:49).
From such a perspective, then, the terms 'child' and 'adolescent' refer to conceptual categories but they are not categorical. Being of and about particular cultures the ways in which the process of physical maturation is perceived and conceptually ordered differs both in time and space, between and within cultures and historical epochs. As Geertz writes:

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

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

Theoretical themes

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

1. Socialization theory is discussed on pp. 115-137.
from the theoretical framework adopted. It is one which has both structured the analysis of field material and was implicit in the methodology adopted as I later suggest.

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

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

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1. The relationship between theory and methodology is discussed on pp. 165 - 168.
2. See Ferdinand de Saussure, (1960).
3. For example, see Leach, (1976a).
become one of reducing 'all social relations to communicative relations and, more precisely, to decoding operations' (Bourdieu, 1977:1).

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

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

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

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

In his critique of de Saussure Giddens argues that

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

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

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

In other words, he did not acknowledge the fact that 'sense of linguistic items can only be sought in the practices which they express and in which they are expressed.' (ibid:38).

The inclusion of a temporal dimension in analysis is, therefore, crucial; although social systems can be said to have structural properties it must be recognized that this structure is 'both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices' (ibid:5). I refer again to Bourdieu: if we are not to risk distorting our accounts of other people's lives we must situate our analyses within spatial and temporal parameters:
As he points out the tendency for analysts to detemporalize social practices - i.e. their failure to account for the difference between experience and explanations of experience - is 'never more pernicious' than when omitted in discussion of forms of social life in which 'temporal structure, direction, and rhythm are constitutive of their meaning' (ibid:9). The life experiences of children and adolescents are prime examples of such social practices.

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

'to uncover the conceptual structures that inform our subjects' acts - the 'said' of social discourse - and to construct a system of analysis in whose terms what is generic to those structures, what belongs to them because they are what they are, will stand out against the other determinants of human behaviour.' (ibid:27)
I offer an account of the children's culture, not through attempting to establish causal connections, but through revealing the cognitive relations which contextualize and structure it and through identifying some of the key generative principles which constantly recreate and redefine that cultural context. I explore the totality of their life experiences through the manifestation of particular parts, a 'whole' which is only experienced by children through the practical sequence of events.

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

Although the model is, as I have suggested, important for its stress on the social construction of gender, the semantics of biology, the model is only partially applicable to the study of children. The terms 'child', 'adolescent' and 'adult' refer to life-cycle categories which conceptually order and control processes of physical and social maturation. They represent attempts to fix and constrain the rhythm of life itself but, in doing so, there is an inherent paradox: an individual's place within any social category is both
defined and negated through this process. Only in relationship does each discrete category become meaningful: a child is a child when it is not an adolescent. In Saussurian terms, then, these categories only have meaning and only acquire identity or continuity in so far as they are differentiated from one another as oppositions or differences within the totality that is langue (Giddens, 1979:11-12).

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

It is no wonder, therefore, that self-determination is of paramount importance to the child: who or what am I, where do I belong? It is through analysis of the form and structure of socializing practices that this questioning...
can continually be seen and it is through examining the culture of children that some solutions to the riddle may be found. Children constantly fight against and also occasionally exploit the restrictions which a selective perception of biological differences have placed upon them through the classificatory process. They recognize that 'becoming adult' involves the personal loss and dis-investment of 'childish' attributes and that they must seek to acquire those of adult status. The multitude of ways in which children question, manipulate and circumvent such conceptual controls through social practice contextualises their 'culture' and forms the subject matter of this thesis, revealing as it does the 'inevitable interweaving of language and the practical conduct of social life' (ibid:34).

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

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

The structuring of a mode of thought

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

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

In essence, the thesis traces particular kinds of movement over time: the passage of children from one conceptual category to another is illustrated by the changing social practices of one particular group of children as they verge towards adulthood. This is the first movement through time. A second, and qualitatively different kind, is the way in which children themselves attempt to negotiate, to move the boundaries which such category distinctions surround them with: as the field material reveals the children continually try to overcome the limitations which age and maturity place upon them and endeavour to enlarge their arena of social
action. Time here is seen as an obstacle to be surmounted. Thirdly, and coincidentally, there is movement in the opposite direction: walls not only contain but also prevent access inside. Whilst attempting to shift the boundaries which contain them the children also continually deflect perception of their own bounded culture, resisting any attempts from outsiders to see what lies within.

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

In Chapter 1 the scene is set for this process. Through an historical exploration of the development of ideas
of childhood and adolescence, an examination of the ways in which one particular classificatory order has gradually become part of the Western collective consciousness, I suggest that the young are now perceived to be marginal to the social order. This perception is illustrated through examining the consequences of this ordering for anthropological approaches to the study of children. I suggest that, precisely because of this particular conceptualisation of the young as being peripheral to mainstream society, the study of children and adolescents has been largely ignored by anthropologists in the past. They were just not thought of as important.

Only in one particular and significant area do the young become primary subjects for research for social scientists: socialization, that is the ways in which children and adolescents move from the periphery to the centre, the process of becoming adult. However, as I suggest in Chapter 2 this has always been seen as movement from the outside in. With but a few exceptions no attention has been given to the movements accomplished by those themselves undergoing the socialization process. By using the metaphor of a rite de passage attention can be given, however, to the adolescent's own cultural experience. Analysis of the field material reveals this to be an experience akin to that of liminality through emphasis being placed upon the participative experience of the young themselves in the socialization process. Seen in this light socialization is no longer simply the process by which adults make the
young social; instead, it gives voice to those not usually permitted to speak and the remaining chapters of the thesis articulate their perceptions of this process of being and becoming human through an exploration of the field material.

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

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

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

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

Throughout the analysis certain key themes repeatedly emerge. All are connected with movement and change and recall the images common in a *rite de passage*: motifs of transformation, reversal and inversion constantly describe the vibrant adolescent experience. In Chapter 4 one particular motif is explored in depth: transformation. To belong to the adolescent culture - the culture of 'doing nothing' - one must be able to speak as an adolescent. It is to the structuring of a 'liminal' language that this chapter is devoted. Analysis shows that the children create their own language through a constant and consistent process of transforming the adult tongue which often literally involves moving letters around, reversing speech forms and inverting word order. It is both a transformed and transforming language.
In Chapter 5 one particular instance of language use is explored: nicknaming. It is here that the significance of *rite de passage* as a metaphor for adolescence begins to reverberate. As Turner points out, a paradoxical feature of liminality is the balance between conformity and individuality. Although structural distinctions are obliterated in anti-structure, through processes of ritual levelling, there exists the opportunity for individual expression: liminality

\[ \text{'does not submerge one in the other but safeguards their uniqueness in the very act of realizing their commonness. Communitas does not merge identities; it liberates them from conformity to general norms.'} \quad (1974:274) \]

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

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

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

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

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

It is suggested that the transition from one of these activities to another symbolises the movement of children through adolescence to adulthood for through controlling what they take inside their bodies at different stages of physical and social maturity the children are establishing control over their own socialization. And, at each stage it is the context of their own culture which structures this acquisition of self knowledge: eating sweets, smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol are practices which recall many of the features of the culture of 'doing nothing' previously outlined. The chapter concludes, then, by returning to some of the initial questions through asserting that, as Giddens argues, 'socialization is never anything like a passive imprinting by society upon each individual' (1979:129). Rather, it is to be understood as an active process of learning, a process of self socialization performed by the children in the context of their own bounded culture and, only by looking at the ways in which the children themselves structure this passage to adulthood can socialization be seen as a way of being and becoming human.
CHAPTER 1: THE STUDY OF CHILDREN

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

Introduction

The study of children has had a chequered history in social anthropology and, by 1973, Charlotte Hardman was still able to pose the question: can there be an anthropology of children? An anthropology of children, she proposes, would be primarily 'concerned with beliefs, values or interpretations of their viewpoint, their meaning of the world' (1973:86). Children would be their own informants and, in contrast to the more usual approaches to the study of children and young people within the social sciences generally, would be regarded as 'people to be studied in their own right, and not just as receptacles of adult teaching' (ibid:87). Characteristic of traditional socialization theory Shildkrout criticises this latter approach as follows:

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

In itself this does not constitute an anthropology of children as visualized by Hardman, for it takes as a priori a correspondence of meanings and values between child and adult worlds. Moreover, through assuming a unilinear,
developmental perspective such an approach mitigates against considering the possibility that the young may possess and articulate in their actions and language an alternative cultural perspective or interpretation of the social world.\(^1\)

That Hardman's suggestion has come so late may seem remarkable especially considering Evans-Pritchard's comments on fieldwork.

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

His experience is certainly not unique and yet few anthropologists have taken up this obvious advantage. With some notable exceptions children receive little mention in ethnographic accounts prior to the 1970's and an anthropology of children, along the lines visualized by Hardman (op. cit), has never coalesced from the scattered and diverse accounts of child-rearing practices and socialization studies.\(^2\)

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

2. See below for a discussion of children within social anthropology, pp. 73-109. It is significant that it is amongst those working on ritual and symbolism that the most interesting early accounts of child culture can be found—see Richards (1956) for example. Their concern was primarily with social classification—social categories rather than groups—which, as I argue, is the cognitive shift necessary for an anthropology of children, see below pp. 125-137.
Its emergent possibility during the 1970's is, as I discuss below, no historical accident. Rather, it is a direct response to the opening up of new areas of discourse within the discipline itself. It is during this period that the three main changes, begun in anthropology after the second World War, combine to produce an alternative and fruitful approach to the study of social life, one which has allowed for the development of an anthropology of children. ¹

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

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

¹. The insights which these developments gave to an anthropology of children are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.
The diminution of imperialism in the post-war era removed such conceptual blinkers and created the necessary conditions for a process of self-critical evaluation of theory and method within the discipline. Anthropology could no longer content itself with being the study of 'primitive peoples'; rather, it had to embrace the fact that its subject was dominated and marginal peoples involved in power relationships on an international scale. This cognitive shift from seeing 'primitive' peoples as geographic isolates to situating them within a world economy and power structure signalled the end to insular functionalist models and provided a more total, rather than simply totalising, perspective for the analysis of social life. Children, as I will show, form one such marginal group.

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

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

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

1. During the heyday of functionalism some anthropologists were, however, already beginning to raise these questions, see for example Evans-Pritchard (1956) and Richards (1956).
A third change has also been crucial. It is the development of what Ardener (1971a) has termed the "new anthropology", a movement which sees men as 'members of a self-defining species' (Crick, 1976:3). It is this which has focused attention on the necessarily semantic nature of anthropological enquiry, of seeing language as both a structured and a structuring system, of social classification as a process continually reconstituted or reaffirmed through social action and experience, rather than as merely a system of order governed by fixed and immutable categories of constraint. It is this latest shift in the discourse of anthropology which has at last begun to tackle the problems raised by Durkheim in his treatise on religion of the relationship between thought and experience.¹

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

1. See Durkheim (1914).
2. Although Hardman (1973) does not explicitly develop this point I suggest that it is implicit in her view of children as belonging to a 'muted' social group who possess an alternative world-view which cannot be articulated within the terms of the dominant model. She is discussing categories rather than social groups. See pp. 219-220 for further discussion of this point.
With respect to the social anthropological contribution to child-study this latter point is crucial. The majority of anthropological work has stemmed from the West, from an intellectual tradition and social order steeped in particular ideas of childhood: ideas concerning the position and participation of the young in society, their capabilities, their limitations, their rights and duties. All these contribute to a particular understanding of childhood and to the meaning of the category to which we assign our children.

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

The history of the study of children within social anthropology must therefore be contextualised through an exploration of the historical development of this particularized idea of the child in Western society and the emergence of the institution of childhood, described by Holt as:
'all those attitudes and feelings, and also customs and laws, that put a great gulf or barrier between the young and their elders, and the world of their elders; that make it difficult or impossible for young people to make contact with the larger society around them, and, even more, to play any kind of active, responsible useful part in it; that lock the young into eighteen years or more of subserviency and dependency, and make of them... a mixture of expensive nuisance, fragile treasure, slave and super-pet.' (1975:22)

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

2. The main historical sources referred to in this section are: Ariès (1979); Laslett (1965); Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969),(1973); Plumb (1975); Stone (1979) and Wardle (1974).
which their existence has been conceptualised and socially ordered is culturally prescribed, located in time and space and subject to change. As Phillipe Ariès writes,

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

My discussion of the history of childhood represents, therefore, an example of a structuralist approach to history which, as Raphael Samuel has pointed out, draws attention to the importance of examining 'means of representation' over time and shifts the focus from 'the real world of objects to the categories of language and thought through which they are perceived.' (1981:xliii).

The value of adopting this approach is assessed by Samuel as follows:

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

Through seeing childhood and adolescence as ideological constructions, historically and culturally determined, two related themes emerge as characteristic of Western representations. Firstly, concomittant with the increasing practical separation of the young from adult spheres of action there develops a conceptual distance between the worlds of adults and children which, in turn, further
removes the child from a central position in the social order. Secondly, and as an integral part of this process, there arises a complex of natural symbols around the idea of childhood itself: children become increasingly associated with the world of nature, rather than culture: nature comes to represent both a symbol of and for their pre-social, marginal status.

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

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

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

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

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

It was also during this period that a fundamental change occurred in perceptions of children: in the Middle Ages children were conceived of as but smaller and more dependent versions of adult members of society and few discriminations were made to class them apart. By the middle of the seventeenth century, in contrast, children were beginning
to be conceptually separated from the world of adults; the institution of childhood was already enclosing them and children had become the focus for considerable religious, moral and pedagogical thought.

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

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

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

². The compulsory registration of births (1836) finally formalized age as a boundary marker for social status, institutionalizing a process which began in 1538 with the keeping of Parish Registers. For a discussion of the symbols of age as a boundary to category membership, see below pp. 176-188.
it was used to denote any position of social dependency, often synonymous with terms for young servant or feudal lackey. Children, servants and apprentices formed a category of dependent creatures. Not until the end of the seventeenth century was the term 'child' to become restricted to its modern, age-related meaning applicable to only one particular group of people.

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

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

The ages of life were fixed. It was a 'continuity inscribed in the general and abstract order of things rather than in real experience' (ibid:21).
This representation of man's progress through life had certain practical consequences for the position of the young in medieval society which, in turn, shaped perceptions of them. Once past infancy, children participated in society as best they could alongside their elders; youth was the privileged age and small children were not separated off as a distinct social group, requiring special consideration. It was an attitude which persisted well into the 16th century: and as Wardle comments childhood was conceptually ' a state of incomplete adulthood, an inevitable but unfortunate period of weakness to be crossed as quickly as possible ' (1974:29).

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

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

¹. See pp.47-48 for Ariès's discussion of this relationship between demography and the development of the idea of childhood.
'Children were no different from the adult members of the family in that they were all conceived as component parts of a far larger unit, the extended family, to whose interests those of the interrelated nuclear families of parents and children were subordinated.' (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969:13)

This is apparent in many areas. For example, amongst the wealthy, infants were often sent away to be wet-nursed and when 'childhood effectively ended at the age of seven' they might be sent to court in order that they could learn the accoutrements of their class and status (ibid:42).

Child marriage, although not common amongst the wealthy, did continue up until the 16th century. Its main purpose seems to have been to establish political alliances between families and some were contracted at very early ages:

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

Amongst the poor, children were also seen as active and able members of the community and were expected to participate...

1. For a comparison of relative marriage ages between different social classes see Stone(1979) who argues that the upper classes tended to contract marriages earlier than the lower classes. Many of the early paintings of children, where children were represented as miniature adults were, as Fuller argues, 'used as bargaining factors in the negotiation of political marriages...They were designed to express what the parents of the child hoped he or she would become' (1979:78). Their present condition was a social and political irrelevance. For a discussion of the representation of children in art, see pp. 46 - 47.
in adult activities. Many children were sent away from their natal families to serve as apprentices or servants in other houses at an early age. They lived as part of their master's household where they learnt their craft as adults:

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

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

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

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

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1. For further discussion and a critique of Ariès (1979), see Fuller (1979).
on classical forms, introduced realistic representations of children into the religious iconography of the fourteenth century in the form of cherubs, putti and cupids; they symbolised the innocence of children through their glorification of the Mother and Child. Not until the seventeenth century, however, did it become commonplace to depict ordinary children with the touching tenderness previously reserved for the Infant Jesus and other Holy children. Breugel's painting, *Children At Play (1560)*, for example, depicts myriads of small-scale adult figures playing the games of children.

The sixteenth century, however, saw the beginnings of realism in the representation of children in art. Child portraiture became increasingly common and, as Ariès notes, the popularity of portraits of dead children during this period 'marked a very important moment in the history of feelings' (ibid:38). It symbolised a new concern and sensibility for the child; no longer was the death of a child accepted with resignation and fatalism. By the seventeenth century the genre of child portraiture was well established indicating that 'children were emerging from the anonymity in which their slender chance of survival had maintained them' (ibid:38). For Ariès this is a surprising development in the growth of the concept of childhood for it was at a time which 'preceded by more than a century the change in demographic conditions which
can be roughly dated from Jenner's great discovery (ibid:41).¹

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

¹ An argument cited by Stone (1979), Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969) and Ariès (1979) is that the plague and small-pox mitigated against the early development of the concept of childhood, due to children's short life expectancy. Up until 1640, Stone suggests, the mortality rate during the first year of life was approximately 21% but, due to the high number of unrecorded births of children dying in the first few weeks this figure is likely to have been much higher. The mortality rate for one year olds was about 18%. By 1640 the average life-span was still short, about thirty-two years, which was possibly another contributory factor to the early assumption of adult responsibilities by children. It was not until 1770 that the child mortality rate began to drop, probably due to 'effectiveness of inoculation against small-pox, which became normal among the elite in the latter half of the eighteenth century' (Stone, 1979:59). E.P. Thompson, however, points out that such beneficial effects did not apply to the poor. In the 1850's the mortality rate he quotes for poor children in their first year of life is 250/1000 i.e. 25% 'in the high-wage industrial centres generations after generation of children were bred, more than half of whom died before they could scarcely speak; while in the low-wage countryside children were kept alive by the poor-rates to supplement, by migration, the heavy adult labour force of the towns' (1972:361). Such differences serve to illustrate that childhood came first to the rich; the poor could not afford the luxury of such a concept.
' the new science saw revolution as the natural movement of events, in which the old is constantly turned over and replaced by the new. The long allegiance of the Middle Ages to established authority was over. ' (Bronowski and Mazlish, 1963:152)

Secondly, and intimately linked to these ideas, there was another cognitive shift: the free thinking of the Renaissance and Reformation represented a challenge to the established hierarchical order of medieval society and paved the way for the emergence of modern individualism. The Humanist tradition, as Bronowski and Mazlish describe it, was primarily an 'intellectual movement, shifting of values and a new self-consciousness of the human spirit' (ibid:85). It liberated man from the weight of tradition and offered a new vision of man's place in the world and a new freedom of thought: reason took the place of chance and fate, and the individual assumed a hitherto unknown importance. Following Erasmus's attack on monasticism and the corruption of the Church, Luther pinned his ninety-five theses on the door of the church at Wittenberg which proclaimed a new conception of man's relationship with God. It symbolised the culmination of the Renaissance spirit: salvation was not dependent upon good works or the purchase of surplus grace from the treasury of merit through the sale of indulgences but rested, instead, upon an individual's own faith and contrition in the sight of God.

It was left to Calvin to push these arguments to their logical conclusion along the path of Puritanism: salvation was predestined for the elect and would reveal itself in

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the virtues of thrift and abstinence. As Thomas argues this was 'a conscientious attempt to impose order on the apparent randomness of the human fortunes by proving that, in the long run, virtue was rewarded and vice did not go unpunished' (1973:125-6). Salvation was in man's own hands and was no longer a matter of luck.

The period (1500-1630) was, as Stone puts it, an era which witnessed a 'fundamental shift in human values and in the social arrangements that went with them' (1979:100). The conception and position of children is one such case. The liberation of man from the wheel of fortune and the new emphasis upon man as master of his own destiny focused attention on individual mental and bodily control for future grace; newborn children were therefore, not surprisingly, feared in their apparent helplessness and lack of physical and mental control. The doctrine of Original Sin preached by the Puritans maintained that a child, although born sinful, could through strict discipline of the body and rigorous training of the mind have its will broken for the salvation of its soul. The practical and intellectual effects of such a doctrine created a fundamental transformation in conceptions of the child:

1. During this period there was a tremendous expansion in state institutions, a factor which Stone(1979) sees as integral to the rise of the nuclear family. The emergence of the Protestant Ethic and the increase in business and manufacturing interests are discussed by Tawney (1938) in relationship to Max Weber's thesis of the relationship between the Protestant Ethic and the development of capitalism in the West.
'So long as no one cared about them very much, they could be left to run wild, or in the hands of nurses, servants and tutors. But the Reformation - and in Catholic Europe the Counter-Reformation - drive for moral regeneration brought with it an increasing concern to suppress the sinfulness of children. A pedagogic movement, which had begun a century earlier with the Italian Renaissance as a glorification of the purity and innocence of the child was twisted in its late sixteenth - and early seventeenth - century northern religious transplantation into a deadly fear of the liability of children to corruption and sin, particularly those cardinal sins of pride and disobedience.' (Stone, 1979:124)

By the seventeenth century, then, the characteristics of modern 'childhood' were already beginning to be defined. The child's nature was thought by the Puritans to be altogether different from that of adult rational man: children - the literal manifestation of the sins of the flesh - represented uncontrolled and irrational beings, qualities in direct antithesis to Puritan morality. For them rational thought, and hence salvation, was only possible through control of the physical body, man's animal nature, and children were more animal than human. The doctrine of Original Sin provided, therefore, both an explanation for their disordered state and a pretext for its remedy.

An explicit parallel was drawn by the Puritans between the nature of children and that of animals which in practice led to distinctions being made between adults and children in terms of social action. As Stone points out:

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

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

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

1. A comparable example is cited by E.P.Thompson (1972) for the eighteenth century. He suggests that the Methodists were the main apologists for child labour and the subsequent reforms for, through focusing upon the future generations, they could recruit more successfully from the ranks of the poor.
children in Janeway's book, *A Token for Children* (1671), an extremely popular publication of the time. These children, too good to live, achieved deliverance rather than damnation when they died. And for parents the Puritans produced the first child-training manuals which discussed methods of child-rearing to encourage righteous behaviour.

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

The gradual separation of children from other members of society, implicit in these perceptions, parallels the wider cognitive shifts of the era: the separation of the body and spirit, of nature and reason, imaged in the Puritan worldview set man free from the great chain of being, placing responsibility upon the self, upon the individual. Children, in their apparent helplessness, belonged more to the irrational, non-social realm of nature and were subject to the whims of fortune; they were not the rational, individualistic members of the newly conceived social order. The
emergence of the idea of childhood, then, stems from and forms part of this new perception of man's relationship with himself and with his own natural condition; only through strict discipline and control could children be made into responsible human beings.

(b) **Children: 1630-1760**

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

By the middle of the seventeenth century the conception of children as being essentially different from adult members of society had become firmly established and, as the century progressed, was to become grounded in a number of social practices. In particular, it was at this time that there occurred a tremendous spurt in educational developments: for the rich, and even for some of the poor, schooling was beginning to separate children off from the adult world and to isolate them as a group apart,
requiring special attention and consideration. The century was fertile with a variety of educational schemes. For children of the poor commercial classes were introduced, charity schools funded and industrial schools established for the learning of the technical skills. But the greatest surge in educational provision occurred with the opening up of numerous private schools and academies for the children of the wealthy.¹ Education was seen as a method of equipping 'the child with accomplishments that would secure for it gainful employment' and as a way of teaching the ideas of 'sobriety, obedience, industry, thrift, benevolence, and compassion - that educationalists regarded as the virtues of a successful man' (Plumb, 1975:69). As Wardle comments, 1700 marks the date when 'childhood was becoming established as a stage in life which presented peculiar problems, but also, for the educator and propagandist, peculiar opportunities' (1974:31).

The pattern of separation and difference being created through the act of schooling was mirrored in other spheres: children were becoming increasingly recognized as a group apart and, as Plumb points out, this 'new world became a market that could be exploited' (1975:71). A whole

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

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

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

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

². For the history of children's literature, see J.R. Townsend (1976) and Ellis (1968).
and card-games designed for the child market. As Plumb comments, this was a time of rapid commercial expansion:

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

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

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

There was, then, a conceptual shift in ideas about the child from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century. The Puritans had seen children as the medium for promoting their faith, of carrying the Puritan message into the future and had argued for the necessity of moral control of the child. Through appealing to the doctrine of Original Sin they justified their strict regime of discipline and control. By the eighteenth century children were still seen as the representatives of the future generation but education and
learning had replaced moral control as the method of ensuring future prosperity. The change in emphasis can be located in the wider shifts in conceptual thought about human nature which were being debated during this period.

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

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

' Strange and Wonderful News or the Full and True Relation of the Miraculous Inspiration of Charles Bennet born at Manchester in Lancashire Who being but Three Years of Age, Speaks without the Least Instruction English, Latine, Greek and Hewbrew; So Perfect and Authentickly the like thereof hath not been heard in any Age ' (Axon, 1901:5)
The tracts relate how the child corrected his father's reading of the Bible and thus revealed his knowledge of the Scriptures and foreign tongues. The child wished fervently to speak to the King for 'he had some business of Importance to declare to his Sacred Self': it was 'to speak only Three Words, and after the deliverance of which, he Prophetically fortells his Dissolution as to this life' as being nine days after his pronouncement. (ibid:9)

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

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

It is through the writings of John Locke that this changed perception of human nature can be best explored and, significantly, it was the education of children which Locke stressed as important in the fulfillment of man's potential. For him, all knowledge was to be gained from experience of the world; it was experience which, with age, produced reason among men. In contrast to the Puritan world-view Locke argued that the mind of the newborn child was a *tabula rasa*, a blank sheet upon which sensations were
imprinted. These experiences were gradually accumulated and ordered in the mind of each individual so that reason was achieved as maturity was reached. The social and moral education of the child were therefore crucial to the realisation of man's potential. For Locke human nature was not innately sinful: rather, each child was born with a capacity to learn, to receive and order experiences. The ways in which learning occurred was therefore of paramount importance.

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

More generally, Locke's writings reflect the continuing growth of interest within the intellectual community of scientific investigation of the natural world, a world no longer beset by chance and fortune but one subject to physical laws. Locke adopted an empirical approach
to epistemology which attempted, in a scientific manner, to explore the mechanisms by which knowledge is acquired through an examination of its simplest form. The newborn child was, therefore, a useful focus for these concerns, and it is in this respect that Locke's philosophical discussions foreshadow many of the later accounts of the form and process of socialization.¹

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

¹. For a discussion of socialization, see pp. 115 - 137. Here for the first time the child is used as a resource for study and Locke's work heralds the later use of the child by social scientists in socialization research.
conditioned by social experience. An individual's destiny was, in part, becoming a function of childhood itself, rather than solely a matter of divine intervention.

(c) Children: 1760-1880

1760 signals the start of the industrial revolution in England, described by Bronowski and Mazlish as an 'explosive moment in European and world history in which the central features of contemporary life were created in a remarkably short time' (1963:349). For children of all social classes it is a time which sees their progressive marginalisation from mainstream society, secured through continued intellectual interest in the particularity of the child's nature and realised in practice through the reforming activities of 'a variety of philanthropic movements which worked towards protecting the child from the harsh realities of the adult world. As Musgrove points out such well intentioned activities have hidden effects:

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

The onslaught of industrialisation signalled the death-knell to cottage industry through the introduction of the factory system and paved the way for the later removal of the child from the sphere of work. Prior to the development of large-scale factory systems the domestic
economy had made considerable use of child labour as E.P. Thompson describes for the textile industry:

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

With the change to the factory system a new method of working was imposed upon the family, one which led to the exploitation of child-labour and eventually stimulated pressure for social reform, leading to the removal of the child from the sphere of wage-work. It was not the employment of children per se which was exploitative for, as E.P. Thompson shows, children had always worked; rather it was the fact that the factory system inherited 'the worst features of the domestic system in a context which had none of the domestic compensations' (ibid:370). The child's labour was still an essential part of a family's income but its conditions of work had been dramatically altered: for children, labour in the home 'would follow a cycle of tasks and even regular jobs like winding bobbins would not be required all day'; 'no infant had to tread cotton in a tub for eight hours a day and for six days a week' as became necessary under the factory system (ibid:368).
The imposition of such working conditions upon children became the focus for a variety of humanitarian reforms during the nineteenth century. A series of Factory Acts were implemented from 1819 onwards as a protection for the child against the worst excesses of the factory system and, by 1876, Sandon's Education Act finally removed children from regular wage-work through the introduction of compulsory schooling. As Pinchbeck and Hewitt suggest,

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

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

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

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

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

¹. For a comprehensive history of these social reforms, see Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1973).
awareness of the particularity of the child's nature, an idea first mooted in the seventeenth century, was fixed in the statute book. As Pinchbeck and Hewitt write,

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

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

¹. It is Foucault's contention that the repression of sexuality is not a function of silence. On the contrary, sexuality became repressed precisely through being talked about. It became a topic of discourse, rather than simply a fact of life; a source of scientific interest and something to be looked out for amongst children and guarded against. Sex, therefore, was a constant feature of discourse and not absent from it. A good illustration of this ambivalent attitude is cited by Fuller (1979). He argues that the popular contemporary print, Playmates, - which was introduced to advertise Pears soap - represents, at one and the same time, the innocent little girl and adult female sexuality. The little girl reclines on a sofa, her nightdress dishevelled, and coyly peeps at the observer. Fuller comments that 'the cult of innocence was a defence against this real advance in awareness of the sexual life of the child' which occurred during the nineteenth century (1979:96).
But perhaps the greatest stimulus to an increased interest in the child's nature stems from the writings of Rousseau. His ideas became widespread and influenced many of the contemporary attitudes towards children, clearing the path for the realisation of practical social reforms. Following on from Locke's seventeenth century speculations upon the particular quality of the child's mind Rousseau also sought to demonstrate that the child possessed a nature quite distinctive and innately different from that of adults.

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

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

1. The idea of sequential stages finds a parallel later in Piaget's work. Piaget argues that development occurs through three main stages: (1) sensorimotor stage; (2) concrete operations; (3) formal operations. See Piaget (1929).
'Nature would have them children before they are men. If we try and invert this order we shall produce a forced fruit immature and flavourless, fruit which will be rotten before it is ripe; we shall have young doctors and old children. Childhood has its own ways of seeing, thinking and feeling; nothing is more foolish than to try and substitute our ways. ' (Emile, 1969:54)

The corrupting influence of society, according to Rousseau, was the only source of evil in children so that through allowing the child to learn naturally, according to its own stage of development, maximum protection from social pressures would be achieved: the child should do ' only what nature asks of him; then he will never do wrong' (ibid:57).

This image of the child was a true product of the age. During the late eighteenth century the New World discoveries had begun to broaden the social vision of Western intellectuals who saw in the 'noble savage' an alternative mode of thought and life-style. The appeal of a simple life, untrammelled by the complexities of industrial society, a life lived according to instinct and in harmony with nature, was widespread for it appeared to offer a solution to the problems of contemporary society. In an age characterized by ruthless individualism, rational rather than instinctive thought, rapid industrialisation and social change, the 'noble savage' presented an ideal of happiness, a utopia. Rousseau's child was akin to this natural man, an image which inspired the Romantic poets of the late eighteenth
and early nineteenth centuries. Wordsworth, for example, in *Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1802-6) portrays the child as being an integral part of nature. As Coveney argues, this poem is 'a locus classicus indeed for the whole literature of childhood in the nineteenth century' (1957:39). The Ode portrays the increasing social pressures upon the child, 'shades of the prison house' which 'begin to close/upon the growing boy'. Blake, too had his central theme as the symbol of innocent childhood:

> 'The Songs of Innocence are, then, the affirmation of human life in children: the Songs of Experience the comparative denunciation of the forces in society which deny to both child and adult the expression of their imaginative joy'.

(ibid:18-19)

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

(d) **Children: 1880 to the present day**

In conclusion, then, the institutionalization of childhood was effectively concluded by the end of the nineteenth century and the nature/nurture debate, begun with sixteenth century Puritanism, was in full flood. It centred upon the needs and conditions of childhood and the philosophical debates found practical realization in the continuation of social reforms and legislation on behalf of the child. Children had become the symbols of a new world view: change was no longer regarded with the hostility and dread of earlier times but was instead popularly regarded as 'being something likely to be good in itself' (Wardle, 1970:11). The rapid social developments, incurred through increase in scientific and technological knowledge and its practical applications, had made progress both inevitable and acceptable. It was children who were seen to be the vehicles of the future, those who would change and carry prosperity forwards. By 1936 Sir Percy Alden was to remark that 'the child is the foundation of the State and the first line of defence. We cannot lay too much stress upon the importance of the child if the state is to endure.' (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973:347-8).
This vision of the child as the vehicle of the cultural order into the next generation continued to flourish and was increasingly refined, a process which is reflected in the present day wealth of legislation which has been introduced for the protection of children. As John Holt describes it, the twentieth century institution of childhood is visualised as

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

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

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

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

² This experience is documented through the analysis of the field material. Chapter 3, in particular, explores in detail the 'prison walls' which children feel themselves to be surrounded with and examines the ways in which they attempt to break through the barriers.
constructed; it is an image which has been progressively framed by particular concepts of the social, moral and political order. 1979 was the International Year of the Child and that the United Nations felt the need to reaffirm their Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924 highlights the cultural construction of concepts of childhood and bears witness to the particularity of our own ideas about children. As Holt reminds us 'Childhood, as in Happy, Safe, Protected, Innocent Childhood, does not exist for many children' (ibid:23). One achievement of the International Year of the Child was the revelation of the fact that images of childhood reflect images of particular cultural orders.

II Children: the contribution of the social sciences

In the light of the foregoing historical analysis of the development of the concept of childhood I shall now return to an examination of the contribution from the social sciences to the study of children for, as suggested earlier, it is against this background that social scientific research into children must be contextualised. The new scientific rationality which emerged during the nineteenth century had led to an increased concern and scientific interest in the nature of children which, in turn, had further refined and institutionalised the idea of childhood. But, by the turn of the century, children had become an important focus for another discipline; the rapidly growing social sciences were
becoming established as a discipline distinct from the physical sciences and were devoted to the exploration and understanding of society.

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

Firstly, the child is assumed to be marginal to society, as having no position of consequence in the social order. In the past, therefore, anthropologists have usually approached children as peripheral subjects or as epiphenomena to other issues. Rarely have children been made the focus for study in their own right. Thus, the study of children has not often been seen as important.
in itself but rather as forming a part of some more over-
riding concern. Indeed, the very paucity of studies on
children within social anthropology bears adequate
testimony to this, when comparisons are made with the
wealth of material written about communities of adults.

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

In academic discourse this metaphor is no less persuasive
and pervasive: like woman-kind the child is often
portrayed as being at the mercy of its own biology. The
child's nature, constituted by the physiological and
psychological aspects of growth and development, is seen
as ultimately delineating its capabilities, as accounting
for its achievements, as excusing its limitations. Rarely
has any attempt been made to explore beyond these natural
boundaries in the past; it is only in the 1970's that such an approach has become feasible. The shifts in thinking which have made this possible are charted below.

**The Child And Nature**

Boas (1966) suggests that a characteristic feature of Western industrial society is the 'cult of childhood' and the early ethnographers reflect this in their writings. Their work, as a whole, demonstrates the 'association of childhood with primitivism and irrationalism or pre-logicalism' which Ariès sees as a characteristic feature of modern conceptions of the child (1979:116). Implicit in Rousseau's eighteenth century philosophy, it became fully developed during the nineteenth century and still remains influential:

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

In the early ethnographic reports, the 'primitive' child is portrayed as the ideal child of Nature, a creature which lives and learns according to innate forces rather than social rules. Chamberlain, for example, makes the point explicit through his comparison of children with the animal world:

'The comparison sometimes made of children with various of the lower animals, such as monkeys, bears, pigs etc. come more naturally to some primitive peoples who.. (suckle) at the breast the young of
certain animals simultaneously with their own offspring. (1895:171)

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

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

Or similarly:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1. The theory of recapitulation still appears to have some adherents. In an article published in the Sunday Times Colour Magazine, (10th May, 1981), Margaret Wallace describes Glen Doman's 'Better Baby Course' in Philadelphia, U.S.A. Doman believes that through training babies along an evolutionary path maximisation of their intelligence can be achieved. Crawling, he suggests, represents the amphibian stage of human evolution and is to be encouraged: 'certain tribes, believes Doman, have never been able to develop writing or to progress beyond cave-culture because their babies have never been placed on the ground, but are always carried on the hips of their mothers' (1981:38). Brachiation, the stage of the monkey, is also reenacted and Doman recommends 'swinging by the arms from rung to rung of a horizontal ladder' (ibid:38). This he believes encourages better co-ordination of the eye and hand, a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of higher grade skills such as reading or writing.
savage. Chamberlain, in his book *The Child: A Study in the Evolution of Man* (1900), makes this correspondence explicit in the title. In an earlier publication Chamberlain also reminds us of Wordsworth's poem and states: 'in brief, the child is the father of the man and the brother of the race' (1895:3). The savage and the child were both pieces of history frozen in time. Chamberlain writes:

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

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

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

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

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¹ Marx, Weber and Durkheim were also concerned with providing holistic accounts of social change but their importance lies in their theoretical contribution to the social sciences as a whole, rather than any explanation of social evolution as such.
can also be detected in the work of those social theorists who were not directly concerned with the study of children, but for whom explaining the evolution of social forms was of primary interest.

For example, the theory was implicitly supported by Tylor in *Primitive Culture* (1871). For Tylor the process of civilisation was seen as a progressive movement: the various grades of civilisation to be found in the world were regarded by him as 'stages of development or evolution, each the outcome of previous evolution, and about to do its proper part in shaping the history of the future' (1903:1). Dismissing the degenerative theory of evolution - an idea that originally a semi-civilised society existed which spawned two opposing movements, one backwards to savage society, the other forwards to the civilised world - Tylor suggested that there were many survivals of a former primitive state in the civilised world. These survivals were cultural elements or artifacts which, although they no longer possessed their original use or meaning, were still to be found in civilised society. For Tylor, it was primarily in the language and games of the young that these survivals were to be found. Implicit, therefore, in Tylor's thesis is a correspondence between the savage and the child: they shared, in part a common culture:
'English children delighting in the imitations of cries of animals and so forth, and New Zealanders playing their favourite game of imitating in chorus the saw hissing, the adze chipping, the musket roaring, and the other instruments making their proper noises, are alike in showing at its source the imitative element so important in the formation of language.' (ibid:74)

Of the bow and arrow he writes:

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

Tylor concludes:

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

It is, however, in Tylor's work on animism that the concept of recapitulation is most explicit. The correspondence between the moral and intellectual life of savages and children finds support from Tylor:

1. The idea that children's culture is conservative, in the sense that it retains many games and rhymes of the past, is put forward by the Opies, (1969);(1977). However, these do not represent survivals in Tylor's sense. For a discussion of childhood traditions, see pp. 233-249, 292-303.
We may, I think, apply the often-repeated comparison of savages to children as fairly to their moral as to their intellectual condition. The better savage social life seems in but unstable equilibrium, liable to be easily upset by a touch of distress, temptation, or violence, and then it becomes the worst savage life, which we know by so many dismal and hideous examples. ' (ibid:31)

The theory of animism proposed by Tylor suggested that the primitive animated the universe. For him, this represented an early form of religion. Children, likewise, were said to animate their worlds and thus the primitive mind was considered to be at a retarded stage of development, a stage comparable to that reached by children. Kidd attempted to demonstrate this in his account of the Kafirs, but it was largely unsuccessful:

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

As Honigman writes, 'a concern with cultural development predominated during the greatest part of the nineteenth century', inspired perhaps by Darwin's outline of the process of biological evolution in the Origin of Species published in 1859 (1976:114). Social evolution was seen to progress through various stages of civilisation. Morgan, for example, in Ancient Society (1877) identified three main stages: savagery, barbarism and civilisation. Each stage was characterised by the acquisition of some new cultural element: middle savagery, for instance, was suggested by Morgan to be the time when the use of fire was discovered, upper
barbarism the period when iron tools were developed. According to Morgan social evolution occurred because 'each cultural breakthrough gave human society a powerful impulse to further advancement' (ibid:118). Social evolution was the survival of the fittest.

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

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

1. That these ideas were widespread can be seen from the fact that they appear as the main themes in many contemporary children's books. Most have as their storyline the triumph of virtue over evil, the progression from a brutish condition to civilised society. The child's world is portrayed as a microcosm of adult society, as if children recapitulated the evolutionary path of their elders. For authors, such as MacDonald, Kingston and Henty, the hero's life from birth to adulthood is a series of natural and inevitable stages of advancement. The Spencerian theory can be seen in terms of social class as being innate and in-heritable property, ensuring ultimate survival; for example, in MacDonald's Sir Gibbie (1878) the story recounts the rise in prosperity of a dumb street urchin who from these miserable beginnings manages to restore the family fortunes and his own title. Kingston's Heir of Kilfinnan (1870's) shows the rise in fortunes of a poor fisher-boy who turns out to be the heir to the Kilfinnan estates. For further discussion see James. A, (1976) Childhood: Fact and Fiction (unpublished).
the path of social evolution and the early ethnographic accounts of childhood and adolescence provide documentary evidence in support of this overarching thesis. These analyses reveal, therefore, the influence of predominantly Western cultural constructs. Both Kidd and Chamberlain, although they provide fascinating documentation of children's games and their social life up until adulthood - often more detailed and well observed than many contemporary accounts - begin from a specific and particular conception. The theory of recapitulation incorporates and systematises the glorification of the child in Nature originally proposed by Rousseau and the period from childhood to adolescence in primitive society is represented as a piece of living history through which the study of the evolution of mankind itself could be pursued. The twin themes of marginality and naturalism run throughout these early accounts: the child was a medium for research into social evolution, rather than an object of that research directly and the particularity of its nature supported the comparison with primitive man for both were seen to belong to nature, and both were peripheral to the Western ideals of social order.

The child's nature

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

As a whole, the culture and personality studies concentrate on exploring the effect of man's social environment on his personality and behaviour, an interest which reflects Locke's concerns in the seventeenth century. For the culture and personality writers the most important question was to determine the 'environmental and psychological factors shaping culture' and it was through examining child-rearing practices that they sought to discover the basic personality patterns of particular cultures (Honigman, 1976:193). Underlying this approach to the study of culture was an evolutionary perspective, stemming from
Franz Boas, which argued that the total culture pattern in any particular society governs what new aspects of material culture or social forms will be incorporated, and also how they will be reshaped and reinterpreted by that society in cases of culture contact:

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

The culture-pattern concept appears primarily in the works of Mead, (1928),(1930),(1935), Bateson, (1936) and Benedict, (1935). Their underlying assumption was that,

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

Continuing Boas's critique of the speculative history of the early European anthropologists which, as Benedict described it, consisted of 'constructing a history of human culture based on bits of evidence, torn out of their natural contacts', these works represent a systematic attempt to explore culture as a totality (ibid:xi).

Using the comparative method combined with intensive fieldwork, their aim was to explore the nature/nurture debate and to demonstrate the cultural conditioning of nature. Mead expressed this hope through the following questions:
' How much of the child's equipment does it bring with it at birth..... How much or how little and in what ways is it dependent upon early training, upon the personality of its parents, its teachers, its playmates, the age into which it is born. ' (1968: 9).

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

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

And yet, Rousseau's ghost still lurks beneath the surface. The child's nature was still visualised as being changed and moulded by contact with the social world. For Rousseau this act was primarily brutish; it represented a blemishing of the child's original nature. For the culture and personality writers, on the other hand, it represented the
infinite flexibility of human nature itself, an explanation for the great diversity of cultures in the world. However, contained within the writings of this school there remains some notion of an original primeval nature belonging to the child:

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

This is comparable with Rousseau's comments in Emile:

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

The period 1920-40 in the American anthropological tradition paid considerable attention to the study of children. As Honigman says,

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

That these studies did not, however, immediately open up a path for an anthropology of children is not surprising. Their overall aim was not to explore the culture of
children *per se* but to examine how children were trained or socialized in different cultures as a contribution to the larger nature/nurture debate. Their quarrel lay with those who argued for a universal human morality, and with those who equated the child with the savage from a misguided evolutionary premise. But, in one respect, their work did significantly pave the way for an anthropology of children: the culture and personality writers were insistent that childhood and adolescence were predominantly social, rather than scientific classifications.

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

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

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

¹. This idea had been explored earlier by Van Gennep (op.cit.) in his analysis of *rites de passage*, where he distinguishes between physical and social puberty. For further discussion see pp.395-403.
In her own work, Benedict explored this idea further. In the United States, she suggested, great emphasis is placed in child-rearing practices on the differences between children and adults in terms of their status roles and physical capabilities. This conceptual dichotomy - child: adult - is reinforced by and mapped on to other sets of binary oppositions related to behavioural expectations: non-responsibility: responsibility, submissiveness: dominance, sexlessness: sexuality. By contrast, other cultures underplay this dichotomy among the Amazonian Indians. A child is continuously conditioned to responsible social participation while at the same time the tasks that are expected of it are adapted to its capacity' (1955:24). An American child is, on the other hand, often praised just because the parent feels well disposed, regardless of whether the task is done well by adult standards' (ibid:24). For this reason, the American child 'acquires no sensible standard by which to measure its achievements' (ibid:24).

As a whole, however, the contribution of the culture and personality school to an anthropology of children, as outlined by Hardman (1973), was minimal. It was their reliance on social psychology as a theoretical and methodological frame which hindered its development. Through prescribing the kinds of questions which were asked attention was directed primarily towards the child's potential future as a carrier of his or her culture. Little attention was given to the study of children as children. Moreover, the frequent use of psychological tests contained
a particular bias: these tests were based on certain assumptions concerning the abilities of man, abilities which were specifically applicable to a Western culture. Ironically, therefore, in attempting to demonstrate the cultural conditioning of nature and personality the researchers used tests based upon a Western conception of man as if they were culture free.

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the section on child-observation - and how to go about it - the following passage occurs in the training manual. (it is concerned with measuring the frequency of certain behaviour patterns among children):
'In order to obtain this sample, the fieldworker should make 12 five-minute observations on each child. These observations should be scattered as widely as possible over time and setting. The field-worker should describe all instances of the situations in which we are interested that occur in each of these five-minute observations. The timing of the five-minute intervals should be accurate to within 30 seconds. If an episode continues beyond five minutes the fieldworker should mark the end of the five minute interval and continue taking notes. ' (Whiting. J. W. M., et.al.: 1966:94)

Charlotte Hardman's approach to fieldwork was radically different:

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

Indeed it is difficult to imagine what significance the six cultures project had for the study of children, when a letter to the fieldworkers is examined:

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

It is precisely such cryptic answers which an anthropology of children seeks and is capable of exploring. The six cultures project is a long way from Hardman's
wish to examine children's meanings and interpretations of the world.

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

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

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1. In a discussion of Mead's work Raum (1940) criticises her for using ink-blot tests. He says, 'she does not take the least trouble to adapt them to the cultural milieu of the Manus child' (1940:241). On the question of animism he argues that Mead only received "rationalisations" of the children's beliefs as she would if she asked adults the same question. Raum argues that Mead is wrong to suggest that children do not animate the universe for animation is a part of make-believe. For Raum, 'without this tendency to make-believe no child would ever become an adult' (ibid:242).
determinism. In arguing that culture was the supreme determinant of the behaviour of individuals they were forced to ignore the process of social life which emerges in and through the activities of people. In doing so, they could give little weight to the idea of the child as a thinking and acting agent of his or her own destiny. In the face of that power called culture, passed on through methods of rearing, there was little room for the child to be the subject, rather than the object, of his or her own socialization. The child, in the end, became almost peripheral to the more central task of establishing the cultural patterning of personality as a social fact. Their emphasis lay on the cultural whole and the child was seen as a prefiguration of that totality:

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

An anthropology of children can and should be more than this.

The nature of culture

As the foregoing discussion illustrates, the history of child-study in social anthropology is not only bound to the historical development of the idea of the child and childhood in the West, but it is also inextricably linked to conceptualizations of culture and of social explanation within the discourse of the discipline and, more generally, to the conception of human nature
itself. The culture and personality school had emphasised the importance of psychological conditioning on man's social life; across the water the British school of anthropology reacted in horror to such suggestions, placing human nature strictly under the control of social rather than psychological factors. As Leach (1976a) argues there are many types of explanation: what constitutes an adequate explanation depends upon the conceptual and theoretical framework within which it is offered. It is in this light that the study of children within social anthropology must be considered.

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

¹ Malinowski's outline for field-work methods appears in his monograph *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922).
Prior to Malinowski's work it had become commonplace to use the life-cycle as a 'method of presenting a large section of the ethnographer's field-data' in monographs (Richards, 1970:1). It provided a holistic account of the society under study. Malinowski's critical contribution was to see the life-cycle, not just as a useful structure for ethnographic description, but as integral to an analysis of the functioning of society itself. For example, his 'genetic approach to kinship' involved exploring 'the child's extension of the primary terms for Father, Mother, Brother, Sister, Son and Daughter to groups of relatives of the same generation, sex and descent' (ibid:1-2). The observation of generational kinship attitudes, therefore, came to be seen as one essential part of social analysis and the study of child-rearing practices are common in many of the contemporary monographs, (see, for example, Firth (1936); Fortes (1938); and (1949); Richards (1932) and (1939).) Specific texts on children also appeared at this time; for example Grinnel (1923), Miller (1928) and Raum (1940).

But although such work contributed to the study of socialization practices, little attention was given directly to the study of the child's culture. The British anthropological school, as did the American, saw children as important primarily in their role as the objects of socialization, as the next generation. In The Sexual Life of Savages (1929), for example, Malinowski does provide some quite detailed descriptions of children's
social life but these are submerged within his more
overriding aim of focusing upon the development of
sexual attitudes in tribal society. The games of children
are interpreted by Malinowski as purely indicative of
the growth of sexual awareness in youth:

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

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

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

' not only has there been a dearth
of theoretically interesting work on
socialization here since 1940, but
ethnographic documentation has been
rather neglected too, considering the
prevailing British emphasis on
thoroughgoing fieldwork.' (1970:xiv)
Detailed research had continued to be indirectly carried out on socialization post 1940 - through work on age-set systems, initiation ceremonies and kinship - but little attempt had been made to situate these in terms of the child's perspective or interpretation of the world.¹

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

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¹ In most of the major monographs, written from 1940 onwards, there are few references in the index to children. Occasionally, there is a reference to child-birth, but no mention is made of the lives of children, or indeed of their training.
' A people described as neat, prudish, meticulous over appearance, secretive, distrustful, treacherous, touchy over status, aggressive, competitive, lively, adaptable, quick, polite and far-seeing may fall into the anal-erotic or some other psychological type, but their behaviour can also be accounted for in terms of the jealousies due to the absence of primo-geniture, the concentration of authority in the father's hands, the highly competitive nature of this society and a particular system of clientship, chieftainship and landowner-ship'. (ibid:19)

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

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

Radcliffe-Brown reacted strongly against the speculative anthropology of his predecessors and also rejected the
implicit biological determinism in Malinowski's theory of culture. He dismissed the idea that culture was primarily a

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

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

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

Rather, for Radcliffe-Brown, society was to be explained through reference to its social structure, seen as a functional system of interrelated parts analogous to a biological organism. In an exposition of his particular perspective in 1940 Radcliffe-Brown states that the term 'social structure' refers to the 'set of actually existing relations at a given moment of time, which link together certain human beings' (1952:193). Following Durkheim's insistence on treating social facts as things Radcliffe-Brown viewed social relations as 'empirical facts out there in the world not ideas in the mind'. (Leach, 1976b:15).  

The empiricist base to Radcliffe-Brown's structural functionalism is rooted in his view of anthropology as a natural science of society and in his insistence

1. See also, pp.33-36 above for further discussion of these ideas.
on the value to be gained from adopting the research methods of the natural sciences. The task of the anthropologist, as Radcliffe-Brown saw it, is 'the systematic investigation of the structure of the universe as it is revealed to us through our senses' (1952:190). Only by direct observation of a concrete reality could social anthropology be a scientific discipline.

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

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

In uncritically accepting the Andaman Islanders own comments on the nature of childhood- that the child
has no social personality - Radcliffe Brown finds confirmation of his own Western view of children as peripheral to the social order. ¹ He says that the child is not an 'immediate social value' and 'has no direct effect on the general social life' (ibid:284). And yet suddenly the initiation ceremony becomes crucial: it is this which provides 'the passage from childhood to manhood or womanhood' and it is through this that the 'society endows the child with an adult social personality' (ibid:284).

In that children seemed to be external to the sets of significant social relations of the Andaman Islanders they were regarded as an irrelevance by Radcliffe-Brown for whom the analysis of social structure was the goal of social anthropology. Nowhere in the writings of the British anthropological school during the 1950's is there a discussion of children's social life comparable with the vivid portraits painted by Kidd (1906), Grinnel (1923) or Raum (1940).

The irrelevance of children for Radcliffe-Brown is linked also to his concept of function. Function was

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

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

The activities of children only became significant to Radcliffe-Brown when he could perceive some function in them: at initiation, for example, children became important for it was this ceremony which ensured the functional continuity of tradition through passing on the sense of conformity necessary for the maintenance of structural form.

In this respect it is indeed remarkable that the structural functionalists did not focus upon socialization. In its traditional formulation socialization theory sets out to explore the methods through which society ensures the conformity of its younger members. It assumes the existence of an 'ongoing, pre-existing society' (Radcliffe-Brown's structural form); it explores the 'process by which someone learns the ways of a given society or social group so that he can function within it' (my emphasis) (Radcliffe-Brown's structural continuity), (Elkin, 1960:4). However, in most analyses of socialization the precise workings of this process remain obscure: for Elkin it involves 'the learning and internalization of appropriate patterns, values and feelings' and it is for this reason that
structural-functionalism finally could not include a study of socialization (ibid:4).

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

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

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

This weighting, therefore, presupposes in the structural-functionalist framework some non-observable event, comparable with Malinowskian functionalism: Malinowski, for example, saw the function of social forms in terms of social needs and desires. In Radcliffe-Brown's formulation such needs could not be scientifically
observed and validated; they were not amenable to direct observation and it was in refuting this kind of explanation that Radcliffe-Brown conceived of function in terms of a self-regulating organic system. For him, social anthropology need not have recourse to psychological explanations. Any discussion of the process of socialization in Radcliffe-Brown's work, therefore, is framed in terms of his concept of function:

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

Socialization, of which ceremonial was a functional form, could only be discussed as an objective fact of the concrete reality; on the other hand, ceremonial which appeared to have no other function could only in fact be explained by Radcliffe-Brown in terms of the processes of socialization or education. For Radcliffe-Brown the way out of this dilemma was to see the process in terms of the person as a social being, rather than the individual as a biological organism.

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

It is clear, therefore, that structural functionalism, in terms of its conceptualization of the nature of social life, its methods of research and its explanatory framework, could not have accommodated detailed study of the process of socialization nor, indeed, an anthropology of children despite the fact that implicit within the theory there is the
assumption of an ongoing process of socialization.\footnote{Even more significant is the fact that this tradition spawned considerable work on rites of passage, see Richards (1956); Turner (1969). In contrast to the American work on socialization which sees culture as communication, the British school was forced to examine rites de passage as observable and empirical instances of socialization. This work has been of considerable influence in the later development of anthropology generally and in particular for the possibility of an anthropology of children. The work on rites of passage provided the bridge between a focus on social groups to that of social categories. See pp.125-137 for a discussion of this fundamental shift in anthropology.}

And it is significant that many traditional formulations of socialization theory bear a marked resemblance to structural functionalist perceptions of social reality. Many discussions of socialization are themselves supremely "functionalist".

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

Remarkably similar is Gluckman's discussion of political processes in Africa:

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

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

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

Related to this point is a second reason for the virtual absence of children from the anthropological record: the assumption of the universality of the category 'children', rather than a questioning of it. Until anthropology turned from the analysis of social groups to the study of social categories an anthropology of children, as visualised by
Hardman, could not develop, a conceptual shift which finds parallels with the study of women in social anthropology.

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

Children have been seen as marginal to the social world by reason of their distinctive nature and categorized as part of Nature itself. It is a history which reflects the intellectual traditions of the period itself: children resemble ' primitives ' for both are disorderly categories in need of control and subjugation. The later cognitive domination of the ' savage ' in terms of economic and political controls achieved through colonialism, which relegated those cultures to a position of dependence and marginality, parallels the process of conceptual ordering which gradually removed children from the social order, containing and confining them in a similar position of moral, social and economic dependence.
' Societies like lives, contain their own interpretations. One has only to learn how to gain access to them.' (Geertz, 1975:453)

CHAPTER 2: TOWARDS AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF CHILDREN

Introduction

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

Reviewing the literature Shildkrout agrees that child study can have an important place within social anthropology once
traditional approaches are recast:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Traditional formulations of socialization theory have not escaped the influences noted previously governing anthropological approaches to the study of children.\(^1\) Indeed, the same assumptions frame the model: children are perceived peripheral to the social order and are thought to possess a distinctive nature which is, in part, what makes them children, what relegates them to this marginal position. I suggest, therefore, that traditional accounts of the process of socialization start from a predominantly Western conception of the child and that the model succeeds in confirming this initial implicit assumption. It is, in essence, a circular argument, the logic of which is outlined below.\(^2\)

A useful starting point is Danziger's (1970) analysis of the presuppositions of traditional socialization theory. He identifies three main influences. Firstly, he suggests that British empiricist philosophy led to an assumption of the 'infinite plasticity of man' which succeeded in reducing the concept of socialization to an 'essentially technical problem, one of manipulating conditions to produce predictable results' (1970:1). This led, therefore, to the

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1. See pp.73 - 76.
2. As an example of the 'traditional' approaches to socialization I concentrate the discussion on Elkin's book, The Child and Society (1960), which neatly summarises the major issues and can, therefore, be taken as representative.
conception of the child as a passive recipient of the models of others, as responding automatically, like a Pavlovian dog, to external stimuli.

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

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

1. It will be noted that Danziger's criticisms are comparable with those noted in Chapter 1 as governing anthropological approaches to the study of children. This adds further weight to the suggestion that the study of children has primarily been the study of socialization practices within social anthropology.
But this uncritical importation of 'a great deal of intellectual baggage in the form of implicit bias' into socialization theory is, I suggest, also attributable to the assumption of a particularized Western conception of the child and ideas of childhood (Danziger, 1970:2). Due, as MacKay has shown, to 'sociology's reliance on the common sense world as both topic and resource' the Western, and culturally specific, social classification of child and adult as discrete and natural categories involved in a particular power relation has been used as an unquestioned theoretical construction (1973:28).

What an anthropology of children demonstrates is that this classification itself should be the problematic under consideration and not its initial premise, for the child is socialized by 'belonging to a particular culture at a certain stage in its history' (Danziger, 1970:18).

The meaning of the category child or adolescent is culturally specific.

Through taking over a specific conceptual category as if it were a culture-free theoretical construct socialization theory, therefore, contains a particular bias. As MacKay points out, it is assumed that 'children are incomplete beings' and that socialization is the process whereby their completion is ensured (1973:27). Children are regarded as 'immature, irrational, incompetent, asocial (and) acultural' whereas adults are their precise opposites: complete 'mature,
rational, competent, social and autonomous 'human beings' (ibid:28). The transformation of the one into the other is termed socialization. A logical consequence of this binary model is that socialization can only be seen as a one-way process, despite Elkin's (1960) claim that this is strictly not so.¹ In terms of the model, children are by nature in need of denaturising. Children must be socialized and, therefore, it can only be adults, their binary opposites, who are capable of performing this act, for the adult world is seen to represent that which is social. That the initial premise of the traditional model of socialization is based upon some conception of the distinctiveness of the child's nature is shown by MacKay:

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

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

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

¹ Elkin does briefly mention the question of peer group influence and the possibility that children may occasionally influence their parents but he gives this little weight.
...to transmit the culture and motivation to participate in established social relationships to new members'.
(1960:7)

This is seen to be achieved primarily through mechanisms of behavioural modelling and imitation. Elkin describes the relation of this function as follows: 'significant others define the world for the child and serve as models for his attitudes and behaviour' (ibid:26).

Through example, it is suggested, the child begins to participate in a series of pre-established social roles. Logically, therefore, the child's nature must be conceived of as quite different from that of an adult. For the model to work children must be seen as both passive and conforming; they cannot be viewed as being able to select and choose from the blue-prints of culture handed down to them by the adult world. In not being able to initiate, only capable of receiving, children must therefore be in need of socialization and be different from adults. Without this ability children cannot participate in social life and, consequently, must remain peripheral to society until they acquire it, i.e. until they become socialized adults. In this way traditional formulations of socialization theory succeed in proving their initial premises. Graham White neatly summarises the traditional model as follows:

'Sociology tended to view socialization as a function performed upon the individual during childhood, designed to ensure the harmonious continuity of society. The judgement of the end product of socialization was, therefore, the performance of the individual as an adult in society.'
(1977:80)
According to the traditional model, therefore, socialization is the mechanism whereby social roles come to be replicated in successive generations. It offers, in effect, an explanation for the persistence of society itself. Following Talcott Parsons (1951) social structure is realised through a set of social roles interwoven into a system of social relationships which function together to maintain the unity of society. Socialization involves learning these role-relationships and thus, in terms of the model, socialization must surely end when the child is able to fulfill his or her expected social roles, that is when childhood turns adulthood. And the cycle begins again.

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

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

Such a model is based upon an economistic, rational view of man. Human beings are seen to calculate the risks or benefits to be accrued through adopting a particular course of action and of choosing to act in a predominantly self-interested manner, in this case the path of conformity. Moreover, the model presupposes a homogeneous world-view through /..
assuming that those who do not conform must necessarily be deviant for they are acting against their own interests; in this model no consideration is given to the possibility that the 'deviant' may possess an alternative world-view, within which his or her actions become significant and can be explained.¹

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

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

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

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

¹ The growth of deviancy studies within the social sciences is a result of this model. However, later work on deviancy rejects the functionalist base and argues that supposed 'deviance' contains its own internal order, within which such apparent disorderly behaviour can be understood as logical and consistent within the 'deviant' world view. See, for example Cohen, ed. (1971) and Corrigan, (1979).
of the traditional framework which he adopts inevitably centres the greater part of his discussion around the role of the teacher, the provider of models (1960:4). Agents of socialization - such as the family or the school - are studied for their effects upon the child's performance, but the child's own participation in this process is credited with little significance. It is ignored precisely because it is assumed that the response will be more or less congruent with the stimulus provided. In terms of the theoretical framework logically there can be no other response.

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

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

Elkin (op.cit.) attempts to overcome this limitation but does not succeed. The traditional theory presupposes that it is primarily adults who provide the models, for adults are the representatives of that which is social, and that it is children who copy them. Consequently, Elkin has to introduce a new variable into the equation - 'character structure' - in order to explain adult socialization. He argues that adult socialization, whilst being almost the same as that of the child, differs in one significant respect: 'the adult has a more or less established character structure' (1960:101). Children it would seem have no stable character structure; indeed, if they did, this would presumably subvert the process of socialization as it is said to do in the adult case. In terms of the model the adult who initiates socialization cannot, at the same time, be the passive receiver of models from others; hence, the necessary introduction of the theoretical joker - 'character structure'. By a sleight of hand a new card is played and the system
is closed once more. This is part of what Rafky has condemned as the 'vague, somewhat muddled...excess of "psychologising" ' characteristic of traditional socialization theory (1973:44). However, as Mayer points out, this trick becomes redundant once an alternative approach is adopted:

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

(1970:xiii)

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

'the whole anthropological enterprise is, potentially, relevant. Since so much attention has been paid to the structures of cosmology and its interrelation with social organization, to rites of passage, to conditions which seem to cause change and to forces and relations which act to make people think as they do, it does not seem a great leap to ask how these effects operate through people.' (Ibid:254).
An anthropology of children directly confronts the question of how socialization occurs rather than merely describing its effects. But as Tonkin rightly notes, 'there is not one 'how' any more than there is 'the individual' or 'the society'; there are many forms of socialization differently exercised and enacted' (ibid:254). The account I shall present is merely one set of experiences which may lead to a rethinking of the question of socialization.

Socialization: the approach within an anthropology of children

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

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

As he suggests, both kinds of account 'lack a theory of the subject'; the 'first reduces subjectivity to the determined outcome of social forces' and the second 'assumes the subjective is not open to any kind of social analysis' (ibid:120). What is needed, then, is a middle path. In this section I shall show how the culmination of certain progressive shifts in thinking within social anthropology, since the structural functionalist's reign, has opened up this theoretical space and reveal in what ways an anthropology of children, as proposed by Hardman in 1973, has allowed for a reconsideration of the question of socialization along the lines suggested by Giddens (op.cit.).
Hardman's proposals are indeed radical in the light of past approaches to the study of children. Firstly she argues that 'children have much to offer' the researcher and should be regarded as informants in their own right (1973:98). This proposition, in itself, is new. It suggests that children are no longer to be consigned to a peripheral place in the research interests of the discipline. Secondly, she suggests that children can assume this central place in the discourse of anthropologists for they, like other marginal categories, have their own perspective on the world, one which may differ sharply from, or indeed comment upon, the dominant world view. It is no longer possible, therefore, to assume a correspondence of world views between different sections of society. Both these propositions have certain consequences for the traditional model of socialization.

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

'children can serve as anthropological-style informants, being qualified like their elders by membership in a society and in command of a limited part of that society's culture... Children not only can but should be solicited to act as informants since their very naivete offers advantages. They can tell us first-hand and without retrospection what their society and culture look like through their eyes, or what childhood is like with respect to its perception of society and culture.' (Goodman,1957:979)
However, as Hardman herself remarks, the appearance of Goodman's book in 1970 was most disappointing: it 'relies on statistical results using formal experiments which hardly fit the culture she is dealing with' (1973:87). This is perhaps not surprising for a real anthropology of children has only become possible with the insights offered by the new developments in areas of theoretical discourse within social anthropology, developments which Goodman does not take into account.  

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

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

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

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

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

¹ For further discussion of definitions of 'culture', see pp. 171-174.
and meaningful in terms of the children's own cultural space then any differences between their culture and that of adults cannot any longer be regarded as simply deviant or less sophisticated versions of an adult model. Such differences must be accounted for and explained which means directly investigating the ways in which socialization is both practised and experienced.

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

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

¹. See footnote, p. 32 above.
not just to what children learn - in terms of role
behaviour, social norms and values - but also how children
learn. Through seeing socialization as a process of active
participation and self reflection it is no longer necessary
to disguise the ' how ' of socialization in woolly
psychological explanations whereby the child ' just picks up
appropriate patterns and values ' and files them away
uncritically as bits of his or her own cultural experience'
( Elkin, 1960:51). The obfuscation of the process of
socialization inherent in traditional explanations such as
Elkin's (op.cit.) - variously blanketed by mysterious terms
such as ' assimilation ', ' internalization ' or ' imaginative
participation ' - is no longer requisite. Through focusing
directly on the young as subjects, rather than just objects,
of socialization attention can be given to the question of
exactly how they do come to learn about the social order.

As MacKay argues what interpretive sociology, such as that
of Mead (op.cit.), has achieved is a view of children
' as beings who interpret the world as adults do ' but not
necessarily coming to the same conclusions; through seeing
children as articulate informants of their own cultural
experience interpretive sociology has transformed a ' theory
of deficiency into a theory of competency ' ( 1973:30-31).
Graham White echoes this appraisal of the more recent advances
in socialization research:
'it is no longer enough to focus on the malleability and passivity of the individual in the face of all powerful social influences. Without some idea about the individual's own activity in shaping his social experience our perspective of socialization becomes distorted.' (1977:5)

However, it is not sufficient to merely shift the focus of study. As Tonkin suggests, although such action based theories of society have avoided the first pitfall indicated by Giddens (op.cit.) - a view of socialization as a moulding process - they may not contribute towards a radical rethinking of the theory itself. As she points out, through their tendency to 'reduce the complexity of social experience' they run the risk of substituting 'an undifferentiated ability to create social forms for the functionalists' inculcation of roles' (1982:249). They fall into the second trap discussed by Giddens (op.cit.) where the question of subjectivity is taken for granted, rather than as a problematic to be considered. The insights gained from recent developments in anthropological theory do, however, suggest an alternative path for socialization research through emphasis being given to the social structuring of cognition, a direction which can be fruitfully followed within an anthropology of children.

Seen through the eyes of a child socialization is the

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1. In particular, Tonkin is critical of network analysis which she suggests 'hides the imbalanced pressures and the different kinds of relationship which actually occur in everyday life (1982:248). She continues: 'to treat society essentially as a network of dyadic relationships - the dyad writ large - is to ignore those non-dyadic relationships into which humans universally enter' (ibid:248).
experience and art of growing up; no child would talk of his or her own 'socialization'. Within an anthropology of children questions must therefore be asked about the meaning of this experience to them, how they interpret and synthesise it into a coherent world view and give it form in everyday life. As Geertz has forcibly argued, any analysis of social life

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

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

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

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

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

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

These controls which children exert over one another are a crucial aspect of the socialization process and an anthropology of children explores the creation of such 'socially established structures of meaning' by children themselves, which represent a way of coming to know and learn the meaningful order of the adult world (Geertz, 1975:12).

By seeing socialization as the learning and the creation of social orders, rather than simply the imposition and acceptance of them, the question of power and social control can be directly confronted for no initial assumption is made concerning the effectiveness of, or necessity for, the replication of any one particular social order. That the experience of adults may often be that of controller and that of children as being controlled is not the issue. What is in dispute is the necessary success of the former over the latter, the passivity of the prisoner in the hands of his captor. By removing the normative, positivistic framework surrounding traditional socialization theory an anthropology of children can approach the problem as an active process of constructing, rather than merely accepting, systems of social meanings. Such a perspective in no way denies access to exploring the role of the school, the home and the
community in the socializing experiences of the young, but it does not award them any priority.

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

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

Finally, then, it is here that anthropology has such a crucial role to play in socialization research. Through its commitment to fieldwork by participant observation, rather than laboratory investigations, anthropology can begin to develop a 'theory of the subject' which Giddens has identified as the missing element in traditional accounts of socialization (1979: 120). Participant observation allows the researcher to work with children in a wide variety of social settings over a prolonged period of time, to see children with adults, to be with them in the context of their own culture. Only through such continual and varied social interaction can an adequate approach to socialization be developed for
as Giddens has argued, 'socialization should be understood as an element of the continuity of social reproduction, of the inherent temporality of the social process' (1979:128).

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

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

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

To summarise: an anthropology of children explores the culture of the young through focusing directly upon the ways in which social order is created and recreated through that context. It reveals the symbolic systems which structure the culture of children by exploring the ways in which they are made manifest in everyday life through the process of socialization. To socialize is to make a conception of order acceptable; to order is to make discriminations, to divide
up and separate; to order the social world is thus an attempt to control it through the control of perception, that is to make sense in a particular social context. As Geertz argues, 'man is an animal suspended in the webs of significance that he himself has spun' (1975:5). The task for the child is to unravel the webs, which adults have created for him or her, through a process of cognitive reconstruction. And in the following sections the scene is set for the exploration of one particular reconstruction performed by one particular group of children.

The ethnographic background:

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

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

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

¹. See Bell and Newby eds. (1974).
rather than a social group has led my research along a different path. I have concentrated upon one particular section of the society, exploring their perception of their place within it, rather than the totality of the community experiences available. As the analysis reveals the context was crucial in framing the particularity of the children's social experiences but it is only in this sense that the question of community is explored. I do not present a traditional ethnography of the village: the ethnographic background provided below is the backdrop out of which the 'field' was to emerge and against which the field material is interpreted.

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

Over recent years the district has suffered a general population decline, largely due to the unemployment resulting from the closure of many coal mines in the area. During the 1850's there had been a spurt in the growth of coal-mining in the region which stimulated a considerable increase in population: 1801-1841 saw a three-fold increase in the
population which, during the next ten years, 1841-51, again trebled, rising to a peak in 1921 by which time the district had a population of approximately 34,500.

However, since 1921 there has been a reverse in these demographic trends concomitant with the declining coal-industry in the region, a situation which continues to the present day. In 1951 coal-mining had provided 4,700 jobs in the region; by 1961 the figure had fallen to 3,500 and by 1971 only 150 jobs were locally available in the coal-industry. In 1971 the population of the district had dropped to 21,500.¹

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

¹ These statistics refer to the administrative district which includes a number of towns and villages. No discrete figures were available for the community itself.
almost inevitable, despite the provision of short-term ameliorative measures by the government through the introduction of Youth Opportunity Programmes and Job Creation Schemes. Although plans were drawn up in 1971 for the establishment of an industrial site in the town, to counter these trends in unemployment, by 1977 only one new factory had been built and by the end of my period of fieldwork this factory was itself being threatened with closure.¹

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

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

¹. These statistics have been extracted from a county council planning document (1971) for the district and from the 1971 census records. More detailed figures for the town itself are unavailable due to its incorporation with figures for the urban district council as a whole.
of any small mining community: one long shopping street with straggling terraces and sprawling council estates fanning off on either side of a central roadway which is one of the main routes into the more rural parts of the County, a place to travel through rather than to visit built, as it was, for the utilitarian purposes of the coal industry rather than those of tourism.

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

Moving 'up' the street two large council estates, together with the main shopping area and some rows of terraced houses, form the town centre leading to the 'posh' houses at the top end. This large circle of houses centred on the main road forms the heart of the town and is rigidly distinguished from an adjoining hamlet which, due to a building programme, now butts directly onto one of the council estates. The boundary between the town and the hamlet is cited as a row of garages and inhabitants of the hamlet are quick to point
out their status as hamlet rather than town dwellers.¹

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

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

¹As part of my fieldwork I worked in a local youth club which, two years previously, had been started by the parents of children living in the hamlet. The money raised had been insufficient to build a youth centre so the club was housed in the Miners Welfare Hall in the town. Throughout the period of fieldwork disputes arose within the management committee of the club over the fact that the hamlet youth club was situated in the town. Although only one member of the committee resided in the 'hamlet' and the majority of the children came from the town the conceptual distinction was always used as a political lever, despite the fact that only a row of garages separated the two places. Indeed, the youth club would not have been viable without the support it received from town-dwellers.
modernized and cherry trees planted along the grass plots in front of the houses. The pit spoil heap, which it is said "used to block out the sun", had been removed and grassed over forming a pleasant open aspect for the remaining terraced cottages. Memories, however, linger on and I was always spoken of as "living up there", away from the town, in a place which, in many ways, was conceptually seen to lie beyond its boundaries and in some strange way linked with a neighbouring hamlet, regarded with a degree of suspicion by the townspeople themselves. It was, however, but a few minutes walk from my house to the main shopping street.\(^1\)

Although by 1977 some pit-cottages were still rented by ex-miners from the National Coal Board, many had been sold off to miners, at substantially reduced prices, or to other buyers. There had been, therefore, a slight influx of 'foreigners' (non-local people) into the community but it was not, as yet, significant in its impact. The people, then, feel themselves to live in a somewhat enclosed community, a conception which is apparent in their articulation of its boundaries. The terms 'up' and 'down', 'top' and 'bottom' bear no relationship to geographical features. Rather,\(^1\)

1. The position of my house in relation to these conceptualizations of space within the town was decisive for the success of the project. By the children, and by adults in the town, I was acceptable, despite my 'foreignness' for I lived in the old 'slum' area and not in the 'posh' end of town, a conceptualization apparent in the disparity between house-prices in these two areas. Although there was little significant difference in the types of houses those in the 'posh' part were always more expensive. For further discussion of this point see below pp. 154-156.
they represent the conceptual limits of the town itself. In their conceptualizations of physical space the people bear witness to the history of the town as a mining community bound tightly together by a common work structure and lifestyle.

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

In the social life of its inhabitants memories of a 'pit-village community' are evoked and echoed in its activities. The Miners Welfare Hall is still largely run by ex-miners and offers a wide variety of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities for the town's inhabitants such as old-time dancing, snooker and bowls; the Labour Party holds its
meetings there and now the Welfare Committee has opened up its doors to the young people in the community. The youth club and the local cadet force both use its facilities.

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

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

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

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

2. On going away for a few days during the bad winter of 1978 I was, on my return, given an account of who had been to the house during my absence. I was told when the telephone wire had been torn down by the heavy snow-fall and given full descriptions of two friends who had been to check that the cat was being looked after.
Rumours and gossip circulated within the community with, what was to me, an astonishing rapidity. When the local scout company had its tents stolen it was not long before the culprits were discovered and pressure brought to bear for them to be returned; as one man remarked, "it's not right to steal from the young'uns when they earned the money" for the tents. He was the instigator of their return through challenging the culprit in a pub one night. News of the success of the youth-club dart's team in the County Finals yielded, in a very short space of time, £100 from the local pubs' teams to finance their trip to take part in the national competition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Malinowski 'had rude things to say about the natives he was living with, and rude words to say it in' (ibid:222).
But the real issue raised by the diary was not a moral one but rather, as Geertz points out, an epistemological one of 'how to see things from the native's point of view.... when we can no longer claim some unique form of psychological closeness' (ibid: 222). The publication of the diary brought to the fore the central methodological problem of the experiential inside versus the observational external view of culture, an issue already beginning to be explored by anthropologists. In 1964 Riseman argued, in the foreword to the second edition of Smith-Bowen's book, that the 'assumption that an autobiography of affective experience is an ethnographic irrelevancy would... be setting a wrong model for what is truly scientific' and he commented that he was 'glad that the author now is willing to have her own name on the book' (1964: xvi). In 1975 Pocock called for the necessity of a 'personal anthropology' for all researchers, a challenge most recently taken up by anthropologists such as Wikan (1980) and Belmonte (1979) who provide frank accounts of their personal experiences of research, detailing the difficulties they encountered, the mistakes they made, their feelings towards their subjects and the effect upon the self that these experiences had, alongside their analysis of field material. These accounts are the 'absolutely candid and above board' reports which Malinowski called for but, in 1922, was unable to publish himself (1922: 2).
In the following discussion of my own fieldwork experiences this question of methodology is crucial for, as I shall demonstrate, the particular way in which the fieldwork was conducted was integral to the understanding of the child's world that I reached and, from the benefit of hindsight and reflection, it is apparent that the actual process and progress of the research was central to this; it was not merely a method of collecting 'data'. The process was itself 'data'. Adoption of alternative research strategies would have been less fruitful and would have obscured the fact that the fieldwork was done to me rather than by me, a fact which is central to the analysis as a whole.

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

A chance meeting with the youth leader of one of the three local youth clubs, who expressed her interest in my project, gave me my first entree into the child's world. She obtained permission from the Management Committee of the youth club for me to assist her in the running of the club as an 'unofficial' youth worker.
The club, held in two rooms of the Miner's Welfare Hall, met for three hours, twice a week. All the members lived locally, most of them on the council estates which were situated close by. The permitted age range for membership was between 11 and 21, but the majority of the members were aged between 12 and 17. The club had a fluctuating membership - about 150 on the register - but there was an approximate nightly attendance of 40 children, most of whom were regular attenders. It was this group of children who were to form the central core of my fieldwork.

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

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

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

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

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1. For further discussion of this, see pp.210-212 and pp. 234-235.
been made; an exploratory visit accomplished. I had been 'sounded out' and, from this moment on, my home was to be invaded by the children. During the following weeks other children would say to me at the youth club: "I know where you live" or "I saw you going into your house" or "you live 'up there' in May Street, don't you?". The children had, as it were, found themselves another suitable context and, for the next eighteen months, there was a continual flow of children in and out of my home.

Their choice of my home as their field of action was largely due to three interconnected factors: its location, its physical appearance and, lastly, its occupants. These combined together, in the children's eyes, to create a rather anomalous space, one suitable for their purposes. ¹

Firstly, as mentioned above, my house was situated in a row of pit cottages in the original slum area of the town. Although a bathroom had been added in the 1960's the house was in a state of decay and my husband and I had begun a massive renovation programme. When the children first began to visit plaster dust and brick dust filled the air and gaping holes decorated the walls, a situation which continued for most of the fieldwork period. In the eyes of the children, therefore, we were not 'posh': we lived in the wrong area of town to be 'posh' and the concrete

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¹. For extension of this argument see p.233-249 below and the footnote on p.156.
floors and unpapered walls, the chipped paint and continual filth confirmed them in this belief. 'Posh' people, as I quickly discovered, were always hated by the children and, although we 'talked posh' - that is, we did not speak with local accents -, given our physical surroundings, we were forgiven for this failure. We passed the first test.

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

1. A recurring theme of this thesis is that adolescents in contemporary Britain are seen as and feel themselves to be marginal creatures, excluded from many central social spheres. It is highly significant, therefore, that it is to ambiguous physical spaces that these children retreat. They constantly exploit such spaces in their everyday activities: rubbish tips, disused buildings, bus shelters, woods and fields. All these places appear to be minimally controlled by adults and, hence, can be maximally controlled by the children; they become their private spaces. See pp.233-249 for discussion of the processes through which children reinterpret and appropriate physical space.
In that the house was one of the original pit properties it was of further benefit to my research. In its physical structure the house was familiar to the children, reminding them of their grand-parent's homes, or houses they themselves had lived in prior to moving to modern council accommodation. The house had a back-kitchen and a front-room - known as 'the room' - which was rarely used by the family except on formal occasions. The back-kitchen opened onto a concrete yard which, in turn, led directly into the back lane, the domestic environment of neighbours and friends, tradesmen and callers. Here women stand and gossip, men mend their cars and chat to their friends and young children play. In striking contrast, 'the room' had a front door which opened directly onto the front street, the public world. The front door was rarely used and a knock on the front door signalled the arrival of strangers or official visitors. It is significant that when one particular group of children first visited me it was to the front door, rather than the back, that they arrived; thereafter they used the back-door.

In the back-kitchen there was an old coal-fired range around which the children loved to sit and chat, poking the coals and playing games. It was a feature missing from the council houses they themselves lived in and something upon which every child gleefully commented. Again it revived memories of their grand-parent's homes and such memories are, for children, usually fond.
And yet, for the children it was a house which was also strange and intriguing. Its half-finished appearance gave it a chaotic air; cigarette ash would be flicked indiscriminately on the floor merging with the plaster dust. Spilled coffee and biscuit crumbs dropped on that surface did not cause the uproar it did at home. As we gradually wrought some kind of order upon the house wierd and wonderful decorations appeared: bead curtains and hand-woven blankets hung from the walls, pans were displayed rather than languishing in the cupboards, 'funny' drawings and pictures and 'old' furniture were placed in 'the room' which was used all the time and not just on special occasions. Indeed, it housed the television - a rare event in the children's eyes. All this made our house anomalous and made it a place which the children could exploit, and turn it into my 'field'.

Finally, in another sense, the children literally created the 'field'. Throughout our stay there the children continually offered their assistance in the renovation work: painting walls, chipping off plaster, sanding down wooden doors, jobs which they rarely got a chance to perform at home and which they all enjoyed. They often brought us presents salvaged from scrap heaps, of pieces of wood, bits of wire and screws and nails as their contribution to the house. By the end of my period of fieldwork, therefore, the children felt that they had taken an active part in the actual construction of - what was to them - partly their own environment. "It's coming on" they would say and make
an inspection of recent work. As time progressed they would comment: "we're getting it nice now" and, finally when the house was finished, they all agreed it was "very posh". Had it been 'posh' prior to their arrival I doubt whether the fieldwork would have followed the path it did.

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

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

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

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1. For a discussion of female roles see pp.426 - 472. Young married women usually go out to work. Work, for them, is seen as a transitory phase prior to marriage and child rearing. It was seen as strange, even in a time of high unemployment, for a young, childless, married woman not to have some kind of job.
any case, real 'work' for it lay totally outside their experiential field.¹ I was some kind of teacher but did not fit the models they faced daily across the classroom. Alternatively, I was some kind of student but not like those people who lived on the hill; I helped at the Youth Club but was not a real 'youth leader'; I studied anthropology, described by them as "people and that - we heard about that at school", a topic which was summarily dismissed. I could have been a 'social worker' but many of them had their own social workers and, again, I did not fit the category.

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

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

¹. For discussion of the meaning of 'work' for adolescents, see pp.221 - 233.
a man of 70 who could hardly lift his spade - watched me plant a whole row of potatoes before commenting that I'd "put them too close together". He kept an eye on me to see that I dug them all up and replanted them properly.

Over time, however, I proved my ability and the men began to incorporate us in their networks of exchange of vegetable produce and garden equipment. Indeed, eventually, I accrued some prestige as a "good worker", often toiling in the allotment whilst my husband and the men watched on admiringly. We did, however, grow strange vegetables and our courgettes were regarded with a great deal of amusement, appearing as they did to be puny marrows.

Many remarked that I was "more like a Geordie lass" than the middle-class female I at first appeared. I was tough rather than tender. Others regarded me as more 'butch' than feminine, often remarking on the 'jeans' and thick sweaters which I tended to wear, rather than the close-fitting tops and trousers worn by other women in the community.

On seeing me in a boiler suit whilst I was decorating one day one man roared with laughter, unable to believe his eyes. All this, combined with my extremely short hair, masked my feminine appearance: on three separate occasions I was mistaken for a 'young lad' by both men and women and little comment was made when the mistake was pointed out by others, so visibly did I appear to contradict, in my appearance and actions, the local perceptions of female gender.1

1. For further discussion of perception of gender, see pp. 426 - 441.
For the children such misperceptions merely served to enhance my status as an anomalous being which reflected back onto my husband as well. We were unlike most other adults they knew; we could, therefore, be permitted some access to their world. Indeed, they often criticised my clothing but not in terms of my adult status; rather, they asked why I did not dress like them and two boys gave me advice as to where to purchase my own pair of Dr. Marten's boots.\(^1\)

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

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

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1. The importance of 'boots' and footwear in general for boys is discussed on p.438.

2. The children also visited regularly two other 'anomalous' adults. One was an elderly spinster who, aged 60, was doing a youth-worker's course and, having lived for a while in the South - a foreign land - was seen as rather 'peculiar', although she had been born in the community. The other was a young man, aged 21, who had a wife and two year old child who befriended many of the youngsters, allowing them to use his house as their own. He was local, but in allowing the children considerable freedom, was considered suitable by the children. Adults in the neighbourhood regarded his laxity, however, with great suspicion, and he became the focus of considerable gossip.
by the children, someone who could be maximally exploited but minimally included; on the other hand, I did not wish to appear too restrictive, a controlling adult, which similarly would have denied me access to their world. Throughout the period of fieldwork I, like them, occasionally erected barriers between us; sometimes giving them cigarettes and coffee; other times not letting them into the house. Gradually, the children knew that 'rules' existed even amongst the apparent disorder. Two cardinal rules they knew well: no drink was allowed in the house for their consumption and truanting from school could not take place in my home. If truants arrived I would always send them away. Aside from the legal protection that this gave me - for, as I knew well, a glass of cider drunk in my company could easily be magnified in their tales to a bottle of whisky - such rules and barriers worked effectively towards building my self-respect in their eyes. Children themselves viciously employ whole sets of sanctions on each other's behaviour and, as I did likewise, they treated me much as they would one another.¹

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

¹. See, for example pp. 272-292, pp.403-419, pp.426-441.
except in serious confrontations, not wishing to act as ultimate controller. At other times my objective status as an adult cut short communication; a lurid tale of sexual encounters or an obscenity joke would be started upon and then abruptly terminated for my adult status made them cautious in displaying knowledge of such matters. The public display of knowledge must always be in an appropriate context and until I demonstrated my willingness to collude in its creation - through supplying an appropriate swear word or suitable obscenity of my own - and until they were sure no sanctions would be incurred I was distanced from their culture. The joke would be left untold, the tale unfinished.

Ultimately, like any anthropologist poised between two cultures, my entry into their social world was both intermittent and inevitably incomplete. My adult status remained however much they usually ignored it; I could never become a child. Like the problem of gender in research total access was, in the end, impossible and certain social contexts were never open to me. I could not, for example, sit with the children in the bus-shelter on a winter's night or play 'Tiggy' in and out of the public toilets; I could not join them on the pin-ball machines in the local cafe; I could not enter the private world of the girls' bedroom culture of make-up and pop-stars; I could not join in the football games of the boys. My physical appearance and objective status made such actions impossible despite my otherwise anomalous position. Rather a bridge was built between us which allowed me to
partially explore these areas through translation into other contexts: the girls would discuss boyfriends and marriage, pop-stars and make-up with me whilst sitting round the fire in my home; the boys would ask me to come and watch the football game, and pop in on their milk and newspaper rounds to give me the local gossip, information usually exchanged in the cafe. Such indirect participation was necessary and critical to the success of the project; to barge unwelcomed into the children's private spaces would have quickly discouraged friendship between us.

Conclusion

It was, therefore, crucial that the children chose my home as part of their own cultural context. Without their onslaught on my personal territory the 'field' would have been largely inaccessible to me and my aim to understand their perspective on the world would not have been fulfilled. Without experiencing this process of creating a context my understanding of the structure of their lives would also have been severely diminished. My home was theirs too and, as I lived there, I was included in conversations and games. Often, however, I was ignored so intent were they upon their own aims; I remained on the side-lines watching and listening and, occasionally, being made to feel an intruder upon their private lives so complete was their appropriation of my home at times.
It was, however, an appropriation which I welcomed for it guaranteed the success of the project, guiding and directing me through the complexities of a culture in the making. Hardman (1973) argues that an anthropology of children should see children as their own informants and not just as the receivers of adult wisdom. Adopting such an approach to the study of children and socialization is indeed highly rewarding; not only does it yield a more insightful perspective on such theoretical questions but in order to understand what it means to be a child involves, for the researcher, an instructive personal 'resocialization'. It was the children who taught me how to be a 'child' again; I had to receive their wisdom and instruction, suffer their discipline and control before I was able to comprehend their viewpoint and interpretation of the world. Only then could I see the world through the eyes of a child.

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

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

One of the major criticisms of the traditional model of socialization is, as argued earlier, its failure to account for change over time, its emphasis upon the reproduction of social order rather than its recreation. Adopting the approach envisaged by Hardman (op. cit.) overcomes this limitation for time becomes central to the analysis. Indeed, the pace and rhythm of my own research was ultimately dictated by the temporal rhythm of the children's own experiences and illustrates the movement of children towards adulthood, their increase in knowledge and awareness as they mature.
At first the data I collected mostly concerned language. Like the eleven year old child, I had to learn to speak in a new tongue before I gained access to other areas of this alternative world. Learning the language of children taught me about their verbal lore, their nicknaming practices, their games and social activities. But it was time itself which allowed me knowledge of their more secret and esoteric practices: the implicit rules of social conduct, the prescribed attributes of gender roles, the corpus of sexual knowledge, and their understanding of their own position within the human order. Like the young child my understanding of these deeper issues was progressive; it paralleled the children's own growing awareness over time. My transition into their cultural sphere mirrored their own rite of passage through adolescence to adulthood, an experience which is documented in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 3: 'DOING NOTHING': THE CULTURE OF CHILDREN

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

Introduction

From the start working with the children was an unnerving experience. Having been trained to participate and observe, to ask questions, to record answers, fieldwork with children presented a problem. My questions were frequently ignored; their answers were vague and non-committal and any probing on my part was often greeted with an air of hostility or deep suspicion. In response to the most cautious enquiry about what they had been doing their answers were invariably monosyllabic - "nowt". Being a keen researcher this was gravely noted down following Crick's valuable advice that 'just as an occurrence may be a non-event so a non-occurrence may well be an event' (1976:95). Corrigan (1979) encountered a similarly perplexing phenomenon amongst adolescent boys in Sunderland in the north-east of England. Alternatively described by his informants as 'hanging around', 'knocking about' and 'having weird ideas' he was also led to the paradoxical conclusion that their main activity consisted in doing nothing. My own informants were less forthcoming: they merely did nothing.
It soon became obvious that in order to make sense of an activity described as not occurring I had likewise to do nothing, to ask nothing, but just to be where 'nothing' happened. It was the observation of and participation in 'doing nothing' which contextualised most of my fieldwork and which, ultimately, allowed me to make sense of it. 'Doing nothing' is not a literal description of the children's social life for they were constantly engaged in a wide variety of activities; they were always doing something. Rather, 'doing nothing' is a figurative expression which resonates throughout their culture, shaping its form and content. In their seemingly unhelpful replies the children were teaching me to see with the eyes of a child, to come to understand 'doing nothing' as a root metaphor for their own adolescent culture.

Several questions immediately present themselves for analysis:

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

1. Each of the following chapters details particular aspects of the culture of 'doing nothing'. Here I am concerned to demonstrate the creation of the conceptual space within which these discrete activities are articulated.
of 'doing nothing' translating it from its commonsense meaning of an inconsequential and purposeless activity into the language of children.

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

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

What then is this culture? In their extensive and detailed accounts of children's language and games the Opies suggest that,
the folklorist and anthropologist can, without travelling a mile from his door, examine a thriving unselfconscious culture .... which is as unnoticed by the sophisticated world and quite as little affected by it, as is the culture of some dwindling aboriginal tribe '. (1977:22)

They describe how this culture - the lore and language of children, their games of street and playground - 'circulates simply from child to child' without the aid of adult intermediaries (ibid:21). Undoubtedly they are correct. However, the Opies are wrong to therefore assume that this mode of transmission necessarily means that children live in some sublime isolation. As I shall outline below, the culture of children whilst being peculiar to them is, nevertheless, still an integral part of that sophisticated world of adults; it is both process and product of systems of social classification which the child is presented with through sets of socializing practices.

The Opies' mistake is that they treat the culture of children as an objective entity, something 'out there' which contains their activities, a sort of cultural bag into which generations of children have poured their games, linguistic expressions and ritual lore. Such an approach to the concept of culture runs the risk, as Wagner argues, of creating a 'wax museum of curiosities', of denying the creativity of social life through regarding its forms as 'real' rather than symbolic acts (1975:27). The objectification of culture, as exemplified in the work of the Opies (op.cit), can 'only
be useful as a sort of "prop" to aid the anthropologist in his own invention and understanding of other people's lives; it is not a container for those lives (ibid:8).

The Opies (1969), (1977) provide mere catalogues rather than interpretations of the culture of children.

A more useful and perceptive approach is suggested by Geertz. I quote once more his definition of culture:

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

In this sense culture is the processual form of social life itself, what Crick has termed as the 'creation and negotiation of meaning' (1976:88). And meaning, as Wagner has shown, is a 'function of the ways in which we create and otherwise experience contexts (1975:37).'

The culture of children, therefore, is the context of their everyday life experiences. Through a series of cameos I present a picture, from the children's point of view, of the socialization process as it is daily experienced through an examination of some of the structuring effects of the legal system, the school and the home on their lives and the ways in which children understand this ordering

1. For further discussion of these theoretical issues see pp. 14-22.
process. Analysis suggests that the culture of children emerges as a social and conceptual space defined and delineated by sets of prescriptive and proscriptive boundaries emanating from the adult world and made manifest through socializing acts. It is within and between these boundaries that 'nothing' happens; it is in this context that the children create their own culture. The chapter concludes with an extended unpacking of the semantics of 'doing nothing'.

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

That the children describe their social activities as 'doing nothing' is, I suggest, a function of socializing practices which condemn them to the category of nobodies. Socialization is, in essence, the teaching and learning of social order and part of that order is the classification of 'self' in relation to others. The process of physical ageing is conceptually controlled through the use of terms such as children, adolescents and adults, and it is the experience of socialization which gives these categories concrete form in everyday life. In this respect socialization is concerned with the learning of category membership.

However in a Western industrial society such as Britain, which lacks any institutionalized rite de passage to ritually mark and conceptually order movement between categories over time, the boundaries and limits to these
conceptual classifications remain relatively fluid and illdefined. Knowledge of one's own position in the social order is implicitly gained, rather than explicitly stated. In particular, the transitory phase between childhood and adulthood is highly ambiguous: adolescence in contemporary Western society is an in-between state perceptually uncontrolled and potentially disordered. Adolescents resemble other marginal beings who have, as Mary Douglas suggests, been 'left out in the patterning of society' (1969:95). They exist by default rather than design.¹

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

¹. This argument is elaborated on pp.395-403, where it is suggested that 'youth' and 'adolescence' are relatively recent collective representations of phases in the life cycle. This reinforces the suggestion that adolescents are indeed marginal to the social order; as yet, they have no institutiona­lized position within it. This anomalous and transitory phase is I suggest, comparable with that identified as a 'liminal' social position by Turner (1969). Many of the perceived qualities of 'adolescence' are similar to those discussed by Turner as characteristic of the ritual liminal undergoing transition. This again suggests that 'adolescence' might be fruitfully explored as a metaphorical rite de passage.
which bound and contextualise this adolescent culture. 'Doing nothing' is, in effect, process and product of 'being nothing'. It is a logical outcome of the real and conceptual boundaries which, through separating adolescents off from both child and adult worlds, leave them with conceptually 'nothing' to do and 'nobody' to be. 1

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

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

1. Adolescents, therefore, work at being 'no one' and they achieve personhood through the style of their own culture; for example, through their use of the body as a medium of expression the children confer personhood on one another, see Chapter 6.
of category status. And, it is category status which permits or prohibits access to social spaces.

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

For example, at five children can legally drink alcohol in private but they cannot buy drinks in public places until eighteen years old. At sixteen, on the other hand, they can be bought beer, cider, wine or sherry to be drunk in public as an accompaniment to a meal. At seven a child may withdraw money from his or her Post Office savings account but cannot earn money until thirteen and then he or she can only work for two hours a day and one on a Sunday. From birth a child may have a Premium Bond in his or her name but cannot buy one until sixteen. At fourteen a child may play dominoes or cribbage in a public house but cannot go into a betting shop until seventeen; even then a bet cannot be placed.
Moreover, classifications vary according to gender. A girl is legally permitted to consent to sexual intercourse at sixteen but a boy can be charged with rape at fourteen years old. A girl can join the armed forces with parental consent at seventeen; boys can do so at sixteen. Only at twenty-one can males legally consent to homosexual activity in private; girls have no such restrictions placed upon them.¹

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

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

¹. These examples are taken from Rae, Hewitt and Hugill eds. (1979).
². See historical account, pp. 38-73.
age as a numerical definition of category status is specific to Western industrial societies.

As Ariès remarks,

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

Indeed, only in such societies does this exactitude serve any purpose: through the possession of implicit, rather than ritually explicit, conceptions of life-cycle transitions the precise measurement of age represents one attempt to define, limit and control the categories we use. It is, however, relatively ineffective. It represents what Baxter and Almagor describe as, 'unsucessful attempts to tame time by chopping it up into manageable slices', creating confusion rather than clarity in definitions of category status (1978:163).

The concept of maturity leads to further definitional problems. In tribal societies, as Van Gennep (1960) has shown, physiological and social puberty only rarely co-incide in puberty rituals; such rites de passage are, first and foremost, collective representations of the social status of individuals undergoing transition rather than celebrations of any physical changes. But, in a society where qualitative judgements are made about the necessary conjunction of age with physical and social
maturity for definitions of category status, any discrepancy becomes problematic:

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

In a Western industrial society people must act their age.

That the children recognize the complex role age plays in the process of category definition, and therefore in definitions of the self by others, finds expression in many of their activities; not least, they try to challenge the immutability of age itself by circumventing the restrictions imposed upon them by the calendar. They experience calendrical time as a control system which defines who and what they are and adopt a variety of strategies to undermine this attempt to separate them off as a group apart.

Their peripheral social position, institutionalized through their lack of 'age', makes age an obsession. When asked their age, for example, the children would usually reply with an exactitude beyond the requirements of the question. They often gave their age in years and months or fractions of years, as fifteen and three quarters or twelve years and seven months for implicit within the question they perceived another: eligibility? The concept of being 'old enough'
to perform certain activities, to have access to particular social spaces, is an integral part; the question is never phrased as 'how young are you'? 

The positive value placed on maturity, upon being 'grown up' and hence socialized, negates the children's perception of their own age; life, for many of them, is the endurance of years until they are 'old enough'. Hence, they endeavour to maximise their age through arguing that they are 'nearly fifteen' or 'sixteen next October'.

For the children, the power of calendrical time to restrict their access to social space is a daily experience. They feel themselves to be in a marginal social position, legally prohibited from participation in certain social spheres and personally excluded by adults from many other activities. They understand that it is the measurement and quantification of calendrical time as a basis for category definition which is leaving them with nothing to do:

'Q. What is there for you to do here...? 

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

1. Extract taken from an interview with a group of lads aged fifteen, reported in the local parish magazine, Crossways, January 1981.
For this reason, therefore, the children attempt to elude the classificatory restrictions which age places upon them. Age becomes something to circumvent and disguise; to short-circuit calendrical time through verbal mystification of numerical age is one strategy employed to gain an earlier entry to these forbidden zones.

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

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

"M: (After weighing himself on the bathroom scales) I'm getting fatter.
A: (regarding this small thin boy) You're getting bigger.... It's a good job you're putting on weight."
"M: I'll soon be an adult.
A: When?
M: I divvn't kna..(pause) maybe when
I'm fifteen..no, when I'm fourteen
... (confidently) yes, when I'm
fourteen... (hesitantly)... I expect.
When are you an adult? "

Changes in category status, then, are conceived in
relation to time and space: a movement of the temporal
boundary extends access to social space and increasing
age symbolises potential transition into another social
category. But as the older children realise, reaching
the age of adulthood might not, in itself, be a sufficient
basis for a change in social category status. They are
aware that the interrelationship between physical and
social maturity is more subtle. A fifteen year old girl
reflects on this subject:

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

Being an adult is not simply a matter of numerical or
legalistic definitions.
As the above examples illustrate, acquiring adult status is seen by many of the children to be particularly bound up with the penetration of restricted areas of action. That movement into such forbidden places as clubs or public houses is perceived to be both inevitable and desirable is a function of the ideological power which the centre exerts over its margins: in the north-east of England the traditional focus for adult social life is centred here and, for males in particular, the ability to consume alcohol is a sign of maturity. Moreover, asking children what they want to be or want to do when they are grown up implies that, until adulthood is reached, they are nothing and can do nothing. From the centrality of their own culture the children perceive these restricted areas, those tabooed and prohibited to them, as loci of potential power and as offering the kinds of freedom and experiences presently denied to them.

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

1. See pp.514-549, for a discussion of the importance of the consumption of cigarettes and alcohol as rituals of the life-cycle transition to adulthood.
had been drinking in 'safe' pubs for a number of years already, his eligibility at eighteen to perform previously restricted activities in previously restricted spaces was seen as crucially important. Reaching the legal age becomes a form of life-cycle transition, legitimation means that control of one's actions is at last achieved.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Through exploiting these lacunae between alternative systems of classification used by different sections of the adult world, the children do therefore often manage to gain access to restricted areas of activity. In the youth club, for example, it was forbidden to smoke under the age of sixteen. The children realised that the youth club had no real executive power, except that of direct confrontation, and some managed to usurp this through producing badly forged notes from their parents which stated that consent was to be given. Through assessing the relative amounts of effective power wielded by each party the children were able
to exploit the gap between them. More commonly, the children would insist that they were "nearly sixteen" or that "at home me mam lets me smoke", endeavouring through such persuasive techniques to get the sanction lifted.

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

The significance of calendrical time as a control system is symbolised in the children's own birthday rituals. The birthday cake provided by the adult world is decorated with candles, one for each year lived through; it fixes age through reference to the past. In contrast, the 'bumps' given by the children to one another looks forward to the future: the birthday child is held by the arms and legs and tossed up into the air, each 'bump' records their number of years plus one for luck in the year to come. The adult symbol, the birthday cake, is a static confirmation of their present status; it fixes the child within a particular category. The children's ritual is one which,
instead, prefigures their future. It looks forward to increasing age and towards the diminution of restrictions upon their activities.¹

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

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

¹. Other birthday rituals are equally volatile and fluid. For example, children spray each other with water on their birthdays. Significantly, they also pelt the initiate with eggs and flour, the ingredients of the birthday cake: the adult symbol is literally taken apart and destroyed by the children and used for their own purposes, through ritual inversion: the cooked food is transformed into the raw. For further discussion of food as a medium of symbolic expression in the culture of children, see pp.477-514.
left over from this classificatory process that children gain access to the control of time itself. Once again it is through playing with adult conceptions of time that this is achieved.

The imposition of clock-time as an ordering system which restricts the children's activities is largely facilitated through schooling.¹ Schooling physically removes the children from adult spheres of activity for a large part of the day; it separates them off from the adult work-place and the home, conceptually therefore limiting their activities to non-adult occupations. For specific times of day, for specific months of the year and for specific years of life children are controlled and defined as a separate and marginal group through the act of schooling.²

On a daily basis this external control of time is constantly experienced by the children as something to be subverted. In school the children are issued with time tables which visually display how their time is to be regulated

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

2. This separation is particularly irksome to older children who see schooling as denying them the opportunity to earn money. See pp.221-233 for a discussion of the employment of children whilst still at school where it is suggested that in fact it is precisely because of their lack of control of time that the children can in fact become wage-workers whilst still at school.
in relation to space and further prescribes the kinds of activities to be performed in those spaces. That control of time is fundamental to the control of space in the creation and maintenance of social order is seen in Douglas Holly's vivid portrait of children's movement around the school during the day as they go from lesson to lesson:

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

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

The difference in control over these two kinds of time during the school-day is symbolically reinforced through
this spatial variation. The time under adult control
takes place within the confines of the class-room, behind
walls which control and contain the inmates. In contrast,
the time which is maximally controlled by the children
is outside these physical barriers, in the marginal areas.
The children are herded into their peripheral space at
break-time for disorder, from the perspective of the structured
school world, must be kept in its place. Children must not
interfere with adult order; they are forced to use the
external environment in the times over which they have some
degree of control, a structural relationship which finds
a parallel in the domestic context.\footnote{For further discussion of this see pp.206-212.} And it is in this
external world that 'nothing' is done in the times
between. For example, smoking in school is forbidden and
therefore takes place in the spaces perceived by the
children to be minimally controlled by the staff: toilets,
bicycle sheds and the playing fields represent such marginal
spaces. In 'Lung Tree' and at 'Cancer Corner' the power of
teachers to enforce school rules is thought to be diminished,
for these places are peripheral to the school-building and
conceptually, therefore, to the central symbol of power.
'Doing nothing' is done in non-places by non-persons.

That control of time and space is fundamental to the
authority of the school in subordinating children to its
structure of power is demonstrated by one occasion when
the system collapsed. During a teacher's pay dispute supervision of lunch-time - the children's time - was not carried out by the staff. The children, therefore, were inside the school building at a time which was maximally under their control. The chaos which followed this breakdown in the normal school order caused many thousands of pounds worth of damage as the culture of children physically penetrated the structured fabric of the school.¹

Corrigan (1979) underlines this point in his analysis of schooling. He argues that the major confrontations which take place between staff and pupils are rarely over specific issues - although this may be their form of expression - but, instead, over the right to self-assertion in the face of an externally derived and externally controlled conception of order: it is the right to be articulate which children assert through confrontation with teachers:

' Violence on the part of the teacher is carried out mainly for behaviour in the class-room which is a continuation of normal behaviour outside of that class-room. It is THIS which threatens the teacher. ' (Corrigan, 1979:63).

Disorder threatens to intrude upon order.

¹. See pp.242-262 for an alternative approach to understanding such acts of vandalism.
The fun derived from ragging teachers is one such symbolic challenge, for it tests the boundaries and limits of adult control. Though, for example, drawing funny pictures on the hidden side of a revolving blackboard which appears in the course of a lesson as the board is slowly turned, there is an interruption of adult time by the children. A funny face materialises in the midst of a mathematical formula and the lesson is momentarily transformed and thwarted in its relentless progress by the intrusion of the children's social world. To write on the board, usually the prerogative of the teacher is, in itself, a symbolic challenge to their authority.

That the school, rather than education, is cited by traditional theorists as an agent of socialization is not surprising.¹ Socialization is concerned with the imposition and learning of social order and, as Holly describes, the temporal and spatial co-ordinates of order are visually displayed in the physical structure of the school-room. It is a condensed symbol of the differential access of pupil and teacher to that control system:

' Serried rows of desks face the teacher's table which, in really venerable institutions is on a higher plane with a supporting dais. Behind the teacher is the black-board on which information directly confronts the pupils. Spatially the arrangement neatly symbolises the conventional relationship of pupils and teacher to education; education in this perspective is a unilinear process in which knowledge is communicated to pupils via the mediation of the teacher. (1974:16)'

¹ See for example Elkin 1960.
What children learn, besides the formal content of lessons, is the underlying order of the school itself and, by extension, their place within it. This 'hidden curriculum' teaches where the external lines of control are drawn and who has the power to construct them.\(^1\) Children, therefore, do not only learn their lessons; they also receive confirmation of their present marginal status. They learn what it means to submit and conform through having to submit and conform to the structured authority of the school; but, having been made to acquiesce they also learn to revolt, and begin to exploit the gaps created by this ordering process.

Nowhere is this more visible than in connection with school attendance. The structured spatial and temporal order of the school is symbolised in its emphasis upon attendance. Physical presence is the formal requirement and becomes almost synonymous with 'education' and 'learning' for only can physical presence be strictly registered; learning is not so easily controlled.\(^2\) Attitudes towards truancy and lateness provide a condensed symbol of this perception.

Lateness is an offence against order and the tardy child is registered as having failed to fulfill his or her quota

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1. The idea of a 'hidden curriculum' is developed by Illich (1973).

2. Testing the results of schooling is the only method available to assess learning and this is similarly ordered within spatial and temporal boundaries: exams require that an ordered answer be produced within a prescribed time period in a particular social setting.
of time at school. Teachers, in loco parentis, continue the imposition of time-limits upon the children's activities which they meet within the domestic context.¹ Lateness is a disordered act - out of time and space - for only certain absences are perceived to be legitimate: illness, hospital appointments and job interviews. Lateness cannot be explained through recourse to these excuses, unlike truancy. One boy, therefore, in explaining why he was truanting, told me that he had been late for school and that "you get knacked (punished) worse for being late" than for missing the whole day.

Children who are late may truant rather than risk the sanctions imposed upon them for an illegitimate absence for they have many standard strategies for truanting and these evasive actions reflect their understanding of the school order. 'Nicking off' (truanting) takes two forms: one is legitimate, the other illegitimate, from the children's point of view. Legitimate 'nicking off' places the authority of the home above that of the school. As they told me, "If your mam knows then it's alright" i.e. if parental consent has been obtained then truanting is no longer seen by the children to be an offence.

An act of disorder is conceptually re-ordered through exploiting an alternative classificatory frame.

¹ See pp.206-212.
Illegitimate ' nicking off ' is when "your mam doesn't know". To truant in this manner the children take refuge in the culture of ' doing nothing '. The truant usually spends the day in marginal spaces away from the route of the kiddy-catcher (the school attendance officer). Stealing time from the adult world means exploiting those spaces conceptually beyond the sphere of adult control, that is, those appropriated by children.2

They may, therefore, pass the day in the woods and fields, the local playground or in friends' houses if both parents are out at work. They may also visit the houses of 'marginal' adults, that is adults who, through accepting them in, tacitly legitimate their truancy.3

Returning to school after this kind of truanting is more difficult for the children require a legitimating excuse. It must be one which falls within the school's definition of 'absence'. The children say, therefore, that they have 'forgotten' their letters of explanation in the hope that no further action will be required; they may forge

1. Here again children are exploiting the gaps between adult order. They recognise that their mothers often permit them to do things which their fathers have forbidden. Hence, legitimation of smoking and truancy were often expressed in terms of the mother's rather than the father's authority, although they knew that often, if their fathers discovered this secret, punishment would still be inflicted.

2. See pp.233 - 262.

3. It was a constant ethical problem of my research that the children perceived me to be such a 'marginal' creature and would come to visit during school hours. To avoid this problem I often invented an excuse for leaving the house shortly after their arrival, thereby quickly evicting them.

/..
a note or use one written by parents on a previous occasion. A more elaborate plan was thought out well in advance by one boy. After telling his mother that he felt unwell he went to the doctor's surgery but omitted to have an examination. He returned home telling his mother that the doctor had advised a couple of days at home. Through playing one adult off against another legitimation of this absence was achieved. If no other strategy is available 'nicking off' after the register is a possibility but perceived to be more risky.

That many of the children complain of boredom when they truant highlights the symbolism of the act. Rarely do children ' nick off ' to do something. Indeed, some children, ' nick off ' precisely to avoid doing something: to miss a particular lesson or to evade a teacher. For others, however, it is merely the fact of missing school which is significant: they have asserted what they perceive to be their right to choose. To ' nick off ' means precisely what it says: to nick, to steal time from the adult world, time which has previously been beyond their control, to appropriate this time and to choose what activities can be done in it and where that time is to be spent. The crime of ' nicking off ' is not so much a crime of missed opportunity; rather, it is an offence against order

1. They may truant to earn money, for example during the potato harvest.
itself. To the adult world it represents the questioning of control over time by those deemed to have no power to question.

This rigid control of time imposed by schooling becomes immediately apparent to the school leaver who has yet to find a full-time job. One girl who had recently left school described her day as being empty: she was still operating on school-time. Her best friend was at school, controlled by its time-table, so they could only meet at lunch-time or at the end of the school-day. Similarly, the boredom expressed by many of the children during the school holidays is not the result of a lack of initiative on their part; rather it is the effect of a sudden expansion in the amount of time they find at their disposal, a literally disordering experience. Being unused to organizing their days themselves many children complain of needing something to do to "pass the time away" until the evening, the time they normally have under their control: the time for 'doing nothing.'

In contrast, the prospect of an unforseen respite from school is greeted with unremitted delight: time which officially should have been structured by the school is transformed into free time, time without limits, unstructured time:
"I meet Gench and Mog who wave and whistle at me to join them. They tell me that the school is closed today as the central heating boiler has broken down. The possibility of an oil strike fills them with delight and Mog tells me that there is a rumour that they might have three months off school. A wonderful prospect which, unfortunately for them, did not come to fruition."

Similarly, when the village was filled with noxious chemical fumes one evening the children fervently debated whether they would have to go to school the following day.

Even accidents, such as a sprained ankle or black eye, have their compensations: physical pain is relieved by the prospect of time off school. Such gifts of time are greeted with much more delight than proper school-holidays for they interrupt and disorder the normal flow of time.

The power and authority of the school to order spatial and temporal boundaries permeates many of the children's daily lives. Uniform is a case in point. Within the confines of the school only adults may choose what they wear; the children must be uniformly attired, thereby visually separating them off and classifying them apart. Although many of the children do not object to wearing the basic uniform they often take issue over their right to assert their individuality within the limits of that uniform.

For example, the wearing of badges other than those symbols of school office is forbidden and one girl was exceedingly
angry when told to remove her Fonz badge. From her perspective this badge belonged to the general category of badges; she insisted on her right to wear it. For the teacher, however, the very particularity of this badge represented the intrusion of external activities into the school. She insisted on its removal. The confiscation of other personal items from the children—for example, cigarettes and knives—represents a similar ordering process: the reinforcement of temporal boundaries between the school world and the children's own culture.

These structuring principles are recognized and can be exploited by the children for their own gain. Two boys arrived at school one day wearing very tight denim jeans, rolled high up their legs, revealing huge laced boots and completed the picture with equally tight-fitting denim jackets, festooned with badges. This spectacle produced an immediate and predictable response from the staff: the boys were sent home to change their clothes. In this way the boys realised their initial intention: to gain time off school by courtesy of the school.

The staff were ensnared by their own rules. It is not without significance that during my period of fieldwork it became fashionable for girls to wear the boy's uniform—

1. During the period 1977-9 'Happy Days' was a popular American programme shown on British television. Its central character, the Fonz, was a hero for both girls and boys and most of the children wore Fonz badges.
cap, blazer and tie - to the local disco. This highly disordering act involved a whole series of symbolic reversals which challenged the power of the school: the boy's uniform was worn by girls in a context external to the school.

In that the school is perceived by the children to represent a complex of structures concerned with order and control any relaxation of this system is seen by them to be both suspicious and potentially dangerous, representing as it does the breakdown of structure and the possible release of anti-structural powers. The Christmas disco, which was held yearly at the local comprehensive, was a case in point. It provides a neat illustration of Turner's (1969) thesis concerning the potential of anti-structural forms.

The children themselves saw the disco as a highly ambiguous event, a perception which can be explained through reference to the structures of control discussed above. It appeared to them to be anomalous because it represented the legitimate intrusion of an external activity into the school. Temporal and spatial boundaries were relaxed and what was to the children most poignant of all, the very structures of control normally operative inside the school appeared to give way to and be replaced by those external to it.

Firstly, the disco was held in the evening. The school was open at a time when it normally closed and the children were to spend this time - time usually under their control - in
a place where normally they had no control over time. Secondly, at the disco the children were permitted to wear their own clothes; uniforms were abolished for this interval of time and they could wear clothes usually worn outside the school inside its walls. As Turner (op.cit.) has noted clothing is often the focus of liminal symbols: ritual liminarians adopt a uniform which submerges their structural identities. The symbolism of clothing at the disco is but a transformation of this ritual act: the children who in structured times are forced to wear a uniform to suppress their individuality were allowed in this inbetween time to express it through the clothes they chose to wear. That the significance of this was noted by the children is illustrated by the fact that many of them would have early Christmas presents of new clothes, requested specifically to wear to the school disco.

Clothing is important in other respects. For Turner (op.cit.) the adoption of uniform attire during the liminal period symbolises communitas and this quality is also expressed through bodily attire at the school disco. Once again it is a transformation: teachers and pupils wear similar clothes at the disco and no longer does uniform act as a visual signifier to separate off children from the staff. The visible symbols of power and authority are temporarily obliterated in this liminoid period.1

1. Turner (1978) suggests that the term 'liminal' should be reserved for institutionalized periods of anti-structure such as those of rites of transition. He prefers the use of the term 'liminoid' for those social situations which possess liminal-like qualities but are not themselves institutionalized rites of passage.
The question as to whether other of the children's external activities could for this moment in time be performed inside the school was hotly debated by the children prior to the disco. In particular, smoking and drinking were important subjects for discussion. Some children argued that both activities would be allowed, that "you wouldn't get wrong" for doing them at the disco, for it was not really "school". Others reasoned that although it was a disco "they'd (the teachers) know you smoke and be on the look out for you smoking in school". Such comments recall Turner's (op.cit.) discussion of the liminal period when structural rules are for this moment out of time and out of place temporarily suspended and replaced by new sets of rules.

The children finally reached a compromise through recourse to the temporal and spatial boundaries of this anomalous event. Drinks were kept outside the building in the undergrowth and, undercover of the darkness of the disco, were handed into the hall through the window. Alternatively the children temporarily left the disco to go outside to drink and smoke and moved, once again, away from the centre towards the margins.

As one girl put it, "there's nothing like the Christmas disco ". The liminoid quality of this event, expressed through symbols of reversal and inversion, the removal of structural distinctions, the conflation of spatial and temporal boundaries between the children's and the school
world, serve, for the children, to highlight the symbolic processes of separation and opposition which permeate the structure of the school in everyday life; the children, like ritual liminars, gained knowledge of structure through anti-structure.¹

The power and authority of the school as an agent of order is, then, seen by the children to be limited within specific temporal and spatial boundaries. They perceive the teacher's authority to be similarly bounded. One girl, for example, complained bitterly of a teacher who had reprimanded her for smoking in the street one weekend: being out of time and out of space she considered the teacher to have no right to control her activities and verbally abused her.

By contrast, teachers who remain within these structured limits are respected by the children. Halfway through my period of fieldwork the running of the youth club passed into the hands of a teacher from the local comprehensive. The children expressed no fear that this would restrict their activities, that it would disorder their social life: "Mr. Spencer" would be known as "Bob" on club nights. He,

¹ A similar, but less dramatic occasion was the school play. Both staff and pupils took part and the children were noticeably disconcerted by the changed relationship they had with the staff during rehearsals and performances. The power structure which they experienced daily in the class-room underwent a massive transformation when the play was being produced.
in turn, respected the conceptual distinction between school and club and never used his role as teacher to further his position as Youth Leader. The parents, on the other hand, were concerned about his reputation as a tough disciplinarian at school. They were unable to be flexible in their conceptualization of time and space; they could not manipulate the two conceptual orders.

The explicit and implicit order of the school is not, however, seen by the children as a total restraint upon their actions. They perceive a particular positive value in these lines of control. Whilst they recognize their activities to be constrained and limited by the boundaries of control operative within the school, they also see these as limits which restrict the teacher's penetration of their own world.

For example, the children differentiate between 'hard' and 'soft' teachers, with the former being given more respect and favour. 'Hard' teachers conform to the comic-strip stereo-type; they are strict law-enforcers, unbending and tough; they rigidly define and maintain the boundaries between staff and pupil. In doing so they thereby allow the children to manoeuvre within these prescribed limits. 'Hard' teachers take practical jokes in good fun; they are a "good laugh"; they do not threaten to intrude upon the children's world.

'Soft' teachers, on the other hand, are those who attempt to befriend, to be like the children. They try to extend
their traditional role. In doing so they confuse and fuzz the boundaries of control; the children regard such teachers with great suspicion. Their friendliness and laxity is perceived to be a weakness and they soon become the object of abuse. They cannot live up to the stereotype. 'Soft' teachers threaten to over-step the boundaries and to infiltrate the children's culture, whilst still having recourse to the structure of the school in order to mete out discipline. 'Soft' teachers are representatives of the power structure but ineffective wielders of power. As the children often remarked, at least "you know where you are with 'hard' teachers"; you know where the lines are drawn and your position within those lines. 'Hard' teachers are real teachers; 'soft' teachers are not. 1

The context for 'doing nothing' is, as the above discussion reveals, bounded by the temporal order of the school day, but it is not only the school which controls and contains the child between temporal limits. Children are also subject to controls upon their time emanating from the domestic sphere. The issuing of time-limits by parents is another significant control upon the children's use.

1. In this respect it is significant that when I told the children that I did some teaching they looked at me in surprise: I did not wear the right clothes; they liked me; I didn't tell them off for smoking; I didn't chastise them for swearing. But most important of all I wasn't old enough and I did not have the haggard face of a traditional school ma'am.
of time and, hence, upon the culture of ' doing nothing '.

The period between the end of the school-day and the time-limits imposed by parents is the time over which the children have maximum control and, therefore, these domestic time-limits are perceived by the children to represent a considerable and significant curb on their activities. Through endeavouring to limit the children's control of time adults force children to re-enter their sphere of control, to relinquish their control of time once again into adult hands. Domestic time-limits are, therefore, often the focus for serious confrontations within the home.

"Mog said he would 'get wrong' if he was late home and symbolically slit his throat and collapsed groaning on the floor, suggesting that this was the inevitable fate of any infringement of this rule. Noz also said that she would 'get wrong' and that if she didn't appear the next day we could look for her in a coffin."

The metaphors of death used by these children are instructive. They do not merely reflect the possibility (and probability) of corporal punishment being inflicted by parents, but also symbolise their own social deaths. One of the most common threats used by parents to enforce their children's adherence to time-limits is a further restriction of their control of time, that is, to prohibit the child going out in the evening at all. Through doing this parents are restricting their offspring's access to the culture of children: children are "kept in" and "not let out" by their
parents. They are controlled, contained and rendered immobile.

Throughout the analysis motifs of movement have appeared and it is this very mobility of the children which characterises the culture of 'doing nothing'. Movement is its source, movement within and between the lines of separation established by the adult world. The images of control, of centreing, fixity of place, containment and confinement used by the children to describe their parent's actions symbolises their social death through stasis.

The children, therefore, endeavour to avoid being controlled through inventing excuses for over-stepping the time-boundary. They argue, for example, that "the bus didn't come", that "the bus was early and I missed it", that "the watch stopped", that "the watch was slow", in an attempt to deflect the cause of their offence to an external agent. The majority, however, seemed to adhere to their parents' ruling: the possibility of a prohibition against going out was perceived as a most severe form of punishment, one which threatened to remove what little control over time, and hence over their own activities, they already possessed.
For the children, therefore, the day is conceptually structured according to temporal boundaries set up by the adult world. It is primarily an adult conception of order, an order which classifies them as a separate social group and which gives them but minimal power to alter it. The only occasion when children gain some degree of control over time is the residue left over from this process of ordering itself. This is the time when 'nothing' happens. (see Fig. 1.).

Fig. 1. The temporal boundaries of the culture of 'doing nothing'.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To School</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Home From School</td>
<td>Evening Out</td>
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It is, therefore, in the spaces and times between adult orders that the culture of 'doing nothing' thrives. As Turner argues with respect to the emergence of liminal forms, 'structure depends on distance and discontinuity between its units, and these interstitial spaces provide homes for anti-structural visions, thoughts and ultimately behaviours' (1974:293). Through attempting to increasingly rigidify the spatial and temporal boundaries of order adults are attempting to control the disruptive potentiality of the children's culture.

Implicit throughout the analysis is the suggestion that control of time is intimately linked to the access to social space; indeed, these are the co-ordinates of order itself as Mary Douglas (1969) has shown. For the children, therefore, in order to extend their control over time, and hence to increase their access to social space, they must endeavour to circumvent or move the boundaries which conceptually contain them. They may truant or ignore time-limits, for example, but such actions incur further restrictions being placed upon them. To gain access to different times and spaces outside adult control the
children, therefore, have to move between different spheres of adult domination: for example, freedom is obtained in the times and spaces between home and school and home again. In order to shift the balance of power the children must initiate movement within time itself and move out of and away from the times and spaces primarily controlled by the adult world. To 'do nothing' they must do something.

With respect to the passage of calendrical time this relationship is given visual form in the real and symbolic distance achieved between private and public space as the child matures. The physical structure of a typical north-eastern back-lane community visibly bears witness to the effect of this socializing process. Little two or three year old children play mainly in the house or the back yard; their access to space is limited, restricted by the walls and locked yard-gates. They cannot, as yet, participate in the life of the older children on the other side of the gate. At about four years old children begin to stray beyond the walls which enclose the private domestic sphere: they are permitted to play on the pavement, at first clinging to the yard entrance, then later extending their control of space two or three houses down the street. As they grow older the whole back-lane becomes their play-ground: its walls and pavements, its telegraph poles and drains become objects of play. The public street becomes their private domain. Finally, they become 'old enough' to leave this space; they move beyond the boundaries of their own back-lane and roam outside the
domestic sphere of control. And, once having left the containing walls of the yard and street behind them, the children enter their own separate social world which is contained by its own symbolic walls. They have moved the boundaries of parental control through negotiating the physical walls which contained them. It is their increase in age which has largely facilitated this movement.

The further the child moves into the transitional period of adolescence the further he or she moves away from adult order and the more fluid that movement becomes; through playing truant, through staying out all evening the adolescent unstructures the structures which adult time creates. 'Going out' is seen as important in itself; one boy remarked with a good deal of pride that "I go out every night of the week" and another said that now I had come to the village he had "somewhere to go every night". Significantly, "going out" is also a euphemism for sexual relationships or boy-friend/girl-friend social encounters; "going out" symbolises the departure of children from their natal homes which such relationships will eventually bring as they establish their own domestic spheres as adults. And, it is not without significance that the symbol of adulthood is the key to the door, that which allows free movement between inner and outer spaces, between the private and public domains. The passage of calendrical time literally increases the child's access to space.
Plate 1. "... being between the polar categories of child and adult, being between the worlds of play and work there is conceptually nothing for them to do."
'Doing' and 'doing nothing'

The culture of the children - that which they describe as 'doing nothing' - is, as the above examples have shown, bounded by the spatial and temporal lines drawn by the adult world, lines which classify the children apart. The culture of children emerges, then, through the imposition of order during the socialization process; its form is structured by that order but its content results from the creativity of the children themselves. In the following section I begin to explore the semantics of 'doing nothing'. To explain why the children use this term and what they mean when they say they have been 'doing nothing' involves an extended unpacking of concepts of action. Only then does the logic of the children's metaphor for their own culture begin to resonate; only then can their interpretation of the socialization process begin to make sense.

In a Western industrial society all activities are perceived to fall within two broad conceptual categories; play and work. Although some forms of work have ludic qualities, and some kinds of play take on the characteristics of work, the dominant classificatory frame remains the binary opposition between work and play. Playing football for leisure, as a respite from work, is to the professional player the work from which respite must be sought. Play and work are always strictly demarcated within spatial and temporal boundaries; the playground is separated from the school-room, the rest-
room from the office, working hours from leisure hours, play-time from lessons. Children, whose prerogative it is to play, can nevertheless be chastised for 'playing the teacher up' through transgressing these spatial and temporal limits. The cultural specificity of this relationship is noted by Norbeck who points out that many other cultures 'lack a generic term for play and lack a concept of work and play in binary opposition' (1976:5).

This cultural construct bears, I suggest, an implicit structural relationship to another binary classification fundamental to Western industrial society: child and adult. Entering the adult world of work entails leaving the child's play world. Something which is easy for an adult to perform is 'child's play', rather than hard work. That adolescents define their activities as 'doing nothing' is, therefore, quite logical: being between the polar categories of child and adult, being between the worlds of play and work, there is conceptually nothing for them to do.

The persistent and persuasive power of this mapping between conceptual domains is historically determined. It is a result of the dialectics of social classification: the separation of the child from the adult world can be seen to have been partly effected and facilitated by the removal of the child from the sphere of wage-work, a process itself instigated by the changing nature of work patterns and conditions of employment with the increase in industrialization. Ironically, it was this very freedom from wage-
work which, in turn, later came to represent and form a boundary to the idea of childhood itself, finally reified through the provision and institutionalization of schooling and the introduction of welfare legislation on behalf of the child. Participation in the world of work became a boundary to adulthood: the opposition between play and work was transposed upon the social categories of child and adult.¹

In contemporary British society this structural homology has certain logical consequences for the position of the adolescent. Children and adults both achieve legitimation of their actions through reference to the concepts of play and work; they represent frames of self-justification, built upon the structural correspondence between conceptual domains of person and action. Children are sent 'out to play' by their parents; 'play' is perceived to be their legitimate sphere of activity. Adults work, they participate in a specific action sphere; hence, the stigma of unemployment. When asked what they have been doing children reply, 'playing', adults reply, 'working'; adolescents can only reply, 'doing nothing'.

It is through recourse, then, to this patterning between conceptual domains that children and adults can legitimate

¹ See pp. 71-73 above for further discussion of these points.
their actions through such blanket terms. An adult who says he or she has been doing nothing is assumed to be speaking metaphorically; there is an implicit understanding that adults will have fulfilled the structural requirements of their social roles in the domestic and public spheres. In this case 'doing nothing' is translated as 'nothing out of the ordinary'. Adolescents, on the other hand, have conceptually nothing ordinarily to do; they are extraordinary. 'Doing nothing' might mean 'nothing at all'.

That 'nothing at all' is negatively perceived is a consequence of the paradigm surrounding the concept of action itself: to act is to produce an effect and action is the process of producing or doing something. Action is not doing nothing. It is this very lack of purpose, the seemingly directionless quality of 'doing nothing' which, I suggest, gives to this activity its negative attributes offending, as it does, the Protestant Ethic.

Play is doing; work is producing. Both are means-ends related activities. Justifications of play as the primary activity of children is variously documented in both classical and contemporary texts on child development.1 Work, on the other hand, in a Western capitalist society is defined

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1. See for example- Caillois (1962); Roberts & Sutton-smith (eds.) (1962)

Craig (ed.) 1976 for various justifications of the usefulness of play for small children.
as purposeful and justified in terms of the rewards it produces. But adult play - leisure - is also seen as purposeful: sports are promoted in terms of health, physical and mental fitness; hobbies justified in relation to their end-product. Leisure, although engaged in voluntarily and lacking the compulsion of work, tends in fact often to resemble it. As Sack has shown, 'the more that one pursues an activity for extrinsic rewards, or is subject to pressures and demands from outside the play world, the more the activity becomes work' (1977:188). D.I.Y. and jogging, for example, bear adequate testimony to this; both are now big business, representing work for the shop-keeper and consumer alike.

Within such terms of reference 'doing nothing' is anomalous. Its very purposelessness threatens these collective representations. For this reason there exists a whole range of benevolent institutions in our society, set up precisely to give young people something to do. Scouts, Girl Guides, Boy's Clubs, Youth Clubs and Sports Clubs are all designed to occupy the time of those who, in structural terms, are seen as having nothing to do. As Colin Ward remarks many of them fail through misunderstanding the meaning of 'doing nothing':

'For thirty years or more the world of the youth club has been torn by dilemmas and doubts. The evangelical or didactic message, the assumption of single-sex institutions, the emphasis on physical fitness, have all been rejected by the clientelle. In the 1960's the concept arose of the 'unclubbables', the assumption being that it was normal for adolescents to belong to a club and that there was something abnormal about those who did not'. (1977:113-114).
'Doing nothing' defies institutional settings for it is not a discrete activity; rather, it is a mode of acting in and upon the world for adolescents. 'Doing nothing' is the context of their social experience, the arena within which many things are done, a fluid metaphor for the transitional experience of adolescence itself. In other words, it is a qualitative description of their position between the binary social categories of child and adult, one which expresses their feelings of being on the peripheries of the social order, placeless people. 'Doing nothing' acts as a conceptual mask for many activities, deflecting external perception of them, for a group of people who find themselves with conceptually nothing legitimate to do.

'Doing nothing' is, therefore, not to be regarded as a negative evaluation by the children of their own activities nor as the passive internalization of an external and dominant definition. Rather, as the following discussion reveals, it is precisely through articulating their actions in these terms that the children create for themselves a quasi-legitimated sphere of action. In this respect, 'doing nothing' may represent what Shirley Ardener has termed a 'muted' perspective, a world-view which does not find expression except in terms of the dominant language, that is in a language external to the group itself:
'The implications are that a society may be dominated or overdetermined by the model (or models) generated by one dominant group within the system. This dominant model may impede free expression of alternative models of their world which subdominant groups may possess, and perhaps even inhibit the very generation of such models. Groups dominated in this sense find it necessary to structure their world through the model (or models) of the dominant group, transforming their own models as best they can in terms of the received ones.' (1975:xii)

Being between the major classificatory categories, and yet at the same time hedged in by them, I suggest that the concept of 'doing nothing' allows the children some freedom. Through an internal restructuring of the dominant order they distance themselves from it. Through using a description which adults understand, as an external definition of themselves, the children are able to create their own meaningful order, maintaining and protecting it by the very boundaries which are used to contain them.

I suggested above that 'doing nothing' encompasses a whole range of activities including both play and work and it is to the latter that I first turn. The work done by children provides a highly condensed and evocative image of the context of the children's culture. It demonstrates quite conclusively the children's ability to move between the spatial and temporal boundaries of an externally derived order, and their capacity to deflect external perception of that culture they call 'doing nothing'.

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Doing nothing': the structure of work experience

Work', as Sandra Wallman (1979) argues, has no precise definition; rather, definitions of work are culturally specific, varying both between and within societies. In any particular social context, therefore,

'we need not only ask what activities are called work and how their economic value is computed in that setting; we need also to know what forms of work are, in that setting, thought to be socially worthy and personally fulfilling.' (1979:2)

The following account details the meaning of work for the children.

It is ironic that the historical processes which separated children off from the adult world of work have made their very peripherality from the work sphere a condition of their entry into it. The majority of the children with whom I worked engaged in some form of labour whilst still at school, prior to their entry into the mainstream labour force. In such a community, therefore, work experience is gained long before adolescents enter the unemployment figures. Kinds of work vary, ranging from traditional child labour within the home, such as helping with domestic chores and baby-sitting younger brothers and sisters (unpaid work) to specific employment within the domestic sphere for monetary reward: for example, regular baby-sitting jobs for other families, digging gardens, shoe-cleaning and car-washing. It includes occasional one-off jobs and seasonal labour as
well as regular part-time employment in the service industries: shops, market stalls, newspaper and milk rounds. The major structuring principle governing such work experience is the marginal social position of the school-child to the main labour force.

Firstly, the very marginality of adolescents allows them to fill certain economic niches left empty by the adult world. For example, potato picking is seen as a particularly lucrative outlet by the children. It takes place during the autumn half-term holidays from school - known as Blackberry Week in the north-east - when children, traditionally, picked blackberries to sell. Nowadays, gaining employment as a potato picker on one of the local farms is seen as a far more profitable occupation and, during the period 1977-9, children could earn between £2.60 and £5.00 per day. One week's work was seen as a good wage by the children and often, as in the past, school was rejected in favour of work if the pickings extended beyond the holiday week.¹

Potato picking, then, is done by children precisely because they are the ones most often free to perform it. Being between the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of adult order they literally have the time; such seasonal labour cannot be usually undertaken by adults in full-time employment. Similarly, baby-sitting is another job created specifically because adults are unable to undertake the task themselves.

¹. See Kitteringham (1973) for comparative historical examples.
This ability of adolescents to fill up the gaps created within adult order is a consistent structural feature of their participation in the economy and also gives them primary access to particular kinds of wage-work. For example, the daily newspaper rounds are staffed by a whole army of school-children who maintain its efficiency precisely because they are available for work in the early morning and evening and on Sundays, times when adults cannot or would not normally wish to work. Similarly, milkmen employ milk-boys ( and, during my period of fieldwork, one milk-girl ) to assist them in their early morning deliveries. Indeed, the milk and newspaper rounds are regarded by children as their primary job-market; jobs are closely protected and often passed between generations of siblings. Vacancies are always quickly filled as these jobs are highly valued amongst the children.

Other regular part-time jobs are also found by children within the service sector of the economy. Once they have reached the age of sixteen the children can legally get Saturday jobs as shop assistants, evening jobs in the fish and chip shop or working as a cloak room attendant in the local night club. Younger children, forbidden by law to serve in shops, may be engaged in a variety of back-room work: cleaning and tidying shelves in the super-market store-room, cleaning the freezer cabinets, washing bottles and glasses in the working-men's club. Market stalls employ children on Saturdays and, during my period of
fieldwork, the vegetable stall in the local market was a continual source of employment for many of the children. It still continues to be so.

All these jobs, then, are structured by particular temporal limits which allow children, rather than adults, to be employed; weekend working, early mornings—starting at 5.00 am or 6.00 am—early afternoons between 4.00 pm and 6.00 pm, evenings from 7.00 pm onwards. At these times adults are usually involved in other activities: domestic responsibilities, working themselves or having leisure time. It is children, then, who complete and complement the adult labour force.

A further feature of this temporal structure is that work is often irregular. For the school-child who is not dependent upon a weekly wage this is a positive advantage for they can exploit such outlets unlike adults. Indeed, work is often sporadic for the school child. For example, two boys were employed one Sunday afternoon by a lady who, on seeing them in the street, stopped her car and asked them to deliver some leaflets, giving them £1 each to do the job. As she was a stranger in the district the boys delivered a few, chucked the rest in the bin and pocketed the money. They delighted in her naivety in paying the wage before the job was done. The marginal status of adolescents to the labour force means that they can take up the opportunity for work whenever it arises. The jobs, usually only for a few hours a day, or one day a week, or even the chance occasion for work,
yield an average wage of between £5 and £6 per week, an insufficient income for an adult but an acceptable wage for the child.

Another example echoes these themes. Robert, aged 11, was in hospital for a considerable period of time and during his convalescence set up in business. His father had encouraged him to occupy his time by making models from lollipop sticks and Robert developed his skill quite quickly. Soon he began selling the models he made to the hospital staff thereby making quite a profit as his father purchased the materials.

However, referring back to Wallman, it is not only the form and economic value of work which needs to be considered but also its social aspect. For adolescents it is this which is perhaps most important. To be working, to be employed rather than unemployed, is a sign of their growing maturity, a signal for later independence as adults. Children attach great symbolic significance to having part-time jobs or to having gained any kind of employment.

On a purely practical level employment, for the child, represents a considerable boost in income whilst still at school but - and this is seen as particularly important by children - it is an income which is truly their own. Pocket money was rarely discussed; some children had regular weekly amounts given to them by their parents, whilst others were given money to spend only on specific occasions - when they
went to school, to the youth club or disco. Wages earned by working were, on the other hand, always a topic of conversation. They signified a degree of economic, and ultimately social, independence from their parents. Indeed, for some children, it was their only regular source of income and, consequently, their only freedom in market choices.

The symbolic significance of 'having a job' is revealed in the tales told about successful entrepreneurs within the school-child's culture. Gench was a milk-boy and a good one, popular with the customers and an employee of long-standing. At Christmas he received tips from customers and for many months rumours abounded concerning how much Gench had made on tips alone. Some said that he had made as much as £50. It became legendary amongst the children and Gench himself accrued much prestige.

However, the social significance of wage-work is further symbolised in the ways in which the money is spent. Money earned from wage-work is spent on things parents will not finance, that is on the commercial aspects of the adolescent culture. Gench bought himself a bike for £55 from his milk-money; others spent their wages on cigarettes, records and on clothes. Wages received represent freedom in market choices and the expenditure of a large part of them on records, clothes and badges symbolises adolescents' freedom to participate in their own commercial culture. Significantly, this is precisely the manner in which first wage-packets are
spent when children leave school, after money has been deducted for board and given to their parents. An independent income, then, represents for the children freedom from parental control; work, in this respect, is therefore seen as 'socially and personally fulfilling' (Wallman, 1979,2).

Money earned is but one aspect of the total work experience; other aspects of working are equally valuable to the adolescent and may be seen to lie over and above pure monetary gain. In particular, girls' access to this informal labour market is often more restricted than boys'; girls are often expected to assist with domestic chores at home such as baby-sitting their younger brothers and sisters, although boys do indeed also take on this task. Here reward is not given financially, but time is exchanged for other benefits: for example, extra clothes or the possibility of staying out late another night in the week. Such exchanges are as equally valuable as monetary reward. Moreover, the absence of adults in the home whilst baby-sitting has its own positive advantages: girls babysit together and pass the time with their friends talking and occasionally having illicit bottles of cider. Their social life at home is, for once, free from parental gaze and control.

Boys, whose possibilities for employment seem to be greater, also value the experience that working gives them; whilst still at school they can participate in an adult environment within which they quickly assume the role of 'worker'. Conscientious milk-boys, who have to get up at 6.00am, tend
to go to bed early so that they can "do the milk" the following morning. They acquire the vocabulary of the trade, demonstrating their skill at working. The one girl who managed to penetrate the male dominated milk-rounds quickly made herself familiar with the language of milk-men, thereby proving her competence. Within a couple of days she was talking of a 'twenty crate' and 'half-bottles'.

The tales told by children of their work experience image their own futures, recalling as they do, in style and content, many of the stories told by adults of working. They are tales of cheating, swindling, nepotism and unfair dismissal:

(1) "Paul tells me that he used to clean his aunt's windows for 10p. She was rather stupid and couldn't tell the difference between a 10p and 50p coin so he and his mate always did well out of it." (Aged 12)

(2) "Kirby says he went potato picking for £3 per day and that if we want some potatoes he'll throw a bag over the hedge. Today he threw over three bags for a mate of his." (Aged 14)

(3) "Dicky said that at one time he used to deliver newspapers but when the Northern Echo went on strike he went on strike in sympathy. Jimmy complains that some 11 year olds are working on the newspaper rounds and says that this is illegal and unfair. Now there are fewer jobs for older kids as the newsagents pay the younger ones less." (Both aged 15)

(4) "John says that the newsagent swindles him. He always says that John is short of money after the Sunday selling round. John complains that he always has to make up the difference and has a good mind to start up on his own. Someone suggested that that would be a good idea." (Aged 14).

Whether or not such tales are true, their significance lies in the ways in which these stories mirror adult work
experiences and, thereby, prefigure the adolescent's own participation in the labour market.

In this respect it is significant that, for many, the work they do whilst still at school does, in fact, represent experience in future employment. Most of the children with whom I worked left school with no qualifications at all; some had a few C.S.E.'s and one girl achieved four 'O' levels. For the majority, life after school meant joining the unemployment register - doing nothing - or gaining work primarily in the service industries, that is in the sector in which many of them had been employed whilst still at school. Of those whose post-school careers I was able to follow many of the boys gained employment in shops, painting and decorating, the armed services and the police force, with a few getting jobs in industry. For the girls, employment was usually found in the clothing industry, a job which was seen as a temporary occupation prior to marriage and the birth of their children.¹ Even those whose later participation in the economic system was as criminals - usually petty burglaries - gained a lot of their experience through rehearsing this role whilst still at school.

Adolescents' participation in the adult world of work is, therefore, a function of their marginality to the social structure. They exploit to the full the gaps and lacunae

¹. For a discussion of these issues see, pp.441-472.
created within the economic order by the structure of adult work patterns. Walking through the village in the early morning this principle was given visual form: the village appeared to be populated almost entirely by children going about their business. The newspaper shop was crowded with boys and girls clutching their sacks of papers; the local cafe, from where the milk business operated, alive with boys playing pin-ball and drinking tea after their deliveries were finished, filling in time before the start of school.

In this respect it is significant to compare the employment of children with other 'marginal' workers, such as women and those operating within the 'black' or informal economy. Both these groups also provide the additional pools of labour necessary for seasonal, part-time and irregular employment upon which mainstream economic activity is partially dependent.

Women's work outside the home is often structured by the temporal and spatial exigencies of her domestic responsibilities as wife and mother. Wage-work, for many of the women in the community, could only be undertaken when household commitments were at a minimum. Like children's, women's work, is by necessity often in-between work. For example, some of the women in the community did cleaning jobs in the pubs and clubs, starting at 7.00 am; at that time of day their husbands could supervise the children at home and, on returning at 10.00 am, the women would then take up their domestic work at home.
Other married women too had to fit their wage-work around domestic responsibilities. They worked in the evenings at the club or fish and chip shop whilst their children were cared for by elder siblings, husbands or relations. Others did door-to-door selling, held jewellery or pottery parties in their homes, thereby combining wage-work with unpaid domestic labour for part of the day. With the demands and limitations upon their time, incurred through their roles as wives and mothers, most women could not otherwise gain employment. Both women and children, therefore, form a pool of occasional and part-time labour which props up the mainstream economic order. On the whole they both provide a cheap source of labour and, as Ward remarks, 'indeed, it is one of the tragedies of 'women's work' in the British economy that her children can do it just as well as she can, without feeling the stifling boredom of the task'. (1977: 145).

In an area characterised by high unemployment and a long history of poverty a further parallel can be drawn in the structural patterning of work. The 'black' economy utilises labour, following the pattern already established for children's and women's work. Men often do jobs 'on the side', marginal jobs, which are fitted in between their regular work, done at evenings and weekends or whilst drawing state benefits. All these groups have in common their peripheral position relative to the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of the main economic order.
Jobs done by men within the 'black' economy are, like those of women and children, characterized by low wages and lack of job security but are attractive to both employer and employee. For the employer, the use of labour from the informal economy represents a cut in overheads and allows the input of occasional labour at times of high productivity or large work-load; for the employee the wage is fixed and not subject to deductions for tax or national insurance.

'Cash in hand', the money earned 'on the side' has great symbolic significance; it parallels the importance given by children to their earning capacity. Wages from the 'black' economy are seen to be in direct proportion to effort; money is not deducted and a man keeps all that he earns. The price for a job—for example, brick-laying—is agreed prior to the work being done; the time it takes is, therefore, directly under the worker's control and the roll of bank-notes accrued at the end is seen as a symbol of a man's ability and self-respect. Time and effort are in direct proportion.

Money earned on the side—from odd-jobbing—is thought by men to be their 'pocket-money'. It is kept by men for themselves and not included in the general household budget. It is money which, like the money the children earn, can be spent freely: on beer at the club, on bait for fishing trips or, indeed, on special treats for their wives. Like children's work, work within the 'black' economy is not only rewarded by money. Men operate a
number of exchange systems whereby one man will use his skill as a brick-layer to help another, in return for him erecting a fence or doing some car repairs.

In conclusion then for any workers within the informal economy - women, children or men doing jobs on the side - it is their ability to perceive the gaps in the economic structure and to utilise them which signals success. Indeed, many of the jobs traditionally done by the children in a community characterized by high unemployment may be taken over by adult workers drifting away from the main labour force. During the period 1977-9 this process was already beginning with men and boys both employed to break cars in the local scrap yard.

Learning to do nothing

The structured patterning of activity described in the case-study above finds repetition in other aspects of 'doing nothing'. I turn now to an examination of this wider context, tracing the general features, the creative potential and conceptual structuring of the culture of 'doing nothing'. Children 'do nothing' anywhere and everywhere: in the street, outside the fish shop, inside the telephone box. 'Doing nothing' is not a discrete activity but is expressive of a context for action; it is a mode of thought which is of and about the culture of children.
In this section I examine how the concept of 'doing nothing' frames the activities of the children through looking at the ways in which they appropriate and re-interpret their external environment in a largely invisible manner. The physical world is transformed in terms of the children's own symbolic system. As I show this represents the continuation of a mode of thought and action learnt through the play of early childhood and, as such, reveals the socializing practices which children perform for each other in the context of their own culture.

It was suggested earlier that 'play' is the prerogative of small children, their legitimate action sphere. Indeed, this seems to be so. Small children invite their friends 'out to play'; adolescents merely ask each other 'out'. They go 'out' to 'do nowt' but 'doing nothing' is, for them, a similarly purposeful activity. A fourteen year old girl who had moved to the south of England returned to the north for a short visit. She complains of her life in the south:

"Joanna says that she hates it down there; it's not like it is up here. There's nothing to do and nowhere to go. There are parties every Saturday and badminton during the week. The youth club is all religious. Parties are boring. When I asked her what there is better to do up here she replied: "Well, you can go and see people and go round the streets and down there the girls don't fight like they do here."

The conventional activities of badminton and clubs are classed by her as 'nothing to do and nowhere to go'; 'doing nothing',

/..
on the other hand, involves 'going round the streets, visiting people and fighting'. These latter activities are the most rewarding but they are activities that have no name, unclassified and unclassifiable, performed by a group which is itself set apart. Learning to create and participate in 'doing nothing' begins in the play of early childhood but it is play of a particular kind.

An analytical distinction is often made between play and games. The Newsons, for example, stress that the 'essence of play is that it has no rules'; games, in contrast, 'involve a formal confrontation between the player and his opponent... in which all activity takes place within an agreed system of rules' (1979:11). The Opies too rely on this dichotomy: pretending games - those with no written or verbally elaborated rules - are dismissed as,

'...little more than reflections (often distorted reflections) of how they themselves live and of how their mothers and fathers live, and of the books they read and the TV programmes they watch.' (1969:330)

Play in adult terms must have content: if rules do not frame the activity then content must be provided to fill it. Play involves playing with 'things'; children are bought toys to play with.

However, as Ward points out, children do not heed these

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1. Further discussion of this 'nameless' quality of 'doing nothing' is given on pp.259 - 262.
distinctions and they will 'play everywhere and with anything' (1977:86). The provision of toys as play-content and the designation of play-areas represent an attempt by the adult world to control what the Newsons describe as children's 'most determined onslaught of their environment' (1979:49). This characteristic of small children's play is apparent in their continual experimentation, a process through which children gain knowledge of the world as Sutton-Smith has noted:

'We have in games behaviour in which conventional roles are mocked (the games of order and disorder). We have in games an unconventional access to roles; and we have in games access to novelty within the role.' (Sutton-Smith, 1977a:228).

As he points out play is not merely the rehearsal for adult roles through passive imitation as traditional socialization theory suggests; rather, it is a creative learning process,

'children who play schools, play at nonsense as much as they play at school....disorder is as relevant to play imitation as is order. And most socialization theories do not account for that as well as they should.' (1977b:235)

Children play with play itself and it is the continuation of this experimental mode into adolescence which gives to 'doing nothing' its potentially subversive aspect. Play and 'doing nothing' both represent the creative restructuring of social order but it is adolescents who are criticised for,
in adult eyes, they should no longer indulge in such questioning. ¹

Writing of play Huizinga argues that it involves the construction of ' temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart ' and suggests that ' inside the playground an absolute and peculiar order reigns (1955:25). Play, therefore, involves the creation of a conceptually separate arena within and between the spatial boundaries of the physical environment and it is often through the rules of play that this place apart is created. The rules define both how and where to play; for the duration of the game the environment is re-interpreted and transformed. A similar reconstruction is effected in the course of ' doing nothing '. The continuity of this form can be demonstrated through comparing the street games of small children and the adolescent's use of the street as a context for action.

A distinctive feature of north-eastern mining villages and many inner city areas is the rows of houses with back-lanes threaded between them. Commonplace in the past, today these spaces are still those in which children play and the peculiarity of this architectural feature is utilised by

¹ Here I am concerned to demonstrate how the children transform physical space and the objects within that environment. A comparable process of conceptual reconstruction occurs through the transformation of the physical body. This is discussed below, see pp.403-419.
children in many of their games.\textsuperscript{1} For example, the boundaries of the space necessary for games such as 'Piney' and 'Oxo' are formed by the walls on either side of the street:

"Piney."

All the children choose a code, often colours or numbers, and each child has a specific example. One child is chosen to be 'on' (e.g. yellow). All the children line up against one wall while 'yellow' throws the ball against the opposite wall. On doing this 'yellow' names a child to catch the ball, e.g. 'red'. Whilst, 'red' tries to catch the ball all the others run to the opposite wall and back again. If 'red' fails to catch it 'yellow' starts the game again.

If 'red' catches the ball he or she tries to hit one of the runners before they have returned to the starting position and touched the wall and shouted 'piney'.

If 'red' succeeds in hitting 'blue', 'blue' must pick up the ball and throw it back at 'red' before 'red' reaches the wall touches it and shouts 'piney'.

If 'blue' misses, he or she throws the ball three times in the air and tries to catch it before anyone else. If 'blue' fails then he is out of the game. The one who has caught the ball starts the game again."

"Oxo."

One child is on and he stands against one wall facing the others. The one who is on chooses a code, e.g. boots. The others choose a particular kind of 'boot' e.g. yellow boots and these choices are told to the child who is on. This child then chooses one of the selection and calls it out. The two children must then race each other three times between the walls and on arriving they must touch the wall and shout 'oxo'. The first to reach the finish then starts the game again."

\textsuperscript{1} See Gamble (1979) for comparative historical examples.

\textsuperscript{2} The idea of 'touch' and 'touching' is a constant theme in many of these street games. The symbolic power of touching transforms the physical environment. For further discussion of the idea of 'touch' see pp.409-410.
Fig. 2. The conceptual reconstruction of the physical environment through street games.

In other street games of younger children street-furniture forms a significant element. In particular the idea of a 'den' - a place where children can temporarily withdraw from the rules of the game - uses objects in the physical environment such as lamposts, drains or benches. 'Tiggy' for example, requires a place which can be sat on, stood on or touched; here the child is safe from being 'tug'. 'Tiggy on high' extends this into the vertical plane; walls, lamposts, roof tops and benches which raise the feet off the ground provide refuge from being caught by the chaser. The game, Blocky, also illustrates this use of street-furniture in children's games:
"Blocky.

The second lampost in the street is the Block from where the game starts. The person who is on stands at the block and counts to 100. Everyone goes and hides and then if the person looking for you spots you, you both race back to the lampost and shout "Block, 1,2,3," followed by the person's name. If the hider gets there first he is "off" (i.e. not on) and the game continues. If the seeker has made a mistake over the person he is still on. The game continues till all have been challenged, if the seeker does not "block" someone, and everyone else has got their own block.

In contrast, the game Itchy Bay - a variation of Hopscotch - requires only a pavement or yard upon which the layout can be chalked.

In the process of creating these separate play worlds the physical environment and objects within it become transformed and reinterpreted; it acquires a new significance and is invested with meanings peculiar to the culture of children. Ward (1977) endorses this viewpoint through reference to Jeff Bishop's work on spatial conceptualization. Adults and children were asked to draw maps of their locality in Harwich and remarkably different responses were achieved:

'In the middle of the port there is a lighthouse featured as a significant landmark in all the maps drawn by adults. But none of Harwich children showed the lighthouse on their maps, though many showed the public lavatory which stands at its base. ....One item that frequently recurred in their maps (and was totally ignored in those of adults) was a telephone connection box. Obviously, as a feature for hiding behind or climbing on, this kind of obstruction has a value for children in their use of the street.' (Ward, 1977:27-8).
Plate 2. "...Itchy Bay - a variation of Hopscotch - requires only a pavement or yard upon which the layout can be chalked."
Children are what planners call 'non-conforming users' of the environment; they create their own order through the reinterpretation and re-representation of physical space, one which challenges the dominant order (ibid:28). As Colin Ward writes 'one of the things play is about, intermingled with all the others, is conflict with the adult world' and it is the continuation of this into adolescence which gives to 'doing nothing' its potentially subversive characteristics (ibid:91).

As children mature they may no longer play 'Blocky' or 'Piney' but the street and its furniture are still subject to infinite permutations of use. Amongst the children with whom I worked some of this was traditional entertainment at the expense of the adult world; for example, 'Knocky Nine Doors' and 'Tappy Windows'. A particular favourite was 'Bugger the Cat': the children would rush into someone's back yard, knock over the dustbin and run off yelling, "Bugger the cat". Such activity was usually regarded as 'pranks' by adults with little retribution to follow.

Older children may play informal games of football using a wall in the back-street as the goal area. In one game I saw being played the goal posts were delineated horizontally by a line of rotten mortar in the wall and

1. Both these activities are catalogued by the Opies (1977). 'Knocky Nine Doors' involves knocking on someone's door and quickly absconding to a hiding place a short distance away where the children can see the inhabitant opening the door to no-one. 'Tappy Windows' provides a similar amusement: a button is tied on a thread so that it can be tapped on the window by manipulation at a distance; once again, the occupant is bemused by the mysterious knocking.
vertically between a gate-post and an orange rust stain from a defective drain pipe. In another game goal posts were demarcated by a pile of clothes and lumps of wood spaced apart in the field.

The changing seasons bring their own transformations upon the physical environment and further opportunities for 'doing nothing'. Puddles become lethal slides on the pavement in winter and places to jump in and splash others in the autumn; woods are places to build dens in in the summer to hide from the 'kiddy catcher' and become places to construct igloos in the winter. In autumn Guy Fawkes and Halloween celebrations bring the opportunity for lighting fires, for stealing 'snackers' (swedes) and potatoes from farmer's fields and apples from people's gardens.

All such activities, not named or bound by rules, nevertheless represent the reinterpretation and transformation of the physical environment in a manner comparable with the construction of separate play-worlds in the games of smaller children. Space is redefined and taken over. In the above examples conflict with the adult world is rare or at a minimum; adults look on indulgently or with grudging acceptance, reflecting back upon their own youthful activities. But, when this mode of thought and action begins to be extended into other domains, when it begins to seriously challenge adult order, the activities are reclassified in terms of vandalism, the exponents classed as delinquent
Plate 3. "...children continue their creative reinterpretation of the physical environment, which they learnt in early childhood during their adolescence."
The following examples demonstrate this changed external perception as the children continue their creative reinterpretation of the physical environment, which they learnt in early childhood, during their adolescence.

In the centre of the village at the cross roads there is a concrete bus shelter which forms the focus for much of the children's social life. The bus shelter, inhabited by old men during the day, becomes the children's own meeting place at night. The "Old Man's Shed", as it is called by them, is the equivalent of the dens and camps constructed during play by small children. Moreover, just as little children 'own' sledge runs or chalked lay-outs of 'Itchy Bay' and permission must be sought before other children can use them, the 'Old Man's Shed' is 'owned' by a particular group of adolescents. Both represent the privatisation of the public world by children but it is the latter which is perceived to be subversive.

This concept of ownership is illustrated in the following incident, related to me by Sue who was not a regular occupant of the shed:

"Sue comes to see me. She says she is 'sick' (fed up). She tells me that last night while she was waiting for the bus in the old man's shed she got set on by 7 girls including Kay, Sandra and Noreen. They said that it was their...

1. It is significant that the term 'delinquent' is reserved solely for the adolescent age-group. It is a description never used about small children or adults.
shed. They pummelled her. She has a cut on her leg and lots of bruises on her stomach and head. They locked her in the toilet (at the back of shed) and she had to bash a hole in the roof to get out. Then they came and opened it and let her out. Sue says that was because her sister and a group of older lads were coming by. She didn't tell anyone but ends by exclaiming: 'They think it's their shed or something.' (aged 16)

The fight which took place appears to the adult world to be but another confirmation of the disruptive adolescent community but it was a fight about ownership comparable with the squabbles of young children.

The symbols of ownership of the 'Old Man's Shed' are the nicknames daubed on the inside walls of the shed and carved in the wooden benches. These symbols are read by the adult world as further signs of disaffected youth, as the marks of rebellion left by aimless adolescents. In contrast, the transformatory acts wrought by younger children on the environment, whereby a window gets accidentally broken or chalk marks decorate the pavement, are seen as legitimate changes for they are part of 'play'. Adolescents who similarly designate their own areas of activity by marking the environment in particular ways pose a threat to society for they have no legitimate action sphere and, being older, are no longer supposed to question or challenge the accepted and dominant order.
Colin Ward recognises the structural similarity between these two kinds of transformations in his assessment of the meaning of graffiti:

' the writing is not a reaction to environmental givens, it is an interpretation of them, a statement about the origins and relative immutability of this bit of the physical world.' (1973:63)

The inscribing of nicknames, the presentation of love affairs through the words" Jos loves Maz " represents a freedom to reinterpret and challenge the accepted order, that which adults do not question. It is this which, I suggest, threatens adult order over and above the physical damage or change incurred. Adults only write on paper or blackboards; the children write anywhere and with anything. Names can be written on clothes, walls, tables, pavements, books, hands, telephone kiosks and on cars. Writing is done through scratching, carving or painting on hard surfaces or through imprinting on soft surfaces such as snow, soot, or wet cement. The children continually explore these different possibilities, and it is a mode of thought which is lost as adulthood encroaches; the rigidity of adult categories is exposed through the children's constant experimentation.

Another reason why graffiti is particularly offensive to the adult world lies in its deflective aspect. Unlike ideological graffiti or slogans daubed on walls, the nicknames are, to adults, an indecipherable series of faceless names. They do not draw the onlooker's attention to any message but, on the contrary, appear to be totally
Plates 4 & 5. "The symbols of ownership of the 'Old Man's Shed' are the nicknames daubed on the walls."
meaningless. The love affairs etched in the bus shelter walls and nicknames sprayed on doors record and document the culture of 'doing nothing'. They reveal little to those who are not participants. As such they represent an insidious attack on adult order through the symbolic privatisation of public space.

Conclusion: 'Doing nothing' as a conflict model

'Doing nothing', it was suggested earlier, is a root metaphor for the adolescent culture. It describes a context for action rather than discrete activities, a way of thinking about and acting in the world. It is a creative process whose origins lie in the 'play' of early childhood but when translated into the adolescent age group 'doing nothing' appears to be subversive of the dominant ideology surrounding concepts of action. Throughout the analysis attention has been given to the ways in which the children create this context betwixt and between the boundaries erected by the adult world during the socialization process, experienced as an ordering system. That adolescents continue to question and experiment with that order contributes to the negativity with which the idea of 'doing nothing' is received by the adult world.

To further illustrate this misperception I shall end with an extended case-study of another fieldwork example of the process of transformation wrought by the children on their
environment which created conflicts with the adult world. Finally, I shall discuss why 'doing nothing', despite its nihilistic appearance, is, for the children, the most appropriate description of their own cultural context.

The youth club, which most of the children attended, means different things to different sections of the community and throughout my period of fieldwork there was always an inherent tension between the children's, the youth leader's, the Welfare Committee's and the local population's conception of it. Such differences of opinion were constantly exploited by the children and, by doing so, they created for themselves considerable freedom of movement between the boundaries laid down by different sections of the adult community.

The youth club meets twice weekly in the Miners Welfare Hall in the village, a building situated on the edge of a large council estate where most of the children reside. It utilises two rooms in this building on the ground floor, one of which is the club room, the other leased from the Welfare Committee only for the two nights. The two rooms are connected by a passage which also gives access to the snooker room, the male and female toilets and the cadet room/social security temporary office. (Fig. 3). This physical structure is, however, subject to frequent reinterpretations by different sections of the community when the youth club is under discussion. The building itself is run by the Welfare Committee, a body composed of
Fig. 3. Plan of Miners Welfare

N.B. Shaded areas indicate the ambiguous zones exploited by the children. Again, the children can be seen to make maximal use of the spaces between adult conceptions of order.
elderly men who are mostly retired miners. Its job is to organize the running of the Welfare Hall, including the allocation of rooms for social functions. Relations between the Welfare Committee and the Youth Club Management Committee - a body which supervises the financial and administrative affairs of the club - were frequently strained and disputes often broke out which hinged upon different conceptions of 'youth club'. It was a situation which the children exploited to the full.

From the point of view of the officers of the Welfare Committee the concept of 'youth club' was structured primarily in spatial terms and, as they had overall charge of the building, they considered themselves to have the right to enforce these conceptual limits and to restrict and bound the youth club between them. For them the youth club was only to have access to the two rooms; the connecting passage was merely a right of way allowing passage between and access to the toilets. Other parts of the building they considered to be strictly out of bounds for youth club members.

This ordering of physical space created a number of problems. If the children congregated in the corridor they were summarily evicted by the caretaker or chased into one of the club rooms. If any damage occurred in the toilets, the passage or the secondary room the blame was always laid on the children although other children who were not youth club members came into the Welfare Hall to play
It was not only the physical presence of the children in restricted areas which caused friction. If the Welfare Committee considered there to be too much noise emanating from the club they complained; the noise was, as it were, overreaching the spatial boundaries they themselves had set and the record player had to be turned down.

On the other hand, the Welfare Committee considered the temporal boundaries of the club to extend beyond its two nights a week. When some damage occurred in the garden of a nearby house, after the end of the youth club at 9.00pm the children were blamed for causing it and a complaint was lodged with the Youth Club Management Committee. Similarly, when a car was damaged outside the hall on a non-youth club night blame again was laid at the children's feet. Moreover, the Welfare Committee considered the youth club committee to be responsible for the actions of any children in the vicinity whether they were members of the club or not.

These spatial and temporal boundaries were recognized by the children and often manipulated by them to their advantage. They were able to use adult conceptions of order to circumvent the restrictions of that order itself. For example, the youth leader insisted that smoking for children under 16 was forbidden in the club. If arguments broke out about this rule the children would go out of the club-room and smoke in the corridor. They stepped over the invisible line of the doorway between the youth club and the welfare. Alternatively, they
would open the window and lean outside to smoke, arguing that they were literally smoking outside the boundary walls of the club.

Payment of 5p subscription entitled a child for a night's membership of the youth club, but a register of members who had joined the club was also kept. However, those who wished to continue their social life at the club and yet wanted to retain their 5p would stand in the corridor and chat to their friends who were allowed to use that passage as a right of way. The caretaker could not evict the non-members of the club and could only attempt to dissuade the members from joining in the conversation. If this occurred conversations would continue between club members and non-members through the open doorway, across the boundary line.

One of the youth club nights coincided with the Cadet Force meeting. Boys, who were attending the Cadets, rather than the youth club, might come first to the club before later going to the Cadets. Then, during the evening the boys would enter the club-room smoking, arguing that they were for that night at the Cadets and therefore not subject to club rules. However, when they wanted to purchase kets from the tuck-shop they would, temporarily, become club members again. Similarly, those who were playing snooker would come into buy kets on the basis of club membership, although for that night they were non-participatory members. In this way the children managed to circumvent and manipulate the lines of control drawn by two different sections of the adult world.

With reference to the above case-study it is significant that the appropriation of public space for personal domains, as in the children's use of the 'Old Man's Shed', was one of the underlying reasons for the creation of youth clubs. Special buildings were created to house and confine young people, to control their manipulation of adult spaces. But these 'clubs' were of and about the adult world, officially sanctioned spaces whose boundaries and limits were controlled by that adult world. They stifled the creative potential which is characteristic of 'doing nothing'. It should therefore be of no surprise that children will always continue to construct their own personal domains. An adult member of the community reminisces back to his time as a skin-head:

"M. talks of how there used to be a strong identification with place. Each gang had its own colour of tartan strips for their clothes...white, blue, black. The gang ranged from about 15 years old to 20 years old. The youngsters used to have to wait about in the market place near the telephone box and wait to receive a call from another gang leader. They would then go into the pub to get their leader out to answer the call. It was like their "office" and the leaders would arrange to meet." (aged 20)

But it is not only physical space which is subject to appropriation, reinterpretation and transformation whilst 'doing nothing'; objects within that space are similarly treated. Just as lampposts form 'safe' places in the games of early childhood, adolescents find alternative uses for them. The structural similarity between these two kinds of activity lies in the conception children and adolescents
have of them: like the spaces, the objects used seem to be public property or to be unwanted and abandoned by the adult world. In the culture of 'doing nothing' they are non-things suitable for the nobodies they feel themselves to be.

Rarely in the course of my fieldwork did I come across deliberate vandalism. Rather, the children found different uses for things which appeared to have been cast out as useless: old tyres were kicked and thrown about, old radios dismantled and their bits used for other purposes; butterflies were chased as 'shuttlecocks' in games of badminton. Performed by younger children such activity receives little comment; when adolescents perform them the perception changes to one of destructive action. And, to conceptually control such activity it is classed by the adult world as vandalism. That the intention to damage may not have been there, that the object itself was useless to the adult world passes unrecognized.¹

Things appear to be done during the course of 'doing nothing'; whilst roaming the streets things present themselves to the children as potential for experimentation. For example, derelict buildings - those places which seem to belong to no one - are suitable for conversion to the children's

¹. My comments on 'vandalism' are not offered as an excuse for deliberate attacks on property but I suggest that the explanation of 'doing nothing' in terms of the children's own interpretation of the world and their place within it may lead to more comprehension of the meaning of this action. /..
own private property. During the course of my fieldwork an old cinema was due to be demolished and, as soon as the order was served on it, its walls were daubed in graffiti. Prior to this it had been untouched by the children although it had been empty for two years.

Telephone boxes can be transformed into objects of amusement rather than communication:

"In the telephone box you pick any number out of the book and dial it. When someone answers you say: "Is Mr.Wall there?" They say no. You ask: "Is Mrs.Wall there?" Again, they say no. Then you say: "Are there any walls there?" When they say no, you say: "Well, what's holding up the bloody roof then? You slam the phone down and run".

Coal-fired ranges may be used to play 'soldiers': bits of paper are placed in the grate and these 'soldiers' are shot down - by pulling the back-boiler flue to make the flames consume them. Bunches of keys can be transformed into footballs, coke tins made into sprays by shaking them up and puncturing them with a pin: models can be sculpted with the putty stolen from new window frames; ants can be made to fry under the glare of a magnifying glass in the sun; pictures of nude ladies can be placed on the dart-board and the bodily parts used to differentiate between scores; trees can be climbed, walls can be sat on, garages can be clambered over.

'Doing nothing' is, then, both structure and event; it is both form and content, each transforms into the other. Things appear to be done in the temporal and spatial flow of everyday
life as the following description of one short walk with a group of boys amply demonstrates.

"Tucker, Kirby and Hutch arrive, Kirby is carrying a transistor and cracks a joke about music as you walk. Hutch does an Elvis imitation to one of the songs. Kirby and Tucker do "jerky walks" - walking so as to appear having one leg longer than the other. They swipe at some butterflies with some badminton rackets they have borrowed from me after losing the shuttlecock. Tucker misses a hit and Kirby shouts: Mr. and Mrs. making a pun and referring to the television programme. They invent a new penalty for missing - knickerbocker and a double knickerbocker. They all then break into song and sing Nobby Hall at the tops of their voices. Tucker and Hutch then imitate each other, copying what each other does as they walk along. An argument breaks out as to who has the most televisions and Tucker swears that they have 4 at home and that Hutch has only 3. Tucker tells me of the camp they went to with the cadets and the pillow fight they had. We reach the allotment and they immediately ask if there are any pea pods to suck. They haven't seen courgettes before and Kirby suggests that they are water melons. Later we walk down the 'lines' (disused railway line) and Hutch finds an old tyre which he hurls in the air. They then find some bricks and throw them at the gate, betting each other that they can hit it. Kirby finds some long grass and they all blow through it, composing tunes out of the sounds they make. They leave to go to visit Mary."

' Doing nothing ' is the creative context of the children's own culture constructed between the socializing boundaries imposed upon their actions by an adult world in which they have yet to find a place.
Why then do children use the term 'doing nothing'? The series of cameos presented and discussed throughout the analysis yield some clues. Firstly, 'doing nothing' reflects the adolescent's perception of the dominant ideology surrounding concepts of action: play and work are transposed onto the categories of child and adult. Through the socializing experiences of the school, the home and the legal system the adolescent sees him or herself to be between these major classifications, in a no man's land with nothing to do. 'Doing nothing' is a response in accordance with the terms of the dominant order which leaves them with no legitimated action sphere.

But, as the analysis reveals, the negativity of this description has some positive benefits for, by using the term 'doing nothing', the children deflect external perception of the discrete activities in which they have been engaged. The description 'doing nothing' effectively cuts off communication with the adult world: no questions can be asked about non-events, no controls can be applied. It can mean 'doing nothing you would be interested in' or 'doing nothing I want you to know about' but the questioner cannot tell. As such 'doing nothing' allows the children some freedom of movement between the lines which control them.

In essence, 'doing nothing' is a response within the discourse available. Many of the children had hobbies which
would fall into a legitimated sphere of action: swimming, football, stamp collecting and horse riding. Many of the children worked legitimately in shops or doing milk rounds. But to answer questions about 'doing' in these terms would invite adult participation in and knowledge of their own collective culture, possibly leading to a lessening of the freedom and self respect which these activities bring to the children. To actually detail other aspects of 'doing nothing', such as throwing bricks at tin cans or participating in the black economy, would be negatively perceived by the adult world and would invite controls upon these actions. To respond with the reply 'doing nothing' is therefore the most satisfactory answer, one which serves to exclude rather than include adults from their activities. It is the one answer which allows the growing child maximum freedom of movement during the socializing process and maximum self control over that experience. The logic of this conflict model is outlined in Fig. 4.

For the growing child it is the freedom to be one's self, to be in control of one's own actions which is perceived to be of greatest importance, a perception which parallels the experience of 'play' for the younger child as Sutton-Smith describes:

'It is not just that the freedom to be irrational gives one the greatest possible freedom to be oneself (exploring all personal permutations), the freedom to indulge the opposite as one can in play or in rites of reversal is itself a cognitive activity which liberates thought.' (1977b:235)
### Fig. 4  Doing Nothing: A Conflict Model

Diagram illustrates the deflective aspect of the children's culture through the metaphoric use of 'doing nothing' as a description of their everyday activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child's Response</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Adult's Response</th>
<th>Effect Produced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hobbies and sports</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>further questions and interest</td>
<td>interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smashing windows roaming streets playing in the toilets</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>criticism and restriction of activities</td>
<td>interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'doing nothing'</td>
<td>+/-</td>
<td>mystification and frustration</td>
<td>no interaction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

}
The continuation of this 'play' mode into adolescence as the experience of 'doing nothing' reflects the process of social maturation which the children are undergoing. It is an experience which they actively participate in, rather than passively accept, and it is through using 'doing nothing' as a metaphor for the culture which they create that this self-socialization is best protected.
Introduction

What goes zzub zzub is a bee flying backwards and what is significant about this event is that adults rarely find it amusing. Children, on the other hand, invariably do. This suggests that they possess an alternative conception of the world, one which is lost or transformed as adulthood encroaches. It indicates the existence of an alternative linguistic mode within which 'zzubing' bees are perceived as humorous, a use of language which contrasts with that of the adult world. If, as Crick suggests, 'language is the most social of all institutions' then an exploration of these linguistic differences should reveal, in part, the process of socialization, the process whereby children learn about social order (1976:7).

Undoubtedly, one of the most crucial elements in the post-1960 revolution in social anthropological theory was the belated recognition of the importance of Ferdinand de Saussure's (1960) contribution to the structural study of language. It was his work which, through demonstrating
the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, stimulated structuralist approaches to the study of social forms. Through de Saussure's formulation of the sign as both signifier and signified this new perspective explored the idea that 'language is not simply a labelling device for elements of the real world' but, what was more important for the study of social life, that 'there is some relationship between the categories through which the world is experienced and the language used to express them' (Ardener, 1971b:xx).

However, although structuralism owes a considerable debt to this linguistic tradition, there has been a tendency, as Crick points out, to ignore the study of language as a means of symbolic expression:

'for all the modern use of language and linguistic models to investigate classificatory systems, it seems to have been overlooked that language itself is a social fact and that one might reasonably expect verbal activity to form such a symbolic structure'. (1976:66) 1

The duality of the Saussurian model has focused attention upon the division between language and discourse, disguising the fact that 'language really only exists when a speaker takes it in his possession and actualises it' (Ricouer, 1978:70). To include this possibility within a structuralist

1. For further discussion of these debates see pp.14-22.
frame necessitates conflating the artificial distinction between *la langue* and *la parole*: it involves combining a semiotic approach to culture - the analysis of 'intra-linguistic relationships' - with a semantic focus, that is a recognition of the 'relationship between language and the world' (*ibid*:74). Only then can verbal activity be seen to form a symbolic structure.

Within such a perspective language is not understood to contain meanings but rather the potentiality to mean: it is a means of meaning, not the source of them. Meaning arises from use. To explore the act and art of using language 'one must begin from speaking as a mode of action not from language as an unmotivated mechanism' (*Hymes*, 1971:67). Such an approach focuses on the performative aspects of language as a structuring and creative linguistic mode. It is, then, through moving away from an analysis of language and other modes of symbolic expression as purely 'an investigation of signs in abstraction toward an investigation of them in their natural habitat - the common world in which men look, name, listen and make' that a more incisive and penetrating description, and hence explanation, of social life is achieved (*Geertz*, 1976:1498). It demonstrates the ways in which 'individuals and groups of individuals try to make sense of the profusion of things that happen to them' and endeavours to capture and portray the form and context of this creative process (*ibid*:1498).
In the following analysis of the language of children these ideas are explored. Through emphasising the performative aspects of language the process and forms through which the children acquire and demonstrate their knowledge of the social world are displayed and the context within which 'zzubing' bees are humorous is revealed to be a social space between adult orders:

' Becoming social cannot be understood in 'monological' terms: as a series of competencies simply 'stored' in the learner. Rather becoming social involves, on the level of cognition, mastery of the 'dialogical' contexts of communication. Such mastery is by no means wholly discursive, but involves the accumulation of practical knowledge of the conventions drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social interaction.' (Giddens, 1979:129-30)

The language of 'doing nothing' images this socializing experience; it is a language of and about the children's culture and reveals the ways in which children actively participate in their own socialization. As the analysis suggests children create their own language by appropriating and transforming the adult tongue, a performative mode which reflects the children's construction of their own cultural space, the context for 'doing nothing'.

Talking of language.....

The significance of tracing the process and form of language use was brought home to me by the comments of one child. Remarking upon his frequent visits to see me with his friends

1. These ideas of appropriation and transformation of the adult world appear in the children's use of space, see pp.233-249.
he said: "It's nice coming here - to sit and talk".

Talking, as I soon became aware, is a crucial part of ' doing nothing '; ' doing nothing ' involves learning how to talk ; talking involves knowing how and when to use language.

In outlining his approach towards an ethnography of speaking Hymes points out that,

' rules of appropriateness beyond grammar govern speech and are acquired as part of conceptions of the self, and of meanings associated both with particular forms of speech and with the act of speaking itself. ' (1971:56 )

To be able to talk involves more than grammatical competence: it requires knowledge of appropriate and inappropriate forms and contexts of speaking. But such rules are never made explicit; children have only a ' practical mastery ' over their language ( Bourdieu, 1977:2). To discover these implicit procedures involves, therefore, analysis of their manifestation in performance.

An important feature of talking is telling tales, tales about their experiences in and of the adult world, of confrontations with particular adults, of incidents which have happened. Telling tales, in adult eyes, is something

1. In his discussion Bourdieu distinguishes between practical and symbolic mastery. The children have ' practical mastery ' with language only; they do not and cannot discourse about speech rules, their grammatical forms or the correctness of particular phrases or words. But, those who cannot ' talk ' are ridiculed and laughed at; they are easily marked out, c.f. Bourdieu ( 1977) pp16-22.
not to be done; children must not inform on one another.

But, tale telling is critical in 'doing nothing'. Children inform each other through telling tales; this is one of the ways in which they gain knowledge of the social world. Phil Corrigan also notes the significance of tale telling:

'standing around talking amongst themselves seems to have a real importance to the boys which mirrors the importance of talking in school and the importance of silence to the teacher. ..... They stand around and exchange stories, which need never be true or real, but which are as interesting as possible.' (1979:127)

All tales are told in a particular style and the following are representative of this oral tradition:

(1) "One night some lads broke into the undertakers and two coppers came in. Two of the lads escaped but the third was left behind and had to hide in a coffin. When he thought the cops had gone he began to get out of the coffin and as he raised the lid one of the coppers saw him in the light of his flash lamp and fainted."

(2) "My cousin had a shop and one day someone stole a pair of knickers. The cops came and my cousin told them he hadn't chased the man as he didn't like to ask the man for a pair of ladies knickers."

(3) "There was this milk depot and one night two lads broke in to steal some milk bottles but the man who owned it had put mousetraps on top of all the bottles to catch them."

(4) "Tom and his mates broke into a butchers shop one night and tried to take the safe away. They got it as far as the door but it was too big to get it through."

1. Talking in school - particularly in lessons - is a disorderly act: it represents the intrusion of the children's external world inside the school. It is matter out of place and out of time, see p.448.

2. Similar series of tales are told about sexual exploits, see p. 523 about the consumption of cigarettes and alcohol, see p.534 and about work experience, see p.228.
As far as I was able to ascertain none of these events ever took place in the manner in which they were told. But the reality or non-reality of these fictions is a secondary consideration. The details of the tale are subservient to its stylistic form as is demonstrated by a comparison with an event which did take place:

"Hawky tells me how his brother stole fags from the shop down the street and naturally the police came to their house to look for them. They were all sitting around puffing away on the fags and the police came and asked if they had any cigarettes (Hawky laughs at the stupidity of their comments.) "We were throwing packets of twenty onto the fire to get rid of them" he says, aghast at the waste, but tells me that he shoved 120 inside a cushion for later."

The brothers were all persistent petty thieves, well known in the neighbourhood, but the telling of this tale was comparable with the tales of non-events.

That the precise details of a tale are irrelevant to its overall structure is apparent in another story told to me at frequent intervals throughout my period of fieldwork. On first arriving in the village I was told that one of the boys had smashed a shop window and had been fined. Later, the story was repeated but this time it was said that the boy paid the fine of £30 himself. Another account stated that his father paid it and yet another related how his father refused to pay it and went to prison. A final version told that a policeman paid the fine on the boy's behalf. Over the two year fieldwork period the amount of the fine increased from £30 to £150 to £153. This particular tale was always
told in company and no one ever questioned its validity or disputed the facts. The details were irrelevant; it was a good story. It is the style and subject matter of a tale which is more important than its factual base for tale telling is about performance and artistry, about skill in language use.¹

A tale to be told whilst 'doing nothing' must, then, be structured in particular ways to be effective: it must be expressive of the children's own linguistic style and the overall subject matter must be of significance to the everyday concerns and interests of the listeners. The above examples all refer to incidents which 'occurred' with the police. Another group of tales are told about events at school, particularly about confrontations with or jokes played upon their teachers. Both groups of tales concern figures of authority, policemen and the teachers, who have some power to control and order the activities of the children; they represent two kinds of law enforcers with whom the children have daily to contend. In these stories this experience is laid bare and the potentiality of conflict neutralised through its representation in a humorous frame. The children symbolically liberate events from adult control through the ritualised telling of tales, transforming a possibly serious confrontation in their everyday lives into a laughing matter. They are tales of the unexpected about very real expectations.

¹. Facts only become important in competitive tale telling; for example, in tales about sexual exploits, among boys in particular, the facts become central rather than peripheral. In such cases tales told are sources of knowledge, see pp. 444-449 for further discussion.
Another set of tales endlessly related by the children echo this transformatory mode; ghost and spook stories are good stories precisely through an assurance on behalf of the story teller that these ' unreal ' events actually took place. As such they represent an inversion of the previous group of stories:

(1) "The junior school is haunted by a man who sits in a wheel chair. One girl saw it and fell downstairs and broke her leg."

(2) "Steven said that in the factory where his father works there is a ghost. He was walking through his room and he went cold all over. He went into the office and there was a wellington boot in the corner which rocked back and forth and spoke to him. Once the wellington boot jumped out at his dad. His dad was furious when they got rid of it as it was his father's friend."

(3) "We often go to the spiritualist hut. There's an old woman in there. Once Steven talked to his grandfather. One girl talked to her grandmother who said that somewhere there was a photograph and a bracelet which she should find before someone else got it who looked exactly like her."

(4) "In the Chinese take away there are alsation dogs hanging up in the back of the shop as meat. Peter once saw a dog hanging in the wood with its throat slit. Another time a policeman's dog was strung up on the bridge with barbed wire."

Through reference to a personal tie - a family member or someone at school- these fictional tales become factual. To tell a good tale is to transform reality through performance; a good performance requires a particular facility with the language of children.

The tales told by children illustrate that, for them, talking is doing. In the adult world this is not the case...
which serves to further reinforce the dominant negative perception of 'doing nothing', the children's culture. Through the tales the children tell one another events and non-events are conflated in the performance. They are expressive of the children's own world and are part of its creation.\textsuperscript{1} As such these tales are mythical stories, stories which are about knowledge more than containers of it. A myth, as Wagner has argued, 'is not a passive message about things but an active operator in setting up or bringing about certain conceptual conditions' (1978: 256). For the children, these conditions are the conditions of becoming social; they demonstrate through performance how to experience and how to perceive the world. Through analysis, therefore, they reveal the world through the eyes of children. The ways in which this is achieved are documented below through discussion of linguistic style in performance.

Language as classifier: 'them' and 'us'

The precis of the tales told by the children used above do not reveal the style in which such stories are told and style

\textsuperscript{1} The current success of the north-eastern comedian Bobby Thompson parallels this in the adult world. Bobby Thompson's performance in working men's clubs consists of series of tales about working-class life in the north-east of England. The stories merge into one another in a conversational style and are quite distinctive in their presentation of a way of life and a mode of thought. To those who are not familiar with the north-eastern culture his brand of comedy is impenetrable.
is crucial to this performative art. Tales must be told in a particular manner, have a distinctive patterning of language and a particular rhythm to be a good story, as the following tape transcript reveals.¹

"G: Allison we were geet teasing Kirby's sister last night.

GL: Right, she runs up behind us with a funny run yer kna...

G: He's chucking bricks at her yer kna.

GL: She picks one up and goes "I'm going to tell me dad of you. He'll come over and beat you." I says: "Fetch him over to our house and our Stephen '11 plant him six foot under." She goes: "Me dad'll knack him."

A: Is that his eldest sister? Catherine?

G: She's the one with the funny walk.

A: Catherine's the one with the ginger hair - isn't she?

GL: Music box.

G: Radio 1.

A: She's the one who always walks round with a radio on. Is she the one who was a waitress?

GL: No that's the other one - the funny walk one.

A: I've never met her."

As Phil Corrigan has suggested children place importance on talking 'not to communicate ideas, but to communicate the experience of talking' (1979:128).

But Corrigan touches on only one feature of children's talking. As I reveal below, the performative style and experience of talking represents, for the children, the exchange of ideas in itself : the language of 'doing nothing'.

¹. I was unable to get many tapes of such stories for, as I show later, tales are not set aside from more general 'talking'; they appear in the midst of conversation - as part of the experience of talking rather than a particular and separate mode.
involves the manipulation and transformation of a language initially derived by them from the adult world. Through the creation of their own exclusive language the children, then, take control over this part of the socialization process. It is this movement towards increased self control which is fundamental to the culture of 'doing nothing' and the children's use of language images this process.

Labov, for example, has shown that whilst children originally learn to speak, learn how to use language, through contact with their immediate family circle, their language becomes increasingly 'reconstructed to fit the rules used by their peer groups' as they grow older (1969:208). These 'rules' are implicit rules of pattern, style and cadence; they structure a way of speaking through use of a particular and particularised vocabulary, a distinct syntax, a peculiar rhythm, accent and pronunciation. To be able to speak in this language requires more than the art of translation. It necessitates knowing how to use language. It is this which is the mark of a good story teller, it is this which is important in performance.

The Opies point out that any child, new to an area, must learn the local words and expressions for 'unless he does this, he will not merely be thought peculiar, he will not be understood' (1977:35). I, too, had to learn a new language. The children, for example, have their own words for parts of the body, to differentiate between kinds of footwear, to insult those they hate; local landmarks are renamed, local
characters identified by specific epithets. They also use particular adjectives and specialised verbs, employ heavily patterned and ritualised forms of speech which gives a distinctive stamp to their conversational style. It is this which structures their linguistic performances.

Firstly, the children's vocabulary is characterised by a preference for 'short, sharp words' (Opies, 1977:175). This economy of length creates a harshness of sound, a staccato rhythm, which itself facilitates a particular conversational style: a fast, punchy metre which allows for quick verbal exchanges. The parts of the body, for example, are renamed mostly with mono-syllabic terms; none are longer than two syllables: gob, rattle, trap, hole, and hooter all mean the mouth; sneck and beak refer to the nose; lugs are ears and lid means head.

Secondly, the potential musicality of language is recognised and utilised. A considerable uniformity of sound is produced through the use of particular word endings: hag, bag, bog, lug, mug and bug; clemmy, spuggy, chowy, gadgy, gobby, sissy, manky and hacky. Words with the suffix 'er' and 'a' are pronounced with a hard 'a' sound, as in 'crack': spacca, snacker, knacker, mega. Others ending in 'z' or 's' are pronounced like the 'z' in buzz: soz, bas, les, pros. In this manner the children transform their mother tongue, that taught to them as tiny children, in a highly ordered fashion.

1. See Glossary.
and create their own uniform language.¹

The Opies point to 'two apparently conflicting emotions .... active in schoolchild language', namely, a 'respect for tradition and a desire for fun' (ibid:174). This latter theme reveals itself in the 'slangy superficial lore of comic songs, jokes, catch phrases, fashionable adjectives, slick nicknames and crazes' that instantly spread, like wildfire, throughout a particular group (ibid:34). During my period of fieldwork this tradition was apparent. The adjective cool and the noun nurd both became current, words taken from the American television programme Happy Days.² Similarly, the adjective rare can be traced to the popularity of such rare beings as The Hulk and Spider Man. Invented for children by the adult world and introduced to them through the media, it is ironic that many adults find such references obscure. The creation of specialized consumer products for children increases their marginality from the social order and, as the above examples show, it ensures, at the same time, the very exclusiveness of that marginality.

The second strand in the language of school children is what the Opies refer to as dialectal lore 'the language of children's darker doings', a language which 'belongs to all time, but is limited in locality' (ibid:35). This

¹. Comparable processes of transformation occur in the formation of nicknames, see p.381.

². For a discussion of Happy Days see footnote 1, p.314 and also p.359.
is passed between generations of children, preserved through their games and rhymes, a language which is truly their peculiar property. It includes words for 'playing truant, giving warning, sneaking, swearing, snivelling, tormenting and fighting' (ibid:65). It is the property and propensity of particular groups of children, closely guarded and inherited by the succeeding generations.

Many of these words are transformations of words in the adult language. This suggests that the mode of transmission is not only from child to child but also one which actively incorporates and manipulates adult language. Only after this process does it become their own. As I suggested previously, the process of socialization is two-fold, involving both transmission and transformation and often transformation occurs in the very act of transmission.¹ This process is exemplified in the patterning of the children's vocabulary: soz, meaning sorry, has been shortened and the end syllable replaced with a single 'z'. The adult word has been reconstructed; a new word is produced in the child's style. Similarly, the word spastic is transformed into spacca and chewing-gum into chowy.

Other words reveal a somewhat different process of transformation through transmission: these are old dialect words which have become obsolete in the adult tongue but are still

¹. See discussion, pp. 21 - 24, pp. 131 - 137.
to be found in the children's vocabulary. Over time they have become symbols of exclusiveness. In each of the following examples the original meaning of the word has been changed through a significant semantic shift.¹

For example, the word dump means cigarette end. Originally dump was a small coin or sum of money and was obsolete by 1895. As a verb dump (from Middle English dump) meant to throw or set down heavily, becoming standard English by 1900 as dump to set aside, to throw away, found for example in the word rubbish-dump. The use of dump as a noun, meaning cigarette end, encapsulates all these meanings: a cigarette end is that which has been dumped, thrown away, left as worthless by the adult world. A cigarette end, useless in the adult world, is highly prized by children. A further interesting sequence of semantic shifts can also be traced. Dump also was used to mean button (1895); derived from the meaning of dump (as small coin), it was used in dump-fencer, a button-seller. Thus, the shortened cigarette becomes a dump (fencer), equivalent to a butt (on-seller).²

Similarly, stots means testicles. Coming from the Northumberland and Durham dialect the verb stot means to strike any

¹. For another more detailed example, see Chapter 7, pp.477-514.
². Adults occasionally use the word 'dump' but it is considered somewhat impolite. Men may use it in male company, but would be rebuked for using it to a woman.
elastic article. Traced from the Dutch, *stuiten*, meaning to bounce or rebound, *stot* was also used to describe a bull-ox. *Stots*, as testicles, contains all these meanings: something elastic, bouncy as in balls (also used for testicles). Furthermore, *to stot* someone is to hit them hard, to literally make them rebound (c.f. *stoter* (1750) to fall heavily, hit hard from the Dutch *stooten* to push or knock). *Stottin*', used as an adjective by the children means to be livid, literally bouncing with rage as in the expression "I was stottin' ".

The words *trap* and *rattle*, used for mouth, have a more complex etymology. *Trap*, meaning a carriage, stems from *rattle-trap*, a carriage, itself derived from *rattler*, a coach, so called because it rattled along (1750). *Potato trap* or *potato jaw* were both slang terms for mouth from 1780 and *potato box* meant mouth from 1870. *Rattletrap* (1820) became used for mouth, and also for chatter-box. In the child's vocabulary of the twentieth century *rattle* and *trap* both mean mouth and chatter: "Shut yer mouth" is the same as "shut yer trap" or "haad yer rattle."

Certain other words used by the children are words which adults attempt to retain for their exclusive use. These are words which refer to taboo subjects, particularly those

of a sexual nature. In contrast to the foregoing examples these words - swear words or technical terms for sexual matters - do not undergo any linguistic transformation when used by the children. Indeed, the children endeavour to use these words precisely as adults do. One boy, for example, suffered acute embarrassment when he said that the acronym V.D. meant veneral disease; another was ridiculed when he announced importantly that someone he knew had cancer of the cervix. The transformation here is one of the social context of use, rather than of form or meaning as in the earlier examples and it is the transformation of context which makes such taboo words valuable to the children. Only when such words are to be uttered outside the children's own social world do they undergo any linguistic change. For example, in the company of adults or other outsiders ' bastard ' becomes bas, ' lesbian ' changes to lez , ' prostitute ' to proz and the expression ' sweet bugger all ' becomes the acronym S.B.A. . It will be noted that the transformations which such words undergo in this context are consistent with the styles noted above.

Talking, however, requires more than mere mastery over vocabulary; knowing how to use it and when to use it is equally crucial. Those who fail to heed the unwritten rules of syntax and style are ruthlessly ridiculed and inability in this sphere may lead to exclusion from the

1. Further discussion of this point is given on pp.443-449.
group. Accents and speech defects are impediments to participation, for ways of speaking are used as significant indicators of category membership. The children, for example, rigidly differentiated between those who "talk posh" and those who do not. To be included in the group a child who "talks posh" would have to adjust his or her accent, switching ways of talking between the domestic context of the home and his or her own social world. Throughout my period of fieldwork I was constantly reprimanded for the way I spoke through the accusing question: "why don't you talk like us?" Those who stutter or lisp are taught the true art of speaking through mockery:

"The others begin to tease Stephen because he gets his words mixed up and cannot maintain the pace of the conversation. They jeer at him and despise him because "he can't even swear properly". Stephen says "hell bells" instead of "hells bells" and they continue to tease him as he attempts to say it."

To be able to speak the language of the children, as this example shows, means being able to use such improper language properly.1 "Talking proper" is a prerequisite for group membership.

To be able to talk means maintaining and participating in the conversational flow, joking and teasing, knowing how

1. This is important for both girls and boys but only boys should swear in public. Girls are not supposed to swear. Boys must not, however, swear in front of girls they respect. For further discussion of this gender difference, see pp.441-458.
to answer back the verbal jibes of others. The following conversations reveal this rhythmic style as some boys played around with the tape-recorder:

(1) " T: It's not taping.
   K: It is taping you idiot.
   T: Is it?
   K: Aye.
   T: Well, say something then.
   K: Tucker is a nutter.
   T: Shut yer trap now, son.
      (Pause)
      (Laughs)
   K: Tucker is a nutter.
   T: Shut yer trap Kirby now... or I'll beat yer brains out (laughs).
   K: Go back to Sandby where you belong, Tucker.
   T: What's that... Is it taping?
   K: Why, Aye.... Tucker is a nutter, Tucker is a nutter.
   T: Shut yer mouth Kirby now, you stupid idiot...
      Oh, shut up. "

(2) " T: It's on now isn't it?
   K: Why Aye.
   T: It's not on man.
   K: It is on.
   T: It's not on.
   K: Switch it on the mike.
      (blows a raspberry and laughs)
   T: It's on (warningly)
   K: You little git.
   T: Kirby is a bummer.
   K: Shut yer face Tucker.
   T: Shut yer trap.
   K: Took 'er down the woods and got nowt.
   T: Alright... Kirby's not capable.
      (pause)
   T: Oh lad..oh lad..oh lad.. (getting louder)
   K: Baldy bonk.. baldy bonk.. baldy bonk. "

(3) " T: Can I have a fag ?
   A: Yes
   T: Are these open?
   A: They look open to me.
   T: Can I have one?
   A: Yes.
   T: (to A) you can have one of my fags. (referring to K) He can't have one can he?
   K: (replying to the insult) You can knock off then.
   T: Where's the light...Is it (the tape) on?
   A: Mmm
   T: How long's that been on?
K: (delighted) since you wanted a fag, Tucker...
wait till I tell yer mother you Smokey Joe.
T: Alright, Kirby... wait till I tell yer father
you smoke.
K: It doesn't matter.
T: It does though... he'll beat yer brains out.
K: Me father thinks yer big.
T: Who?
K: You... look at the size of him and the size of
me and me father won't even let me smoke. Tucker
walks in, a geet fag in his gob: "Here Mr. Kirby,
here's a cigar for your" (imitating Tucker).
T: So what.

In all three conversations the following characteristics
of talking, of performance, are to be found: the nicknames,'Tucker' and 'Kirby' are used throughout; insults -
idiot, git, bummer, nutter - are exchanged quickly between
them and the insulting nicknames 'Baldy Bonk' and 'Smokey
Joe' used temporarily as alternatives to permanent nicknames
in the exchange of verbal blows. Face, trap and gob are all
used for mouth, fag for cigarette, geet for great. In
conversation (1) the reference to Sandcy is to the local
lunatic asylum. In conversation (2) there is a developing
battle of verbal skill finally culminating in a word-play
upon the nickname 'Tucker' which is transformed into
'took 'er down to the woods and got nowt', that is, took
her down to the woods (place for sex) and did not manage to
have sex. This insult is diffused by T, through his
suggestion that K. is not capable at all. K. responds with
the nickname 'Baldy bonk', literally bald testicles, that
is a further derogatory comment on T's inability.

In conversation (3) a verbal battle develops over the
subject of smoking, an illicit activity, through appeal first to the authority of the opponent's mother by K. To this T. invokes the greater authority of K's father. Also in conversation C. the idea of the relationship between increasing size and the approach of adulthood is raised. The bigger you are K. suggests, the more mature you are and therefore you should be allowed to smoke but, in terms of age, T. is older than K. and therefore it is he who is permitted.¹

As a whole these three conversations, which occurred whilst 'doing nothing', reveal that the use of language, talking, is an activity in itself. Fast rhythmic speech and short snappy sentences produce a conversational style which can itself be played with. Talking is punctuated by mimicing accents, by outbursts of laughter and the introduction of non-verbal forms of expression through blowing raspberrys or feigning a raised fist.² Although it would appear that these conversations are arguments, through a glance at their content, the form and tone of all three was far from acrimonious. Talking in this style is merely something to do, a form of entertainment in itself, a performance.

1. The relationship between physical size and maturity is discussed further on pp.426-441. See also conceptualizations of age in relation to social maturity, pp.174-213.

2. See, pp.419-426 for discussion of the body as a medium of expression for the children.
The use of more ritualised verbal ripostes is also traditional to this style of talking and knowing how to use these speech forms is crucial for participation in conversations. It is a process of verbal duelling similar to the practice of 'playing the dozens' among Negro youths.¹ Both involve demonstrating mastery over language itself and hence, for the children, establishing their places within the group through verbal skill. Those who are proficient in the art gain considerable respect. Some standard response couplets are as follows:

A : Do you mind ?  
B : No, I baby sit.  
A : Well :  
B : That's what you get water from.  

A : I don't find you funny  
B : I'm not lost funny.  
A : Aye.  
B : Comes before J.  

A : See....  
B : Comes after B.  

That these formulas are traditional among school children is demonstrated through reference to the Opies:

A : Why  
B : Y is a letter you ought to know better.  
A : What ?  
B : Watt made the steam engine. ( Opies, 1977:71 )  

All such couplets again depend upon processes of transformation. The original meaning of the statement is deliberately misconstrued through performance; its content mocked and

¹ See, for example, Abrahams (1962).
distorted. This wordmanship is an important skill for the children and once again represents the creation of nonsense out of adult sense. Throughout the foregoing examples the sense of the first line is transformed into nonsense through a deft switch of contextual meaning and a play upon homonyms. The language of 'doing nothing' gains its characteristics, then, through performance and, through the creative restructuring of both form and content, talking becomes a game in itself. Many of the verbal games played by children are pure art forms; they reveal the speed and dexterity with which language can be manipulated and transformed into something other than that which it first appears to be. For example:

A : Are you alright? 
B : No, I'm half left. 

These standard couplets turn into a game through leading the unwary into unknowing participation:

A : Are you alright? 
B : No, I'm centre down the middle. 

A : How are you? 
B : I'm alright. 
A : No you're not you're half left/centre down the middle. 

A : How are you? 
B : I'm sick. 
A : No, you're not you're Paul. 

This stylistic structure is considerably flexible:

A : Are your shoes wet? 
B : No/Yes. 
A : Well, they should be. There's a big drip in them. 

A : Did you get the number? 
B : What of? 
A : The bus that run over you.

/..
A : When did you have the operation?  
B : What operation?  
A : Do you mean you've always looked like that?

What is significant about these couplets is that the majority of them are composed of common speech conventions, insignificant comments or courtesy forms of speech which are ritualised in the adult world. They are the conventional remarks used by adults in establishing social relationships or the continuation of them: the questions "How are you?", "Do you mind?", or "Are you alright?" are ritualised, requiring similarly ritualised responses. They are not those provided by the children. The children's responses poke fun at such conventional usage and, through performance, challenge the structure of adult order. Conformity is replaced by originality; one's own verbal skill is demonstrated at the expense of another's banality. Through recourse to the language of 'doing nothing' children deconstruct the rituals of language etiquette in the adult world, replacing it with their own.

One particular sequence of questions and answers is constructed by the children around the subject of smoking, highlighting the ritualised aspect of linguistic performance whilst 'doing nothing'.

A : Have you got a match?  
B : Yes, your face and my arse.
This standard riposte is transformed through the addition of a third line.

A: Have you got a match?
B: Yes your face and my arse.
C: Well, try and strike it then.

This additional third line reveals the subtly and complexity of language use among children through the device of punning. An initial pun is made of the word match, exploiting both its meaning as matchstick and pair. This double entendre is capitalised upon by matching, pairing, the questioner's face with the respondent's arse, thereby delivering an insult. Through the addition of the third line, however, the challenge is returned and the power balance upset: through again using the pun it is proposed that the insulter (B) should strike the match (that is, light the match) and at the same time strike the match (ed pair), (that, is, A's face). The concealed threat in the third line potentially moves the battle from the purely verbal plane to direct physical confrontation. Therefore, to avoid this possibility A, the insulted party, may give an alternative rejoinder:

A: Have you got a match?
B: Yes, your face and my arse.
A: Reverse the charges and no back answers.

This version effectively concludes the battle but avoids the possibility of a fight. The initially insulted turns the accusation back upon his or her opponent; the insult rebounds on its originator. If all else fails such verbal
battles can be ended through recourse to another standard response:

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
What you say is what you are.  

Such rhymes and verbal games contain their own internal energy, a dynamic which impels a riposte and leads onwards to further transformatory acts until one party fails to meet the challenge. They reveal the considerable dexterity with which the children play with language, a skill which is often highlighted by adults failing to perform as well. The inability of many adults to perceive the double meanings - I was often caught out - stems from their reliance on the conventionality of speech, their unwillingness to go beyond normal speech patterning. Adults rarely think outside the normal linguistic structures; the children often do and it is the source of their enjoyment. Simple ritual statements, polite questions, linguistic space fillers are rituals of normal social intercourse for the adult. The children seize upon these and reveal them as such, through deliberately giving meaning to essentially hollow comments. It is an act which 'intentionally deconventionalises the conventional ( and unintentionally conventionalises the unconventional ); a new meaning has been formed ( and an old meaning has been extended )' ( Wagner, 1978:28 ). In effect, the children's verbal performances demonstrate de Saussure's (op.cit.) comments on the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign:

they reveal that meaning is contextual and not, as adults appear to think, an intrinsic property of words themselves.

Bound up as they are with a particularly ordered conception of language adults are suitable targets for verbal trickery; they are not as quick as children to perceive hidden ambiguities, possible puns and the potential slipperiness of language. The children on the other hand are; living between the orders of the adult world they are nimble and experienced in the art of disordering adult perception.

"Mog decides to play a trick on me. He says; "I bet I can make you say red." He then points to various items in the room, including red things, and asks me the colour of each. I give the answer to all of them, except those which are red. He then points to a blue jumper and asks me what colour it is. I say; "It's blue." He replies, with obvious delight; "I said I could make you say blue." I begin to correct him but then realise the catch in the game, which would inevitably lead me to say the word red. I stop short. He is amazed, and annoyed, that I managed to catch on. He goes off to try it out on some girls. They are not so easily trapped and get the point of the joke earlier."

Ordinary language in the mouths of the children becomes distorted and disordered. Its symbolic structure is exploited. It is this use of language which separates the 'them' from the 'us', which distances adults from the children's culture of 'doing nothing'. Through reordering adult language the children create for themselves a manner of conversing which adults cannot easily use and, more importantly, can literally 'do nothing' about.
Occasionally this process is carried to its logical conclusion. Not only can adults not use it, they also cannot approximate to any comprehension of it. Like the use of back-slang among Cockney street-hawkers and barrow-boys, the children may so totally transform language, through inverting a word or introducing extra letters into it, that a new language is created. This foreign language is totally impenetrable to outsiders. Two girls of my acquaintance conversed in a manner which involved inserting an 'h' into words after the first letter; if the word began with a vowel the 'h' was placed in front. The result was a highly distinctive, breathless and jerky style of talking, difficult and sometimes impossible to understand. The Opies (1977) note some comparable examples: the introduction of the syllable 'eg' before vowels or 'arag' after the first letter in a word.¹

It is interesting that this transformation of language was, itself, originally an adult device:

' This secret juvenile patter is another item which is not only old but adult in origin, for, by an ironic twist, it seems formerly to have been used when adults did not want children to know what they were talking about. ' (Opies, 1977: 345).

Once again the children's use of language represents the appropriation and transformation of adult form.

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¹ See example on pp. 321-330.
One of the overall characteristics of the performative aspects of the children's language is, then, the creation of semantic and linguistic barriers which separate off and define the cultural context of their social world. Socialization, in this light, is not merely the ordering and classification of children by adults, but the active reordering and process of self-classification performed by the children themselves:

"By using slang, local dialect, a multiplicity of technical terms, word-twistings, codes and sign language, children communicate with each other in ways which outsiders are unable to understand and thus satisfy an impulse common to all underdogs." (ibid:344)

This 'impulse' is nothing more, however, than the structural necessity to maintain group unity in the face of external systems of control, to distinguish the 'them' from the 'us' in their own terms. Through recognising and exploiting the power of language as a symbolic system the children exclude adults from participation. For adults, to be greeted with the couplet, "Ha, ha, ha, hee, hee, hee / An elephant piddled up a rhubarb tree" means nothing; it is pure nonsense. For the children it is a traditional insult applied to the bearers of stale news, a damning comment on their boring and banal personality.

**Rhymes and rhyming**

It was suggested above that the children pay particular attention to the rhythmic and musical quality of language in their conversational style so it is not surprising
that rhymes themselves are integral to the activity of
talking. These rhymes are those passed directly between
successive generations of children, unlike nursery rhymes
taught to children by adults: ' not always invented by
children they are used by them and transmitted by them,
largely without the mediation of adults or the help of
print' (Rutherford, 1971:8). To hear a group of
children sniggering in a corner over one of these rhy~mes
is to feel the power which such esoteric knowledge brings
with it, what Tambiah describes as the ' magical power of
words ' (1973:175). The stirring of adult memories on
the hearing of these rhymes supports the suggestion that
these verses are the ' peculiar property of children '
(Rutherford, 1971:8). Half-remembered verses speak of
the adult's past participation in this corpus of secret
knowledge.

The two major transformatory styles characteristic of the
children's construction and use of language indicated above
are (1) semantic changes and (2) changes in the spelling
of words themselves. These represent play upon form and
content and it is these two movements which give to the
language of ' doing nothing ' its autonomy. The children
are their own ritual specialists and teach one another,
through performance, their cultural style. It is such
techniques which contain and order the culture of children
and are techniques replicated in many diverse dimensions.
The rhymes of children are one such area.
As the Opies (1977) show, many rhymes have an extremely long history; some were originally adult verses and others are translated in different cultures. Some rhymes endure whilst others are momentary. Unlike nursery rhymes, however, these verses are not frozen through the literary mode, but form a purely oral tradition, subject to continual change through the social context of use. In this sense the rhymes are subject to the children's own creativity for the content can change through performance. But it is a creativity which is highly structured.

The Opies remark that 'rhyme seems to appeal to a child as something funny and remarkable in itself, there need be neither wit nor reason to support it' (1977:37). Indeed, this is the case. Rhymes, unlike jokes, are rarely introduced; they appear as a normal part of the conversation or, in the case of counting-out rhymes for games, they are functional to the game itself. The conversational style of 'doing nothing' allows the children to burst spontaneously into rhyme in mid-sentence - through rhyming nicknames or word games - and verses can crop up within the normal flow of talking. In that they are part of normal conversational style they need have no extrinsic purpose other than that of contributing to the performance of the speaker and the experience of the listener. There is, for example, no weighty meaning attached to the following rhyme; it is pure nonsense, an experience to be enjoyed:

/..
Mrs. White had a fright
In the middle of the night.
She saw a ghost eating toast
Halfway up a lampost.

Other rhymes, however, are more conscious constructions; these are transformations of songs which were once popular in the adult world but no longer commonly sung. For example, the children have their own rendition of the old musical hall favourite, *Daisy, Daisy*:

Daisy, daisy, the cops are after you
And if they catch you
They'll give you a month or two.
They'll tie you up with wire
And set your knickers on fire.
So ring the bell and pedal like hell
On a bicycle made for two.

It will be noted that the form of the song is maintained; its metre and rhythm are used to experiment with the content and the whole song is contained by the retention of its original boundaries, the first and the last lines. A love song is transformed into a slightly licentious verse but its form is unaltered. It is an iconic image of the process of manipulating form between adult boundaries of order symbolic of the culture of 'doing nothing'. The traditional folk song, *Johnny's so long at the fair*, undergoes similar treatment:

Oh dear what can the matter be,
Three old ladies locked in the lavatory,
They were there from Monday to Saturday
Nobody knew they were there.

Again, the form of the song remains but the metre and rhythm of the original provides the vehicle for an altered content. The theme of the song is also retained; absence is still
the underlying message but a traditional love lament has become transposed into a verse which ridicules the adult world. The humour of this verse lies in the fact that for adults lavatories are merely places for excreting bodily wastes; on the other hand, toilets for children are places for many other kinds of activities. 1 The three old ladies are, as it were, being made to use the toilets in the manner of children, a wish which is profoundly anti-adult. The infinite flexibility of the language used by the children is echoed in their rhymes. Once having transformed a song this transformation itself yields further possibilities:

Oh dear what can the matter be,
Mr. Jackson's locked in the lavatory,
He was there from Monday to Saturday
Nobody knew he was there.

Here, a particular teacher is made the figure of fun in the verse; the generality of the original transformation is used for specific ends.

As the above examples suggest rhymes are important in the language of the children. They are themselves speech forms, not merely a form which uses language. Rhymes are part of the style of talking, a way of conversing which allows for continual invention and re-invention and it is through constant use and repetition that the creative power of language is released and realised through performance.

Other rhymes are parodies of songs which adults regard as legitimate for children; children are instructed to learn nursery rhymes, religious hymns and carols. But these are of the adult world and therefore quickly subject to alteration through reference to phenomena significant in the culture of children:

We three kings of Orient are,
Selling ladies underwear,
Knicker elastic
How fantastic
Two shillings a pair.

In the above verse, collected in 1978, it will be noted that the last line refers to shillings as currency. Seven years after decimalisation this is a significant indication of the continuity of childhood lore between successive generations. However, that it is a style of restructuring language which is retained, rather than simply specific examples, is demonstrated by the speed with which new material can be assimilated by the children. The structuring principle is always the same. The following rendition of We three kings was known to myself as a child in Birmingham during 1962-3 when Beatlemania gripped the pop world:

We four Beatles of Liverpool are,
John in a taxi, Paul in a car,
George on his scooter,
Tooting his hooter,
Following Ringo Starr.

This was itself a transformation of an original transformation cited by the Opies as being current in Birmingham in 1959, prior to the Beatles era:

/..
We three kings of Orient are,
One in a taxi, one in a car,
One on a scooter,
Tooting his hooter,
Following yonder star.

The choice of subject matter for these parodies of adult songs is particularly significant; the humour and illicit enjoyment to be gained from reciting them lies through their reference to 'taboo' topics. In particular excretory and sexual functions feature predominantly through references to knickers, underwear, lavatories and the sexual act. It is through the rhyme form that excretory and sexual matters are discussed, knowledge openly displayed and transmitted between children. Knowledge of the adult world is gleaned by the children and incorporated into their culture through this verbal style; it is stored here and passed on to others through performances. This may well account for the perpetuation of sexual myths amongst children and the familiarity of quite young children with sexual terms and swear words. Whether an individual child understands the explicit reference of a particular word is not important; he or she knows implicitly that it is 'dirty' or 'rude' for it is the mode and manner of transmission which gives it great symbolic weight. Form and performance dominate content, recalling the features of tale telling discussed earlier.

Through memorising and later using such words the children can appear knowledgeable and may only afterwards fully...

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1. Further discussion of the acquisition of sexual knowledge by children appears on pp.441-458.
comprehend their meaning. In this respect, many verses can be said to be educative mnemonics which assist the learning process as socialising forms. The following verses make this explicit:

Mary had a little lamb
She also had a duck
She put them on the mantelpiece
To see if they would....

Mary had a little lamb
She covered it in charcoal
And everywhere that Mary went
It looked right up her....

In the recitation of these kinds of rhymes the last word is not spoken and the listener is left to silently fill in the gap. The nursery rhyme, with which the child will have considerable familiarity, provides the metre and rhyme scheme as clues to the length and sound of the missing word. In this way such rhymes test the listener's knowledge and fluency in the use of 'tabooed' language. Those who cannot think of a fitting rhyme are ridiculed; in not getting the point they reveal their ignorance. It is important, then, for such children to laugh for, through laughing, they assert their familiarity with the topic and reinforce group complicity.

As a socializing process this use of rhymes is interesting and raises some fundamental issues. Through performance the separation between the children's and the adult's worlds are displayed. Adults who hear such rhymes are often lulled by the familiarity of the form and remain
ignorant of its content; the adult's ignorance is exposed to the children. On the other hand, the form also serves to disguise a particular child's ignorance from others in the group. Such rhyming, then, produces a learning style which is specific to the culture of 'doing nothing' and allows the children to operate successfully within it; it is also remarkably effective in inhibiting the learning of the content of the children's culture by the adult world. Culture in this sense is truly creative in making experience possible for the children and impossible for adults and it is through performance that this cultural space is defined and realised.

The language of 'doing nothing', therefore, has certain fundamental structuring principles which give to it a particular style, and which find repetition in all spheres. For example, in many of the children's verses, as in their tales, authority figures such as teachers, policemen and adults in general are conceptually distanced from the children's culture through abuse or ridicule. One of the best known examples is a verse traditionally sung on Guy Fawkes night by the children.

Build a bonfire, build a bonfire,  
Put Miss Robson on the top,  
Put Jackson in the middle,  
And burn the fuckin' lot.

The form of the rhyme is used to insult specific individuals and it will be noticed that poor Mr. Jackson again is the target as the children use the rhyme in their own cultural context. The funeral pyre of Guy Fawkes symbolises the
burning of authority, the eradication of those seen by
the children to control them. This, in itself, is a
transformation for it was the authorities who burnt Guy
Fawkes after his challenge to their control.¹

As the Opies' (1977) collection reveals such parodies
are endless but, as I have suggested, the process of
transformation is highly consistent with the general
features of the language of 'doing nothing'. The form
of the original is always retained but its meaning drastically
altered in performance through the insertion of symbols
specific to the culture of children. Another example
will emphasise this point:

While shepherds washed their socks by night,
All watching I.T.V.,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And switched to B.B.C.

1. As a child in the early 60's I sang a similar verse:

   Build a bonfire, build a bonfire,
   Put the teachers on the top,
   Put the text-books in the middle,
   And burn the flippin' lot.

This rhyme was usually sung to celebrate the end of the
school term. It is another example of the continuity of
the lore of children. Interestingly, when I was a child
we thought the swear word 'flipping' was quite daring;
for the children in the late 70's 'fucking' has become
the replacement 'taboo' word.

Another half-remembered verse went as follows:

   No more Latin, no more French,
   No more sitting on the old school bench.

I sung this verse at junior school where Latin was not a
subject and I doubt whether I knew what Latin was. This is
a further example of the importance of the performative and
educative aspect of children's language and also highlights
the transmission of verbal lore through generations of
children. The Opies (1977) give similar examples,
Firstly, this rhyme is a parody of a traditional carol: the religious message sung as a celebration in the adult world is transformed into a mundane and humorous commentary by the children. This is achieved by punning; the children exploit the homology of sound between 'watched their flocks' and 'washed their socks'. Also significant is the fact that the angel of the lord, a messenger from the supreme authority, is sent to order and control activity; for the children I.T.V. was the channel they always watched and it is this outside angelic controller who forces them, as it were, to switch to the more educative and staid B.B.C.

The linguistic creativity of children, apparent in the above examples, mirrors their continual experimentation with the elements of a material world whilst 'doing nothing'. It is a creativity similar to that of bricolage defined by Lévi-Strauss as follows:

'a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with remains of previous constructions or destructions.' (1972:17)

Many of the songs, rhymes and words used by the children are transformations of those in the adult world or reworked versions of songs they used to sing as children and many of the games and activities of 'doing nothing' represent similar transformatory modes. Through processes of disordering, reordering, reversing and inverting the dominant

1. See discussion on pp.233-262.
language children create their own ordered linguistic system out of its many parts.

Disorderly language

I have argued so far that the language of 'doing nothing' is a creative process of disordering and reordering the adult tongue in a highly systematic and meaningful mode. It is consistent therefore that the telling of jokes, the posing of riddles and the performance of verbal tricks should be a major aspect of the language of 'doing nothing': all these represent explicit ways of playing with the form and meaning of language, of reordering that ordered system.

The common practice by children of collecting riddles and jokes, noted by the Opies (1977), was carried out by the children. One girl had inscribed in an old school notebook a collection of over eighty riddles and jokes; others were always keen to swap riddles and jokes with their friends. Such practices reinforce the idea that talking for the children is in itself an activity; like the recitation of rhymes and the telling of tales, joking and riddling are modes of conversing for the children, not merely a part of conversation. Jokes and riddles appear in the course of talking; rarely are they set aside as a specific speech act for, as I shall show, they are an iconic image of the flow and style of the ordinary language of 'doing nothing'. The only time that jokes and riddles are set apart is when the talking stops; when there is literally nothing to say,
someone may suggest telling a joke or posing a riddle as a way of continuing the conversation. The following tape transcript reveals the style in which jokes and riddles are included in the ordinary flow of talking:

" A: Stephen phoned this morning.
G: What did he say?
A: He wanted to know if Tony was here.
K: He'd be standing there saying (mimicing his voice) " Is our Tony in? "
A: You are horrid.
K: Eh...I've got me foot stuck.
A: Save you kicking people.
K: Allison, what would you do if a queer man got on your back?
A: I don't know.
K: Toss him off.
G: Toss him off.
K: Throw him off or toss him off...toss him off.
G: Toss him off.
K: That's a funny one.
G: I think I'm rare......"

Through the collective memorising of jokes the children always have some at their disposal to contribute to the conversation.

The appropriateness of joking and riddling to the structural form of the language of ' doing nothing ' lies in the fact that both are games of classification, reflecting the playing with order noted previously for the culture as a whole. As Mary Douglas has shown,

1. This joke revolves around a central pun. ' Toss off ' is in the children's vocabulary, the verb for masturbation. Hence, the double meaning between ' throw off ' and masturbate. This is yet another example of the educative role of the language of ' doing nothing ', see pp.441-458.
2. See Chapter 3.
' the joke merely affords the opportunity for realising that an accepted pattern has no necessity. Its excitement lies in the suggestion that any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary and subjective.' (1968:365)

Both jokes and riddles, then, play with the form of language itself and reveal through performance the ambiguities created through the very act and process of the imposition of order. They display the inherent arbitrariness of the relationship between the signifier and signified.

However, jokes and riddles do not in their essence create these possibilities; it is the social context of their exegesis which frames the joke's possibility as a subversive mode. For a joke to be perceived as such requires some implicit consensus of meaning, a collective representation of the particular classification which the joke works to subvert. As Douglas argues 'in every period there is a pile of submerged jokes, unperceived because they are irrelevant or wrongly balanced for the perspective of the day' (1968:366).

Joking is thus culturally prescribed, subject to the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of that order, and it is this cultural specificity which is revealed when attempts are made to translate jokes across cultures. In the present context, it is displayed in the differential perceptions of the humour to be obtained from 'zzubing' bees between adults and children. The spatial and temporal

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boundaries which separate the children from the adult world render many of their jokes pointless for adults for the point of a joke is to be found between those classificatory lines. The following joke exemplifies this and also illustrates how jokes are incorporated by the children into ordinary conversation:

"Stephen comes up to me and asks if I want a paper job. Thinking that he is referring to a newspaper round, I reply: "No". Annoyed he says: "Say yes". We repeat the routine: (1) "Do you want a paper job?" (2) "Yes" (3) Well lift yer arse and let me wipe it!"

The importance of newspaper rounds in the children's culture as a source of employment ensures that when told to other children this joke is bound to work; they are guaranteed to reply in the affirmative. Told to an adult the joke is doomed to failure for the significant referential frames are absent. There is no consensus on meanings. Moreover, it is apparent from the Opies (1977) collection that many of the children's jokes have been repeated for generations, as part of the collective verbal lore of childhood and adults may hear from their own offspring jokes they themselves used to tell. That these jokes are no longer funny for adults is a function of their spatial and temporal distance from the significant sets of symbols which, within the children's culture, give these jokes their resonance, their 'points' of conceptual focus.

For example, many of the children's jokes are, like their rhymes, built around sexual or excretory concerns. Both
these subjects are, in different ways 'taboo' for the children and, hence, suitable topics for the disorderly use of language. In that the children are shielded from their own sexuality and sexual potential through their conceptual and often physical separation from these 'adult' spheres, the introduction of sexual matters within the referential frame of the children's own culture is, in itself, a disordering action. Bodily wastes, on the other hand, are as Mary Douglas (1969) has shown inherently ambiguous substances for they transgress the boundary between the inner and outer body. It is significant, therefore, that those who are perceived to be in an ambiguous social position should concern themselves most explicitly with matters which reflect and symbolise their own marginality. Through joking and riddling disorder is transformed and rendered orderly within the children's own cultural space.

Dirt appears in many guises in the children's jokes: dirty words, dirty substances and dirty thoughts and as topics which are matters out of place and time and therefore conceptually disordered - dirty - for the children:

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1. See pp. 390-403 for further discussion of this.
(1) Did you hear about the Irishman who thought that Johnny Cash was the change from a durex machine? 1

(2) A: What's the difference between an elephant's arse and a letter box?
B: I don't know.
A: Well I wouldn't give you my letters to post.

(3) A boy asked the teacher if he could go to the toilet.
Teacher: Recite the alphabet first.
Boy: a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, q, r, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z.
Teacher: What happened to the ' p '?
Boy: Its running down my leg.

The content of such jokes mirrors their form: the literally or metaphorically dirty symbolises the dirt of disorder produced conceptually through performance by the children.

Jokes represent, therefore, a disordered mode and it is a pattern which finds repetition in riddling as the production of classificatory disorder through performance. As Ian Hamnett suggests, although riddles are usually formulated as a question and answer, getting the answer is not the main purpose of the activity for riddles ' rarely give enough details for the answer to be ascertained and some riddles

1. The term ' Johnny ' is a word used by the children to refer to the contraceptive condom. Here, then, a pun revolves round the double meaning of ' Johnny ', as a name of a singer and a contraceptive. Note also the incorporation of a traditional scape-goat: the stupid Irishman. This demonstrates the incorporation of ' adult ' humour already into the children's mode of thought. See also the footnote on p.314.
are presented more as statements than questions' (1967: 384). It is this feature which facilitates their use in the conversational style of the children. Whilst talking to each other, for example, the children make jokes through the use of statements which are inverted riddles: one girl, looking at her comb, remarked that "it has been to the dentist"; the comb was missing a few teeth. Another boy commented when I got a pie out of the freezer that "the pie will come out sneezing", it would have caught a cold in its icy surroundings.

As with jokes, riddles are also culturally specific and the social context of their exegesis is crucial. Riddles require the participation of knowledgeable others who can appreciate the process through which the play upon form is achieved. The answer to a riddle is relatively unimportant; as with joking it is the process of reordering achieved through word-play which must be appreciated. When I was asked a riddle I was often berated or accused of having heard it before if I provided the correct response. To riddle in the children's culture involves 'getting the point' and demonstrating an appreciative awareness of the subtle transformatory logic performed upon language itself, as is shown by the following example:

'Mog tells me a joke: "What's the dirtiest thing in the world?" I say that I don't know. Delightedly, he says, "Second hand toilet paper." When I don't laugh he says: ".Get it? Get it? Covered in shit."

/..
By not laughing I demonstrated my own distance from the children's culture, although I had understood the riddle. Mog's eager explanation of the process of transformation of the literally dirty demonstrates his concern that I should appreciate the logic by which such metaphoric movements are accomplished.

In both jokes and riddles, therefore, humour is to some extent a by-product of performance. 'Getting the point' is the major concern. The pivot upon which any particular word-play turns must be discovered and the focal point around which images are inverted or overturned is the central quest. These metaphoric movements are subtle transformations; both riddles and jokes direct attention to separate and discrete classificatory orders by temporarily conjoining them in performance and exposing their ambiguity; both bring 'into relation disparate elements in such a way that one accepted pattern is challenged by the appearance of another which in some way was hidden in the first' (Douglas, 1968:365).

Many other linguistic games played by the children also exploit the implicit structuring of social classification through exposing it to public gaze. The implicit is made explicit and form and content manipulated which moves these games outside the purely verbal domain; the joke becomes a joke upon the listener who is caught out in his or her unconscious dependence upon one particular ordered mode of thought:

/..
Q: If blue houses are made of blue bricks and red houses are made of red bricks. What are green houses made of?

A: Green bricks.

Q: No, greenhouses are made of glass.

Through exploiting the difference between classificatory orders the respondent is made to appear stupid. Lulled into a false sense of security the listener is led into matching the colour of bricks with the colour of the houses; concentration is focused upon appearance, on the form rather than content. By switching between different semantic series the questioner achieves his or her success: the question concerning greenhouses focuses upon function and content rather than form. 'Green houses' becomes 'greenhouses' and the previous symbolic weight attached to colour as a classificatory principle is shifted and transferred to the method of construction. Unless the riddle has been heard previously this deceit will commonly be missed, for such word-games contain their own ritual dynamic and energy which propel the respondent towards disaster.

Such expositions of order in its own arbitrariness is often a focus of the children's language games and the permanence of social classifications shown to be an illusion. Unless it is realised that this is the very point of the game the respondent will inevitably become ensnared:
The above example illustrates well the ritualised dynamic of such language games. The first five questions, which are asked at great speed, propel the respondent onwards; through the process of repetition a patterned sequence of numbers is established, a rhythm set in motion: 2 plus 2 is 4, 4 plus 4 is 8, 8 plus 8 is 16, 16 plus 16 is 32....

Suddenly, this flow is dramatically interrupted by the question switching to spelling but the rhythmic and repetitive mode already established through the number series remains; the respondent urgently seeks a rhyme for the word 'shop' which belongs to the sequence of movements associated with traffic lights, that is 'go' and 'stop'. It is 'stop' which rhymes with 'shop' and the respondent is involuntarily trapped. Throughout the riddle conscious attention has been at a minimum; the questions are simple, requiring little thought and recalling the ritualised chanting of mathematical tables learnt as small children; emphasis has been placed upon repetition, rhyme and motion, rather than upon semantics, so that the final question is similarly answered. The deft switch from form to content is missed and
the respondent is left feeling ridiculous. If by any chance the correct reply is given the questioner usually accuses his or her victim of having heard it before, so certain are the children in their manipulation of perception.

Playing with this relationship between sound and sense, between the signifier and the signified, between form and content is common in the language of 'doing nothing'. It recalls the use of puns noted above in the everyday language of the children and finds its fullest expression in children's jokes and riddles. Here, the children delight in the musicality of their language and in their ability to manipulate form and content with great ease and fluency:

(1) An Irishman breaks out of prison: "I'm free!", he shouts. "So what" says a boy, "I'm four."

(2) Clean my boots boy. Yaas, sir. No, my boots. (Yaas - your arse, when spoken in a pidgin English)

(3) What's dracula's favourite singer? Fang Sinatra (Fang - Frank)

(4) There's a dirty film on telly tonight. Close down. (Close down - clothes down)

(5) A man went to have a heart transplant but they gave him an arse transplant and then he died of a fart attack. (Heart - arse - fart)

A further feature of children's jokes and riddles is the mode and manner of transmission which, as noted previously
for other aspects of the language of ' doing nothing ', allows for both conservation and innovation in performance. The emphasis upon form permits a multiplicity of contents to be incorporated within the particular style. Old jokes - Why did the submarine blush? Because it saw Queen Mary's bottom - appear alongside jokes of very current interest; the similarity of form permits a variety of content and structures the performative style.

During 1978, for example, the television programme Happy Days heralded the appearance of four new jokes in the children's repertoire, jokes which all conformed to the patterned structure outlined above:

(1) Q: Why doesn't the Fonz like hot weather?  
A: Because it ain't cool.

(2) Q: Why does the Fonz live in a freezer?  
A: Because he's cool.

(3) Q: Where does the Fonz shop?  
A: Hey Presto.

(4) Q: What does the Fonz say in Ireland?  
A: Straw.

1. The four Fonz jokes illustrate again the cultural specificity of joke-telling. All require an intimate knowledge of the television programme for them to be understood. Jokes (1) and (2) refer to the Fonz's behavioural style: he is a 'cool' American kid of the 1950's rock and roll era, not a college boy. Joke (3) requires knowledge of his mannerisms: on entering a room the Fonz puts up his thumbs and says, "Heeeeeey" to which the studio audience responds with loud cheers and clapping. In joke (4) this is also used: in Ireland the Fonz says "straw", rather than "hay" and turns his thumbs down. Here the children incorporate part of the humour of the adult world and use the Irish as a scapegoat for stupidity.
Similarly, a few weeks after the murder of Lord Mountbatten in the summer of 1979, the following joke was told to me:

Q: How did they know Lord Mountbatten had dandruff?  
A: They found his head and shoulders all over the beach.  

The translation between orders

In conclusion I shall consider one final feature of the language of 'doing nothing' which encapsulates many of the structural principles explored above. It illustrates that the language itself is part of talking and not just its vehicle; talking communicates ideas and also the experience of linguistic performances but other things talk apart from words.

The children 'talk' in a variety of ways. In that it is a performing art, rather than merely a method of communication, the children experiment with alternative modes of conversing: rhythmic messages are relayed through drum beats, through hitting central heating pipes and flashed between children with a torch. The pattern of speech is translated from the spoken word into non-verbal domains and it is investigating the potentiality of such objects as communicative mediums which forms a large part of 'doing nothing' itself. To 'do nothing' you have to 'do something'; to say 'something' you need say 'nothing'.

1. This joke refers to the advert for hair shampoo called 'Head and Shoulders' which is a medicated treatment for dandruff. Lord Mountbatten was killed by a bomb blast which exploded his boat off the coast of Ireland.

2. Children also use the wider resources of the body for communication, see Chapter 6.
All such performances involve translation between orders and it is in the children's use of acronyms that this is best expressed. Acronyms are not of course confined to the language of 'doing nothing' but their use by the children slightly differs from their employment in the adult world. Adults most often use acronyms as abbreviations, as a quick way of referring to well known social organizations such as the T.U.C. or the C.B.I. This assumes a consensual worldview, a common pool of knowledge; they are used for ease of recognition, for economy. In time some acronyms become word-like: the letters, which originally stood for individual words, conjoin to form a new word, a new commonly used term: NATO, G.C.E. or C.S.E. Often questions are asked in quiz shows about the original referents which have been conceptually obliterated over time, so frequently is the new 'word' used in everyday speech.

In the language of 'doing nothing' acronyms reverse this pattern. Acronyms are not used for abbreviation or quickness particularly; their main purpose is mystification, disguise and secrecy. This is not a result of their use over time, but a deliberate intention from the outset. Acronyms for the children are ways of codifying messages; they are not designed for collective consumption, for ease of recognition. Rather, the reverse is true; acronyms are devices for obfuscation, not clarity, and only those who have access to their referential frames can translate them. Many acronyms are therefore employed by the children to protect group
knowledge from outside comprehension, and once again, it is sexual knowledge which is most frequently disguised through the use of acronyms:

(1) A.D.I.D.A.S.  A durex is done after sex
(2) I.T.A.L.Y.  I trust and love you.
(3) S.W.A.L.K.  Sealed with a loving kiss.
(4) B.O.L.T.O.P.  Better on lips than on paper.
(5) H.O.L.L.A.N.D.  Hope our love lasts and never dies.
(6) B.I.S.H.O.P.  Before intercourse suck his overgrown penis.
(7) A.F.R.I.C.A.  After fucking rinse in carbolic acid.
(8) E.N.G L.A.N.D.  Every naughty girl likes a nob daily.
(9) C.H.I.N.A.  Come home I need affection.
(10) C.H.I.L.Y.  Come home I love you.
(11) F.I.S.H.  Fuck I'm staying here.
(12) C.H.I.P.  Come home I'm pregnant.
(13) C.R.I.S.P.  Come running I'm still pregnant.
(14) J.A.C.K.I.E.  Just a cute kiss is enough.

The acronyms above are usually written on the backs of envelopes containing love letters or Valentine cards. A coded message conceals a most secret and personal communication.

Here, words of common parlance such as Bishop, England, Fish or Chip are used as acronyms, a transforming act which reverses the process used in the adult world where acronyms become words. Moreover, the intention is radically transformed: for the children these outwardly innocuous words contain highly explicit sexual messages; a whole statement is condensed into one extremely resonant symbol. The girl who signs herself ' Jackie ' says far more than the name alone implies as does the exchange of messages carried out through the sequential use of the acronyms C.H.I.P., F.I.S.H. and C.R.I.S.P.

1. A 'nob' in acronym (8) refers to the act of sexual intercourse.
The inherent ambiguity of this use of acronyms recalls the structured patterning of the children's language already established. They are massively transformatory speech forms, ritualised and dynamic. For example, acronyms are used in games of ritual insults, reflecting the use of couplets discussed above as linguistic weapons between opponents: If a boy calls another Puff, (homosexual) the insulted quickly converts this into an acronym and responds: "Yes, I'm perfect, unique, fabulous and famous", emphasising the initial letter of each word. Alternatively, the accusation Puff can be yelled at someone and immediately followed by a different explanation of the acronym: prehistoric, unhuman fat fairy. This doubles the insult through the additional accusation of effeminacy in the word 'fairy'.

The destruction of words achieved through dismantling them into their component parts as acronyms allows certain 'taboo' words to be used. As the following incident illustrates, to spell out the word is not literally to speak it for only its parts have been enunciated:

"Stephen tells me a joke with the word fanny in it. He wouldn't say the word itself but, pointing to each person in the group, made them say one letter each. F A N N Y was thus produced but embarrassment at speaking the word was avoided through only using its component letters. Similarly, later Stephen insulted Michael through saying M.I.A.S.S., meaning Michael is a stupid sod. Michael could not retaliate for, as Stephen pointed out, he had not actually said that at all."

1. A comparable series is established for the insult 'pig'. Translated into an acronym, it means 'pretty intelligent git'.

/..
Such use of acronyms reflects the ways in which many adults may disguise their conversations in front of young children. Through spelling words out, rather than saying them, adults attempt to prevent their offspring from understanding. Here, this power is used in reverse; the children use acronyms to disguise their knowledge of matters pertaining to the adult world. A further example occurred at the youth club. The children were asked to list what activities they wished to do and the acronym M.G.S. appeared on many of the boy's forms. It later transpired that the activities they most enjoyed were money, girls and sex.

The game 'I spy' also relies on the use of acronyms; an initial letter of a word is given as the clue and an object must be spied which begins with that letter. Whilst playing this game one day with two boys the 'spying' part gradually disappeared till eventually it became totally impossible for me to participate in the game. It had transformed into a purely verbal competition of matching any words with the letters given: B.F. stood for 'been flooded' and M for 'mains electricity' B stood for 'bastard' and S for 'shit'. 'I spy' had become an excuse for playing with language itself, not a form of play which merely utilised language; it acquired its own momentum as each boy tried to think of more and more crude and vulgar words to fit to a given letter.

Acronyms are, therefore, devices which enable translations to be made between different orders of language. They
facilitate the development of alternative semantic systems which are limited to a particular social group for only those with knowledge of the cultural context of their derivation can translate them. In this sense acronyms are one way of ensuring a monopoly of knowledge through exploiting the power of language as a tool of non-communication, rather than communication, a facility which was used to the boys' advantage in the game of 'I spy'. The following case-study highlights this point. It describes the cultural context of the creation, development and power of one particular acronym during a period of approximately one month and, as such, the acronym NWCWTW is a highly saturated and powerful symbol of the process and form of the language of 'doing nothing'.

NWCWTW: A case study

The following passage extracted from my field notes reveals the background to the emergence of the acronym NWCWTW in the children's language.

"I was sitting talking to Jackie and in a pause in the conversation she suddenly interjected: "NWCWTW". This seemed strange to me; I thought it was a word and asked her what she had said. She repeated it fast and I tried miserably to copy her. She thought my attempts hilarious and then proceeded to say it slowly. Only then did I grasp that NWCWTW was a phonetic acronym. Eventually I too could say it fast. I

1. The exclusivity of knowledge which the use of acronyms creates does find parallels in the adult world. For example, the computing industry makes great use of acronyms to describe its technical support systems. Those who have no knowledge of computing find its language impenetrable.
asked her what it meant and she replied that it meant nothing: "It's just something to say ". By the way she denied it and laughed I knew that it must have some meaning and asked her again. Again she denied it and told me to ask Noreen and the others. I ask her if it was rude and she just laughs, suggesting that it is. I ask her if each letter stands for a word. She says that she won't tell me and I feign annoyance and disinterest. Then she says that she won't tell me but that she'll help me work it out."

This encounter is significant in a number of respects for it highlights many of the points already discussed concerning the language of ' doing nothing '. Firstly, the acronymic form, NWCWTW, is itself an icon of the children's language. It follows the patterning of sound and rhythm indicated earlier as a structuring principle: spoken quickly it contains its own energy through the repetition of the 'W'; spoken phonetically it has a musical quality, with emphasis being placed on the ' N ', ' C ' and ' T '. Secondly, the acronym was interjected into the flow of ordinary conversation in a style similar to the telling of jokes or riddles, the recitation of verses or the telling of tales. It appeared unprompted with no introduction or explanation.

Thirdly, the encounter as a whole is informative about the power of language. Jackie delights in the fact that she knows ' something ', that she has a secret from me and taunts me with her exclusive knowledge. NWCWTW is meaningless to me, an adult, and she laughs at my ignorance. The language of ' doing nothing ' is the children's monopoly, a language which separates their culture off from the adult
world, a powerful deflective boundary against outside intrusion. But as the conversation progresses Jackie relents and says that although she will not tell me what it means, I can try to discover the meaning of NWCWTW: a linguistic game has begun. Jackie has implicitly acknowledged that NWCWTW is an acronym, but I must participate in order to become party to its meaning.

The following extract reveals the progress of the game:

(2) "I work on the premise that each letter stands for a word and Jackie tells me that the first two letters stand for four letter words, the next two for three letter words and the last two for four letter words. I guess the middle two, CW, as 'can we'. She says that this is correct but that it can also be 'WC', which would then mean 'we can'. Having got 'we can/ can we', I look at the first two letters and guess 'next week' as the words to go with NW. She won't tell me at first whether it is correct and, after I assume that it is, she agrees. The formula now reads 'next week we can/can we'. I am now lost but try and fit all sorts of words with the 't' and the 'w'. I try rude words none of which work. She then says that because 'you've turned the middle two round' I should now be able to work it out. I try and make anagrams out of the first two words applying the principle of reversal and, on failing, ask her if the letters of the last two words are in the first two. She writes them on her hand and then says no and rubs them off. She says, showing me her hand: 'You can try and read them now' and laughs. Next she says: 'You've turned the middle two round so turn the others round'. I then ask: 'You mean WT? 'No', she cries at my stupidity. I then grasp the idea and turn the paper round. The 'W' then becomes an 'M' and the 'T' becomes an 'L' when one half of the horizontal line is cut off. I still can't grasp the significance; finally she writes down 'make love'.
From this extract it is apparent that the principle of inversion is a structural feature of the acronym, one which is a common theme throughout the language of 'doing nothing'. The ways in which the various transformations of the acronym are achieved are summarised below:

(i) \[ \text{N W} \leftrightarrow \text{N W} \]
\[ \text{C W} \leftrightarrow \text{W C} \]
\[ \text{T W} \leftrightarrow \text{T W} \]

(ii) \[ \text{N W} \leftrightarrow \text{N W} \]
\[ \text{C W} \leftrightarrow \text{W C} \]
\[ \text{T W} \leftrightarrow \text{W T} \]

(iii) \[ \text{N W} \leftrightarrow \text{N W} \]
\[ \text{C W} \leftrightarrow \text{W C} \]
\[ \text{T W} \leftrightarrow \text{W T} \leftrightarrow \text{M L} \]

In the first sequence the middle two letters are reversed: 'C.W.' becomes 'W.C.' These two letters stand for 'we can' or 'can we'. Through the principle of reversal a statement is transformed into a question. In the second sequence the last two letters are reversed: 'T.W.' becomes 'W.T.' In the third sequence this transformation is itself transformed by inverting 'W.T.' which, when written upside down, becomes 'M.L.' if the one end of the 'T' is cut off. It is this final transformation which yields further information for 'M.L.' stands for 'make love'. The whole acronym now
reads in two directions: 'Next week we can make love' or 'next week can we make love'. Once again, a seemingly meaningless acronym hides and disguises in its form a potent and powerful message: only through knowing the language of 'doing nothing' can this be deciphered.

That this language is infinitely flexible can be seen in the next extract. The fact that I had successfully decoded the acronym, that I had gained access to its exclusive meaning, was seen as potentially threatening. I had overstepped the boundary, penetrated too far into the private sphere of the children's culture:

"Having solved the acronym Jackie then says that inbetween the last two letters there is a Ø sign. When this is turned round it is similar to a 'p'. This word is there but it is silent and not spoken. It's a French word and also English and "it's all about love and stuff". This she will not tell me."

Here again inversion has a part to play: Ø transforms into ᵃ. The significance of the 'p' still eludes me; Jackie had successfully reestablished exclusive control. But, as the final extract reveals, it was not control over a particular body of knowledge, but over the process of knowing itself:

"Jackie then tells me about how it all started. She says that Noreen, Coker and Tosha were always together and they started saying 'N'. 'C'. 'T'. They then put in the 'W' after each letter because it sounded better. Hence, they would say 'NWCTW' to each other as a greeting. People then began to ask what it meant so they then made up the meaning for it." Its funny getting adults to say it, especially men, because they don't know what they are saying", she remarks."
Here then is the central feature of the language of 'doing nothing': the control of perception structures the form and content of the language itself. The acronym was originally derived from the nicknames of three children, names which are themselves disguises, only meaningful to those who have access to the children's culture. They are names used by the children which confuse and disorder external perception of that culture. Secondly, although this was the root from which NWCWTW sprung other children began to ask what the acronym meant, so another meaning was invented which differed from the original: something which was meaningless to the children was invested with significance by them and given meaning which, in turn, became meaningless to the adult world. Such disordering of perception lies at the heart of the language of 'doing nothing'.

A few weeks after this initial conversation I became aware that NWCWTW was becoming further transformed as it spread into a wider social context. Other children had adopted it and changed it for their own purposes. Some of the boys began shouting out 'TW', an abbreviated form of the acronym; in announcing this to the world they were declaring 'make love' out aloud, but in a form which no adult could understand. Later, the acronym became further condensed and only the 'W' remained: it is significant that what had initially been the least meaningful part of the acronym - inserted because it sounded better - was the part which was retained, for it could be freely transformed. The 'W' phonetic sound

1. For a discussion of nicknames, see Chapter 5.
began to appear in all kinds of words: 'hovercrafts' became 'howercrafts'. 'well developed' became 'well deweloped'. The resultant sound was similar to that produced by the speech defect which turns 'v' into 'w'. For the children to adopt this form of speech reflects their wider use of the body as an expressive medium: the demonstration of one's own self control through mocking the afflicted, the revelation of one's own perfection in the face of defective others.\(^1\) The gradual incorporation of NWCWTW into the children's language yielded yet another transformation: what had originally been a play upon language through the use of acronyms became a way of playing with language more generally: NWCWTW was made to conform to the patterned and structured style of the language of 'doing nothing' through the addition of a hard 'a' sound on the end:

```
" G: Spa..... t ankna.
   A: What's that?
   G: Our speech.
   G: Ren ne kna...re ne gnna...Sta.
   K: Kwa Nwa twa.
   K: KW NW TW.....TWWWWW
   K: Who's TW.
   A: I don't know. Who's TW?
   K: Tosha..TW... and Gench is SW.
   A: (to Stephen) Why are you SW....S, from Stephen?
   G: Stawa.
   A: And you haven't got anything? ( to John)
   K: Nawa
   G: I'll give him one.
   G: KWa
   K: KW KW
   G: KWa
   A: Why KW?
   G: It's his name.
   A: From Kirby?
   K: KW
   A: Why aren't you GW....from Genner?
```

1. See Chapter 6.
K: I'm JW...J William....JW.
K: You're a JW an'all.
A: A JW?
K: JW.
A: JW from James.
K: No you're a AWa.
A: Allison....Awa. "

The language of ' doing nothing ' is, then, primarily a language of performance, what Bauman (1977) has defined as a way of speaking, a verbal art. To analyse it merely as a series of texts would be to obscure its creative power and potential, to misrepresent its stylistic form and use by the children. Indeed, many of the characteristics cited by Bauman as being specific to performance, rather than literal or everyday speech, appear in the language of ' doing nothing ': for example, the children have their own special codes, often archaic in origin, and rely heavily on figurative language for it is this which provides the semantic density and novel forms of expression characteristic of many of their linguistic games; throughout the language of ' doing nothing ' parallelism is evident in the repetition of both form and content, a device which structures their performances and gives overall unity and style to the language; the children also employ many paralinguistic features, such as rhythm, pace and rhyme to structure their language use and have recourse to a traditional body of special formulae to mystify and mislead others.

But above all of these special effects it is the creativity achieved through performance which is most characteristic
of the children's language; as Bauman notes performance ' sets up ', or represents an interpretive frame within which the messages being communicated are to be understood' (1977:9). For the children it is the context of their own culture which is framed by the language of ' doing nothing ', a structuring system which provides the clues and referential points for their interpretation of the world. In this sense the language of ' doing nothing ' represents the children's own performance in the process of socialization.

In addition, as Bauman notes, performance is set apart from ordinary speech and it is this marginality which gives to performance its power. For the children, the language of ' doing nothing ' is an exclusive tongue, used only between themselves; it is a language which controls external perception, a deflective device which, through its stylistic form, keeps the content secret. Those who are set apart from society have, through performance, created their own boundaries of separation through a particular use of language.

Finally, as Bauman remarks, one of the most important features of any performance is its capacity to transform social structure through its power over the audience. In the language of ' doing nothing ' the children are alternatively performers and listeners; they judge each other's competence through their ' knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways ', ways which are specific to their own culture (ibid:11). Performance, for the children, is then
integral to their own socialization; it both instructs and constructs modes of interpreting the world, provides the potential for acquiring new knowledge and consolidating that which is already known. Through talking with one another and performing together children gain knowledge of the social world and begin to experience parts of it through the context of their own culture. The language of 'doing nothing' frames in part, therefore, the structure and experience of the children's self-socialization.
"Don't stand chattering to yourself like that," Humpty Dumpty said, looking at her for the first time, "but tell me your name and your business."
"My name is Alice, but--"
"It's a stupid name enough!" Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. "What does it mean?"
"Must a name mean something?" Alice asked doubtfully. "Of course it must,"
"my name means the shape I am-- and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours you might be any shape, almost."
Lewis Carroll.

Introduction

The language of 'doing nothing' images through its performance the transition made by the children between childhood and adolescence. Its puns, riddles and linguistic games are of the Carrollian kind, replete with images of inversion, reversal and transformation. It is a language for jesting with the social world through deflecting and controlling outside perception, one which reveals the process of social order through illuminating its discontinuities. It is part of the socialization process which the children themselves conduct and nicknaming provides a condensed and powerful case-study of this learning process. Nicknaming is integral to the language of 'doing nothing' and reflects many of its characteristics but, most importantly, nicknaming is fundamentally concerned with processes of social classification. For the children nicknaming represents their creation of a social order and reveals their position within it.
Martin Gardner, commenting on Humpty Dumpty's conversation with Alice, writes that

' in real life proper names seldom have a meaning other than the fact that they denote an individual object, whereas other words have general, universal meanings. In Humpty Dumpty's realm, the reverse is true. Ordinary words mean whatever Humpty wants them to mean, whereas proper names like "Alice" and "Humpty Dumpty" are supposed to have general significance.'

(1966:263)

This looking-glass world is an appropriate metaphor for the complex of inverted and reversed images which structure the culture of 'doing nothing'. Here, too, names are mirrors of the social self, having general rather than particular significance, semantically rich, rather than devoid of meaning.

Naming is the process of conceptual classification and, amongst the children, nicknames are crucial for the categorisation of social persons. As Geertz writes:

'peoples everywhere have developed symbolic structures in terms of which persons are perceived not merely as such, as mere unadorned members of the human race, but as representatives of certain distinct categories of persons, specific sorts of individuals' (1975:363).

Nicknaming is one such symbolic structure. As I demonstrate below, nicknames confer individuality through recourse to a linguistic conformity which, in turn, serves to generalise the individual, to classify him or her. In this sense nicknames mediate between the self and others, between the
individual and group; they represent the process described by Burridge (1979) of gaining self knowledge in relation to traditional and alternative possibilities.

As Goodenough suggests, modes of address and reference 'communicate over and over again things about the self and self-other relationships' (1965:275). Naming systems express 'something about which people are concerned, something about their own identities or the identities of others that they want to emphasize' and thus the structure of any particular system expresses the particular 'nature of the identity problems' in that society (ibid:275).

The nicknaming practices of the children is one such process of identification carried out by those who, in terms of the dominant structure, have no identifiable place. Being between the categories of child and adult they are in process of switching identities and, as I show, it is through nicknaming that the children themselves conceptually control and order this movement. Nicknames, for the children, therefore class the unclassified, order the disordered and rename the already named in terms appropriate to the culture of 'doing nothing'.

Names and nicknames

According to de Saussure (1960) names - linguistic signs - are purely arbitrary but through the process of signification
once a particular category is identified its name serves to semantically delimit its boundaries. Through this ordering process difference is achieved, leading to an immediate proliferation of other categories, defined minimally through the principles of opposition and contrast. Meaning of categories is constituted through difference and in this manner social knowledge is constructed around a 'logical scaffolding' as Wittgenstein argues:

'one name stands for one thing, another for another thing and they are combined with one another. In this way the whole group - like a tableau vivant - presents a state of affairs.' (Douglas, 1973:31)

This state of affairs is, however, only realisable in action. To emphasise this I quote once more from Giddens: 'the constitution of language as meaningful is inseparable from the constitution of forms of social life as continuing practices' (1979:4). Systems of social classification are therefore immanent in action; nicknaming, as one particular symbolic system, is to be understood as social practice.

For the human animal names take on a more significant usage over and above that of outlining and bounding a category or species. Names are used to refer to or address particular individuals or animals. These are proper or personal names - autonyms as Lévi-Strauss (1972) calls them - which refer to the self. Seemingly, therefore, autonyms refer to and express individuality; in this sense there is not a category of 'Susans'

1. For an analysis of animal names, see Lévi-Strauss (1972).
which differs in certain prescribed ways from a category of 'Marys' as cats differ from dogs.

However, as Lévi-Strauss emphasises, it is only through processes of contrast that autonyms confer individuality: 'an autonym only determines a "self" by contrast to other "selves"' (ibid:192). Only through comparison is a cat not a dog. There lurks an idea, therefore, that proper names operate also as tacit classifiers, that 'proper names and species names form part of the same group' (ibid:213). Indeed, for Lévi-Strauss 'there is no fundamental difference between the two types of name' in a linguistic sense (ibid:213). Their difference lies instead in the 'enterprise of classification' in any particular society (ibid:213).

In the context of contemporary British society Lévi-Strauss's assertion can be substantiated: proper names form part of a paradigmatic set. Names, it is believed, are chosen but the very fact of choice, rather than invention, indicates the existence of a set of names considered to be appropriate labels for human beings. Although there is the assumption that the combination of Christian name and surname produces a relatively individual sign of personal identity, and therefore one could expect the distribution of names to be more or less random, the parameters of 'choice' of names are subject to certain classificatory constraints.
Choice is conditional upon gender; it is often circumscribed by family tradition so that, for example, a baby may be named after a father or grandmother; parental choice is limited by the names already bestowed upon a baby's siblings; it may also be constrained by geographical location or historical period and by the aural aestheticism of the conjunction of christian name with surname.\textsuperscript{1} The surname itself is an obvious classificatory device and can be regarded as a 'classifier of lineages' (ibid:193). What therefore appears to be free creation is, on closer inspection, limited by a variety of implicit classificatory procedures so that ultimately can one be said to be really naming or is it rather that 'one therefore never names: one classes'? (ibid:181).

A move into the children's culture, where the very idea of names and naming is a constant preoccupation, confirms this suspicion. Their nicknaming practices reveal the 'species' attribute of names and that names are not in fact a 'very reliable way of fixing identity' (Goffman,1976:77).

Nicknames deny the commonly held assumption that through

\textsuperscript{1} Exceptions to the gender rule do occur; for example Francis can be both masculine and feminine. The historical constraint on naming practices is evident in generational differences; currently names such as Conny, Elsie, Cissy, Fred, Albert belong to the older generation. Geographical constraint on naming is evident from my own fieldwork: my husband's name 'Jeremy' was considered to be rather strange and no one ever used it, preferring 'Jerry' instead.
naming ' the individual can be differentiated from all others and that around this means of differentiation a single continuous record of social facts can be attached ' as a medium for establishing personal identity (ibid: 74 ). Nicknames are powerful classificatory devices.

The Oxford Dictionary defines nicknames as ' names added to or substituted for person's, place's or thing's proper name ' and as Goffman ( op.cit.) suggests re-naming is one of the most common and easiest ways in which people disengage themselves from their conferred personal identity. However, nicknames must be distinguished from other re-naming practices.

Nicknames differ from pseudonyms in two ways. Firstly, pseudonyms may be adopted by authors or entertainers as identity masks but, as Goffman points out, they are often ineffective for ' the individual's previous name is likely to be available, and even widely known ' (ibid:76).

Nicknames, in contrast, are highly effective masks; they are limited in their use and known only to members of a specific social group. When used publicly, as a form of graffiti, the individual's proper name remains unknown. Nicknames are effective new identities. Secondly, pseudonyms are usually chosen by the individual of his or her own volition for personal and private reasons. Nicknames, on the other

1. See pp246-249 and p348 for a discussion of graffiti.
hand, are group property; they are chosen by others for the self. Nicknames are eminently social and dependent upon specific interpersonal relationships. They mark and remark upon an individual's place within a group. Amongst the children nicknames are publicly acknowledged symbols of their relationships with each other and with outsiders. They are comparable with the ' monikers ' of criminals: ' nicknames given in the criminal community and retained for life, but used only by and to members of the community or the wise ' ( ibid:77).

Nicknames, therefore, refer to the individual. They are not general classificatory terms, substitute names for specific groups in society used by children-such as "blue pigs " for policemen - but operate like ( and often instead of ) personal names. At the same time, however, nicknames are also species names; in their linguistic form and mode of use and generation nicknames act as social classifiers. Nicknames image the ' passage from the unity of a multiplicity to the diversity of a unity ' ( Lévi-Strauss, 1972:136).

This aspect of nicknaming highlights the theoretical importance of Gidden's analysis of the duality of structure as ' the essential recursiveness of social life as constituted in social practices ' for to divorce language from its source of generation - language users - is to...
ignore its capacity for creativity and change (1979:5). Meaning is therefore not an intrinsic property of words but emerges through them.

For example, to fully comprehend the semantic load of nicknames, their explicit and implicit meanings, their fluctuations in affective and effective tone and resonance, it was crucial to watch and observe their circumstances of generation and use. Only through extended participation over time was I able to perceive the highly systematic and powerful nature of the children's nicknaming practices; only then could I perceive the lie in the old dictum that "sticks and stones may break your bones but names will never hurt you."

Similarly, Morgan, O'Neill and Harré also discovered that nicknaming is seminal in social relationships between children as an 'effective instrument of social control of appearance and personality projection' (1979:3). Only through seeing nicknaming as social practice can its power be perceived; it is this which allows one to call and be called.

The inadequacy of a purely linguistic analysis divorced from its practical context is demonstrated in the Opies' (1977) discussion of children's nicknames. Although they rightly suggest that 'children attach an almost primitive significance to people's names, always wanting to find out a stranger's name, yet being strangely reluctant to reveal their own' - a case confirmed by my own fieldwork experiences - they offer no explanation for this phenomenon (1977:176). Instead they provide long lists of nicknames and make little
reference to the context of nickname use or how their various contributors obtained their material. The Opies merely suggest that some nicknames are traditional and others not and give the examples listed by two fourteen year olds:

' Phumph, lumber bontts ( bonce ), lush, Gables, square head, pugh, Jimpy, Hepsibs, lofty, big head, Rudolph, hog, scoffer, flippin kid, titty, rocker box, chubby cheeks, chink, coaca, Cowson, screawy, nuts, bolts, Tweedle, woolly wog, Kedah Wong, gilly, ruby nose, Bullet Head, nutty and cominist. '

(ibid:174 ).

Such lists, barren of contextual references, remain essentially devoid of meaning.

In comparison, the details of the ethnographic context to be discussed below reveal that the context of nicknaming practices are crucial: different kinds of nicknames carry varied semantic loads and are used in certain specific social interactions. Such factors as knowing whether a nickname is a momentary insult or a permanent form of address, knowing the gender of the referent or speaker, being able to judge whether the resulting response to name calling was intended or accidental are all pertinent to an understanding of nicknaming as social practice.

Dundes, Leach and Ozkok make precisely this point in their analysis of Turkish boys' duelling rhymes: 
' it is not just a matter of describing the general function of one type of insult, but also of describing the particular rationale underlying the use of one particular insult by one particular individual to another particular individual on one particular occasion. ' (1970:326)

As Winslow perceptively notes: 'a child may good-naturedly accept his nickname in the course of normal social interaction but the same name may be used derogatorily in other contexts' (1969:256). Understanding the different levels on which name-calling may work requires knowledge of the social context of use. Adults use nicknames only on certain occasions and only to certain people and there are many different social contexts which inspire or restrict the use of such epithets; children likewise perceive these options. As Hymes suggests, 'persons choose among alternative modes of address, and have knowledge of what the meaning of doing so may be' (1971:76). To explore this process involves an analysis of the "semantics" of social relationships as well as the semantics of verbal form' (ibid:77).

Towards an understanding of nicknames: a model of the self

On first acquaintance with the children I was immediately struck by their use of names. Indeed it was difficult to get to know their names, to put a face to the name or a name to the face for the children switch easily between
their personal names and alternative nicknames. Often they would tease me as I attempted to get to know their names by denying that they were called particular names or giving me names which no one ever used. Only after a prolonged period of time was I able to know how to name.

The analysis of nicknaming practices discussed below is based upon a collection of 133 names used of 111 individuals. As is immediately apparent from these figures there is no one-to-one correlation between name and individual. Nicknames are ambiguous identity pegs and, I shall show, it is this very ambiguity of nicknaming which gives it such power.

Nicknames are group property and hence can be regarded as markers of group membership. Through following the origin and derivation, the application and use of nicknames it is possible to trace the patterning of social relationships. In the following section I discuss what can be termed permanent nicknames. These can be defined as those alternative labels given to specific individuals by the children which endure over a period of time. Permanent nicknames are given to friends and foes but the names are of a qualitatively different kind for each group. As I shall show it is adults - especially teachers - who receive the permanent nicknames reserved for outsiders.

In the next section I compare these nicknames with what can
be termed the temporary nicknames used between the children. Temporary nicknames are names uttered only in specific social circumstances; they indicate the value placed on a relationship at any particular time. Such names can be identified as insults and over time, as I shall suggest, temporary nicknames may transform into permanent labels. Through exploring the patterning of nicknames over time such qualitative changes can be explained.

To explore the movements in affective tone of different kinds of naming involves examining the systematic character of nicknaming through the working out of its individual manifestations; to explore the syntagmatic chain of nickname exchange reference must be made to its paradigmatic structure, which itself is a syntagmatic element within the overall performative paradigm of the language of 'doing nothing'.

The word 'nick' means to steal, to alter or to make an incision and the term nickname itself bears witness to this tendency to transform. 'Nickname' derives from the Middle English an 'eke-name' (surname); the 'n' was nicked and made to intrude upon the 'eke'. An 'eke-name' transformed into a 'neke-name' which itself became a nickname. The children's nicknames discussed below incorporate both these processes of transmission and transformation.

There are two major sources of nicknames. The first source,
classed below as the cultural source, is one in which an individual's social identity, his or her personal name, is stolen and through alteration used as the basis for a nickname. The personal name is amended through the addition or subtraction of letters; it is transformed through pun or parody and used as a springboard for a rhyming nickname. An individual's own name is literally ' nicked ' for the creation of a nickname.

The second source of nicknames is termed the natural source. Here, the physical rather than the social body, inspires the nickname. A new identity is created from and described in relation to an individual's physical appearance, personality or actions. As I shall show the source of nicknames is critical for it structures the new identity, an identity which is conceived to be either part of culture or part of nature, either of ' us ' or of ' them '.

Permanent nicknames: child to child

These nicknames are those which can be continually heard. They are a constant mode of address and reference, shouted out in anger or in play. They appear in sentences such as "I saw Hammy yesterday " or "Knack off, Kirby". They are used in much the same way as proper names. Permanent nicknames are divisible into six categories, five of which

1. "Knack-off " means ' stop it ' or ' go away ', always used in annoyance.
are derived from the cultural source and one from the natural source.

The cultural source:

The first major category of nicknames is by far the most common and is one which involves alteration of the proper name by the addition or subtraction of letters. It is divisible into three sub-categories:

C.1.1. Standard abbreviation of Christian name:

Although this sub-category is not specific to the children's nicknaming practices, as it encompasses what can be defined as common abbreviations or familiar forms of Christian names, it has been included as one type of the nicknames used by the children. They are names used informally or as a sign of familiarity. Few names are of this type, however.

- Walter - Wally
- Susan - Sue
- Jacqueline - Jackie.

C.1.2. Other types of abbreviation, including surnames:

In this sub-category some names are included which could have been classed in (C.1.1.). However, they are perhaps more commonly used amongst the children and thus deserve to be distinguished. It is this sub-category which contains the most common permanent nicknames, especially amongst girls.
Occasionally there occurs a double transformation of the personal name in address, so that Genner, which is usually Gench (C.1.2.) might become Genchy (C.1.3.). Similarly, Jav (C.1.2.) is Javvy (C.1.3.) on occasion and Glendenning which could be Glen (C.1.2.) is always Glenny (C.1.3.).

C.2.0. Personal names used as the source of a pun or parody

Here is perhaps the 'desire for fun', which the Opies (1977) find so characteristic of the child's language, but which so far in the nicknames has been lacking. This
category is, however, significantly sparse. Only three permanent nicknames are of this type.

Thomas - Tucker (from the nursery rhyme, "Little Tommy Tucker sang for his supper.")

Colson - Coker (a pun based on the phonetic equivalence of 'col' and 'coal', leading to the inverted semantic association with 'coke'.)

Roger - Rogger (involving the substitution when spoken of a hard 'g' for the soft 'g'.)

C.3.0. Substituted names

In this category appear nicknames which have no obvious connection with the individual's personal name but represent the substitution of another autonym.

Stephen - Dicky
Stephen - Sam
Alan - Benny

It could be argued that here nicknames serve a functional role through distinguishing between those with the same Christian name. The next category prevents any such simplistic conclusion.

C.4.0. Names which cover more than one individual

This category demonstrates the paradoxical nature of nicknaming practices. Many names, previously assigned to earlier categories must necessarily feature here for particular nicknames take on further meanings in performance. No longer
can gender or individual boundaries be maintained. Although
the nickname ' Olly ' is of the type (C.1.2.), being a
corruption of the surname Allchurch, all the boys of that
family have the same nickname - a neat inversion of the
naming procedures adopted by parents to distinguish their
offspring. A complex transformation has occurred: the
classificatory device - the surname - is transformed into a
personal nickname for an individual but is then used as a
new classificatory label.

Similarly, ' Maca ' covers two brothers so that the question
is frequently asked : " Big or little Maca ? " This is
reminiscent of two other brothers, ' Big Mog ' and ' Little
Mog '. ' Leddy ' spans two brothers, although each boy has
his own individual nickname. ' Bouch ' makes do for a brother
and sister as do the nicknames ' Plewsy ' and ' Feather '.
Clarification, in terms of individuality, is not therefore
a prime function of nicknaming practices. Some children
have more than one nickname; others have no nickname at all.
No one ever knows why a person has a particular nickname,
rather than another, and the fact that he or she has a
nickname is never questioned. A nickname " just is ".

C.5.0. Surnames as nicknames

This practice, common in Public schools amongst boys and
often between teacher and pupil elsewhere, is also a form
of nicknaming used by the children. It is however
comparatively rare. Amongst the children there are but

/..
four examples: 'Genner', 'Liddel', 'Kirby' and 'Leddy'. It is possible that these nicknames do not, in fact, constitute a separate category in analytical terms for three of these children have alternative nicknames found in other categories. 'Genner' and 'Liddel' are also known as 'Jue' and 'Delly'. The boy called 'Leddy' is also 'Dicky' and, as is obvious, both surnames 'Leddy' and 'Kirby' already end in a 'y' so that alteration might not be necessary. 'Leddy' and 'Kirby' correspond to the type of nickname (C.1.3.)

The significant poverty of this category suggests an equality in social relationships, when contrasted to the superior-inferior relationship involved in the use of surnames alone between teacher and pupil, master and servant or friend and enemy. Often surnames will be used alone when a fight or argument - a power struggle - is about to take place. These kinds of nicknames may, therefore, represent temporary nicknames. This theme of the relationship between the use and type of nickname and social distance will be amplified below.¹

N.1.0. Physical appearance as a source of nicknames

The nicknames in this category are all based on analogies with the individual's physical body or descriptive of his

¹. See pp.363 - 377.
or her character or manner. The explanations of the nicknames were offered by the children themselves.

Colin - Rocky (because of his slicked back hair and Rock 'n Roll image - a veritable Elvis Presley)
Wendy - Weed (because she's small and goes about with Bill and Ben)
Kevin - Mouse (because of his sticking out teeth and pointed nose)
Paul - Nipper (because he always used to nip girls' arses)
Alan - Mouser (because he's always on the scrounge)
Anne - Inch (because she's small)

To summarise some of the observations so far: an individual child may have two or three interchangeable permanent nicknames. Some nicknames may be place specific as, for example, one boy who is known as 'Tiddler' in his class at school (being the smallest in stature) but 'Delly' at the youth club. Some nicknames refer to more than one individual with no regard to gender. Other nicknames are used only by girls of girls. In a context where the male voice is more audible I thought at first that girls did not have nicknames. Close attention, however, revealed that Sharon was often 'Shaz' and Patricia often 'Trish' when the girls were talking of or to each other. Boys know the nicknames of girls - they understand the references - but, in general, they address girls or refer to them by their personal name or a familiar form (C.1.1). Occasionally boys might use their own nicknames for girls in address so that
Jacqueline might be addressed as 'Jack'. Girls, in contrast, always use the boys' nicknames.

The first major category (C.1.1.;C.1.2;C.1.3) is by far the largest being 64% of the total. It is striking by its very predictability. A personal name can often be deduced from an examination of the nickname and amongst the girls all but a handful of nicknames fall within this class. The highly consistent patterning of nickname derivation is revealed through the following incident:

"Jackie tells me that she has an invitation to a party but that she wasn't asked directly. I said: "You got it by proxy?". She replied "No, from Dave". Proxy she understood as a nickname, comparable with Plewsy, Cloughy, Fishy or Grahamy."

All but 8 of the children's permanent nicknames derive from the cultural source.

Permanent nicknames: child to adult

In contrast to the rather bland permanent nicknames used between the children the nicknames they give to adults are spicy and poignant. These names can be roughly divided into the categories outlined above with some exceptions. In

1. This example is instructive for the girl in question did not conform to many of the implicit restrictions placed upon females in the culture of the children. She always wore trousers and often joined in 'male' activities. Here perhaps she is classified by the boys as 'male'.
general, for adult permanent nicknames the categories are fewer and less well bounded. It is, in fact, their ambiguous qualities which lend these nicknames their power; many names are highly resonant and depend upon a complex combination of methods of derivation. However, the two main sources - the cultural and natural sources, - are still distinguishable.

The cultural source:

The first major category is one in which the adult's personal name is altered by adding or subtracting letters. The majority of these nicknames are constructed from the individual's surname; in that most of these nicknames are ones given to teachers this is of no surprise. Teachers' Christian names are usually closely guarded secrets.

C.1.1. Personal name as the basis for a rhyming pair

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nickname</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Smith</td>
<td>Smith Withy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Not</td>
<td>Snotty Notty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Bell</td>
<td>Smelly Belly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or Bell the Smell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Mary the Hairy Fairy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all these names the suffix 'y' is used to form the rhyming element.
C.1.2. Surname lengthened by the suffix 'y'

This sub-category has been included but it is ambiguous in use. As will be suggested later this may in fact represent a transient category similar to the category of surnames used alone (C.5.0.) found amongst the children's permanent nicknames.

Mr. Hall - Hally
Mr. Brook - Brooky

C.2.0. Personal names used as the source of a pun or parody

Mrs. Not's husband is a transgressor from (C.1.1.) - an extended pun whose nickname only becomes meaningful when seen in conjunction with that given to his wife. His name being Ivor invites the obvious nickname: "I've a snot up my nose." Mrs. Bell reappears here as 'Ding Dong', which reflects the rhyming element noted in (C.1.1.). Mr. Angus is known as 'Scottie' although he speaks with a local accent. Mr. Doudle is 'Dougal', Mrs. Beveridge is 'The Beaver' and Mrs. Mazerretti is 'Long Spagetti'. All these nicknames depend upon either a phonetic or associative resemblance between (i) the literal meaning of the name or (ii) the sound of the name when spoken.

C.3.0. Personal name used to refer to the media

Here the nickname is derived from the association of the adult's
personal name with characters or items from the media.

Mr. Wood - Woody Woodpecker (The headmaster who is also the beak)
Mr. Gregory - Gregory Peck
Mr. Smith - Smith's Crisps
Mrs. Dabs - Sherbert Dabs

Also there is Mr. Phillips who is "years behind time", a parody of the Phillip's Electrical advert which proclaims its products as being "Years ahead of time"; a neat inversion!

The natural source:

Here there are two categories of adult permanent nicknames:

N.1.1. Personal appearance as source for nicknames

Raggy Pants - (who is always dirty)
Auntie Bionic - (who talks incessantly)
Snoteater - (because he does)
Fat Parkin - (who has an enormous belly)
Beaky - (who has a long nose)
Concorde - (""
Madame Le Box - (who has a square-shaped head)
Sexy Sam the Dustbin Man - (an unkempt man who is reputed to pinch girl's bottoms)
Kiddie Catcher (the school attendance officer)
Miss MacMoan (Miss MacLone, "who always tells yer off")
Squeak (who has squeaky shoes)
Owl Eyes (who wears glasses)

N.1.2. Personal appearance or actions linked to the media

Little Rolf (who looks like Rolf Harris)
Hitler (who wears a moustache)
Planet of the Apes (who has a moustache and protruberant chin)
Bugsy Malone (who rides a motorbike)
Mitchellin (who is fat, like the Mitchellin Man)
Barnaby Bear (whose ears stick out)

Approximately half the permanent nicknames for adults are derived from the natural source in contrast to 10% of the nicknames used amongst the children. However, these figures are of little import when the inspired and cruel overtones of these nicknames are compared with the rather reserved comments evident in the permanent nicknames the children give to one another.

To summarise the contrasts between these two kinds of permanent nicknames there are a number of qualitative differences in (i) their use and application (ii) their mode of construction and (iii) their semantic flavour.
### Table 1: Nickname Distribution For Children And Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>C.1.1</th>
<th>C.1.2</th>
<th>C.1.3</th>
<th>C.2.0</th>
<th>C.3.0</th>
<th>C.4.0</th>
<th>C.5.0</th>
<th>N.1.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Total: 80

### Table 2: Nickname Distribution For Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>C.1.1</th>
<th>C.1.2</th>
<th>C.2.0</th>
<th>C.3.0</th>
<th>N.1.1</th>
<th>N.1.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 5. Nickname Distribution For Children And Adults
Firstly, the difference in use according to gender, noted for the children's permanent nicknames, is not apparent in adult nicknames; male and female receive equal treatment. The names for adults are intended to be abusive and are given to adults who are hated. A teacher who is disliked must have a nickname and, I was told, if there is not one currently in use the children will soon find one. In contrast, the children's permanent nicknames for each other are relatively neutral. They reflect little emotion and are used by all and not just close friends.

An obvious distinction between these two kinds of permanent nicknames is that whilst the children use their nicknames as both address and reference terms, the adult nicknames are purely referential. By virtue of the assumed, and probable, authority of the adult over the child adult nicknames cannot be used by the children as address terms for fear of painful retribution. However, beyond this purely pragmatic difference lies another explanation: the nicknames given to adults are secret knowledge. Many adults who get to know their nicknames may work on the principle that nicknames are given to popular people, just as they might see the practical joke as fun, as not serious in intention. The ways in which the children express these nicknames, their insistence that a hated teacher must be named, denies this belief. The children, if playing a trick on adults, will often hint at the trick before the discovery is made if they think of it as fun. If, on the other hand, ridicule is the
aim the unwary adult will be left to discover it alone.
Just so with nicknames.

Nicknames wield power and the ones reserved for hated adults are abusive in intention and conception. Those permanent nicknames for children remain neutral. The boy nicknamed 'Mouse' has it emblazoned across his jacket; even though it pinpoints most acutely his deficiency in looks it is not a name to be hidden or to be ashamed of. It invites no retribution to the namer from the named.

Secondly, nicknames for adults are linguistically more complex. They often involve two or more words and at times a whole sentence. In contrast, the children's permanent nicknames are short and snappy. In the whole collection no permanent nickname for the children is more than two syllables long. Most are monosyllabic and even "Grahamy", which is three syllables, is spoken as if it contained just two: 'Gramy'. Similarly, the nicknames which stem from the natural source (those which appear to be potentially insulting) are short and simple: 'Rocky', 'Inch', 'Nipper', 'Mouser'. These are very different from the adult names: 'Sexy Sam the Dustbin Man', 'Put a Tiger in your tank' and 'Planet of the Apes'.

Thirdly, the adult nicknames contain a multitude of metaphoric associations. As a set they indicate a stress on the parts of the body. The names are metaphorical constructions around
the nose, the mouth, the stomach, eyes, ears, faces and sexual organs. There is no reference to body parts in the children's nicknames. Animals as metaphors abound and there are many references to familiar T.V. personalities or characters. This source of nicknaming - adverts, cartoons and children's T.V. programmes - make the names instantly recognisable to other children who can perceive the hidden identity of the individual who is named. These names represent yet another useful aspect of this corpus of sacred knowledge: the children can speak of 'Smiths Crisps', 'Gregory Peck' and 'Dougal' without those not in the know understanding the reference.

Media figures are used as metaphoric names for the children but are always directed towards the self. They are never permanent nicknames. Instead, they represent self-ascriptions, destined to augment prestige. To call oneself 'The Fonz' or 'The Hulk' is a form of self-congratulation, implying great ability. The Fonz has a way with girls, the Hulk has exceeding physical strength. A boy may call himself 'The Bionic Man', as a form of self-appraisal, but 'bionic' as in 'Auntie Bionic' is a critical assessment of her constant gossip; it does not suggest visions of strength and masculinity. Moreover, it is apparent that the choice of media figures as metaphors for the self are taken from the realm of super-heroes.¹ Super-heroes are not used for

¹. For further discussion of this, see pp.426 - 444.
adults, those who are despised. In this respect I received a mark of acumen from one boy; he told me that I warranted the status of the Fonz's wife.

From these initial conclusions it is possible to draw up a series of conceptual oppositions which form a series of inverse images revealed through the semantic analysis of nicknames.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILD</th>
<th>ADULT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Source Predominates</td>
<td>Natural Source Predominates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual differentiation</td>
<td>Non-differentiation by sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple, short names</td>
<td>Long, complex names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-abusive</td>
<td>Abusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T.V. heroes for self-appraisal</td>
<td>T.V. and media used for abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral attitude to the other expressed</td>
<td>The other as a hated enemy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address and reference terms</td>
<td>Usually, only used in reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few animals and inanimate objects</td>
<td>Many animals and inanimate objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The body as a physical whole</td>
<td>The body as separate parts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Fig.6](image_url) The differences in construction and semantic value between the two types of nicknames (read horizontally), and the characteristics of each series (read vertically).
The data in Fig. 6 summarises the conceptual representation of two kinds of species: 'them' and 'us'. 'Them' - visualised as the adult world through nicknaming practices - are separated off into a named category. 'They' have names which refer to the natural world or to the popular culture of the media, cartoons and adverts. 'They' have names which belong to the realm of ordinary discourse, highly constructed names involving a multitude of metaphors. 'We', on the other hand, have names of the social world; 'we' have cultural labels which are self-referential, names which are restricted to the human order.

However, to leave the analysis as a discrete discussion of binary classification would be to reify what is a complex and highly ambiguous social practice. Not all adults are hated; not all children are liked. Clifford Geertz argues that to achieve a comprehensive appreciation of cultural processes it is necessary to undertake an 'extended unpacking' of the relationship between empirical reality and conceptual thought (1975:90). Crucially, this involves maintaining the distinction between symbols and their referents for the 'the latter are not in themselves symbols', of making an analytical separation between a model of and for reality (ibid:92).

In this respect Fig. 6 expresses a model of the world: the children's nicknaming practices represent a process of symbolic classification predicated upon and congruent with the non-symbolic reality, that is the social distance
between the children's and the adult's worlds. However, through exploring the mode of operation of temporary nicknames a model for reality is revealed: temporary nicknames represent the conceptual manipulation and transformation of the adult-child dichotomy in the physical world.

This process suggests that nicknames, whilst being individual names, are also species names. They are totemic and the adult-child dichotomy represents the totemic operator.\(^1\)

Totemic naming systems are metaphoric in character but, as Lévi-Strauss remarks,

\[\text{'the homology they evoke is not between social groups and natural species but between the differences which manifest themselves on the level of groups on the one hand and on that of species on the other'}\ (1972:115)\]

Totemism postulates 'a homology between two systems of difference' (ibid:115).

The features summarised in Fig. 6 frame the model of reality - the adult-child dichotomy - but also provide the referential points for the model for reality. The nicknaming system, like totemism and other systems of social classification,

\[\text{'are codes suitable for conveying messages which can be transposed into other codes, and for expressing messages received by means of different codes in terms of their own system'}\ (ibid:75-6).

1. See Lévi-Strauss (1972).
Metaphoric nicknames may reflect the physical reality but they are metonymical links in a symbolic system. Not all 'fatties' will be nicknamed according to their shape; not all those who are so named will be fat. Indeed, reversal may occur: the name 'tiny' may be used for the very tall. Just as Lévi-Strauss dismisses any biological explanation for the existence of totemic practices, preferring 'ethno-logic' to 'ethno-biology', I suggest that nicknaming should also be understood primarily as a logical conceptual system (1969:100). Such a perspective moves the analysis to a consideration of how self-knowledge is constituted, of the expression of social unity through inclusion against the diversity of exclusion, of the children's own conception of the social order and their position within it. These questions can be explored through exposing the underlying logic of nicknaming practices, manifested in manifest forms.

A model for reality: temporary nicknames amongst the children

Fernandez has argued that the mission of metaphor is to create a 'synthesia in respect to continua in different domains' (1974:124). This is also the mission of temporary nicknames: temporary nicknames reconstruct and realign the divisions and boundaries between the children's and the adult worlds.
Temporary nicknames, unlike the children's permanent nicknames, are intrinsically bound up with sentiment and are highly metaphoric. As Winslow suggests in his discussion of children's derogatory epithets they 'can function as implements of social control' (1969:262). They achieve this persuasive power through metaphor, through confusing different conceptual domains.

I suggested earlier that temporary nicknames can best be described as insults. They are not names by which children are necessarily always known but are usually only momentarily invoked. They are less person specific than permanent nicknames as is apparent from the fact that many of these names represent those which the Opies (op.cit.) have identified as 'traditional'. In this sense, temporary nicknames are species names, not proper names, applicable to many rather than single individuals. However, as opposed to terms of general abuse - such as pig, puff and spacca - temporary nicknames are of a highly contrived nature. They are similar in both derivative form, mode of construction and semantic flavour to the names discussed previously for adults. The congruence of sentiment which accompanies their use emphasises this marked resemblance in construction. It is precisely this contiguity which unleashes the insult.
The cultural source:

C.1.1. Name used as the basis for a rhyming pair

Jacqueline Spaccaline
Jannet Cannot
Tucker Fucker

As in the adult classification, play is usually on the children's personal name, but here it is the Christian name which is used rather than the surname. All the three temporary nicknames above have a multitude of associations. In the first nickname there are three modes of abuse: (1) the use of Jacqueline implies a formality and hence a social distancing, as normally she is called Jackie; (2) the nickname includes *spacca*, a general insult; (3) the rhyming quality of the name is similar to that employed for hated adult nicknames; she has been metaphorically moved into an excluded and abused group. The rhyme form may facilitate a singing jeer. As Hardman (1973) notes, the phrase 'Cowdy, cowdy custard' (from my own data: 'Tucker is a nutter') always follows a distinctive rhythm and tune which allows abuse to be sung; variations in verbal content are unimportant for 'the meaning is fixed in the tune' (1973: 97).

C.2.0 Personal names used as a source of a pun or parody

Riggerby - Riggertwit
George - Georgie Porgie
In the first example, the personal name is turned into an insult through the addition of a general insult twit. In the second, recourse is made to the nursery rhyme character who kissed the girls and made them cry; insult is added to injury through exploitation of the rhyme form.

C.3.0. Personal name used to refer to the media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Andy</th>
<th>Andy Pandy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheena</td>
<td>Barry Sheene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison</td>
<td>Alibaba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The natural source:

N.1.1. Personal appearance as source for nicknames

It is in this category that the majority of temporary nicknames occur, reflecting the similar emphasis in the adult classification. In contrast to the category (N.1.0) for the children's permanent nicknames, the ones used temporarily are graphic illustrations of the individual's deficiencies. Permanent nicknames in this category were, by contrast, neutral in tone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Golliwog</th>
<th>(for a half-caste boy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackie</td>
<td>(&quot;&quot;&quot;&quot;&quot;&quot;&quot;&quot;&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concorde</td>
<td>(for a boy with a large nose, c.f. adult classification N.1.1.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snotbag</td>
<td>(c.f. snoteater in adult classification N.1.1.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Jaw</td>
<td>(for a boy who had recently acquired a brace for his teeth and was embarrassed about it)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fat William (for a fat boy c.f. Fat Parkin in adult classification N.1.1.)

Daft Margaret (for a girl who attends the 'spac' school -i.e. she is E.S.N.)

The Tramp (for a dirty, poorly dressed boy, c.f. "the dustbin man" in adult classification N.1.1.)

Freckle Face (because she had one)

Copy-cat pig (because she does)

Fatty Bum Bum (for a fat boy)

Barrel (for a fat girl)

Tank (for a fat girl c.f. Opies (1977))

N.1.2. Personal appearance or actions linked to the media

Smelly Pele (footballer. Insult is achieved through rhyme form)

Smerf (Shell Petrol advert, cartoon character)

Miss Piggy (the Muppet Show)

Pixie and Dixie (T.V. Programme for children)

John Player Special the Snoteater special (cigarettes)

It is apparent that the temporary nicknames used amongst children bear many of the characteristics familiar in the permanent nicknames given to adults. There are references to animals and inanimate objects; the body is split into parts; there is no regard to gender differentiation; the names are linguistically complex; there is an emphasis on the natural source as the mode of derivation, (c.f. Fig. 6, adult series).
Earlier, reference was made to Winslow's (1969) comment that nicknames work on many different levels: one particular name may be at one time acceptable but at another hurtful. By exploring in detail how temporary nicknames are evoked an explanation of this paradoxical process is achieved. The key to this puzzle lies in the distinction between teasing and the breaching of friendships, between conceptual recognition of an individual as a member of 'us' rather than 'them'.

Teasing is integral to name calling. To tease a friend is metaphorically to move him or her into the category named for adults - outsiders - through evoking a temporary nickname. For that moment in time he or she becomes conceptually something other i.e. a metaphoric adult/outsider. By addressing a friend with a temporary nickname a distance is created between the namer and the named, a conceptual distance analogous to that between adults and children. Frequently, temporary nicknames are used in games of name-calling: each individual tries to outwit his or her opponent through conceptually manoeuvering the other into more distant classificatory domains. The aim is to achieve the maximum insult. The game is finished when one insult is perceived to over-step the normative boundaries of the game, at which time the namer will be met with a physical response in the form of a fight or a refusal to continue the game.
The following examples outline the process of name-calling in such linguistic games:

(1) "Kirby, Bouch and David were visiting. Kirby gets up to leave and David shouts: "Bye, bye, Kermit". Kirby replies: "Bye, bye Fuzzy Bear" to which David shouts: "Bye, bye, Miss Piggy". Kirby threatens to thump him".

In this series all the names are taken from the T.V. programme, The Muppet Show. An initial alliterative pun is made on Kirby's permanent nickname: Kirby is transformed into Kermit (the frog). Taking up the challenge Kirby continues the theme by calling David Fuzzy Bear, to which David responds with yet another animal metaphor, that of the pig. Pig is a general insult and genderized, in this case, as female; David therefore achieves a double insult and Kirby can only reply with a physical threat.

(2) "Tucker and Stephen are sitting round the bonfire. Tucker calls Stephen "Woodenbrain" to which Stephen replies "Leadbrain". Tucker responds "Noseface". Later Stephen calls Tucker, "Friar Tuck", followed quickly by "Fire Tuck".

In this example, there is a complex interplay on personal characteristics. Stephen was well known for certain ineptitudes and so Tucker's nickname for him, "Woodenbrain", was highly resonant. Stephen, not to be outwitted, picked on a substance denser and heavier - that is thicker-than wood - 'Woodenbrain' became 'Leadbrain'. The new insult retained the original's form (something brain) but was more insulting for it implied greater stupidity. Tucker, in reply, changed tactics and once more directed his insult
against Stephen's body through calling him "Noseface". (Stephen had a large nose). This nickname continued the established theme of bodily description but represented a direct hit. Stephen's later attempts to get his own back were less successful: through using Thomas's nickname 'Tucker' as the starting point he transformed it into 'Friar Tuck'. Tucker being a small, thin boy, was not offended by the name and gave no response. The final transformation of 'Friar' into 'Fire' was equally unsuccessful; Tucker did not rise to the bait for the names were not good teases.

(3) "Coker was teasing Noreen. He kept rushing up to her and calling her 'Thirks'."

In this last case is another example of teasing. Coker and Noreen were going out together and Coker was deliberately endeavouring to make her angry. Noreen was called Noz and Coker always used this nickname. By calling her "Thirks" he was insulting her in a number of ways. Firstly, he was not using her own nickname, thereby distancing himself from her. He employed the nickname "Thirks" (a permanent nickname from Thirkel) and a name which belonged to her brother. Metaphorically, Coker was transforming his girlfriend into a male, and possibly chastising her for some of her more aggressive, masculine behaviour.¹ Later, he capitalised upon this latter insult by suggesting that she "stinks of vinegar", another undesirable quality.

¹. See below for a discussion of gender prescription for action, pp.426 - 458.
In the three examples above it is significant that many of the temporary nicknames, although following the pattern of construction outlined previously, used the individual's permanent nickname, rather than proper name, out of which to form the insult. All these three incidents were about teasing rather than insulting and the use of the permanent nickname represents a sign of their affectionate rather than abusive intention. A similar series of transformations would be the one directed at Kevin, known as 'Coker', when he was called 'Coconut'.

However, temporary nicknames can also serve to create more permanent divisions in social relationships; the social distance instigated through teasing becomes the main reason for name-calling rather than its result. Here there is a change in use: the temporary nickname becomes used in reference as well as address. In teasing the name is only used in address. When the friendship is finally breached the temporary nickname becomes permanently applied and changes to a purely referential term. In address the individual will be called by his or her personal name. This pattern recalls that already discussed in the use of permanent nicknames for adults.

As Morgan, O'Neil and Harré (1979) confirm, nicknaming is an effective instrument of social control. Anyone who is perceived to trangress the unwritten rules of conduct
adhered to by the group as a whole - rules of behaviour and physical appearance - can be sanctioned through nicknaming. Temporary nicknames are used to insult those who go beyond the bounds. For example, the temporary nickname 'Professor' was given to one boy who boasted of his knowledge in front of his friends and 'Daft Margaret' was picked on for her stupidity. To be picked out from the crowd is to be named and temporary nicknames, which are linguistically complex and semantically rich, symbolise this process of individuation; the insulted lose their permanent nicknames which are less outstanding, which conform to the names given to others. In both these instances each child had to tread most carefully in case the temporary nickname was maintained. Once an individual is thus named the name may stick like glue and total exclusion from the group must surely follow. In this way nicknames serve to delineate the implicit social norms established by the children. ¹

Children who are external to a specific group are identified and named: they have permanent derogatory nicknames. Three sisters are collectively known as the 'The Jumble Sale'. Their clothing is perceived to be non-conformist and the children would remark: "There's a jumble sale outside" when they caught sight of them. Another boy once remarked, when a jumble sale was planned at the Club, that "the

¹See pp426-441 for further discussion of bodily norms.
Sparks can buy their clothes there " . These girls were peripheral to the main group at the club; they had to find friendship elsewhere.

Whole groups of outsiders are named in this fashion. They are specified as groups apart. Although within the village there were no formalized gangs and during the two year period of fieldwork friendships remained relatively fluid, the village lads had a strong sense of territorial identity. Through using the geographical boundaries of the village they conceptually delimited the extent of their own territory; lads from nearby villages were collectively known as ' Bishop Botters', ' Teefab Metal Mob' 'C-----Twats', and 'F-------- Evil Bastards'.

The change from using a temporary nickname as a tease to using it as a positive insult is symbolised in the move from the name being used purely in address to it becoming used as both an address and reference term. Total exclusion from the group occurs when a temporary nickname - an abusive name - is used only in reference with the personal name being used in address. The use of the surname alone as a nickname (C.5.0.) may similarly mark changing sentiment. Both these processes of name changing represent a form of social death; non persons are those who do not have a permanent nickname. In many ways, therefore, as Morgan, O'Neill and Harré also note, it may be 'better to be stigmatized than to be a non-person, for not to exist socially is the worst fate of all' (1979:47).
It remains to be discussed how the children name adults whom they like. If those children who are disliked are conceptually distanced from the group by drawing analogies (through nicknames) to adults it would seem logical that adults who are favoured should be conceptually equated with the children. This seems to be the case. Similarity, but not contiguity, is asserted in a negative fashion through the process of not giving permanent nicknames to liked adults. A negative process is hard to substantiate but as Crick suggests 'semantic investigations have to cope not only with a diversity of conventions, but also with the semantic power of purposive non-conventionality' (1976:135). By not giving adults abusive nicknames the children positively flaunt their usual nicknaming practices.

Such adults will be referred to and addressed by their personal name. To tease such an adult an abusive nickname is delivered directly in address as amongst the children: I was nicknamed by the terms 'Alibaba' or 'Clogger'. Should such an adult break the friendship, however, there is a mode of distancing comparable with that used amongst the children. The category (C.1.2.) for adults was identified earlier as ambiguous: this can now be explained. The addition of the suffix 'y' succeeds in temporarily insulting a liked adult through drawing an analogy with children. This finds expression in such statements as "I got wrong off Hally yesterday" or "Woody told us off". There is a temporary

1. 'Clogger' was derived from my footwear-clogs and Alibaba from my Christian name.
change in sentiment. Should that adult become permanently unacceptable he will acquire an adult-type of permanent nickname.

It seems therefore that if the children wish to tease a member of the adult liked group he or she must be pushed towards the children's category by addressing him or her in the same way as the children tease each other. If the children wish to insult such a liked adult, he or she is moved further into the children's classification scheme; conversely, if a member of the children's group is insulted he or she is moved towards an adult type of classification. That is to say, in order to insult the children exclude a person who is usually included (a child) and further include a person who is on the boundary (a liked adult). Involved in both these processes of changing sentiment is a complex series of transformations and inversions which accomplish movement around, what Fernandez has called, 'quality space' (1974:124). The boundaries of this quality space rest on the framework of distinctions established in Fig. 6 which govern the construction of nicknames for 'us' and for 'them'. The mode of description of this space is based on the child-adult dichotomy, on 'us' and 'them', but expression of who exactly belongs to each category at any point in time is achieved by movement between these two extremes through the manipulation of different types of naming, see Fig. 7.
The Metaphorical Shifts Incurred Through Nicknaming Practices

N.B. The arrows indicate the direction of metaphoric movement in category status and the shaded areas the equivalence conceptually accomplished through the affective use of nicknaming.

The quality space around which individuals can be moved through the children's nicknaming practices is further illustrated by the following two examples in Fig.8. The table plots the changes in name over time as a child and an adult moved from favour to disfavour. In each case it is the use of particular address and reference terms which registers the changing sentiments:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>PERMANENT NICKNAME (+)</th>
<th>TRANSITORY NICKNAME (+/-)</th>
<th>TEMPORARY / NEW PERMANENT NICKNAME (-)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHILD</td>
<td>Bouch (A)</td>
<td>Iron Jaw (A)</td>
<td>Paul (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bouch (R)</td>
<td>Boucher (R)</td>
<td>Boucher/Iron Jaw (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADULT</td>
<td>Mr.Hall (A)</td>
<td>Mr.Hall (A)</td>
<td>Mr.Hall (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr.Hall (R)</td>
<td>Hally (R)</td>
<td>Hally Scrawly (R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 8. An illustration of the change in nicknames given to (i) a child and (ii) an adult as each moved from favour to disfavour over a period of time.

Changes in nicknaming also reflect changes in social status. At a certain point an individual will be perceived by the other children to be leaving their world and drifting towards the boundaries of adulthood and, at this time, nicknaming may change. During the fieldwork period one boy who was always called 'Butch' by the children gradually began to prefer that they addressed him by his personal name and would reproach anyone who used his previous nickname, especially if it was a younger child. Eventually even in reference 'Butch' became used infrequently by the children as he began to separate himself off from their world.
Conclusion: Nicknames as a mode of thought

The preceding analysis reveals a powerful and semantically rich system of naming. It is one which has its own internal logic, a mode of thought which structures and is structured by the children's own understanding of their relationship with others. Nicknaming, as a social practice, represents one of the ways in which the children conceptually reorder and manipulate the strictures of a classification scheme which works to categorise them apart.

The high consistency of this example of nicknaming practices is, I suggest, a function of the particularity of the ethnographic setting. Morgan, O'Neill and Harré conclude from their studies that 'the intensity of the nicknaming system is related to the intensity of the social structure' (1979:50). They argue that 'nickname density is highest where the institution approximates to Goffman's total institution', that is when people are subject to strong processes of social control which force them into 'relatively close and prolonged contact with each other' (ibid:51).

This correlation between nicknaming and social structure is substantiated by Barret's (1978) analysis of changing nickname practices among adults in Benbarre, Northern Spain. He suggests that with increasing modernization personal nicknames - those coined from 'personality characteristics,
place of origin or occupation of particular individuals' - have become increasingly surplanted by traditional inherited family nicknames (1978:94). These latter names have 'no necessary connection between the meaning of the name and the individual it identifies' for they are passed down between generations (ibid:95). Through the diminution of community sociability, which he sees as integral to the process of coining, disseminating and establishing personal nicknames, inherited nicknames which do not rely on continual face-to-face interaction for their transmission have become more common. That is, the village has become less of a 'total institution'.

In general, therefore, the more rigid the boundaries between social groups, the more people are turned in upon themselves, the more coherent and elaborate nicknaming practices become. In the village where the children live, go to school and socialize within a limited physical and social space, where they have continual and close contact with one another both in school and outside it, where there is a marked separation between the adult world and the children's world, the conditions exist for the emergence of a highly coherent and strongly bounded 'autonomous world' and the development of a world view which conceptually separates the 'us' from 'them' (Morgan, O'Neill and Harré, 1979:2).

This world view finds one expression through the totemic qualities and symbolic import of their nicknaming practices: nicknames enable the children to draw relatively rigid boundaries between different species, between 'us' and 'them'. This difference incorporates ideas of social distance and is expressed in the linguistic form of the names themselves.

Leach (1964); (1971) has explored the relationship between language and cultural conceptions of familiarity. He poses the problem of the social contexts of utterance of two alternative kinship terms, 'mummy' and 'mother', and asks what conditions inspire or restrict their use:

'when a speaker's competence includes two kinship words which are alternative referents for the same individual the words are differentiated in the speaker's mind by a complex of associations which we may call 'semantic colour' which may have a phonological base'. (1971:77)

In the nicknaming practices of the children this hypothesis is confirmed: the differences in semantic colour noticeable between the two types of nicknames used by the children are reflected in differences in phonology.

Firstly, the permanent nicknames used by the children for each other are short and simple; those used for outsiders are, by contrast, long and linguistically complex. The children's permanent nicknames gain their overall phonological uniformity through the use of particularized
suffixes: 'y', 'z' and 'a' or 'er', the latter two being aurally indistinguishable. Examples of such nicknames are: 'Baz', 'Gaz', 'Daz', 'Shaz', 'Caz', 'Maz' and 'Trez'; 'Linty', 'Hutchy', 'Delly', 'Joany', 'Glenny', 'Hezzy' and 'Canty'; 'Tosha', 'Whipper', 'Moga', 'Maca' and 'Rogger'. Such names are composed of sounds which are 'easy to control'; these, as Leach argues, are usually reserved for close relatives as in 'mama' and 'papa' (ibid:78). More distant relationships, those which are 'surrounded by awkwardness and taboo will tend to be signalled by 'difficult' sounds', a pattern again apparent in nickname construction: names given to outsiders are long and complex, contrasting strongly with the names used for close friends (ibid:78).

In the light of these findings it is surprising that few researchers have considered the process of social inclusion through nicknaming: for most writers nicknames are merely ways of individualising people through stigmatization, of excluding those who are perceived to be different or of reinforcing social norms through derogatory epithets and ridicule. Morgan, O'Neill and Harré (op.cit.), for example, make no clear distinction between differences in semantic colour between different kinds of nicknames. Although they note that some nicknames are of the Marion-Maz variety (category C.1.2.) they make no comment on the significance of having this kind of nickname. It is, I suggest, precisely because they have not considered the performative aspect of
nicknaming, have not paid close attention to the usage of nicknames as address and/or reference terms, that they have missed the importance of such prosaic nicknames for the establishment of group unity. There is, however, an indication from their work that this is in fact the case: 'the smaller the school class the more internal motivations played some part in the formation of nicknames (1979:39). This is substantiated in my own findings: members of the 'us' group most often have nicknames derived from personal names - what Morgan, O'Neill and Harré term as the internal motivation - and it is this principle of nickname construction which, I suggest, symbolises the unity of the group.

Nicknames, then, are used both as inclusive, classificatory devices as well as exclusive, individualising ones. The rather prosaic and unimaginative nicknames which the children use constantly for one another as permanent address and reference terms - 'Trish', 'Hooky' and 'Gench' - are positive symbols of inclusion within a particular social group. Such names have rarely been considered as nicknames at all with undue attention being placed on the more flamboyant names, those generally perceived as comical or insulting.

As Collier and Bricker (1970) correctly note, nicknames can therefore operate as both classifiers and individualisers. Nicknames classify 'us' and 'them' through giving names
to individual members, but the names chosen reflect the category to which these members belong, and therefore act also as classificatory devices. This movement between individual and category is a complex interweaving between internal and external perceptions. Among the children, although their permanent nicknames individuate within the group, the very process of nicknaming serves to blur external perception of individual members. Nicknames therefore provide a disguise for the individual and are used to confuse outsiders.

Whilst working at the youth club, for example, I soon became aware that the children were adept at manipulating their nicknaming system for their own gain; through exploiting this difference between internal and external perception of it the children managed to confuse and disorder the adults who were in charge as on the occasion when one boy managed to get two games of table tennis, rather than the allotted single game. Table tennis was very popular so there was a rota on which children who wanted to play signed their names. Through writing down both his personal name and his nickname (ostensibly referring to two people) this particular boy achieved his goal. Another boy wrote down his two alternative nicknames to achieve the same end and yet another wrote down the nickname 'Leddy' twice, arguing that the one name referred to himself and also to his brother.

Within the group nicknames individuate; to outsiders nicknames serve as masks for individual identities. Stephen
is 'Dicky' but also 'Leddy', whilst 'Leddy' is 'Tucker' who is really Thomas. Alan is 'Benny' but sometimes 'Mouser' and Maurice is 'Mog' and also 'Macca'. 'Maca' is also Mog's brother and 'Little Mog' is 'Big Mogs' brother. In some cases the nickname is in such constant use that the individual's personal name is unknown, as is the case with the legendary 'Pegga' who used to live in the village. He may or may not be 'David something' but none of the children were certain. The display of graffiti sprayed around the village reveals a wealth of nicknames, so conspicuous and ostentatious and yet, to outsiders, ultimately meaningless. The physical identity is lost to the stranger under a disguised name. It was one of the high points of my fieldwork when I was at last able to identify the faceless names which decorated the interior of the telephone box.

The ways in which the nicknaming practices of the children serve to colour in the contours of their social map, indicating familiarity and distance, friends and foes, suggests that the study of names, which in anthropology assumes importance under the headings of teknonomy and necronymy, could well be augmented by studies of nicknaming. The analysis presented here has, for example, covered many of the issues raised by Hilda and Clifford Geertz (1964) in their article on teknonomy in Bali. They suggest that above all teknonomy provides a classificatory frame for the life of the community:
The display of graffiti sprayed round the village reveals a wealth of nicknames.
The mode of address in this situation becomes the weather vane for their social situation, summing up the various vectors of prestige, and correspondingly, shifting with the changes in their social situation.' (1964:98)

Nicknames, however, do not merely function as codes for communication, as disguises or implements of social control: they have an immense symbolic significance demonstrated perhaps most explicitly in the permanent nicknames which the children use daily as address and reference terms amongst themselves. Through transforming their personal names the children gain new identities which are, I suggest, more meaningful to them, coming as they do from their own cultural context rather than from outside it. The children replace the identificatory label given to them by adults at birth with a new and more semantically rich name which is of and about their own social world.

In this respect it is highly significant that the majority of these permanent nicknames used by the children are constructed out of a literal destruction of their own personal names. The choice of this destruction is a response perhaps to the fact that they will most often have heard their personal names as a negation of their own activities in the reprimands and orders emanating from the adult world. Through decimating this perceptually negative identity given to them by adults the children actively create a new one from its broken parts as they seek to gain more control over their own destiny. It represents a process of linguistic bricolage.¹ It is not surely a matter of pure practicality that most graffiti is

¹. See p.302 - 3 for discussion of 'bricolage'.
written in capital letters: to see TOSHA painted in huge, white block letters on the wall of the bus' shelter suggests that this is a name to be proud of, a name which is far more meaningful to its owner than Tony from which it originated.

Nicknames, then, are powerful tools in the children's hands and form an exclusive body of knowledge, one which is framed by the language of 'doing nothing'. Firstly, the ways in which nicknames are created reflect the structural principles previously outlined for the language as a whole. For example, the children use particular suffixes - 'er', 'a' and 'z' - in creating their permanent nicknames for one another, preferring short, sharp names; these two principles are a consistent feature of their wider exclusive vocabulary. Acronyms also are used for nicknames: Susan Anne Marie is known as S.A.M., Wayne White as W.W. and Teresa Cook as T.C. Words, then, which are the peculiar property of the children are nicked words, words from the adult language cut short and deliberately transformed within a particular paradigmatic structure.

Secondly, the permanent nicknames of the children have a linguistic uniformity which symbolises the social unity of 'us' as opposed to 'them', a feature which makes these names, like other words in their vocabulary, exclusive to the culture of 'doing nothing'. But, the names used for

1. See Chapter 4.
' them ' whilst being diverse in form are, nevertheless, still created within the frame of the children's language: rhyme and alliteration are frequently employed in these names and many of them contain references to taboo subjects: to shit, snot, sex and other conceptually dirty topics. Such names fall within the interpretive frame set out through the children's linguistic performances.

Thirdly, the resonance and power of the nicknaming system as a whole stems from the performative aspects of the language of ' doing nothing '. It is through performance that nicknaming acts to classify: to segregate or unite through teasing and taunting others, through using names as address and/or reference terms the children continually reorder their social relationships. Through nicknaming, transgressors of the implicit cultural rules can be quickly excommunicated and revealed to be in error; new people can be included, old companions ruthlessly dismissed. Nicknames reveal the power of language described by Tambiah when ' the uttering of words itself is a ritual ' and becomes an effective instigator of social action (1973:175). To call someone 'Hartley Hare' is to diminish them through relegating them to a fantasy world by analogy with the media and to further remove them from social life by a natural metaphor. The language of ' doing nothing ' creates a frame for interpretation through performance and the nicknaming practices of the children image this learning process.¹

¹. See Chapter 4.
Finally, the importance of nicknaming stretches beyond its role in illuminating the paradigm of the language of 'doing nothing' for nicknames feature in many of the children's non-verbal forms of expression. Nicknames appear as graffiti, symbolising the creation of personal territory out of public space; nicknames appear in girl's tattoos and are used in their divination techniques and are emblazoned across the boys' jackets. They are resonant symbols of the culture as a whole and represent one small aspect of the process of self discovery, the path of self-socialization which is characteristic of 'doing nothing.'

1. See Chapter 3.
2. See Chapter 6.
' The fact that the performers are young is neither here nor there - they are really in adult situations. In my view, you become an adolescent and that's generally the way you die. To put it the other way round, these kids wheel and deal and play power games just like adults!'

( Bill Forsyth's comments on his film, Gregory's Girl, Guardian 13th June, 1981).

Introduction

Burridge argues that ' to become it is first necessary to belong; and belonging makes it possible to define just who or what one is ' ( 1969 : 46 ). Belonging, for the children, is a subtle stylistic form, a mode of being and doing, which is implicit rather than explicit in their actions. They have no structured or named groups; they do not belong to any formalized subcultural groupings and yet there exists a tacit sense of belonging which sets up and initiates its own lines of exclusion. There is a style of being comparable to the style of youth subcultures, noted by Hebdige, through which a ' challenge to hegemony ' in the adult world is symbolically realised ( 1979:17).

As he suggests style in youth culture is the process by which ' objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed and ....magically resolved at the profoundly superficial level of appearance : that is, at the level of signs ' ( ibid: 17 ). In this way the children learn a mode of being and only those who participate with style are said..
to belong. In this way they also learn a mode of becoming through manipulating, transforming and experimenting with the signs of their own culture.

Nicknames are but one example of this process of belonging; they symbolise the patterning of membership. Those who have no nickname—good or bad—are marked as outsiders; they are non-persons obliterated from the social map, people who are not worth mentioning. To have a derogatory nickname is at least a sign of recognition; to have no nickname at all is to be conceptually ignored, to be socially invisible. It is a symbol of outsider status and outsider status is predicated upon those who do not act stylishly. David was one of these; he expressed his outsiderhood in a multitude of significant ways:

"David always seems to be on the fringes of the crowd; he is never one of the crowd. David has no nickname. He was the first to befriend me which gave him some initial kudos but since the others have come to see me he has been the first to stop visiting. His position has been usurped. In appearance David's outsiderhood is given visual expression: he wears a dark checked suit-jacket over non-descript trousers; his shoes are plain lace-ups or slip-ons. He never wears boots or 'trainers' like his younger brother. David does not wear badges like the other lads. His hair is long and often greasy; his skin poor with a tendency for spots. He always seems to have a cold and appears dirty. David has a slight hesitancy in his speech and cannot engage in verbal repartee. He always has money and buys sweets which he gives away; he buys cigarettes to give to others but does not smoke himself. In this way he purchases friendship for a shortwhile. He befriends those who are temporarily ostracised by others but seems to have no real mates. His friends come to his house and steal from him. Although often on the edges of some action
David never acts himself; he is accused of telling tales. David boasts of his father getting him a job and has ideas of becoming a social worker. The others know their fate and have realistic aspirations. At 16 David has tried to commit suicide and has entered a psychiatric hospital."

David was not actively disliked and rarely excluded; he was tolerated as an irrelevance.

In contrast, Mary was a non-conformist in a different way. She utilised the style and was not outside it. Her non-conformity was within the terms of the style itself and opinions were expressed about her actions. David, who was always outside it, was rarely talked about. Mary belonged:

"Mary is one of my main informants from the girls. I got to know her early during my fieldwork and she remains a constant visitor. Mary is highly informative on rhymes, nicknames, riddles, jokes and games. She has taught me a great deal about the culture. She participates effectively within it and in many ways expresses it to its fullest extent. However, Mary has no close female friends, unlike the other girls; she moves between different groups. Some of the girls dislike her, perhaps because she seems to be independent. Mary always has a boyfriend and changes them often; some of the boys call her a 'whore'. She plays games alongside the boys and is not an on-looker like the other girls. She always wears trousers; some call her a 'lad-lass', a tom-boy. Her clothes are always fashionable though: highwaisted trousers, close-fitting stretch shirts, smart shoes. She is always clean and tidy; she wears many badges. She has a nickname. She expresses little concern for what others think of her and always has somewhere to go. For all that she rejected many of the 'feminine' styles of behaviour Mary was the first to conform. At 18 Mary has left work and has three children."
Belonging is therefore not merely a matter of conforming, of submerging individuality within a general frame. Belonging is a question of style: style is the expression of individuality in particular cultural ways, the discovery of self through prescribed stylistic forms. Individuality must be expressed through style and not, like David, outside it. Mary belonged; she worked with the cultural forms and yet remained independent of them. David was an outsider who failed to grasp these signs but was heavily dependent upon the style itself. Mary was nicknamed; David was not. The style of being is the style of becoming: Mary's individuality led to her final incorporation through massive conformity as an adult and mother; David's desperate attempts and repeated failure to submerge his perceived individualistic inadequacies within the general frame ensured his continued perpetuation as an outsider.

As I explore below, for the children, belonging is therefore a delicate balance between self and others, between individuality and conformity; it is a tension which must be handled with style. The ways in which the children learn how to belong are manifold: linguistic and verbal skills are one form but an ability to utilise other mediums of expression is also crucial. The body itself is an important vehicle of style. As Benthall writes:
' Since our society uses words as its primary means of social control all repressed groups will tend to find their most effective and confident expression through the body's wider resources rather than within the enclosure of verbal language, in so far as they opt for self-assertion rather than for integrating with the norms of the majority.' (1975:11)

To act stylishly involves learning how to use the body and it is through learning about the body that knowledge of the self, of one's own individuality, is realised.

This chapter, therefore, is concerned with the children's use of the body as a medium of expression. Through analysis of the multiple conceptual transformations wrought on the body by the children I suggest that in Western contemporary society, which lacks any institutionalised rite de passage to adulthood, it is the physical body which becomes the expressive focus for that transition. Firstly, I explore the various ways in which the children themselves construct and display a concept of 'normality' for the physical body. At a time when physical puberty is beginning to change their bodies in particular ways these agreed bodily norms provide a standard against which children can compare the changes occurring in their own and other people's bodies. Secondly, I discuss how this concept of physical 'normality' provides a measure of social status, in particular for concepts of gender. If adolescence is a metaphoric rite de passage to adulthood then it is, as the final section demonstrates, at this time that the social construction of gender begins to resonate: the children teach one another their respective gender roles as adults through the context
of their own culture. It is a style of being and becoming predicated upon the physical body.

Adolescence: The body in transition

In his essay on the techniques of the body Marcel Mauss indicated the role of the body as a cultural sign. He argued that 'man's first and most natural technical object and, at the same time, technical means, is his body' (Mauss, 1979:104). In using the word technique Mauss emphasised that the manner in which the body is both used and perceived differs between and within cultures, 'between societies, education, proprieties and fashion' (ibid:101). This variation, Mauss argued, results from the implicit learning of bodily techniques, achieved through what he termed as a process of 'prestigious imitation'; it is a tacit education which is culturally specific (ibid:101). Ways of walking, sleeping, standing and sitting are the literal embodiment of cultural styles; they are more than the simple outward manifestation of biological processes. From birth onwards the natural physical body is continually constrained and modified in its movements by culture.

This representation of cultural forms through the physical body is highlighted in Mauss's suggestion that bodily techniques may be subject to further variation within a particular culture in accordance with social classifications of age and sex. This too is not solely explicable as a function of biological difference; rather, it represents
the imposition of cultural forms upon the physical body, the
domestication and control of nature by culture. The ways in
which males and females, children, adolescents and adults
use and perceive their bodies are culturally prescribed;
they are learnt techniques rather than purely inherited
characteristics.

In any society the process of physical maturation is
conceptually controlled: it is made meaningful and ordered
through the use of classificatory concepts, such as a child,
adolescent and adult, which frame the process of ageing into
sequential form. Such representations attempt to constrain
the inevitability of this process through the imposition
of bounded categories. But the use of such static conceptual
divisions contains within it an inherent tension; in
attempting to fix and define an individual's place within a
category his or her relationship with members of other
categories is, at the same time, mapped out, for only through
contrast and comparison does each discrete category gain
its own significance.

Ironically, therefore, the construction of conceptual
categories of social persons is achieved through movement,
a movement which transcends those cultural divisions, a
movement portrayed as a series of classificatory categories
through which the individual will or has moved. For the
individual, therefore, whilst being defined and constrained
through membership in a particular class of persons, the
inevitability of his or her exit from that category is also apparent. For the individual, a further movement is necessarily involved: the oscillation between individuality, in terms of the uniqueness of the self, and communality, in terms of the self's relationship with others in the same social category. Writing of tribal communities Van Gennep (1908) identified this movement of individuals between different conceptual stages of the life-cycle as one form of a more general phenomena, *rites de passage*:

'For groups, as well as for individuals, life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn. It is to act and to cease, to wait and to rest, and then to begin acting again but in a different way. And there are always new thresholds to cross: the thresholds of summer and winter, of a season or a year, of a month or a night; the thresholds of birth, adolescence, maturity and old age'. (1960:189-90)

Such *rites de passage* are social constructions, social interpretations of the passage of time in an individual's life or passage through social space. They both represent and create order in social life and throughout this transition between categories new techniques of the body must be learnt appropriate to each new social status.

For Van Gennep puberty rituals - the series of rites surrounding the transition from child to adult status common in many cultures - are erroneously named. He argues that they are more correctly initiation rites. They are first and foremost social statements concerning the culturally perceived status of a group or an individual:
they initiate individuals into a new social category and are only secondarily concerned with marking the onset of physical puberty, for physiological puberty and social puberty are essentially different and only rarely do they converge' (ibid: 65). For Van Gennep, then, they are primarily 'rites of separation from the asexual world and they are followed by rites of incorporation into the world of sexuality' (ibid:67).

However, in contemporary British society which lacks such formally institutionalised rites de passage the physical body is commonly used as the symbolic medium through which changes in social status are marked. The age, shape, size and functioning of the physical body are seen as referential poles, visual images of category membership. Adolescence, for example, is said to be characterised by changes in attitude, temperament and behaviour patterns, explained as the outward manifestations of inward bodily changes occurring with the onset of puberty. However, implicit within such biological explanations there exists also the tacit recognition and acceptance of a conceptual relationship between physical and social maturation, a suggestion that adolescence is also a social transition, a period of ambiguity, a form of rite de passage between childhood and adolescence.1

Moreover, many popular conceptions of adolescence image this transitional quality of adolescence through metaphors of movement, energy and power and through symbols of

transformation predicated upon the changes occurring in the physical body. For example, James Hemming (1975), in what he himself describes as an impressionistic account of adolescence for parents, describes the experience variously as: -

' on the road to adulthood ' ; ' moving towards freedom and independence ' ; a ' period of rapid development ' . Adolescents are portrayed as ' striving ', ' moving ', ' penetrating '; they ' plunge adventurously into life ', they are active and not passive creatures. Images of movement, energy and power abound: adolescence is a ' tide of vitality ', ' a whirl of energy ' , ' a ranging dynamic ' .

Finally, for Hemming, adolescence is a ' school for life ' , a rebirth: ' adolescence is a second birth - a severing of the psychological umbilical cord; a second weaning - learning to live by one's own thoughts and feelings ' ( 1975: 22 ). As early as 1908 Van Gennep outlined these motifs of death and rebirth in the symbolism of rites de passage, themes later elaborated by Turner:

'The novice and his or her seclusion-setting are symbolically equated with dying, death, invisibility, darkness, decomposition, eclipse, the dark of the moon, uniformity, humus, compost, and the like, followed by symbols of rebirth, new dawn, vegetative growth, naming anew, new dress and so on. Liminal symbols tend to be ambiguous, equivocal, neutral, ambisexual, rather than to be classificatory reversals. This is because liminality is conceived of as a season of silent, secret growth, a mediatory movement between what was and what will be when the social process goes inward and underground for a time that is not profane time. ' ( 1978: 279).
Adolescents, then are midway between the categories of child and adult, anomalous and indeterminate beings who participate in a 'teenage culture', epitomised for adults by strange forms of dress, music and dancing (Davis: 1975:716). They form a disorderly and disruptive population of 'soccer hooligans, delinquents, muggers or addicts, teeny-boppers or premature pill users' (Harrison, 1975:630). The ordinary adolescent rarely features in the press; in the newspaper world they are all extra-ordinary and potentially subversive. The following headlines image the adolescent: "£1m. wreckers under siege. County declares war on army of vandals"; "Gang warfare erupts on Council estate"; "Vandals take revenge after bus curfew"; "Siege school hit again"; "Toughs wage war on too-smart schoolboys"; "Schoolboys offer sex for sale in town centre"; "Sex row school girl moves in with lover"; "Guy Fawkes fun ends after youth throws Peter on bonfire".\(^1\)

Such stereotyped images recall many of the features characterised by Turner (1969); (1974) as being intrinsic qualities of the liminal phase of a *rite de passage* reinforcing the suggestion that this may indeed be a useful metaphor for the period of adolescence. In his extensive elaboration of Van Gennep's (op.cit.) thesis Turner describes the ritual liminar as being 'betwixt and between all fixed points of classification' as potentially threatening to structure itself (1974:232). The newspaper headlines would have this communitas as anomie, a perception resulting, I suggest,

\(^1\) All these headlines appeared in the local newspapers during the period 1977-79.
from the relatively recent social visibility of 'adolescence' as a distinct phase in the life-cycle. As Hall and Jefferson note,

"Youth" appeared as an emergent category in post-war Britain, one of the most striking and visible manifestations of social change in the period. "Youth" provided the focus for official reports, pieces of legislation, official interventions. It was signified as a social problem by the moral guardians of the society - something which we "ought" to do something about. (1976:9)

This 'something' was, moreover, usually working class, male and potentially disruptive, popularly epitomised in the subcultural gangs of mods and rockers, Hells Angels and skinheads. These 'folk devils' of the second half of the twentieth century symbolise the potential power of this, as yet, emergent category which has 'encroached upon childhood in one direction, maturity in the other' and still remains relatively uncontained and uncontrolled (Ariès, 1979:28). In structural terms adolescents therefore belong to the inbetweens. Too old to be children, yet too young to be adults they are denied the security of either category; the adolescent is 'matter out of place', a symbol of disorder made manifest in the rise of youth subcultures which deliberately set themselves apart from mainstream social order (Douglas, 1969:35).

And yet, for the majority, this opportunity for self

1. It was in Cohn (1973) that the term 'folk devils' first appeared. For a discussion of youth subcultures see Hall and Jefferson eds (1976) and Hebdige (1979).
assertion through conscious participation in structured subcultures may not arise; they are, like ritual liminaries, in a process of normal social transition and, as I shall show, there exists for them 'a continuous thread of structure' throughout the period of their adolescence which such images of warring and violence, subversion and deviance negate. (Turner, 1974:254) And it is precisely through this process that, for most adolescents, their power to change and effect is neutralised. Adolescence, like liminality, is about change, rather than revolution and, for the children with whom I was working, this is particularly resonant: the potential creativity of their adolescent culture, replete with its images of opposition, reversal and inversion, is, as I shall demonstrate, but a preparation for their massive conformity as adults.

Adolescence is comparable, then, with what Turner (1969) describes as normative communitas; it is an educative experience for their later participation in social life as adult members of the community.¹ As Turner writes: neophytes receive 'the knowledge and wisdom of the group in those respects that pertain to the new status' (1969:98-90). But, as I shall show, it is a process of self, more than institutional, socialization; it is a rite of passage conducted by the children themselves in the context of their own adolescent culture. The integral relationship between social and physical maturation during adolescence makes the significance of the

¹ See also Richards (1956).
body as a medium of expression possibly at its greatest
at this time, precisely because the body is used as a symbol
of classificatory status by others. The transformations
which the physical body is undergoing are taken as signs
of movement and change for the social body. For the children
themselves, therefore, these signs are symbols: symbols of
both present and future status, symbols of being and becoming
and, thus, also symbols of belonging.

Bodily styles: the promulgation of bodily norms

The process of 'growing up' is, then, both a social and
physical experience; for each individual it represents a
transition from one social category to another, a movement
reflected in and refracted through the bodily changes
occurring at puberty. The children's awareness of this
complex interrelationship is symbolised in the importance
placed by them upon their physical appearance and is also
imaged in their concern that the changes which the physical
body is undergoing are changes which will permit them to
find a place within the new social context. For the children,
therefore, the transformation of the physical body represents
a transformation of the social self; adolescence is a process
of social and physical reconstruction for a new conformity.
It is a search for individuality through communality, for
the self through others, and it is through learning the
style of particular bodily techniques that this is primarily
achieved.
Normality of the physical body is crucial; the body must conform to an agreed and commonly held set of principles as is apparent in the children's attitudes to those with perceived bodily defects:

"A nutter escaped from the compound at Sandby and then phoned up: "Is Cell 24 empty?". "Yes." "Phew, I've escaped."

The physically afflicted are also mocked through rhymes:

Half a pound of nuts and bolts,
Half a pound of plastic,
Mix them up, what have you got?
A bionic spastic.

Such rhymes and jokes provide frames for humanity; through recognition of the abnormality of others the children assert their own conformity. In Gateshead, in the North-East of England, the term lep (from leper) was a common taunt during the 1960's and, during my own period of fieldwork, spac or spacca (from spastic) was a frequent form of abuse.

Other insults used by the children similarly abuse the physical body through relegating the insulted to the natural world, to a category set apart from humans. The insults cow and pig reflect the metaphorical shifts incurred through nicknaming practices: 'Hartley Hare', 'Dougal' and 'Woody Woodpecker' belong to the animal, not the human, realm. But one of the most effective insults used between children is bairn; the abused is reduced to a lower category.
status, to a category which he or she is endeavouring to leave.\textsuperscript{1} As Hemming notes, this concern for the normality of their own physical appearance is common to the adolescent experience in Western industrial societies:

\begin{quote}
' The majority of adolescents are displeased with their bodies. An enquiry from a sample of girls produced a whole catalogue of physical imperfections. They felt themselves to be too tall, too short, too fat, too thin, too pimply, too freckly, too pale, too flat in the chest, too well developed and so on. Boys also anxiously weigh and measure themselves and feel it acutely if they think they are physically inferior.' (1975:32).
\end{quote}

Through verbal relegation of others to a less than human world the children, then, are symbolically realising their own perfection.

Unlike adults, children do not have the means freely available to permanently alter their bodies. They can rarely resort to dieting, wear wigs or have plastic surgery except under a directive from the adult world. They must therefore learn to master the constraints of their physical bodies through social means and, as the above examples show, one of the most effective devices employed by the children is ridicule of others. Criticism of the physical body appears frequently in the nicknames and insults children exchange with one another and these ritualised taunts are educative in their power to exclude others from belonging. The

\textsuperscript{1} The term 'bairn' acts as an insult for it is the term used in the north-east of England for babies and young children. It is used by the children in such phrases as "Don't be such a bairn" or "You're still a bairn".
puppy fat and pubescent spots, dismissed by adults as 'something to be grown out of', are used as highly symbolic targets for verbal abuse by others for they represent symbols of the social self. 'Spotty Face' and 'Fatty Bum Bum' are always threatened with exclusion.¹

Analysis of the nicknames and insults which children use reveals, then, an agreed set of concepts of normality for the physical body; through abusing others the children reveal the style to which 'normal' bodies must adhere. Standards are laid down for both the shape and size of the body and its various parts and, as Hemming (op.cit) notes, complaints children make about their own bodies are always through reference to excess: too tall, too short, too fat, too thin. Bodies must not deviate, therefore, from a median upon which the children themselves have tacitly agreed. There is a common standard against which one's own body and the bodies of others are measured. Those who are perceived to differ too much from this symbolic mean are identified and named: 'Big Ears', 'Flat Nose', 'Gobby' (too big a mouth) and 'Beaky' (too big a nose).

Conformity is similarly induced for the style in which the body is used: for example, there is a median of intelligence which must not be exceeded: those who are too bright are named 'Big Head' or 'Professor', those who fail to reach

¹ It is interesting to note the prevalence of advertisements for acne remedies in teenage magazines, which underlines the importance of not having a blemished face for the adolescent.
the level are called 'Thicky' or 'Dafty', a perception often reinforced by the additional comment that "your head is full of sawdust" or "your brain is in your little toe". Adolescence, then, is about conformity, but it is conformity to a particular style whose parameters have been defined from within the children's own culture.

But bodily style must not only be realised in the act of being; it must also be portrayed in the act of doing i.e. through performance. It is not enough merely to look right: the children must act right too. Here, then, is the particular tension: acting stylishly involves asserting one's individuality, but it is an individuality tempered by the style of conformity. Learning how to use the body is a technique which the children must therefore acquire and it is through using the body in particular culturally defined ways that this is achieved. One way to act stylishly, to master this tension, is, as I shall show, to effect temporary transformations upon the physical body. And, it is through utilising body techniques learnt in early childhood that the children begin to develop this skill.

In the street games played by little children the physical body provides a focus for experimentation and transformation. The limits, boundaries and abilities of the physical body are

1. During adolescence much of this is centred around sexual mores. See pp.426-441 for an extended discussion. Again, this emphasises the idea that in contemporary Britain physical puberty is conceptually linked to social puberty, particularly by those undergoing transition.
explored, tested and manipulated in a manner comparable with the ways in which the physical environment is re-interpreted and transformed through play.¹ These skills are acquired through play and continue to be used during adolescence.

For example, small children transform the body through the imposition of physical handicaps on one another during the course of a game. In the ball game, 'Ten Bad Eggs', a penalty is imposed on anyone who misses the ball. For the next throw the child may have to stand on one leg or endeavour to catch the ball with only one hand. If the child is successful - i.e. if he or she has proved master of the handicap - normal body movement is restored. Similarly, the game 'Queenie' involves imposing handicaps on children who fail to elude being caught:

"Queenie.

The game is composed of a King, Queen and two jacks. Someone is chosen to be on. All the others stand with their legs open while the King, the person who is on, rolls the ball between their legs. This person is transformed into the Queen and "she" has to run and retrieve the ball. The rest then run as far away as possible. On picking up the ball the Queen shouts: "Stop". All the others must freeze and, if they are able to, they try and sit on the ground. The Queen is then commanded by each of the others to take some kind of stride, the object being to make her go as far away as possible from themselves. "A giant step" is a long stride; "a pin step", a small stride, placing heel to toe and a "Lampost" involves lying flat on the ground and stretching out as far as possible. The Queen

¹. See pp.233-249 for a discussion of the transformation of the physical environment.
then goes to the point where "her" fingers reached. The Queen then attempts to roll the ball between the legs of the others (hence, the advantage in having sat on the ground) and the game begins again."

In both these examples those who have least control over their physical abilities are ruthlessly punished by the rules of the games through further tests of bodily skill.

Other games, whilst not transforming the body as a penalty or punishment, require the performer to utilise his or her body in an unusual way. They demonstrate the physical prowess of those who succeed. 'Itchy Bay' - a form of 'Hopscotch' - involves being able to hop from square to square at speed; 'Donkey' involves throwing a ball against a wall and jumping over it as it bounces off the ground.

But the most important transformatory device in many of these street games is the power of touch. In games such as 'Tiggy' one player is marked by significance and tries to keep or lose it and through the act of touching he or she transmits the 'sign of the chaser onto the chased' (Huxley, 1980:119). These games create a distinction between the one and the many, between 'it' and the rest for one child is singled out to be 'it', to be a thing different from the others. As Huxley's comments suggest to be 'it' is, however, double-edged: in some games, the 'thing' has the advantage and children will endeavour to remain being on for 'it' has a prestigious position; at other times
'it' is the loser and children will try to lose the stigma.¹

This ambivalence of the role of 'it' is expressed by children in their use of fate to decide who 'it' will be. Counting-out rhymes are often used at the start of a game to come to a fair decision. As each word is spoken a child is pointed to and, by the end of the rhyme, 'it' will have been discovered. For example:

Ibble, obble, black bobble,
Ibble, obble out.

On the word 'out', the first child is excluded and the rhyme is repeated until only one child remains. That child will be it.² Similar rhymes are:

Mathew, Mark, Luke and John
In this game you're not on.

and

One potato, two potato, three potato, four
Five potato, six potato, seven potato more.

The ambiguity of 'it', which necessitates such fatalistic rhymes, stems from its stigmatising power, described by Huxley as 'the most primitive form of playing scapegoat where the infection of significance can be laid to rest' only by tigging, that is by touching, another person (ibid:120). Amongst the children this was made explicit in a game called

1. 'Oxo' and 'Blocky' are two games which give opposing values to 'it'. In 'Oxo' 'it' has a prestigious position but in 'Blocky' 'it' plays a stigmatised role, See pp.238-239.

2. This rhyme once again reveals the continuity of children's verbal lore. The Opies (1969) cite approximately 21 variations of this counting-out rhyme, coming from all parts of the country.
'Lurgy': through touch a contagious disease - the lurgy - was passed between the children.¹

In the street games they played as little children adolescents, therefore, have already learnt many bodily techniques, techniques which are concerned with symbolic confrontation and mastery over the body itself. They are techniques about individuality and conformity, about an individual's ability to use his or her body in culturally prescribed ways and, during the transitory period of adolescence, this bodily style continues. There are, for example, particular forms of bodily expression which are signs that have to be learnt: the sign for the sexual act is the thumb and forefinger pressed together forming a circle; shaking hands with the left hand, rather than the right, means that a promise need not be kept; promising to do someone a favour with legs or arms crossed similarly releases a child from any obligation. To make certain, therefore, that a bet will be carried out requires a third person to 'cross the bet', to seal it by placing his or her hand over the two who are challenging each other.

But by far the greatest emphasis is laid on competitive

¹The power of touch can also be transmitted through objects; for example, in 'Queenie' it is the ball which touches and causes transformations. Note also the significance of 'touch' in the adult world: we touch wood for luck and hang charms around necks or arms which offer protection through their proximity to the body. Also of significance is the use of the word 'touched'; someone who is mad is said to be 'touched', to have been transformed through some past action.
and combative uses of the body, a performative style which brings the expression of individuality to the fore but within prescribed cultural limits. It is through the performance of practical jokes that this tension is primarily displayed, a process which bears considerable structural similarity to the verbal battles conducted between children.¹

I quote again, therefore, Mary Douglas's analysis of jokes: a joke is a 'play upon form' and its power lies in the suggestion that 'any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary and subjective' (1968:365). Here it is the physical body which is being deliberately disordered but it is a performance which, like their verbal contests, is carefully structured: the disorder produced is contained and controlled.

The practical joker can only successfully perform his or her tricks if he or she is confident that the structure of the joke will be recognised by others; the joker will have failed if his or her antics are taken literally. The children who perform jokes upon and with their own bodies or the bodies of others are, at the same time as they reveal the ambiguity of a particular bodily order, also ruthlessly establishing their own conformity and normality. Practical jokers therefore reinforce the bodily style through visually mocking those they verbally abuse.

¹. See pp.303-316 for a discussion of verbal joking.
Mimicry, for example, is one way in which the children subvert the order of the physical body through temporarily transforming its shape, its size or functioning. Half a table-tennis ball is placed in the eye socket; vampire teeth inserted in the mouth; false noses clasped to the face. These gruesome additions poke fun at the disabilities or disfigurements of others whilst also confirming the normality of the child's own facial features. In many photographs the children are pulling faces; through distorting their visages for a joke they have a fixed and permanent record of the possible transformations which the physical body can undergo. Similarly, jerky walks mimic the crippled and balls pushed up the backs of jumpers ape the hunch-backed. The following tape transcript reveals one example of body experimentation as two boys played with some putty:

"T: ( looking at the putty on the end of his thumb ). My thumb's bigger than yours. ( T. puts the putty on his nose ).
A: Who's that?
T: Just think if you had a nose like that.
A: What if you had a nose like that?
( Both practice making different noses ).
T: ( humming a tune with putty on the end of his nose ) What's this?
K: Muppets.
A: ( looking at his nose encased in putty ). You can't pick your nose now anyway.
T: ( picking his nose encased in putty ) Wanna bet? ( to K ) Let's look at your nose - let's have a look, man. ( they both laugh and continue making different noses ). "

All these jokes and games with the body are sources of fun so long as they are not misconstrued, so long as the
Plate 9 "In many photographs the children are pulling faces; through distorting their visages for a joke they have a fixed and permanent record of the possible transformations which the physical body can undergo."
transformations are not taken as 'real'.

Another method of revealing one's own physical normality is through transforming other people's bodies achieved by drawing them, unwittingly, into oblique situations of conflict and making disguised physical attacks upon their bodies. This process again parallels the verbal tricks children perform upon one another. To be caught out is to have misconstrued the context of this body language; the unfortunate victim loses prestige at the expense of another's superior bodily style. For example, to take a proffered hand is to risk having one's finger pushed up the nose; to look down when someone points at your throat and asks, "What's this?", is to risk being cuffed under the chin. The oldest trick of all must be guarded against:

Thump me and thump me not,
Went down to the river to bathe,
Thump me not was drowned,
Who do you think was saved?

A modern equivalent is: "Repeat after me - cat, dog, pig, duck". The joyous rejoinder as a fist flies through the air is: "I told you to duck".

The necessity of mastering this body style is brought out through such tricks and games; they demonstrate that gaining individual mastery over the physical body is the style of belonging. Adults - those who do not belong - are therefore

1. See pp. 303 - 316.
often used as targets for such attacks for they possess a false sense of security in their bodily control which can be easily disrupted by the children's style. Once again a parallel can be drawn with the linguistic sphere; adults are frequently caught out by the children's verbal dexterity. Learning to be is, then, a style which is structured by and which also structures the culture of 'doing nothing'. The parallels noted above between non-verbal and verbal forms of expression mutually reflect a particular style of performance. They emphasise the structuring principles of the culture of 'doing nothing' which allows for a multiplicity of contents within a particular form. Bodies and minds are both framed by the context of 'doing nothing'.

Indeed, the mind is itself often transformed. In the street games played by little children the whole body can become an object of play; the player also becomes the plaything in games of spinning and twirling informally played by younger children. Feelings of vertigo and altered states of consciousness are produced through these activities for, on finally standing still, the world is made to rotate. Such principles are formalized in fairground amusements where the mechanical devices produce similar states of being. The more devastating their effect, the more appreciated they are by the children.

But this experimentation with the body and the mind continues during adolescence in more informal activities; for example
through inducing trances, as the following account reveals:

"Stephen tells me how they put each other into trances at school by getting the victim to breathe deeply and then he or she is pushed in the stomach. He says that then you press their temples hard and they fall asleep. Then you tell them to "go and get someone" (i.e. go and attack someone) and then they go wild. To wake people out of a trance you have to hit them hard. He was put in a trance and told to go and get Fat Parkin. After he had got Fat Parkin Stephen had explained that he had been in a trance and he had let him off (i.e. from retaliation)."

Whether or not an actual trance state was induced this example reveals the children's recognition of possible transformations of the self, and the potentiality of altered states of consciousness. This may be the appeal of the Incredible Hulk, who not only changes character but also his physical body during his transformatory process.¹ The possibility of exploiting the fears and weaknesses of other people, apparent in the description of the trance, appears also in the following incident:

"Maurice turns off the light in the room and goes, with hands out stretched, towards a smaller and younger child who is standing in the corner. He waves his hands in front of him in the dim light and closes in on him. The younger child is obviously getting quite frightened."

All these different kinds of body expression are a consistent feature of 'doing nothing'. Transformatory acts are performed on other people's bodies and the limits and boundaries of the children's own bodies are a source of

¹ See, p.359.
continual experimentation. They reveal the parameters of the style: the lines between conformity and individuality. Communality is, in essence, expressed at the expense of doing others down, acting in terms of the style for individual gain, which is an idea perhaps best illustrated in the concept of the 'dare'.

Dares represent the playing out of the oblique competition inherent in practical jokes, through making competition the focal point. Like the tribal initiate who undergoes bodily feats, dares invite an individual to give direct proof of the possession of bodily style, of control of body techniques. Dares involve the proposer in thinking of an act which he or she thinks another will not perform and competitive performance is introduced through the question: "Dare me to......?". Alternatively, the proposer of a dare will call someone's bluff and say: "I dare you to.....". The hint of scorn in the latter challenge is echoed in the statement "You wouldn't dare.....". All three kinds of challenges are based on an assessment of another's ability in relation to one's own and rely on the knowledge that, if required, one could oneself perform the action for issuing or challenging a dare may require that the competition is played out and the test undergone.¹

¹ Examples of dares recorded and actually carried out were: (1) stealing cigarettes (2) jumping into an open sewer (3) breaking a window (4) climbing onto a garage roof.
Dares therefore test power relationships. Any who fail to fulfill a dare, having taken up the challenge, will have to pay a forfeit; for example, they may lose social prestige and be derogatorily nicknamed, that is, they will be marked as not belonging. They will be temporarily excluded from the group for failing to participate within the style. To regain social status a child may have to pass another bodily test, such as "Fag Chewing". The filter of a cigarette must be chewed in order to regain one's social status through a different kind of demonstration of mastery over the physical body.

Encapsulated in the dare is, therefore, the inherent tension of the style of 'doing nothing'. The body is, for adolescents, a source of and for processes of establishing both conformity and individuality within the group. The physical body is a medium for symbolic and real acts of aggression, actions which situate each individual within the group through his or her ability to use the style appropriately. The normality of other people's bodies is assessed according to one's own and one's own body similarly judged by others.

All body : nobody

The above examples of the ways in which children develop a median of normality for the physical body as part of their bodily style are extracted from the total communicative
act of the body as a medium of expression. The 'nobodies' which adolescents feel themselves to be are in fact 'all body'. They utilise every aspect of their bodies to communicate ideas amongst themselves and to the outside world. Their cultural style is primarily body based.

On first acquaintance with the children I was struck by their dynamism; they seemed to be constantly on the move, full of energy and vitality as the following extracts from an early field diary reveal:

(1) "Throughout the film there was constant noise and comment. Peter leapt up and burst a crisp bag in my ear. Others blew up crisp packets and burst them on people's heads. Scenes of fighting and the start of gunfire produced noisy clapping and jeering."

(2) "Paul and Stephen spent most of the evening teasing Susan. They kept rushing up to her and pulling the front of her jumper, yelling "Bingo" at the tops of their voices."

(3) "Mog and Noz have a spitting contest. They chase each other round the room and in and out of it and when the other is not looking spit in their face."

(4) "Kim and Coker playing a game of slapping each other on the bottom. They rush in and out of the room. Kim screams at me: "Tell him Allison" in obvious delight. I say: "No, you're enjoying it".

(5) Hutch and Diane rushing in and out of the room thumping each other. Julie and Gench stamping on each other's feet, biting and hitting one another.

(6) "Jacky was throwing darts at other children. He intimidates Gerky by aiming darts at his feet until he gives him a cigarette and chases him out of the room. Then he attacks me in a friendly fashion by pricking me with darts. This evening I discover that Lyn is Paul's sister when she threw a dart at his foot."
Suddenly the place erupts and Stephen has had his face covered in charcoal and runs off to retaliate on someone else. Very soon everyone's faces are blackened with charcoal. The children are very cunning, running up behind someone and leaving black palm prints across the faces of an unsuspecting bystander. Soon a variation to this activity is found. They first spit on their hands and then rub in the charcoal - this makes the charcoal dust sticky and more difficult to remove. The game then turns into a series of fun fights and leaves and grass and cindered potatoes are stuffed down each other's clothes as they sprawl on the ground. The children begin by assaulting me, quickly followed by attacking the other adults. We all join in and fight back, running round to get back at the children. Eventually everyone is black all over and then the jokes begin. Kirby remarks that he is Cunte Kinty and Jackie that he is a member of the Dinka tribe. (At this time "Roots" was on television). Then anyone who is still white, who has avoided the game, is ostracised. To be in on the act it is necessary to be black.

1

I was not immune from joining in this bodily style. Throughout my field notes are records of the children forcing me to use my body in their style:

(1) As usual this evening they are all kicking, squeezing and pinching me and trying to tread on my toes.

(2) Whipper punched me gently in the stomach - a sign of affection?

(3) Jacky rushing up and giving me bear hugs then tickling me.

1. In two of the examples, (3) and (7), it will be noted that 'spitting' occurs which represents yet another example of the children's use of body as a form of expression. Interest in bodily wastes and the orifices of the body is, as noted previously, a feature of their language. This parallel again reinforces the emphasis upon structural form: the children's delight in holding spitting matches, belching competitions and farting contests reflects their interest in all matters dirty. In extract (7) it is interesting how 'blacks', a normal target for the children's abuse, become first of all the object of mimicry and then, suddenly, the process is reversed: whites are attacked. Again here it is form rather than content which matters.
Gench and Coker pretend to strangle me with their toilet chains.

The children are all very tactile - squeezing, poking and hitting me, slapping me on the behind and pulling my scarf to try and choke me.

The seeming mayhem and riot which assaulted me at first soon became familiar and I learned to participate in it as a later entry in a field diary reveals:

"The noise level is incredible—screaming, shouting, piercing whistles, rushing in and out and slapping one another, but it is quite a normal atmosphere. They delight in making these noises, in hitting each other—lads and lasses alike".

The above examples speak for themselves. Whilst 'doing nothing' the body becomes a play-thing par excellence. Its transitory state seems to focus and concentrate this activity; the changes which puberty is bringing to the physical body are mirrored in the social uses to which the children subject their bodies. It is a particular body style which gives to the culture of 'doing nothing' its vitality and energy.

Crisp bags are blown up and burst on people's heads; gloves and hats filled with snow and snowballs rubbed into each other's faces, scrubbing, as it is called. Informal games of 'Tiggy' start spontaneously when one group of children chases another in and out of the room, slapping, tickling or kicking one another. Each act invites retribution and the chase begins again. Flicking girls' bottoms with rubber bands is much enjoyed by twelve year old boys as well
as running up to girls, pulling out the front of their jumpers, like two protruding nipples, and yelling Bingo, insinuating that their breasts are very apparent. Ducking heads under taps and throwing water over each other, knocking off hats and hiding articles of clothing all induce roars of laughter.

Boys, in particular, enjoy 'arm wrestling' which tests each other's strength: elbows are placed on the table, hands locked together, and then each tries to force his opponent into submission by bringing his arm down on the table. 'Murder Ball' is also popular and the whole body becomes a weapon for attack: two teams line up facing one another with a ball between them and, on the whistle, each team tries to get the ball by grabbing, kicking, pulling, pushing and shoving or, ultimately, sitting on members of the opposing team.1

This style of belonging is a way of using the body which, to the untutored eyes of the adult world, appears aggressive, violent and potentially dangerous. It is these outward signs of disorderly conduct which reinforces the popular conception of adolescence as a turbulent and possibly anomie period of life. The 'all body' emphasis apparent in such forms of expression contrasts radically with contemporary Western emphasis upon the mind. Indeed, 'mindless

1. Many of the boys' activities are associated with physical strength; this is perceived by them to signal their physical and, hence, social maturity, see pp.426-441.
behaviour ' is often a criticism made of adolescents. But, gradually during my fieldwork, I came to understand such bodily techniques as symbolic rather than real acts of violence, as experimentation upon and with the body: rarely were any of the children involved in real and damaging acts of aggression. Most of their ' disorderly' actions fell within the realm of what the children call fun-fighting: these are jokes about power relationships played out through the medium of the physical body.

Fights take three forms: - fun fights, scraps and arranged fights. Only the latter two are truly acts of direct physical violence and the children maintain rigid distinctions between kinds of fights:

"Arranged fights have both a time and place, usually after school or as Rob says in the 'battle ground' - a piece of wasteland. These fights are prearranged and have an audience. Lads are not allowed to pull hair, scratch or kick when someone is down on the floor. You cannot pounce on someone when they are not looking. If you do the onlookers will set on you and they will kick you. Rob says that the person who has offered the fight must throw the first punch.

Scraps are when someone just pounces on you and you can do anything. This is probably the most violent. Abby says there are not so many arranged fights now - mostly scraps. Mog for instance knocked him in. Mog had called him "Egor" so Abby called him "Frankenstein" and then "Black Honkey". Rob says it's sissy to pull hair and to use your finger nails. These are girls weapons. Caz is proud of the fight she had with Darren. She delights over how she had left big scratches down his back. Both Rob and Abby show me scratches they have received from fighting with girls." 1

1. In this extract the phrase 'to offer' is used for arranging a fight. This is current usage amongst adults also. 'To offer someone out' means to suggest a fight outside.
Fun fights, on the other hand, are not for real; there is no intent to injure. Funning or fun fighting is pure entertainment:

"Stephen tells me a secret. When they stayed in a house with the school Michael and the other lads used to have fun throwing things at each other during the night and shining torches at people. Once he picked up a "hawker" (a kind of boot) instead of his slipper and threw it across the room; - He said: "It nearly knocked this lad's teeth out". No one "knacked him in" though because it had been an accident and wasn't meant seriously."

Real fights - scraps and arranged fights - are, in contrast, serious in intent and execution. Good fighters are well known and an individual's reputation is discussed and evaluated. Partners for scraps or arranged fights are carefully considered and if an opponent is larger or a better fighter then the challenge will not be taken up. Fights are remembered and recounted in conversation; they mark times when friendships were broken, honour vindicated or prestige lost. Arranged fights are usually concerned with honour. An elder brother will fight in defence of his sibling and brothers fight on behalf of their sisters. To win a fight is to give a visible demonstration of mastery over one's own body and the body of another. Lads fight lads, lasses fight lasses and lads and lasses fight each other. The following incident reveals the process and performance of a fight:

"This afternoon a lot of the children were in the house. They had been there for many hours when they started to watch television. Mog began
annoying Tres and teasing her till eventually she suggested a fight. The two of them walked out of the house in silence into the back lane. The others followed but I remained behind thinking it was a "fun fight". After ten minutes Gench came in and said they were arguing. I asked one lad who had remained behind whether we should go out. He said: "no". A little later Gench returned to ask me to stop the fight. I went outside to see Mog and Tres locked together in a real scrap, hitting each other's heads against the wall. Two of us pulled them apart. Mog was shaking with anger and difficult to hold: Tres's nose was bleeding and swollen and looked as if it was broken."

This particular fight became a great topic of conversation. As no one had won Tres gained some glory and boasted about her bruised and swollen nose. Mog, who felt guilty for "hitting a lass", was anxious about how much he had hurt her but still maintained that he was glad he had hit her.

Belonging, then, is a matter of style and a question of learning the techniques of the body appropriate to that style. Real and symbolic battles are fought through the medium of the physical body and an adequate bodily knowledge is therefore crucial. For the children control over the physical body is equated with control over the self. To return to Burridge: 'to become it is first necessary to belong; and belonging makes it possible to define just who or what one is' (1969:46).

Concepts of gender

A major part of the transition to adulthood involves learning how to act as a sexual being for passage between childhood
and adulthood represents a move from the classificatory asexual world of children to the sexual world of adults. New techniques of the body must be learnt to accomplish this transformation of the physical and social self, techniques which are subject to the constraints of style discussed above but played out in terms of gender: normality, in terms of both the appearance and actions of the physical body becomes gender specific.

Firstly, the shape and size of the body must conform to the requirements of style. For girls, fatness and large size are physical characteristics of great symbolic weight. They are used as classificatory criteria for the self. Fat girls are teased and insulted by nicknames such as 'Barrel', 'Tank' or 'Ten Ton Tessie'. Large girls are called 'Lampole' or 'Big Bertha'; such nicknames are intended to be pejorative. In contrast, small girls are not subject to such verbal abuse. The nicknames 'Inch' and 'Weed' are affectionate; little derogation is implied in these names. Preference for the thin during adolescence is reinforced by contemporary media representations of the acceptable shape and size of the female body. Lean female bodies are highly valued and perceived to be desirable. The thin belong to the fashionable public world, the world of the single girl, a social world which precipitates marriage. The fat, on the other hand, are seen to belong to the domestic sphere of wives and mothers, the private world of the home.

That children have absorbed these symbols is demonstrated

1. This is substantiated by Morgan, O'Neill and Harre's (1979) findings on nicknames.
by one fifteen year old male's view of the world from a female perspective:

'I would eat lots of cream cakes when I got married and tell my husband that now I'm married I can get as fat as I want and he should be grateful for being able to live with me.'

The thin female body is perceived to be the body of the unmarried girl: it is, therefore, through the possession of a slim body during adolescence that the adolescent girl visualises her passage to adulthood, a transition which, as will be argued later, is seen to be accomplished primarily through marriage.

For boys, on the other hand, the opposite perception pertains. Large size is regarded as the most important characteristic of masculinity. Many boys express concern over their weight and, throughout my fieldwork, it was the boys who made most use of the bathroom scales. They constantly sought to discover, through precise measurement, how much weight they had accrued, as is revealed in the following incident:

"J: (after weighing himself) I'm getting fatter.
A: (Regarding this small 12 year old) You're getting bigger...it's a good job you're putting on weight.
J: I'll soon be an adult."

For girls, in contrast, gaining weight was negatively perceived and they made strenuous efforts to restrict their intake of fattening foods.

Plate 10  "It is through the possession of a slim body during adolescence that the adolescent girl visualises her passage to adulthood, a transition which is seen to be accomplished primarily through marriage."
a projection of their future status. Manliness is perceived to be associated with physical strength, with the ability to fight, to protect and to defend. The corollary of an increase in the weight of the body is perceived to be an increase in strength. Physical strength is of overwhelming importance to boys and is symbolised in their wish to learn how to box and to participate in weight-lifting. The appeal of such 'super heroes' as the Hulk and the Bionic Man to the boy is consistent with this perception. Such 'rare beings' are symbols of male prowess, a hidden strength lies submerged beneath an apparently normal external appearance. The Hulk and the Bionic Man both appear as normal males, but each has within them hidden resources of exceeding power and strength.

The use of nicknames amongst boys reflects these ideas. Small boys are insulted by names such as 'Titch', 'Tiddler' and 'Shorthouse', whilst fat boys more often merely teased through names such as 'Fatty Bum Bum' or 'Fat William'. For boys it is far worse to be small and puny than fat; for girls the reverse holds true. For both genders it is, of course, better to be 'normal'. The following diagram summarises the polarity of shape and size of the body, on the basis of gender, through the use of nicknames:
This discriminatory pattern of bodily shape and size, based on social conceptions of gender, is reinforced through extension to the parts of the body. In particular the shape and size of the sexual organs is seen by the children as a crucial consideration in fulfilling the perceived requirements of gender roles.¹ The Opies (1977) note that school children have a wealth of alternative terms for parts of the body - for the nose, the head, the ears, the eyes - but they fail to mention that the sexual organs are similarly renamed by children and, amongst the children with whom I worked, the number of words used by them for the sexual organs considerably outweighed alternative terms for other bodily parts.

Significantly, this renaming of the sexual organs by children is again linked to an internally derived concept of normality. Those who are perceived to differ are insulted by being named

¹ Much of the following material is derived from comments from the boys for the girls were far less willing to discuss sexual matters explicitly. This, in itself, represents part of their perceived gender role which calls for the public silence of the female in contrast to the aggressively public display of masculinity. See pp.441-458.
in a derogatory fashion and it is apparent from the names used that the children associate abnormality of the sexual organs with conceptually unnatural sexual activity. This may be in terms of homosexuality, excessive indulgence in sexual intercourse or, indeed, lack of any sexual experience. For example, the common taunts used amongst the boys are mostly connected with homosexual activity: puff, homo, backskuttler, botter, bummer and bugger. For girls, the insults most frequently used are pros (prostitute - excessive sexual activity) or les (lesbian - abnormal sexual activity).¹ From the children's point of view, the size and shape of the sexual organs is then conceptually linked to forms of sexual activity and there exists a norm to which all must adhere; once again, however, this norm is gender dependent.

For girls, the breasts should ideally be visible but not obtrusive. Large breasts are negatively perceived by boys and girls alike, but small breasts receive derogatory comment too. One girl was described to me as "being like a lad", as having "small tits like bricks", hard rather than soft, small and insignificant. Girls without any visible signs of breast development are often teased but those with large breasts are more frequently insulted for large breasts are seen as resembling the breasts of an adult woman, that is of a woman

¹. Boys are confused about lesbianism and understand it as a girl's unwillingness to have sex rather than as a sexual relationship between girls.
who is sexually experienced and who has produced children.

Similarly, the vagina should ideally be small and judgement of size, by males, is based on presumed or actual sexual capacity. A girl, seen by boys, as being sexually promiscuous may be insulted and condemned for her actions through appellations such as 'Welly Top' or worse 'Bucket Top'. Both nicknames suggest a large vagina, a vagina enlarged, like the breast, through excessive sexual activity. Girls who have facial hair are also subjects of frequent taunts from boys, for the growth of facial hair is perceived to be the most visible symbol of masculinity. Thus, the girl who has a shadow of a moustache represents an anomaly: she confuses the strict conceptual division between the genders which adolescents construct for themselves on the basis of physical appearance.

The importance of girls physically conforming to these gender-specific norms is brought out in the following incident when a cruel joke was played upon one rather fat and plain girl:

"There is a very large, fat girl in the club tonight. She has tiny breasts but the rest of her is enormous. She tells me that she has a boyfriend of 22, which is older than the boyfriends of many of the girls. They usually go out with lads of about their own age. Sandra asks her if her mam knows and does she like him. A large crowd begin to gather around her and the girls tell her that Gaz - the most popular lad in the club for the girls - wants to go out with her. Lynne acts as the intermediary. She tells her that Gaz wants to go out with her. Will she go? After some persuasion - the girl is suspicious
- she agrees and ' it ' is arranged for 8.30. ' It ' is the first meeting alone. At 8.30 Gaz refuses to go and the girl is waiting outside the club. The other girls push him outside and so he is committed. Gaz and the girl walk off towards the woods and a crowd of lads and lasses follow, at a distance, to see what will happen. The crowd leap in and out of the bushes, scurry behind trees as they attempt to follow the pair - Surely the two must be aware of their followers for there are many suppressed giggles and shrieks? Gaz and the girl climb over the fence at the bottom and are gone. Soon they reappear and there is a mad rush of the onlookers back into the club. Gaz enters alone and tries to laugh it off as a huge joke. The rest all demand to know what happened. He is embarrassed but then makes much of the tale and ' skits ' her too. He said that she had refused to do ' it ' as the ground was too wet. Gaz relates how he had found a dry patch but in the end ' nowt happened '. Gaz says " it'll be all round the school tomorrow " and is worried what Julie, his regular girlfriend, will say. The rest find it very amusing. Gaz goes on to relate to me about when he used ' to go down the shed ' and he and his mates used to do the same thing to another ' fat lass ' who was ' geet ugly '. They ' skitted her ' and then one of his mates would tell her he wanted to go out with her. The same procedure followed as the two headed towards the wood. Gaz says how one time by the time they had all arrived, one of the lads was standing with his pants down so he ran up and slapped his ' arse '. Finally, Gaz remarks that the girl has two brothers and he says they might ' kick his head in ' for the joke tonight played upon their sister." 1

To belong it is necessary to conform.

For males, however, the preferences are again reversed. The desirability of a large penis is expressed in numerous ways: temporary replacements - such as billiard cues, large pine cones, screwdrivers- long, hard objects, are held between the legs as symbols of both the prevailing conception of

1. ' to skit ' means to tease.
male adequacy in terms of penis length and of virility. Such conceptions are generated by boys through public display; each competes with another over claims to sexual prowess.

Amongst the younger boys this may take the form of peeing competitions, for example, a common practice as recalled by Robert Roberts in his autobiography:

'You monitors still, keeping good watch on those "offices" at playtime, are you?'

'Oh, yessir,' I said. 'We're allus watchin'.'

'Tell them to report to me any boy who stays in a closet more than two or three minutes. Understand? Have those peeing competitions in the urinal stopped?' he asked, looking stern.

'Oh,yessir! 'I lied. 'All that's finished now.'

Had he known that in this sport the school outcast stood all-comers' champion, having hit a brick with a stream of effluent eight feet above ground level, his fears about Ig would have found ample substance.

(1978:77)

Those who can produce the longest stream of urine, who can aim it the highest, are judged to be the most capable of fulfilling the male gender role.

Amongst the older boys this competitive style is made most explicit and the comparative lengths of penises are frequent topics of conversation; again the larger and longer the better. Those boys who fall short of such definitions of adequacy, produced through competition, are liable to be insulted by the term puff or, as one boy said to another, "you need a magnifying glass to see his." The following transcript of some boys playing with lumps of putty is an example of one such discussion:

/..
T: (with putty on the end of his finger) (Sings) It's time to put your finger right. It's time to put it right.

K: (laughs)

T: (showing his finger) What does that remind you of?

K: (copying him) Watch, watch.

A: What does it remind you of then Tucker?

T: (laughs)

T: I've got one.

A: I bet you don't know how to use it.

T: Wanna bet.

K: (laughs)

T: I've did it afor (low voice)

K: Done what before?

A: Done it once before have you?

T: (embarrassed) Yes.... it was alright.

A: (teasing) It was alright was it?

T: Yeah.

A: I'm pleased about that Tucker.

T: Every lad's got one.

A: Every lad's got one have they?

T: Yes (laughs)

K: (pointing at his drooping putty) Ah...its asleep.

A: (to K) I wouldn't give yours much chance then.

T: (screaming with delight and shouting) She wouldn't give yours much chance.... He's never used it.

A: It's bent at the end.

T: (laughs)

A: (T. hitting my nose with his puttyed finger) Get off. It's bending Tucker.

T: (laughs)

T: (showing his drooping putty) What does that remind you of? Whoops (as it droops right down)

A: Boasting again Tucker (as he straightens it out)
The acquisition of facial hair is, for boys, a very visible symbol of the onset of physical puberty and is taken by them as an important sign of their transition to full adult male status. The boys often used to proudly tell me how frequently they had to shave and I was told by two young boys that the growth of body hair on the arms and legs was a 'sign of strength.' The growth of pubic hair is particularly important; the insult 'Baldy Bonks' (literally bald testicles) is used to expose the physical inadequacy and social inferiority of others: body hair is a very public symbol of masculinity.

During adolescence, then, perceptions of gender are massively dependent upon physical appearance and stereotypes for each gender are constructed and assimilated through social experience. Children teach one another the rules for body conformity through a process similar to the 'ritual levelling' described by Turner (1974) as a feature of the liminal period: the individual seeks or is made to conform to a commonly perceived standard. For the children, the construction of this conceptual commonness is based upon the overt changes occurring in the physical body at puberty and those who do not conform, in bodily terms, may well be regarded as socially inadequate. This relationship underlines the earlier suggestion that in contemporary Britain a complex interweaving between conceptions of physical and social maturity create, for the adolescent, the symbolic rite of passage to adulthood which is institutionally absent.
To summarise so far: the male gender stereotype is one of overt sexuality, of large, strong, and obtrusive size in bodily terms. Females, in contrast, should appear to be small and delicate, revealing few outward signs of their sexual maturation. Girls should approximate to the childlike state; they should hide and control their sexuality from public gaze. Boys, on the other hand, must constantly demonstrate and make increasingly visible their masculinity; they must act and appear as men. For each gender there is, then, a particular movement: girls look back to the status they have lost whilst boys prefigure their own futures. Male adolescence is a process of exhibiting the body; female adolescence is a process of bodily negation. ¹

These opposing styles of bodily expression are further reinforced through the clothed and decorated body; concepts of male and female gender are visually displayed through distinctive styles of dress and adornment. During my period of fieldwork, the boys focused upon the distance between the extremes of the body, paying particular attention to the adornment of the feet and shoulders. Their uniform was primarily boot-based and rigorous semantic distinctions were made between different kinds of footwear: 'Martens' differ from 'Hawkers', 'Riders' from 'Sannies', 'Trainers' from 'Docs'. These boots were always highly polished and fastened with brightly coloured

¹. This is the public presentation of the female; see pp. 449-472 below for an alternative interpretation from the girls' own perspective.
laces. Wide-legged trousers were worn cut off short, revealing a tightly bound ankle encased in leather. The visual image created by this juxtaposition is one of continual growth; it is as if the boy is forever outgrowing his clothes, getting, one could say, too big for his boots. The top half of the body was similarly the focus of detailed decoration. Short denim or leather jackets hugged the frame tightly; the backs of these were massively decorated with brightly coloured badges, with stickers and embroidery.

The boys also decorated their bodies in particular ways. During the fieldwork period it became fashionable for hair to be close cropped and for boys to wear an earring - either a gold stud or ring - in one ear. Tatoos were also common, sometimes homemade copies of professional patterns: one boy had above each nipple the words 'sweet' and 'sour'; another had a dagger scratched on his arm. More common, however, were the 'borstal spots', a single blue dot on the cheek or four dots on the knuckles. These latter tatoos are highly suggestive: they decorate the fist used for fighting, symbolising male strength, but they also contain a hidden code for each dot corresponds to the letters A.C.A.B., an acronym meaning 'all coppers are bastards'.

1. Scars are also proudly displayed for these forms of bodily decoration also symbolise strength and toughness.
2. Once again, the unity of the children's culture is expressed through their use of acronyms for body decoration.
As a whole, then, the dress of the adolescent male is one which focuses attention on the extremities of the body; it creates an illusion of growth, expansion, development, of strength and virility, reiterating the particular emphasis expressed by them in the size and shape of the naked body. The visual impact of the female presents a stark contrast: it emphasises a reduction in size of the body. Clothes swamp and crush the female form. A newspaper article described the female fashion, current during my period of fieldwork, as follows:

'Some recent visitors from London were amused and astounded by all those vast circular skirts, worn ankle length with leather jackets or bombers, together with clodhoppers... Neither butch nor punk it coincides with no current fashion. Neither feminine nor sexy, the dark jackets and voluminous skirts showing those grotesque shoes are the essence of dowdiness and ugliness.'

The skirts and jackets were, indeed, uniformly sombre, usually dark blue, grey or brown. The visual impression is one of the body being contained and controlled by the clothes themselves; the heavy shoes weight down the feet, the flowing skirts allow little freedom of movement. Alongside this appears another image: that of frailty and delicacy of frame. The swirling skirts focus attention on the narrowness of the

1. For an example of one boy who was an outsider, see pp.391-392 above. His clothes were but an extension of his excluded status. At one time a brand of bubble gum gave free gifts of tattoo transfers which the younger boys used; these were seen by older boys as 'kids stuff' and they jeered at them. To belong it is necessary to have permanent self-inflicted tattoos.

2. Extract from the Northern Echo 28th March 1979.
waist as do the high-waisted trousers and long leather coats, nipped in at the waist. Similarly, the heavy shoes emphasise, through juxtaposition with the hem of the skirt, the slender 'sparrows ankles' which peep out from beneath yards of material. As a whole, the illusion created is one of uniformity in appearance, the denial of individuality; the female bodies merge together into a blur of darkness. It is, indeed, neither 'feminine nor sexy' but is an image which is consistent with the prescribed gender role of the unmarried adolescent female expressed in other aspects of bodily style. The male body, in contrast, is a body of individual expression and choice in composition of design and colour within the limits of a prescribed form. These publicly displayed contrasts are, however, subject to private contradictions.

Adolescence: public and private

As the above examples have shown it is during adolescence that children begin to learn particular body techniques in relation to gender. Children teach one another ways to behave and ways to appear: girls who are seen to possess sexual

1. The girls often also wore white ankle socks and sandals which both reflected the current 'fifties look' fashion-apparent in the popularity of the television programme, The Fonz, which is set in this era - and further served to emphasise their child-like status.

2. Consistent with this image girls should not have tattoos but this public ideal is privately denied in the context of the girls' own culture, see pp.456 - 457.
potentiality must mask its outward symbols for fear of exclusion from the group; boys, on the other hand, must constantly reveal and demonstrate their own potential in order to belong. The gender differentiation revealed in contrasting sizes of the body and its parts, through visible and invisible expression of sexuality, is extended into the realm of everyday social interaction. For example, boys are extremely visible in the public world of the culture of 'doing nothing'; girls, in contrast, inhabit its edges. They remain near to their own private spheres. In the youth club room this largely conceptual division was given physical expression; the boys played loud and violent games of table football and aero-jet in the centre of the room whilst the girls clung to its walls, huddled in groups, talking amongst themselves.

But this distinction between public and private realms of action is nowhere made more explicit than in the expression of sexual knowledge. Girls should, and do not, reveal their knowledge of sexual matters to the public world; they keep their knowledge private, just as they conceal the physical changes in the body brought about by puberty. Boys, on the other hand, compete openly with one another over sexual knowledge, reflecting the competitive atmosphere surrounding the body's physique, discussed above. Boys are active participants in sexual encounters whilst girls act out a more subtle and less visible role. For example, suckers (love-bites) are displayed and paraded by boys; shirts are left open precisely to reveal the marks. Girls, on the other hand,
attempt to hide them by wearing scarves or polo neck sweaters. They will, however, reveal them in private amongst their female friends and considerable discussion will then ensue concerning the precise details of the encounter.

A similar difference is in evidence in the public telling of a 'dirty' joke or the singing of a rude song in mixed company. Boys delight in their telling, whilst girls remain reluctant to join in and frequently berate their male companions for being disgusting. This is not to suggest that girls are not as well versed in the repertoire as boys. Indeed, their knowledge may often surpass that of their male contemporaries but girls should not publicly appear to be knowledgeable. For example, during the recitation of 'Tea for one', told to me by a fifteen year old girl in the presence of a much younger boy, lines five and six - the more explicitly sexual ones - were relayed through the boy as an intermediary. The girl herself refused to utter them openly:

Tea for one, the party's just begun,
Tea for two, she's taking off her shoe,
Tea for three, she's sitting on his knee,
Tea for four, she's lying on the floor,
Tea for five, her legs are open wide,
Tea for six, she's taking off her knicks,
Tea for seven they're doing it like heaven,
Tea for eight, the doctor's at the gate,
Tea for nine, there's nappies on the line,
Tea for ten, they're doing it again.

The masculine world is therefore the public world and boys must make their claim to male gender within this arena. Proof of sexual experience may be difficult to provide so that
judgement of a boy's sexual encounters and knowledge lies mostly in his ability to talk about sex itself. It is an art developed from an early age. For example, the following document, entitled 'Racing at Ascot', was handed around a group of boys aged between twelve and fifteen. It had been obtained from a friend, who in turn had got it off his elder brother. Although none of them fully understood the references, an affected comprehension was conditional upon each one's participation in the recitation. Significantly, 'Racing at Ascot' was brought by David the outcast, for whom an insider status was temporarily acknowledged. More significantly still he refused to read it out aloud - he lacked style in recitation - and I was made to read it to them:

Racing at Ascot:

1. Lovely legs 9-1
2. Pyjamas 8-1
3. Big Dick 2-1
4. Nylon Pants 10-1
5. Bare Belly
6. Passionate Lady 8-1
7. White tights 40-1
8. Clean sheets 1,000-1
9. Conscience 10,000-1

Commentary

Place your bets they're off. Nylon Pants and Pyjama are off with a rush, clean sheets is in a dangerous position and conscience is left at the post. Passionate Lady and white tights are very close together with Big Thighs are very close together with Big Dick trying to force his way between nylon pants and lovely legs. At the turn Passionate Lady is under pressure while white tights and lovely legs are slowly drawing apart with Big Dick slowly forcing his way into the gap. Its a tight between passionate lady and Dick. But she is taking everything he can give her and it is looking like an exciting finish. Passionate Lady is quivering with excitement and Big Dick is doing everything in his power to get his spurt before its too late. White

1. David was constantly attempting to purchase membership through such means. See p.391.
tights and lovely legs fully excited and foaming at the mouth. Big Dick has made his spurt and won by a length.

Summary of the Race

Big Dick looked like a winner from the start
Clean sheets never had a chance
Nylon Pants was helpless and conscience was left at the post. On the whole it was a tight finish and next time passionate lady will carry more weight.
Bare Belly was scratched.

( Uncorrected document )

And a twelve year old boy told me the following rhyme:

Dr. White time please,
Tampax two,
Durex-pect me to believe that?
Blobably.
Wank you very much.

The importance for public demonstration of male gender lies more in the possession than in the understanding of such pieces.

But the value in learning such rhymes is realised in the wealth of terminology they contain which allows the boys to compete publicly with one another over knowledge of sexual matters. A whole new vocabulary must be mastered by the boys for this public display of competence in the culture of ' doing nothing '; this may involve knowing how to swear, knowing rude jokes and rhymes, telling sexual stories or merely shouting out obscenities. To be able to use terms such as bell end or pigeon kiss symbolises a boy's ability to fulfill his culturally prescribed gender role.¹ The importance

¹ The term 'bell end' means the end of the penis; the term 'pigeon kiss' refers to oral sex female to male.
of this is revealed in the following incident: a group of boys came to visit me and asked if I had a French dictionary. One of them had heard the word 'dard', meaning sting or prick, but was unsure of its pronunciation and spelling. That it is crucial to be accurate in these matters is echoed in another incident:

"T: What's V.D.?
K: Vertical dangler.
A: You don't know what V.D. means?
K: Venirical disease.
A: Venirical disease?
K: Venirical.
A: Are you sure?
K: Well, it's something like that." 1

K. retreated abashed and later asked me what the correct word was.

In such public demonstrations of knowledge it is important for the boys to be able to ask cryptic questions such as: "Have you a sink or a tap?" or "Have you a match or a fire?" Those who do not know the equivalence of tap and match with penis, of sink and fire with vagina, are liable to be ridiculed if they answer incorrectly. The public admission of ignorance is, however, rare. In response to challenges about sexual knowledge boys usually answer: "I used to know but I've forgotten." This reply provides some relief from the humiliation which would otherwise follow. Indeed, challenging another's information is a dangerous path to tread for no one is really certain of the 'facts'.

1. Note here the ease with which K. substitutes appropriate words for the acronym; the word 'dangler' is used for penis by the boys.
life' for the boys are often really 'facts of popular culture' and knowledge is gleaned from a variety of outlets: from pornographic magazines, from elder brothers, from tales told by others and from the verses and songs handed down between generations of children themselves.\(^1\)

The reluctance of the adult world to admit the sexuality of the young may also partly contribute to the persistence of many sexual myths among adolescents. A recent report reveals the common beliefs that, for example, "pregnancy is avoided if you do it standing up" or "on the first time" or, more poignant still, "if you don't enjoy it".\(^2\) Other myths, the idea that venereal disease can be transmitted from toilet seats, that masturbation makes you blind, may, on the other hand, still form part of the knowledge of the adult world or may be told to children by adults to curb their activities.

But it is male knowledge of the female anatomy which is most subject to misconceptions: for example, the boys understood the clitoris to be the female equivalent of the testicles, the vagina was regarded as the same as the labia. Female masturbation was seen by one boy as horrific and unnatural, as something perhaps akin to anal sex; but for him, female

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1. Comparable examples of this competitive ignorance amongst boys are vividly illustrated in Robert Robert's (1978) autobiography, p 51.
sexual activity was in any case practically impossible without the aid of a male. Such male ignorance is, I suggest, both cause and effect of the socially constructed female gender role. The shroud of secrecy, both literal and metaphoric, surrounding the female body creates much mystery and curiosity amongst adolescent boys about the details of female anatomy. The following three extracts reveal different misperceptions of aspects of female sexuality:

(1) "The boys have been talking about sex: M:"I've had mine for 12 years, Tony has had his for 11 years, Stephen has had his for 14 years and Jeremy has had his for 23 years." Mog looks at Jackie. He is uncertain what to say and the boys confer with one another. Mog says Jackie, who is 16, has had hers for 5 years. The others agree. It is obvious that the lads assume female genitalia, unlike male genitalia, to appear with the onset of puberty".

(2) "Kirby comes to see me. He has found a free gift out of a woman's magazine. A "Carefree Towel" for discharge. He is fascinated and puts it on. He then lists the names of all the other sanitary towels he knows and tells me what they look like. However, he assumes all of them are for menstruation- this he calls 'gruel' and 'slime'. He is revolted and makes a noise of being sick."

On one rare occasion a group of boys and girls were having a conversation with me about sex and Grahamy was attempting to demonstrate his knowledge:

(3) "Grahamy is trying to embarrass me and failing. He tells me that he made a huge "dildo" out of a pile of grass and also 'other things that you get from the chemist'. The girls don't know what he means by a dildo and he tells them that it's what you send away for. The light dawns upon them. He continues to try and test me by asking if I know what an "erection" is and which hand my husband "goes out" with (masturbates). I give as good as I get and the girls look on with..."
amazement. Finally he gives up and announces that he knows what 'cancer of the crevix' is. The girls roar with laughter at his mispronunciation. Grahamy compounds this error by saying that he has a clitoris. Again the girls roar with laughter. Realising his mistake he says he has had a 'sex change' but Grahamy has lost face in front of the girls."

This discussion was unique for rarely are such matters openly discussed between the sexes and that it took place in front of an adult was the more unusual. Grahamy's persistent attempts to embarrass me failed and the girls looked on with admiration. "Just listen to her talk" commented Shaz, for I was talking like a male, rather than a female, in my public display of knowledge.

The acquisition of sexual knowledge, and the use of it, is alternatively framed and handled by the adolescent female. Their knowledge is comparable with the boys' but is contained within a culture bound by the metaphors of love, romance and marriage. Sexuality and sexual experience is translated from its purely physical expression into a social construct within the private world of the adolescent female. For girls, the male body must be sheathed in ideas of romance and love. For example, "I love Elvis", written by many girls upon their hands, transforms the overtly sexual adult male into a romantic symbol, an object of spiritual desire rather than physical lust. Bedroom walls are adorned with Elvis posters and it is not thought abnormal for teenage girls to lie in bed surrounded by pictures of men. The clothed body and imagery transforms the sexual idol into a romantic symbol; the pictures of female nudes avidly collected by boys are, in

/
contrast, expressions of overt sexuality, or physical lust, rather than romance.

This conceptual transformation of sexuality within a romantic framework forms the basis for an alternative adolescent culture for girls. It is rarely commented upon by the adult world, for it can be contained and controlled within the private sphere; it remains in the mind, in the bedroom, in the magazines and stories. Unlike the public male culture it does not intrude upon everyday life. The girls' culture would therefore seem to be partly neutralized in its power through its confinement to the private sphere. But, as I shall argue, it is this very invisibility which allows it to flourish. ¹

For example, Valentine's Day was more generally celebrated by girls than by boys. Valentine rhymes were collected by girls and swapped between them. Many are traditional to the female culture. One girl could recite 42 rhymes off by heart. These included the more vulgar rhymes and sexy acronyms but, for public consumption on the card itself, she favoured the more romantic and sentimental verses:

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If your love for me is true,  
send to me a ribbon blue.  
If for me there is no hope,  
send to me a ten foot rope.  
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¹ This point is echoed in McRobbie and Garber (1975) who argue that whilst girls may be marginal to predominantly male subcultures, they are central to another: the bedroom culture. See also McRobbie (1978) on this culture of romance in her analysis of the teenage magazines for girls.
or

I don't know how it happened,
I only know its true.
There is a space within my heart,
No one can fill but you.

In contrast, Valentine's Day passes in an air of assumed indifference for boys and the only rhyme one boy said he could recall was:

Over a bridge
Over a plank
A kiss is no good
Without a wank.

This latter rhyme was told to me in the presence of a girl as beginning: "Over a tree". She rather grudgingly corrected him, thereby demonstrating both her knowledge and a reluctance to admit it.

For girls sexuality is domesticated through romance and it is romance which is seen by girls to lead to marriage. Much of the culture of the girls is directed towards this end, towards discovering their future status as married women. For example, how many twists it takes to core an apple tells the initial of one's true love, through translating the numbers into the alphabetic sequence. A similar discovery is made by counting how many times it takes to light a match by twisting it on the side of the box. Another divination technique involves drawing around one's hand on a piece of paper and dividing it up in the manner illustrated in Fig.10. This technique produces, through the act of elimination, a very detailed description of a girl's marriage: it reveals the name of the boy a girl will marry, the colour of the wedding dress, the transport which will take the couple away
Fig. 10. **Divination of marriage**

N.B. To divine the future a number between 1 and 5 is chosen - in this case 3 - and then counting round the hand begins. On each third count a choice is eliminated until only one choice is left on each finger. The 5 remaining choices represent the divined future.
from the ceremony, the place of the honeymoon and the kind of house they will eventually live in. Other divination techniques are less detailed; usually they merely reveal the name of a girl's future husband, or foretell if a current romance is likely to continue. Such latter devices involve manipulating the boy's name and the girl's, crossing out letters to calculate the result, see Fig.11.

The girls also hold superstitions connected with marriage, their personal future as they conceive of it: it is, for example, said to be unlucky to wear a ring on the wedding finger for an unmarried girl. If a girl should inadvertently do this it must be twisted three times before removal. It is thought to be unlucky for love to receive a Valentine a day late. Girls talk constantly amongst themselves about marriage and their relationships with boys and glean information from older married women about their possible futures. One girl asked me what marriage was like, commenting that she had heard that "the first year was the worst". No boy ever mentioned marriage to me.

The private world of adolescent females is, then, framed by a romantic imagery but it is this very disguise which allows them some freedom of movement beyond the boundaries publicly used to contain them. Through concealing their sexuality, in both social and physical terms, girls can themselves initiate sexual encounters. From the perspective of their own culture girls are active huntresses, trappers of males,
S A M A N T H A  J O N E S
D A V I D  H U T C H I N S O N

Aim: To test whether 'it' is true (i.e. true love)

1. Cross out letters which are the same in each name
   S A M A N T H A  J O N E S
   D A V I D  H U T C H I N S O N

2. Give remaining letters a numerical quantity in relation to their place in the alphabet, beginning
   A = 1:
   D = 4       M = 13       I = 9
   D = 4       J = 10       C = 3
   V = 22       E =  5
   I = 9       U = 21

3. Single numbers which appear are 0,1,2,3,4,5,9

4. Convert these numbers back into letters, beginning with A = 0 (c.f. stage 2).
   A = 0       C = 2       E = 4       J = 9
   B = 1       D = 3       F = 5

5. Out of these letters, A,B,C,D,E,F,J, you must try to make a word. If you can make a word then 'it' is true; if not 'it' is false.

Fig. 11. Divination of marriage through names.
the lurers and snarers of men. Thus, it is the girls who make love strings to entangle the males. A piece of cotton is tied around the wrist and seven knots made in the end. A wish about a particular boy or a current relationship is made on the tying of each knot and the love string is kept on for seven days. On the seventh day the boy about whom the wishes were made is persuaded to break the string. In doing so he inadvertently seals his own fate for this is said to make the wishes come true.

Such ensnaring of unwitting males is performed by a number of other 'magical' means. Relationships are symbolically cemented through inscribing, and thereby fixing, particular pairings on walls, on the backs of schoolbooks, in the dust on cars, in wet cement or carved into tables. The girls publicly present a fait accompli for all the world to see. Significantly, it is the nicknames of the boys which are used for such inscriptions: the boy's secret and personal identity, the one by which he is known to his mates, is publicly displayed with a girl's name. The walls of the bus shelter and telephone boxes bear witness to the changing relationships between the sexes, cataloguing the beginnings and endings of love affairs as JOHN + JACKIE is replaced by JOHN + JUE, which later is added to by DEL + JUE. Boys, when they decorate the public world, merely write their own names; it is the girls who dare to publicly reveal their sexual encounters.

1. See footnote on p.457.
But, more important than these etchings, is the writing of names on the girl's own body for girls, too, have tattoos. They do not inscribe their own names or have the pictorial tattoos of the boys but, instead, use their own bodies to express particular romantic attachments:

"Jackie has Ray scratched on her arm. Ray stands for Raymond with whom she is now going out. She did it in the 'bogs' with a pin and had 'got wrong' off someone at work for doing it. It lies under her watchstrap so her mam cannot see it. Ray has Jackie tattooed on his left arm in ink so she doesn't see why she shouldn't have his name on her arm. Ray has told her off for doing it."

Such visible signs of a sexual relationship are not considered to be correct conduct for the female by the male: it is a public admission of private affairs.

"Sandra and Noz both have the following symbol drawn on their hands in biro.

I ask Sandra about them. She says one is for Gench and the other is Noz's sign, but both are identical. Later Hutch asks Noz what they mean. She says one is for George. He asks Sandra why she has the sign on her hand but she will not tell him. Whilst Sandra is out of the room Noz tells Hutch that it stands for Gench but she warns him not to say anything. Sandra reappears and Hutch begins to tease her and points to the 'G' on her hand. Sandra denies that it stands for Gench and says it's a secret sign. She leaves the room."

The importance of these visual clues of sexual relationships is brought out in the following incident:
"Jackie and Sandra nearly have a fight because Sandra used to go out with John. Jackie saw that Sandra had John written on her hand, and says that Sandra wants her to finish with John. This, she thinks, is a way of making her jealous. I pick up this weather vane of their social relationships - the next day Jackie has John written on her right and left hand. They have made up their quarrel."

This active female role is carried through in a number of ways. Girls draw hearts, pierced by arrows, on pieces of paper or on walls or pavements; the number of feathers on the end of the arrow correspond to the letter of the boy's name. Hairs from a boy's heads are retained in matchboxes, possessions of a boy are coveted by the girl: scarves borrowed, badges stolen, jackets worn and combs acquired as if, like magicians, they can use these personal items to secure their victims through a form of metaphorical control. Gaining access to a boy's jacket is indeed to have acquired some degree of control over the boy himself, for it is on this jacket that boys express their individuality through creative decoration of it.¹

This idea of possession is brought out well in the following account of a fight between two girls:

"Kay tells me that she went to the club and had a fight. She went out with Abby on Saturday night and this other girl was furious because she had. She had all her mates at the club last night and she had insulted Kay. So, they went into the "bogs" to fight it out. Kay told her to take off her glasses and then thumped her on the nose, and it started to bleed. She herself had bruises and scratches on her legs and arms. The others came in and broke it up as you aren't allowed to fight in the club."

¹. c.f. Leach (1976a) pp.29-32.
Such fights represent a public demonstration of a girl's possession of a boy.

That girls recognise and exploit their own sexual powers is encapsulated in the Licence to Kiss, a secret formula circulated amongst girls in private. The Licence has five stages and is granted when all five stages have been achieved within a relationship. The five stages are: (1) Your arms around him; (2) His arms around you; (3) Lips together; (4) You kiss the boy; (5) The boy kisses you. If the last stage is not reached a girl is said to get seven years bad luck. The Licence to Kiss is of great significance for it stresses the role of the female as instigator of the encounter and reveals that a competitive spirit also exists amongst girls; some girls have gained their licence, others have not. The private culture of girls reveals, therefore, an alternative female perception of their role in relationships: in the male oral tradition (see for example 'Racing at Ascot') it is only the male who is portrayed as the active participant.

Conclusion: relationships between public and private

During adolescence there is, then, considerable conceptual distance between male and female worlds, a separation maintained through gender specific bodily techniques. However, it is also during this period of social transition that relationships between the sexes take on a particular significance for sexual relationships are seen by the children to
be a necessary element in the assumption of full adult status. It is a tension which must be handled with style and, once again, the culture of 'doing nothing' proscribes the form within which such relationships between public and private are managed.

One way in which the children straddle the conceptual gulf between male and female worlds is through the use of intermediaries to initiate sexual encounters. A third party, either male or female, is used as a go-between at the start of a relationship for relaying messages or passing notes:

"It seems that Kim fancies John. Stephen passed this message to Mog who gave it to John. He told John that "a girl fancies you." Later he found out that it was Kim."

I was brought into the role of intermediary too:

"Maurice asked me to get Janet from the "bogs". He said he had a message for her from Tony. The message was scrawled on the back of his hand: "I want to go out with you, Tony."

And the following sequence of relayed messages was recorded at the onset of one relationship:

"Cloughy told John to tell me to tell Jackie that he liked her. I told Jackie the message. Then Jackie told me to tell John to tell Cloughy that she liked him. Cloughy then told John to tell me to tell Jackie that she had to "do the asking", that is, to ask him out. After this initial exchange the two sat side by side not speaking for a while and then left the room together, and the relationship began."
Through the use of a neutral party negotiations are transacted and, as revealed in the above accounts, both males and females can employ a go-between. Performed in secret, agreement is reached prior to the start of a relationship and should either party prove reluctant later no public face is lost.

This use of intermediaries is highly instructive. On the one hand it publicly reinforces the prescribed gender roles through emphasising the distance between male and female worlds whilst, on the other, it also points to a number of private contradictions of these gender specific norms of behaviour.

For girls, using an intermediary ensures that their public image of purity is maintained. As suggested above, the majority of girls appear to publicly accept their muted status, defined both for and by males, for they possess an alternative perspective on their own futures which remains within a private female culture and provides them with a conceptual resolution to their predicament. Through the use of a third-party to initiate sexual relationships girls can therefore continue their active participatory role outside this private sphere for only the intermediary, who is usually a close friend, will know of their attempt to engage in a sexual relationship. They can enter the public world with no adverse criticism of their actions.

Go-betweens play a critical role in the sexual life of adolescent girls for any who publicly transgress the
prescribed passive and non-participatory female role are liable to be condemned. If a girl chooses to reveal and flaunt her sexuality she is classed as pros (prostitute) by boys; she represents the dangerous sexual female, the temptress of male fantasy, the 'Annie' who appears in the following rhyme:

Danny and his girlfriend Annie,
She had a great big fanny,
They went to the pits,
He sucked off her tits,
And that was the end of Danny and Annie.

As girls well know such behaviour during adolescence will not provide them with a secure future; a pros will never find a permanent boyfriend.

On the other hand, girls who reject the prescribed female role in another manner are equally condemned by boys. Girls who do not reveal any sexual potential, who wear jeans rather than skirts, who join in male activities on their own terms rather than through a boy-friend become classificatory males, lad lasses (tom-boys). Lad lasses, if they continue with such behaviour, are also unlikely to find permanent boy-friends.¹

Using a go-between as mediator between private and public allows the girls, therefore, to maintain a fine balance between these two extremes. A girl may make herself available or express her interest in a boy privately, before entering the public arena of sexual relationships.

¹ c.f. the account of Mary, pp.465 - 466.
For boys, too, intermediaries are useful. In that boys must publicly appear to be well versed and experienced in sexual matters, to be successful and popular with girls, the use of a go-between insures that no slight on their social status occurs should a girl refuse, for only the intermediary will know. This is particularly crucial for girls possess their own opinion of male sexuality, one which is predicated upon their own futures in terms of marriage and one which contrasts dramatically with the male self conception, their public image. Girls will frequently warn each other against "going with" certain boys. These will be those who are overt in their sexual behaviour, those who are regarded as lads. Such boys are only suitable for platonic relationships; they are not thought of as potential spouses or permanent boy-friends for their fidelity is in question. This alternative perspective is expressed in the following rhyme, thought by the girls to be hilarious:

My friend Billy had a ten foot willy,
He showed it to the girl next door,
She thought it was a snake,
So she hit it with a rake,
And now it's only three foot four.

The public male gender stereotype is cut down to size by the girls in private. On the other hand, boys who show no interest in girls, those who cannot participate with style, are privately condemned by girls as puffs. For boys too there are, then, extremes within which they must contain their sexual activity. Like the girls, they must achieve a fine balance in order to belong.
Much of this private reconstruction of public gender roles is predicated upon the children's future in terms of marriage. For males and females alike, marriage is seen as an inevitable part of full adult status and adolescence is seen as the preparatory phase for this. But different perceptions of marriage exist; again they are culturally prescribed and gender specific.

For girls, marriage or a long-standing relationship with a boy represents the ideal and long awaited opportunity for the public legitimation of their own sexuality. Marriage is seen to provide a release from their sexual exile through the relaxation of constraints upon their sexuality. This perception is, I suggest, intimately linked with the reproductive power of the female. Pregnancy is thought to be the most overt and visible symbol of female sexuality. Ideally it should occur within marriage - it should be legitimated - but girls who have babies outside the marital state do not suffer adverse criticism for long. They become classed as mothers, rather than wives. Indeed pregnancy may be the precipitating factor in marriage. Sue who had her first baby in November 1979 came to see me in great excitement, saying that Paul was going to give her an engagement ring for Christmas.

That pregnancy is considered to be the most powerful symbol of female sexuality can be seen in a number of ways. For example, the common north-eastern expression "to fall wrong" (to become pregnant) applicable to both married
and unmarried women, is highly resonant: 'to fall wrong' is to topple from the mythical pedestal of virginity, to make public the private sexuality of the female. The teasing of girls by boys often revolves round the subject of pregnancy: a thump in the stomach is said "to hurt the baby" and fat girls are often taunted by the accusation that they are pregnant. Fat girls resemble pregnant women and recall the overt expression of female sexuality. As one man said of a local girl: "it's such a shame, she can't have children and such a big strong lass as well". Being married and yet childless, the girl had not fulfilled the requirements of her gender role. Throughout the fieldwork period I, too, was gently criticised for not having started a family.

The onset of physical puberty for girls does not, then, mark the beginnings of any sexual freedom for them. Girls are literally cursed by their own bodies for, without marriage or a long standing sexual relationship, they are allowed little public expression of their sexuality. Their sexual potential must be concealed and constrained until it can be legitimated through marriage. That marriage is seen as the ideal fulfillment of the female gender role is expressed in attitudes to unmarried women. Spinsters, for example, are often conceptually equated with lesbians for, in not marrying, the children perceive them to be 'unnatural', as lacking normal heterosexual desires. They are called "old hags"or "witches" and frequently gossiped about. The private culture of the
female with its emphasis upon love, romance and marriage symbolises then the transition to adulthood for the majority of girls. What is particularly ironic about this conception is that, as McRobbie and Garber point out, they are swopping one set of restrictions for another: the conceptualization of sexual freedom in terms of marriage 'symbolises a future general subordination and a present one' (1976:221).

Girls, therefore, are literally and metaphorically muted. Having been classed by others in need of containment and control they cannot participate so visibly in the adolescent culture. That this conception finds wide currency in contemporary Britain is revealed in the following comments of a fifteen year old girl:¹

"If I was a boy I would be a lot happier and free. I would not have to stay at home so much and worry about coming home early. I would be able to stay out late and go around with the gang. Also, I would not have trouble with having menstruation and worrying about getting pregnant."

And, in the context of my own fieldwork, the power of such cultural classifications was brought home to me by one striking example. One of my best female informants was Mary whom others regarded as a lad lass.² She was aggressively independent, invariably wore trousers, although fashionable ones, and joined

2. Mary is the example of the outsider discussed on pp.392-393 above.
in most of the male dominated activities. And, yet, she also participated in the private female culture. She was an avid collector of Valentine rhymes and was highly informative on many aspects of the life of an adolescent female in the north-east of England. She also had many boyfriends, whilst not flaunting or actively encouraging sexual attentions from boys. She was unique amongst the girls and seemed to be able to fuse quite effectively the separation between the public and private domains, the genderised social distance. It was, however, Mary who at the age of 18 became pregnant with her first illegitimate child and at the age of 19 was expecting twins. In attempting to break out of the subordination ascribed to her gender she was the first of the girls to conform to the gender role ascribed for adult females.

Mary's case is illuminating. She had seemed to offer an alternative route for girls on their journey to adulthood in a context where few options are available.\(^1\) Her failure to continue to transgress the cultural constraints is the more poignant in her eventual massive conformity. Even for Mary it was the traditional female role which was allotted to her but one which was not sanctified through marriage, the normal rite of passage for the female.

That marriage is seen in this light by girls is further symbolised in the custom of decorating a bride - to-be

\(^1\) See pp. 221 - 233 above for a discussion of female employment.
prior to her wedding. It is the female equivalent of the male stag night; a rite performed by women for women, a symbol of their private culture. It represents the final stages of their transition to adulthood through celebrating the removal of many public constraints on their sexuality.

For many months prior to the wedding a girl's friends will secretly make a costume for the bride. A huge paper hat is constructed out of masses of brightly coloured paper flowers and a dress, similar to a sandwich board, is made out of cardboard. This dress is covered with messages, composed from newsprint, of an overtly sexual nature. The evening before her marriage, or on her last day at work, the future bride must put on these clothes. She is literally immobilised by the size of the hat and may require other girls to support its brim. Her shoes may have been replaced by giant shoes, covered with silver paper, again making movement difficult. She must then parade through her workplace in this costume, publicly declaring her intention to marry through the wearing of it.

The pinning of overtly sexual comments onto the female body symbolises the transition she is making from the private female culture to the public world, from the concealment of sexuality to its display. Even at this time, however, the future bride must affect an air of innocence for she, as yet, has not completed the transition. It is significant that such costumes are always made by unmarried girls who,
Plates 11 & 12 "The pinning of overtly sexual comments onto the female body symbolises the transition she is making from the private female culture to the public world."
in the construction of them, are both celebrating their friends final release, as they see it, and prefiguring their own future hopes. Married women, significantly, do not take such an active role in this rite. In the evening the girls will go out together to celebrate further, often drinking a great deal of alcohol, an action which parallels the male stag night, and represents another inversion of the prescribed female role. The liberation achieved through intoxication is normally guarded against for it is a public display of lack of control, an experience normally denied to the female.

In contrast to this massive celebratory act marriage, for boys, is seen by them to signal the end of their freedom and a restriction of the overt sexual activity which has characterised their adolescence. Warnings against marrying, on the pitfalls and disappointment encountered, are often given to the boys by older men. In particular children are often cited as being the cause of marital disharmony; many men said that, although they might have married, if they could begin again they would never have had children. It is, therefore, the reproductive power of the female which is perceived to bring change in social status, further emphasising the suggestion that it is pregnancy which is thought to be the most resonant symbol of female sexuality.

Many of the common metaphors used by males to describe the married state reflect these negative perceptions of
marriage. Boys become "hitched", "trapped" or "caught"; they are literally tied by the love-strings secretly made for them by the girls. The stag night is a night of heavy drinking in the company of other men; it is a meeting for commiseration rather than, as in the female case, a celebration. Furthermore, the state of bachelorhood does not carry the stigma attached to spinsterhood and many married men speak enviously of the bachelor's freedom: the freedom to go with other women, to go abroad for holidays because money is not needed to support the wife and family, the freedom to change jobs and to get sackless (drunk) with no fear of retribution. As Corrigan (1979) also notes in his work many unmarried boys changed jobs regularly but commented that when they got married such free living would have to end.

Such perceptions of marriage are, however, only partially realised in practice for, in the context of the north-east of England, many married men do still continue to indulge in laddish behaviour. They congregate in working men's clubs, gather on the allotment as a community of men, a community which parallels the separated domestic community of their wives. The separation between the sexes, between the public and private worlds, begun during adolescence is thus mirrored in the adult world: the two are mutually reinforcing, further

1. This essentially conservative attitude of adolescents is widespread, see for example the survey conducted by the Sun newspaper October 21st 1980. It is not confined to this particular context. As a teenager my female friends and I used the phrase "to go happping" meaning to go out and find some boys at the local dance.
underlining the suggestion that adolescence is truly a preparation for adulthood, a rite of passage.

In conclusion, then, it is marriage which is seen to represent the end of adolescence for both males and females. The images of containment, restriction and concealment of female sexuality, the perceived loss of sexual freedom of the male at marriage meet and mutually reflect upon one another in connection with the question of female virginity. Through marriage the passivity and sexual innocence of the female is transformed: the 'wife' has become the 'whore', that is the overtly sexual female used by boys during their adolescence only for short-term relationships. It is, then, through their conformity to a predominantly male perception of the female self during adolescence that girls can express their sexuality as adults through the institution of marriage. For boys, marriage signals the restriction of their adolescent sexual freedom through conformity to the female perception of male sexuality.

The gender roles and perceptions of marriage presented above are images of the future generated from within the children's culture, ideals to which all must aspire, behavioural norms to which all must adhere, if they are to belong. That individual children may privately acknowledge that, in practice, adulthood may conflict with these projections underlines the power which such cultural constructs wield in shaping the aspirations and values of the group as a whole. Adherence to these beliefs is a prerequisite for belonging.
As such, then, perceptions of gender mirror the style of belonging characteristic of the culture of 'doing nothing'. It is a style of conformity tempered by individuality within prescribed cultural boundaries. Overstepping these limits may lead to exclusion. As in other aspects of the children's bodily techniques it is the physical body which provides a focus for the social body. It is the medium through which knowledge is displayed, acquired and assimilated, knowledge which will be necessary for the transition to adulthood.
CHAPTER 7: CONFECTIONS, CONCOCTIONS AND CONCEPTIONS

'Symbols may well reflect not structure, but anti-structure, and not only reflect it but contribute to creating it.' (Turner, 1974:270)

Introduction

Bodily style is a mode of belonging expressed through the complex interweaving of different body techniques into an ordered symbolic system. The physical body mirrors the social self and, thus, bodily style is a sign of belonging. In conclusion to this discussion of the culture of children I trace the patterning over time of changes in one particular body technique as the child moves towards adulthood. It represents a condensed and highly evocative symbol of that physical and social transition, a symbol of being and becoming.

As Mary Douglas (1969) has shown the body as a symbolic system is vulnerable at its orifices for substances pass out of the body through them. These substances are 'marginal stuff of the most obvious kind (for) spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body' (1969:121). All these bodily wastes, as I have shown, feature regularly in children's jokes and conversations and, in general, children regard the orifices of the body as significant for in allowing passage between the inner and outer body they, conceptually therefore,
allow movement between the self and others.¹

In particular, certain orifices are of maximal importance:

"Stephen remarked that he had seven holes in his head. Delly said: "No, there's only five." The eye sockets are blocked up by the eyeballs - they aren't holes. There are only five holes: - two nostrils, two earholes and the mouth."

And of all these holes in the head the mouth is most crucial. Words for the mouth are many, symbolising its conceptual importance: hole, hooter, trap, rattle, gob and face. This latter equivalence of the face with the mouth indicates the importance of the mouth as an expressive orifice; that the face is the mouth is revealed in the following semantic equivalents: "shut yer face", "shut yer trap", "shut up".

The mouth allows innermost thoughts to be given outward expression and, thus, through the mouth the self is revealed to others. Those who talk too much are gobby; he who tells tales on another is a 'Big Mouth' for he gabs too much with his gob. To have a gemmy is to have a chat and to be able to talk is, as I have shown, critical in the art of 'doing nothing'. Those who cannot verbalise successfully do not belong for they cannot participate in the culture of 'doing nothing' with style.²

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1. See Chapters 4 and 6.
2. See Chapter 4.
All the body's orifices are portals between the self and others; they mediate between the inner and outer body. But it is the mouth alone which also allows passage in the opposite direction and it is this process of ingestion, of taking into the self, which makes the mouth of particular symbolic significance to children. Mary Douglas has written that 'each culture has its own special risks and problems (and) to which particular bodily margins its beliefs attribute power depends on what situation the body is mirroring' (ibid:121). In that the physical body reflects the social body the children see any changes in their bodies as reflecting changes in their social status.¹ In this sense the mouth is important for it allows substances to enter the body and, hence, to enter the self; the mouth, therefore, has the potential to bring changes to the physical and the social body of children.

Gaining control over the mouth means, therefore, gaining control over the self and over the direction and manner in which the transition to adulthood is made. A young child's first act of rebellion is usually played out through the medium of the mouth and as, Simone de Beauvoir recalls, the mouth is the first body orifice which the child gains control over:

'The principal function of Louise and Mama was to feed me; their task was not always an easy one. The world became more

¹. See Chapter 6.
intimately part of me when it entered my mouth than through my eyes and sense of touch, I would not accept it entirely. The insipidness of milk puddings, porridge, and mashes of bread and butter made me burst into tears; the oiliness of fat meat and the clammy mysteries of shellfish revolted me; tears, screams, vomitings: my repugnance was so deeply rooted that in the end they gave up trying to force me to eat those disgusting things. '(1978:6)

In this concluding chapter I explore, therefore, the ways in which children gain control over their bodies, and hence control over the self, through learning to acquire one particular body technique: the taking of substances into their bodies through the mouth. Through examination of three case-studies - the eating of sweets, the smoking of cigarettes and the drinking of alcohol - I show how, at different stages in the process of becoming social, children are symbolically defining who they are, the category to which they belong, through the medium of the mouth. In this sense the transition between these activities can be seen as an iconic image of the process of social maturation, the transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood.

Sahlins argues that 'men reciprocally define objects in terms of themselves and themselves in terms of object' (1976:169). Children, as I shall argue, also do. As Sahlins continues:

'the product that reaches its destined market constitutes an objectification of a social category and so helps to constitute the latter in society...Capitalism is no sheer rationality. It is a definite form of a cultural order; or a cultural order acting in a particular form.' (ibid:185)
Sweets, cigarettes and alcohol image, then, the process of social transition to adulthood in a Western capitalist society which has no institutionalized rite de passage. The chapter concludes with an examination of the implications of this for socialization theory through situating these activities within the total frame of the culture of 'doing nothing'.

I Food for thought

The notion that food might be a subject worthy of discussion as a symbolic medium has long been ignored by anthropologists. Past ethnographers have either only made fleeting reference to what people eat or have subsumed that topic under more general headings such as agricultural production or economics. Kinship studies have discussed rules of commensality but not the act of consuming.

However, with the publication of Le Totémisme Aujourd'hui, and Lévi-Strauss's provocative suggestion that animals are 'good to think with', the subject of food and its relation to the social, rather than the physical, body has become increasingly central to the discipline (1969:162), (see Leach, 1964; Douglas, 1969; Bulmer, 1967 and Tambiah, 1969). In all these analyses it is suggested that ideas people hold concerning the edibility of different kinds of food are logically linked to other conceptual domains and that, by examining a people's food categories, a more penetrating and incisive explanation of other aspects of the social order can be achieved. As Tambiah argues: 'cultures and social systems
are, after all, not only thought but also lived'; particular attention should be paid to exactly what people let inside their bodies (1973:165). We are what we eat.

More recently Mary Douglas (1975) has directly confronted the subject of food in her analysis of British eating habits. She identifies two major opposed categories of food: meals and drinks. Of the two, meals are the more highly ranked and ordered, being internally structured into 'first, second, main (and) sweet' courses, whereas drinks possess no such structuring (1975:255). Meals, unlike drinks, are also externally structured by the temporal order - breakfast followed by dinner and tea - which parallels the weekly cycle of ceremonial meals. Drinks, in contrast, are 'not invested with any necessity in their ordering' (ibid:255).

Eating is not however confined to this rigid system. As Douglas goes on to argue, besides these major food categories some 'food can be taken for private nourishment' but it is likely to be condemned if considered 'to interfere with the next meal' (ibid:254). It is here that she locates sweets.

Sweets, according to Douglas, threaten to disrupt the orderly consumption of food but hers is an adult perspective. For adults, sweets are merely an adjunct to real food; they should not and cannot usurp the place of meals. For the child, as I shall argue, the reverse is true: it is meals which disrupt the eating of sweets.
This opposition was initially revealed to me through a chance statement by an old lady of my acquaintance. Remarking on the quality of the paint used by the National Coal Board on their rented properties she said, disparagingly, that it was "all ket - rubbish" and that it would peel off within a few months. This use of the word *ket* intrigued me for up until this moment I had only encountered the word amongst the children, used as their general category term for sweets, especially those of the cheaper variety.

Further close attention to language revealed that the word *ket*, when used by adults, could be a classificatory noun - to mean an assortment of useless articles - or an adjective, *ket* or *ketty*, meaning rubbishy or useless. Confirmation of this usage comes from Dobson (1974) who defines the word as rubbish. However, Cecil Geesom cites the original meaning of *ket* in the Durham dialect: 'something smelly, stinking, unhealthy or diseased' generally applicable to the 'carcasses of animals, dying a natural death and dressed for market without being bled' (1969:116).

Seemingly there has been a significant semantic shift between the use of the word in the worlds of adults and children: that which is despised, inedible and a natural substance of the adult world is, for the children, a highly regarded, extremely edible and cultural form of food. More significant still, sweets - like the inedible and stinking carcass - are not classified by adults as proper food; sweets are the
rubbish which children eat between meals.

The metaphoric transformation of the inedible into the edible through a semantic twist is an example of the persuasive effect of language in performance. Fernandez (1977) argues that language does not merely reflect social experience; it acts upon it, creating a continual interplay between conceptual thought and social action. Understanding the performative power and persuasive effect of these movements is crucial to the unravelling of social order;

'ethnography is obliged to trace as specifically as it can both the accidental chains of associations that may be at work in any imaginative cultural product as well as the higher order concepts or controlling ideas that may be present in mediating between associates bringing about their synthesis.' (1977:130)

The linguistic paradox of edibility, described above, is one such example; it represents the playing out of controlling ideas about the worlds of adults and children which both creates a cultural synthesis and is itself thereby created.

Sweet thoughts

Sweets - as in 'Ye Olde Sweete Shoppe' - seem to be an entirely British phenomenon. There is apparently no equivalent abroad and the British sweet industry, in its production of a very extensive range of confectionery, seems to be unique. The concept of the sweetmeat is the nearest parallel to the kinds of confections available in other countries, a confection which is absent from the supermarket shelves and non-specialist sweet shops in this country.
The European sweetmeat dates back to the seventeenth century with the discovery of sugar. During this period sweetmeats formed an integral part of the rich man's menu - they were a part of the meal itself - as is often the case in other countries contemporarily. In Britain, however, the sweetmeat today is best described as a home-made confection to be found delicately displayed in tiny baking cases in a traditional confectioner's shop. Elsewhere, mass production techniques have replaced the sweetmeat with similar, but not identical, pre-packed products. However, although the sweetmeat has largely disappeared and the traditional sweetshop now competes with supermarkets, newsagents and slot-machines, the sweetmeat's pre-packaged successor strikingly resembles its forerunner in many respects. In this sense the sweet, for adults, may be closer than Douglas (1975) supposes to our major food categories; it may form a sweet course to the meal.

Junk food

Kets and sweets must not be confused. Although the distinction may seem to be purely linguistic other more substantive issues indicate that kets are opposed to other kinds of sweets in being a very distinctive kind of confectionery. Kets belong exclusively to children and, as I shall show, are an iconic image of their relationship to the adult world.

The youth club had a tuck shop and a continual and preoccupying activity for all the children was the buying and selling of
sweets, primarily of the 'ketty' variety, although older children tended more towards other kinds of sweets. The majority, however, almost always referred to the tuck as kets. In contrast adults generally used the word sweets although occasionally an adult might jokingly refer to kets, especially if they were buying sweets for children. But they would never use the term kets for sweets they themselves were going to consume.

It would seem therefore, from my observations, that the term kets is usually used for those sweets at the lower end of the price range and it is these sweets that the children most often buy. It could be argued, therefore, that the linguistic distinction between kets and other kinds of confectionery rests solely on economic factors. However, before assuming that children buy kets because they are cheap and that, in general, they have less money to spend than adults, certain problems should be considered. Why don't adults buy kets? For 10p., the price of a chocolate bar, they could purchase ten pieces of bubble gum. Furthermore, why do children find adults eating kets such a remarkable event, a perception portrayed in the following conversation:

"G: Allison, why have you got Space Dust behind there for? (indicating the packet behind a jar on the shelf)
A: Because I bought it.
G: What did you buy it for?
A: Because I wanted to.
G: Oh.
A: Any objections?
G: Yes
GL: Yes "

/..
Secondly, although it is certainly true that children tend to buy the cheaper sweets, it is apparent from my field data that the total amount of money spent by the children on sweets at any one time may be quite considerable: a typical purchase might be: four 'Fizz Bombs' at 1p each; three 'Liquorice Novelties' at 2p each and two 'Bubble gums' at 1p each. The total outlay, 12p, could have bought two small chocolate bars which were also available at the youth club tuck shop. This may be an example of getting more for one's money, but another factor should be taken into account. The spending power of children is obviously an important consideration for manufacturers, but, if this were the sole criterion influencing production, why do manufacturers not produce miniature versions of the kinds of confections available in the higher price range? Some years ago it was possible to purchase slim bars of Cadbury's chocolate for one old penny and a slightly larger version for twopence. The equivalent contemporary products are tiny - 'bite-size' - 'Milky Ways' and 'Mars Bars', sold in bags as 'Family Packs'. Why do manufacturers not sell them singly? The answer seems to be that there is no demand for them and that manufacturers recognise the selling power of kets.

Children, then, do not buy kets simply because they are cheaper or have a lower unit price. Kets have other properties, besides their cheapness, which makes them important. Manufacturers may not therefore be exploiting the power of the child's purse but, more insidiously, the power inherent in the conceptual gulf between the worlds of adults and children.
Kets have their own attractions. In their autobiographies Jimmy Boyle and Rose Gamble both remember the pull of the sweet shop window:

'Our house stood beside the sweet and paper shop, and the next best thing to having a ha'penny to spend was playing 'I-Spy' through its tiny window. The floor of the window was layered with rows of grubby glass fluted dishes filled with tiger nuts that tasted like the insides of dusty cupboards, gritty spearmint toffee, aniseed balls, sherbert dabs and sun-faded jelly babies, all at ha'penny an ounce. The quality stuff, the buttered brazils and satin cushions, was in tall glass jars up on the shelves, but we never paid any attention to them.' (Rose Gamble, 1979 :19-20)

'on a winter's night there would always be some of us grouped round one of the sweet shop windows playing Guesses - this was to choose the name of a sweet and give the others the initial (i.e. C.B.? - Candy Balls ) and we would pass hours playing this game.' (Jimmy Boyle, 1977 :22)

But what is the attraction of kets? In order to resolve all these problematic issues a statistical survey was carried out in which the range of confectionery available was divided into three groups. The term kets designated all those sweets costing less than 5p. An intermediate group was established for sweets costing between 6p and 10p and a third group contained all sweets costing 11p or more, including the more expensive boxes of chocolates. By isolating kets as a distinctive group, according to price, it was possible to explore further, more elusive contrasts between kets and other sweets, an investigation which suggested that the alternative adult meaning of the word kets - rubbish - was indeed a powerful and persuasive metaphor. Much of the attraction of kets for children seems to lie precisely in the ways they stand...
in contrast to conventional adult sweets and culturally prescribed eating patterns. Kets contravene adult conceptions of order in numerous ways: in their names, colours, the sensations they induce, their mode of presentation, their ingredients and in the timing and manner of their consumption.

Firstly, it is in the names given to kets as opposed to other sweets than an immediate contrast is struck. Analysis reveals that children do in fact consume named rubbish - that is, inedible substances - when they eat kets.\(^1\) It is this metaphorical rubbish that children prize most highly as can be seen from the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRICE</th>
<th>INEDIBLE/NOT EATEN</th>
<th>EDIBLE</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.1)</td>
<td>(1.2)</td>
<td>(2.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KETS Below 5p</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 10p</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11p +</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 12. This table shows the distribution of names, according to their semantic connotations within each of three groups of sweets, differentiated according to price.

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1. Each of the price ranges for sweets was further subdivided into three categories (1.1) inedible and edible but not normally consumed; (2.0) edible; (3.0) other. The confections of each group were classified into these categories according to the meaning of the names i.e. whether they referred to inedible or edible substances. Sweets whose name implied nothing concerning their qualities of ingestion were classed as other, (3.0), as for example sweets such as Ripple, Contrast, Sports. Edibility was assumed to mean conforming to food normally consumed or considered edible in Britain.
In the first group - kets - it is the domain of inedibility in name which contains the most sweets, being approximately double the number of those in the remaining categories. The intermediate group (6p-10p) reveals an almost equal distribution over all categories. The third group of sweets (11p+), however, reveals approximately seven times as many sweets in the edible category as in either of the remaining two.

If adults regard kets as rubbish, low in nutritive value and essentially 'junk food', then it is quite logical that manufacturers should label their products in an appropriate manner. Kets are often given names which emphasise their inedibility and rubbishy content in adult terms. Many have names reserved for mechanical or utilitarian objects which adults would never dream of eating. Children, however, will gleefully consume them. For example:


Other kinds of sweets rarely have such names, with perhaps the exception being 'Black Bullets'. That this is no mere coincidence can be seen from the entries sent to an 'Invent-a-lolly' competition for children run by the Sunday Times. ¹ First prize went to a lolly called 'Skullduggery', whose wrapper portrays a human skull; second prize went to the 'Thick Ear' lolly, shaped like a human ear and third prize to the 'Electric' lolly, which masquerades as a light bulb.

¹ See Sunday Times Colour Supplement, 16.11.80.
Not only do children consume that which is inedible but they also metaphorically ingest many animals whose consumption is normally abhorred by adults and which are surrounded by dietary taboos. Many of the names given to kets are taken from the animal kingdom; they are names of creatures which are either conceptually close or distant from our own domestic world, animals which, as Leach (1964) has shown, are not considered edible. But this applies only to the adult world of meals; in the children's eating of kets such distinctions are ignored. Cannibalism in particular ranks highly:

Womble Dips, Mr. Marble, Snakes, Kangaroos, Micky Mouse, Spooks, Yogi Bear, Jelly Footballers, Dinosaurs, Lucky Black Cats, Dormice, Mighty Monkey, Bright Babies, Jelly Gorrillas and Fun Faces.

Other kinds of sweets are generally conservative so that 'Plain Jane', 'Merry Maid' and 'Poor Bens' are the sole representatives.

This rubbishy attribute of kets is highlighted when the above names are compared to the names given to other more expensive kinds of sweets. Unlike kets, the names given to these sweets are often descriptive of the actual composition of the confectionery, frequently yielding precise and detailed information for the consumer. Adults, it seems, like to know what they are eating. For example:

Although a few kets possess descriptive names the unfamiliar eater should beware of assuming that the description refers to the taste. The names of 'Seafood', 'Shrimps' and 'Jelly Eels' may lead to the expectation of a savoury flavour; they are, however, sweet and sickly. 'Rhubarb and Custard' and 'Fruit Salad' are hard, chewy kets, presenting a marked contrast to the sloppy puddings implied by the names. Such inversions and contradictions of the accepted adult order are, as I have previously shown, an essential feature of many spheres of the child's world so that 'Silly Toffee Banana' and 'Orozo Hard Juice' could only be kets.

Kets are mostly brightly coloured, as in the luminous blues and fluorescent oranges of the 'Fizz Bomb' and the vivid yellows and reds of many jellied kets. Some have contrasting stripes, with clashing colours; for example, the 'Liquorice Novelty'. Here, black strips of liquorice are festooned with shocking greens, reds and blues. All these harsh, saturated colours are absent from the 'real' food of the adult order. Blue, especially, is banned; bright blue belongs to the realm of iced cakes and such concoctions are a highly ceremonial form of food, divorced from the everyday menu.¹ Many sweets, also aimed at the child's market but not classed

¹ Birren (1961) provides an illustration of the conservative adult attitude to food colour. He cites a Western baker 'who once tried to market bread in pastel tints such as blue and violet (and) found the venture a dismal failuure' (1961:167).
here as kets, are similarly coloured: for example, ' Smarties ', ' Jelly Tots ', ' Jelly Babies ' and ' Liquorice Allsorts '. Such bright and stimulating colours are not normally associated with the dinner plate. ¹

In contrast, the sweets which are aimed at a primarily adult market have a more uniform and sombre appearance. Most are coated in chocolate, presenting exteriors of shades of brown, significantly known as ' natural ' - i.e. healthy - colours today. In the more expensive boxes of chocolates the highly saturated colours of the kets are present, but they are masked by a coating of chocolate and hidden from sight. Where chocolate is not used, the colours of these sweets tend towards pastel shades, soft, delicate colours inoffensive to the eye, as in ' Sugared Almonds ' or ' Mints '. The ' Humbug ', with its sedate black and white stripes, is a poor relation of the ' Gob Stopper ' and lacks its coat of many colours. For sweets to be suitable for adult consumption highly saturated colours must be avoided, ¹

¹. It is important to note that bright artificial colours do appear in ' real'food but such foods are also classed as ' junk '. Many instant products - e.g. Angel Delight and cake mixes - have extremely bright colours. Bright colours appear often in food at children's parties - e.g. in jellies, blancmange and cakes. Such food, like kets, is also regarded as not ' real ', essentially rubbishy, possibly detrimental but certainly not nutritious.
for such colours are not present in 'real' food and adults, unlike children, are conservative about what they class as edible. ¹

The eating of this metaphoric rubbish by children is a serious business and adults should be wary of tackling kets for, unlike other sweets, kets are a unique experience. Many of the names given to kets hint at this propensity, so that ' Fizzy Bullets ', ' Fizz Bombs ', ' Fizz Balls ', ' Festoon Fizzle Sticks ', ' Fizzy Lizzies' and ' Fruit Fizzles ' all stress the tingling sensation to be gained from eating them. Many kets contain sherbert and ' Sherbits ', ' Refreshers ', ' Sherbo Dabs ', ' Dip Dabs ', ' Sherbert Fountains', ' Double Dip Sherbert ' and even ' Love Hearts ' all make the mouth smart while eating them. Rose Gamble recalls such a taste:

'I liked her cough candy best, and I always hoped someone would buy some. It was bright orange and tasted of peragoric and pear drops. ' (1979:151)

In contrast other sweets provide little in the way of exciting consumption and there is merely ' Fruit Sensation ' or ' Fruity Sherberts ' in this group. The nearest rival among these sweets to the explosive taste of many kets is the ' Extra Strong Mint ' - a poor comparison with the ' Knock out Lolly '. The stress on citrus fruit flavours

¹. The eating of such disordered food is consistent with the child's culture, but adults abhor such anomalies. On sweet wrappers and other food stuffs a guarantee is usually issued which states that: 'This product should reach you in perfect condition. If it does not, please return it.' (Twix wrapper). Kets, on the other hand, offer no such guarantee.
and the tangy, often acrid, taste of many kets contrasts with the preponderance of sugary or nutty flavours in other kinds of confections. The ferocious taste of a 'Fizz Bomb' is quite distinctive and lingers in the mouth for a long time, temporarily putting the other taste buds out of action.

Chocolate, which is a favoured ingredient in sweets aimed at the adult consumer, is rare among kets but may appear as chocolate flavour. There is a range of kets, styled in the shapes of hammers, saws and chisels, which although appearing to be chocolate are in fact made of a substitute substance. Similarly, 'Cheroots' look like long sticks of chocolate but have a gritty texture and are dry and tasteless to eat. They lack the rich creamy flavour and smooth texture so beloved by the advertisers of real chocolate.

This marked difference in taste and texture between kets and other sweets lies naturally in the ingredients used in their manufacture. Kets are frequently unwrapped so that a list of ingredients is difficult to obtain but common substances include: sugar, glucose, edible gum, edible vegetable oil, citric acid and assorted flavourings. Other sweets, in contrast, proudly list their ingredients and frequently stress their 'natural goodness'. For example, a message on the wrapper of a Picnic bar announces that it contains: 'Milk chocolate with peanuts, wafer, toffee and raisin centre'. In much smaller print it admits that the chocolate contains vegetable fat - thus lessening its
nutritive properties and desirability - but stresses that there is a minimum of 20% milk solids which must not be overlooked.

It would seem therefore that sweets, as opposed to kets, are to be valued as a form of food. The Picnic, as its name suggests, is to be regarded as a source of nourishment. Indeed, a recent advert for this sweet advises us to 'choose (our) picnic area carefully'. These kinds of sweets are, like the sweetmeat, closely associated with our major food categories and many can be concocted at home from common household ingredients. Cookery books include recipes for sweets such as truffles, peppermint creams, coconut ice and toffee. Kets, on the other hand, are impossible to reproduce in the kitchen.

Thus sweets belong to the realm of 'real' food, to the private world of the kitchen, and are bound to the concept of the meal. They have names indicative of their wholesomeness and their flavours echo the patterns of taste normally associated with the dessert - the sweet course - of the meal. Mary Douglas suggests that it is 'the capacity to recall the whole by the structure of the parts' which has ensured the survival of the British biscuit in our diet and similarly it is this mimetic quality of the sweet which has kept it bound to the realm of 'real' food (1974:747). Kets, in contrast, are by their very nature removed from the adult domestic sphere and belong to the public, social world of children. In name, taste and consumptive experience kets belong to this disorderly and inverted world for, in this
alternative world, a new order exists which, as I shall show, makes the ket an eminently desirable product.

Lévi-Strauss (1975) suggests that the differing culinary modes to be found in a particular culture may reflect its conceptual categories and it is in this light that the adult meaning of the word kets becomes highly significant. If sweets belong to the adult world, the human cultural world of cooked foods as opposed to the natural, raw food of the animal kingdom, then kets belong in a third category. Neither raw nor cooked, according to the adult perspective, kets are literally rotten food. These rubbishy, decaying and diseased sweets are the peculiar property of children who are, from the adult perspective, a tainted group. As I have argued they are pre-social, in need of training and correction through the process of socialization and thus it is quite consistent that it should be kets which children regard as their most social form of food. Mary Douglas has argued that ' consuming is finding consistent meanings ' and that goods are purchased and needed ' for making visible and stable the categories of culture ' (1977:292-3). In this sense the literal consumption of different kinds of confectionery by adults and children reflects the conceptual separation between their social worlds.

**Metaphoric Meals**

Mary Douglas (1975) argues that the eating of meals involves a whole series of rituals, concerning both the presentation
and consumption of food. Food is served on different kinds of plates according to the kind of meal. It is eaten with cutlery of assorted shapes and sizes, which transfers food from plate to mouth. The use of the fingers for this act is frowned upon by adults and rarely should food enter the mouth by hand. Chicken legs become embarrassing to eat in the company of others and the eating of lobsters entails a battery of dissecting instruments. Finger bowls and serviettes are provided for the eaters of such foods to remove any particles adhering to the hands or lips. As Goffman suggests, 'greasy foods that are not considered to contaminate the mouth can yet be felt to contaminate the hands should contact have to be made without insulation by utensils' (1971:73). The more ceremonial the meal the more crockery and cutlery necessary to facilitate the eating of it.

Those sweets which are to be regarded as belonging to the realm of 'real' food must be similarly distanced from the body, unlike the non-food kets. Kets are usually unwrapped, whereas other sweets tend to be heavily packaged, for the layers of paper provide the necessary separation between the inner and outer body. The phrase 'a hand to mouth existence' - a poor and despised condition - emphasises the necessity for maintaining this purity. As with the eating of meals the more packaging provided the more ceremonial the sweet and the further it is removed from the 'ketty' sphere. The ultimate example is the box of chocolates, which is shrouded in paper.
First, there is a cellophane outer wrapper which must be removed. Under this is a cardboard box, highly decorated in its own artistic style - the chocolate box kitten or country scene - and frequently ornamented with a bow of ribbon. The box itself is sheathed inside with corrugated paper and each chocolate lies in its tailor-made slot. Like the eating of meals these sweets must be insulated against contamination from external sources.¹

The 'After Eight Mint' is superlative in this respect. The clockface printed on the box is repeated on each tiny envelope which encases the sweet and it registers the time at which this confection should ideally be consumed. Its other name - the 'After Dinner Mint' - secures the place of this chocolate as a highly ordered kind of confection inextricably bound to the concept of the meal. Douglas (1975) suggests that meals are externally ordered by time and that it is the temporal sequence of meals which is used to divide up the day. The 'After Eight Mint' confirms the suspicion that the eating of sweets by adults should be similarly structured.

After the meal has been eaten the sweets may be passed round. Their tray shaped box and insulating containers recall the crockery and cutlery of the meal and the hand is allowed

¹. This trend is reflected in other foodstuffs. Vegetables are hygienically scrubbed to remove any trace of soil and sold in vacuum-sealed packs in supermarkets, ensuring minimum contact with external sources.
minimum contact with the sweet. The most criminal of acts, frequently indulged in by children, is to finger the sweets for, as with the meal, food must scarcely be handled. To nibble a sweet and then to replace it in the box, again common practice among young children, is never allowed amongst adults for that which has been in the mouth must ideally remain there.¹

Just as ceremonial meals have a yearly temporal cycle so does the purchase and consumption of sweets. Boxes of chocolates are bought at Christmas, birthdays and other ritual occasions, as is apparent from television advertising: in the week before Christmas many of the usual sweet adverts are replaced by ones for the more luxurious boxes of chocolates.

One major ceremonial sweet, heavily packaged and adorned, is not, however, aimed at adults directly. This is the Easter Egg, given by adults to children. The Easter Egg, however, bears all the characteristics of an acceptable adult sweet and encapsulates the whole ethos of the adult's conception

¹. c.f. Goffman (1971): 'Note that in the matter of markings (traces left by the body) knives function in an interesting way...since they provide the means of taking without contaminating, as middle class children learn the first time their mother finds a teeth-marked crater in a cake, a loaf of bread or a piece of fruit. These craters are defiling, and it is very important to disinfect the object and its setting by cutting away with a clean knife until only a flat surface remains' (1971:72).
of food. Firstly, it marks a ritual season. Secondly, the silver-paper covered egg sits resplendent in a highly decorated cardboard box, frequently adorned with ribbon. Under the outer layers the chocolate egg can be found, already separated into two, to avoid much contact with the hand. It is easily pulled apart to reveal a packet of highly-coloured sweets, such as 'Smarties' or 'Jelly Tots', which although ostensibly similar to kets are much less 'ketty' in fact. It is highly significant that Easter Eggs are never stuffed with 'Bubble Gum'. The Easter Egg is strictly ordered in both its construction and consumption and is ultimately representative of adults' rather than children's conception of acceptable food.

The association of sweets, rather than kets, with the idea of the meal is demonstrated powerfully in advertising techniques. Sweets destined primarily for the adult market are advertised as forms of food. They are either (i) utilitarian in producing a desired end; (ii) substitute food which contains nourishing properties; or (iii) additional extras which will not, however, interfere with meals.

1. A difference may be noted between 'Bubble gum' and 'Chewing gum'. 'Chewing gum' is often eaten by adults as well as children, whereas 'Bubble gum' seems to be restricted to children. 'Chewing gum' is heavily packaged and pale cream in colour, whilst 'Bubble gum' is far more 'ketty'. It is wrapped in a single twist of paper and available in a large variety of colours, e.g. pink and turquoise, non-food colours.

2. There is a smaller, cheaper less ceremonial Easter Egg on the market which seems to be aimed directly at children. It has many 'ketty' qualities, for the cream filled egg, although appearing to contain albumen and yolk, is extremely sweet to eat and far removed from the taste of a fried egg which it closely resembles.
In the first category fall the quality sweets: expensive food accompanies exotic life-styles. The 'Black Magic' advert reveals how a girl is lured to a man for he 'knows the secret of the Black Magic Box'; 'Chocolate Liquars' bring romance and a 'Bounty' provides a girl with 'the taste of paradise'. The man who eats a 'Twix' - two finger bar of chocolate - not only gets a 'longer lasting snack' but gets a girl by giving her the other half.

In the second group is the 'Mars Bar' which helps the harassed mother 'work, rest and play'. 'Picnics' help painters finish painting the Forth Road bridge and the 'Picnic' is placed in the mens' sandwich boxes. The 'Picnic' is part of their meal. The 'Marathon' is similarly a metaphor for a meal: the bar is pictured sliced up like a pre-wrapped loaf. It 'comes up peanuts slice after slice.'

The 'Milky Way' features in the third group. A group of children sit round the dining table waiting for their father to come for the family meal. They all have a bite of a 'Milky Way' but it won't interfere with their meal for, as the advertising slogan says, a 'Milky Way is the sweet you can eat between meals without ruining your appetite'. Similarly, a few years ago, 'Maltesers' were recommended to ladies because they had the 'less fattening centre.'
The separation between the inner and outer body necessary in the consumption of food is imaged in an old advert for 'Peanut Treets'. A white-gloved ladies hand filled the screen and held the sweet in its palm; the glove was not marked with chocolate for 'Treets melt in your mouth and not in your hand'.

Advertisements for sweets for children are for those which most closely echo the patterning of adult sweets. For example, there are adverts for 'Chocolate Buttons', 'Smarties' and 'Jelly Tots' but these sweets are usually purchased by adults for children. In contrast, I have only seen one advert for kets on television. 'Fizz Balls' were advertised through cartoon imagery which showed the experience of eating the ket; two cartoon children were featured with their eyes whizzing round in opposite directions. 'Fizz Balls' are a mind-blowing gastronomic experience; they serve no other ends.

As manufacturers seem shrewdly acknowledge the culture of kets is well established; it is its own advert. The sharing of sweets among children in their separate social world creates a pool of knowledge concerning the kinds of kets available. It was, for example, not long after the arrival of 'Space Dust' in the village sweet shop that it had completely sold out. Kets, unlike sweets, need no promotion. Indeed, they are self-promoting.
Adult sweets, then, are highly structured and linked to the realm of food; kets, on the other hand, are divorced from it. Most kets can be found piled high in a cardboard box on the shop counter, with no respect for variety or flavour, into which dirty hands delve and rummage. Few kets are individually wrapped and, if they are, the packaging is minimal. Children do not heed the purity rules of adults. They frequently share their sweets, offering each other bites or sucks of a ket and dirty hands break off pieces to offer to friends. Kets are fished out of pockets along with other articles and 'Bubble Gum' is stuck to the under side of tables to be reserved for later use. The absence of wrappers leaves the fingers sticky; kets are not distanced from the body.

Many kets are specifically designed to conflict with the adult's abhorrence of food entering the mouth by hand. 'Gob stoppers' are removed from the mouth for comparison of colour changes and strings of chewing gum continually pulled in and out. Hands become covered in ket and the normal eating conventions, instilled by parents during early childhood, are flagrantly disregarded.

Indeed some kets seem not to be designed for eating at all: 'Gob stoppers' fill the mouth totally, not allowing any of the normal digestive processes to begin. 'Chews' produce an aching jaw - reminiscent of eating tough meat - and 'Fizz Bombs' simply have to be endured. 'Bubble Gum' is
Plate 13 "Bubblegum... is never swallowed; instead it is expelled from the mouth in a bubble and held at the point of entry until it bursts, spattering the face with particles of sticky gum."
chewed vigorously, masquerading mastication, but is never swallowed: instead it is expelled from the mouth in a bubble and held at the point of entry until it bursts, spattering the face with particles of sticky gum to be picked off piecemeal later. 'Lollipops' are pulled in and out of the mouth and 'Jelly Footballers' first decapitated. 'Space Dust', perhaps the ultimate ket has no rival. The powder is placed on the tongue where it begins to explode while the mouth remains open and the ears and throat buzz and smart.

Neither do kets just function as objects to be eaten, a feature brought out in the following example:

"Michael comes round to see me. He has some Alphabet sweets. He spreads these ABC sweets onto the table and makes words out of them. For some words he does not have the correct letter so he chews off another letter and creates the one he wants. For example, Allison was composed in the following manner:

A - A
L - L
L - was a J turned through a mirror reflection:
I - I
S - was 2 x c placed on top of another, with the lower one in reflection: 5
O - O
N - N

Other letters were also constructed through chewing bits off and combining different bits of the alphabet together.

An E was made from an M with the legs chewed off and then placed on its side: m → E

An R was made with a P and an I, chewed in half and placed into the join beneath the circle: R
An h was made with an 1 and a u, turned upside down: \textit{In}

An E was made with an F plus half an I: \textit{E}

An L was made with a T turned upside down with one of its sides bitten off: \textit{T \rightarrow L}

After playing a while, Michael then literally began to eat his words."

The frequent examination of each other's tongues during the process of eating \textit{kets}, together with the other eating techniques required to consume them, reject the mannered and ordered conventions of adult society. The joy with which a dirty finger probes the mouth to extract a wine gum contrasts strongly with the need for a toothpick to perform a comparable operation at table.

\textit{Kets} therefore are the antithesis of the adult conception of 'real' food. \textit{Kets} reject the series of rituals and symbols surrounding the concept of the meal and are regarded as rubbish by adults. In that they are so despised by the adult world \textit{kets} are prized by children and become their metaphorical meals. Although children will consume sweets of any kind it is \textit{kets} which they will most often purchase. The child's private funds, which are not controlled by adults, are appropriately spent on those sweets symbolic of the child's world and which adults would never purchase. \textit{Kets}, deemed by the adult world as rubbish, are under the child's control.

The marginality of \textit{kets} to the realm of real food is becoming increasingly expressed in their retailing. Sweets can be bought in a variety of commercial outlets - in supermarkets,
slot machines, and specialised sweet shops. These shops are in the centre of towns, in shopping precincts and in other adult spaces; sweets can be popped in the trolley along with the meat and potatoes. Kets, on the other hand, are in peripheral spaces; they can only be purchased in the corner-shop or the local newsagents. These shops are those which children often frequent; they run errands for their parents to purchase forgotten items from shopping expeditions or deliver the newspapers sold by the shop. In large cities this spatial distribution is exceedingly apparent; kets cannot be bought in the centre. They are peripheral to the adult world of food.

In the village kets were relatively easy to purchase but shopping was in any case very localized. One interesting example, however, highlights the relationship between the peripherality of the children's spaces and the location of kets. Near where I lived in the village, which was a small distance from the main shopping street and regarded by many as an almost separate community of four streets, was a working men's club. In the off-licence section of the club, where the children would take bottles back or purchase crisps, kets were also sold.

Kets, therefore, are extremely significant for children and, as in the adult world where food has an important social aspect, kets and the owning of kets are symbols of prestige
for the child. Many kets are sold with additional novelties such as football picture cards or tatoos. These items can be swopped, bartered or sold and used as symbols of friendship or as peace offerings among younger children. The child with the most picture cards or who distributes kets gains a peculiar kind of prestige and his social status is momentarily elevated, just as the provision and sharing of food operates as a social medium of symbolic exchange among adults.

The importance of these metaphoric meals cannot be overstated. Keti times are in between meal-times and the eating of kets begins almost as soon as the adult meal is over, lasting until the structure of adult society again disrupts the eating of kets. Such continual eating of sweets by adults would be classed as a medical condition in our society, for which a cure must be sought.

Kets are bought in quantity and range over a full span of flavours, eaten one after the other with little regard to the mixture of tastes but, as in the adult meals, contrasting flavours and colours are important for a well-balanced and appetising meal. Children will spend much time in deciding whether to purchase a red or a green 'Climpie' and agonise over the choice between a chocolate rifleman or soldier. Such consumer behaviour is paralleled in the adult world by people's preferences for particular brands of goods. As the Opies (1977) point out many kets have been favourites since at least the 1920's. Not surprisingly, given the

1. In 1983, the latest ket is the Easter Egg with a plastic gift in the centre.
coherent and persistent structure of their culture, the children have an immense knowledge of the varieties of *kets* available and are always careful to distinguish between them. 'Chewing gum' is *chut* or *chowy* as opposed to 'Bubble Gum' which is *bubbly*. A lollipop is rarely called a 'lolly', but instead a 'Kojak' or a 'Traffic Light'.

Planning one's meal is a serious business.

*Kets* therefore are children's food, the food over which they have maximum control. By eating *kets* rather than other sweets they force confrontations with the adult order for *kets* have been despised by adults. Getting adults to consume *kets* is the children's delight:

"Jackie brings over some Space Dust. I've never seen it before. It is a sherbert based *ket* and amazing to eat. I am rather wary as she is laughing and tempting me to try it. My fears are well founded - 'Space Dust' crackles and explodes in your mouth and makes your ears ring. Jackie thinks it a great laugh - especially when getting adults to eat it. She tried it on her father and was delighted by the horror and shock he received on eating it."

Some *kets* outwardly resemble inedible objects. I was once brought what appeared to be a bag of shiny pebbles but on eating them - much to the two boys amusement - I discovered them to be sweets. Similar *kets* can be bought as a bag of nuts and bolts.

Getting adults to eat *kets* is part of the children's power and it seems that manufacturers have recognised this disjunction between the eating habits of children and adults. There is a range of confectionery produced as 'joke'
sweets. They appear to be 'Jelly Babies' and 'Jelly Tots'—relatively safe sweets in adult eyes—but they are bitter and foul tasting to eat. Such sweets are easy to dupe an unwary adult for they are not confections which adults particularly condemn.

The esteem which is attached to kets as the children's own food is emphasised by the ridicule and disgust expressed by the children towards adult food, the food over which they have minimal control.

Children are highly articulate in their views on food and school dinners, in particular, come in for great contempt. The authoritarian structure of the school frequently denies any self-expression by the children so it is significant that it is school-dinners which are most abused. 1 Mashed potatoes are called by the children 'mashy arty' or 'shit' when too salty; mushy peas are likened to 'snot' and school rice pudding "looks as if someone has hocked in it", that is, spat into it; semolina resembles 'frogspawn' and there is, of course, the traditional favourite 'spotty dick'. The food which the children are forced to put inside their bodies by adults is metaphorically given the status of the excretions which pass out and the most graphic statement of all goes

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1. For a discussion of this denial of self-expression by the children in the time minimally under their control, see pp.192 - 193.
as follows:

Yellow belly custard, green snot pie,
Mix them up with a dead dog's eye.
Mix it thin, mix it thick,
Swallow it down with a hot cup of sick.¹

But food acts as another point of confrontation within the school for the eating of kets in the classroom is forbidden. It represents the intrusion of external activities into the internal space of the school paralleling the rule against talking in class: the culture of children must be kept at bay.²

As Charlotte Hardman comments children perceive the adult's ' weaknesses and responsibilities in connection with food and drink ' and much time is spent on reducing ' adult order to humorous disorder ' (1974b:6 ). Food is used as weapons by the children and ' white pudding ' and peas are often effectively employed. On birthdays the children pelt one another with flour and eggs and one recipe for a home-produced stink bomb comprises bad eggs and oil. Pickled onion water and washing up liquid is mixed together and poured into a squeezy bottle, making a very effective water pistol. But more vehement than the physical attacks with food are the verbal onslaughts directed by the children against adults and their control of food :

¹. The Opies (1977) cite 4 versions of this rhyme, always traditionally associated with school meals which again indicates the wider context of the culture of childhood.

². See pp. 174 - 213.
Old Mrs. Riley had a fat cow,
She milked it, she milked it
She didn't know how.
She pulled its tail instead of its tit
Poor Mrs. Riley covered in shit. 1

The implied sympathy contained in the last line of this rhyme is not genuine for gales of laughter always accompany the relating of this event.

Some food is not, however, subject to this kind of rejection; this is food which the children themselves have assumed control over. Autumn is the time for scrumping, for stealing *snackers* (swedes), walnuts and apples. Such forbidden fruits are eaten in defiance of adult authority and thought to taste delicious:

"Milt and Linty burst into the youth club with armfuls of enormous 'snackers' (swedes) which they have stolen. They proceed to share them out and they eat them raw. Susan assures me that they taste fine so I have a bite. The children sit and munch their way through the swedes. As I drive away from the club that night the drive is littered with swede tops which crunch under the wheels".

"Paula tells me how she steals Mrs. B's apples and conkers. She hurls bricks up into the tree to get them down. She always wears thick socks and bulky clothes in which to secrete the stolen fruit. Once Mrs. B caught her and so she gave her back the ones in her pockets but she still had some tucked up her sleeves and down her socks."

1. Again c.f. Opies (1977) and Rutherford (1971) for comparable versions of this rhyme.
Such food is ceremonial food for the children, part of their seasonal rituals. Stolen from the adult world, rather than freely given, it is food which the children prize greatly for, through their appropriation of it, they can also control its ingestion. Bonfire night, for example, was always greeted with great enthusiasm by the children and they demanded tatties (potatoes) to roast in the embers:

'Tatties are thrown into the fire and sit in the ashes to cook. Many of the children cannot wait for the potatoes to cook and eat them half raw. Tucker takes charge of the cooking and produces some fine mashed (cooked) potatoes'.

Anyone who has ever eaten a raw swede or a half-cooked/half burnt potato would not extoll its palatable flavour but, for the children, it is like caviar for it is valuable and rare, representing as it does the flaunting of adult conventions.

Other similarly prized bits of 'real' food are the rubbish particles not eaten by adults. The children get scrapings from the fish and chip shop, small pieces of batter left over from the frying process; these are unwanted by the adult world. In his autobiography Jimmy Boyle remembers the delights of this food:

"For instance, one of the chip shops "Greasy Peters" - would sell a penny's worth of scrapings - that was the fine bits of batter and potato from the chips and fish. Lots of us would go in and get these and buy a burnt roll from the bakers and put these scrapings onto the roll."

(1977:49)
And Rose Gamble too recalls the prized delicacy of leftover batter:

'As the lumps of fish bubbled in the deep fat, bits of batter broke off and were fried into the crispy bits of brittle crunch that we called 'cracklin'. Sometimes Mrs. Lea sieved some out for us with her long scoop and wrapped it up in a bit of newspaper, and we had the cheek to put her free salt and vinegar on it.' (1979:92)

If 'real' food is equated with adult order and negatively perceived by the children it is logical therefore that 'non-food' should be positively viewed by them. Kets are seen by the children to be particularly beneficial but other substances are also considered to be worth investigating. The children frequently dare each other to eat the literally, rather than the merely metaphorically, inedible and sawdust, plant leaves and other natural substances are used. A particular favourite is the game called 'Fag-chewing': a cigarette is passed around a group of children with each taking a puff until all the tobacco has gone. The unfortunate person left with the filter is then made to eat it or, at the very least, to chew it. This mode of ingestion is also used as a forfeit or punishment in games and may be used to test the mettle of those who have been temporarily ostracised; through 'chewing the fag' successfully such children may gain readmittance to the group for they have acted with style and demonstrated mastery over their physical bodies.¹ Such

¹See pp.418-419 for comparable examples.
activity is reminiscent of Jimmy Boyle's Glasgow childhood:

' One kid from the next close to me added to the attraction of digging holes as he would swallow all the worms we found. When he was round we would all dig like little Navies and give them to him. All of us would gather round as he would drag it out and make it a big deal before taking the worm in his mouth and chewing it up. He had a very bad burn mark on his face which was a source of ridicule, and he was rejected by most of us until we discovered his appetite for worms. When it got back to his mother she would be on the look out, and catching sight of her son surrounded by us all looking, open-mouthed, while he dropped a big "blood-sucker" into his mouth, she would scream at the top of her voice and come charging downstairs, but by that time we would have made off. " (1977:6)

Tales are often told of those who have successfully eaten the inedible. I was told with all seriousness that one lad had eaten "them pregnant pills" which he had stolen from his mother, an act which earned him considerable kudos: he had acted with great style in putting his masculinity to the test by eating purely female substances. Another related how a boy he knew ate some soap powder and all through the day at school "geet bubbles came out of his mouth". ¹

Such ability to consume metaphoric and real rubbish is integral to the culture of 'doing nothing'. By the very nature of their conceptual marginality to the adult world the children have sought out an alternative system of meanings through which

¹. Such tales are unlikely to be factual but are part of the language of 'doing nothing'; see pp. 266-272 for a discussion of tale-telling.
they can establish their own integrity. Adult order is manipulated so that which adults esteem is made to appear ridiculous; that which adults despise is invested with prestige.

Through taking control over their own bodies adult order is thrown into disarray by the children. Adults continually urge their offspring to eat up their food and lament that they are 'fussy eaters', but children are only pernickety in adult terms. As I have shown children stuff a variety of substances into their mouths which would be abhorred by adults.

The eating of kets represents, then, a metaphoric chewing up of adult order. Food belongs to the adult world and is symbolic of their power over the bodies of children. By disordering and confusing adult conceptual categories the children erect a new boundary to their bodies over which adults have no authority. Douglas (1966) has argued for the powerful potentiality of dirt as a disordering substance. The eating of dirty, decaying kets is condemned by adults and it is this very condemnation which allows the children to assume control over their own orifice, the mouth. By eating that which is ambiguous in adult terms they establish an alternative set of body techniques, a unique bodily style. The American edible toy, described by Ron Goulart, encapsulates these ideas quite succinctly:

'Mattel's is a more complicated product, and more expensive. Their food substance is Gobble-Degoop, and when put into molds and heated in a 110-volt metal heating unit, then cooled on
cooling trays, it turns into candy insects, bugs and worms. Two kinds of accessory packs are available, one of which contains molds for baking edibles resembling Bugs Bunny, elephants, bats, weird eyes and tortoises. The television commercials for Mattel's edible toy shows kids happily eating spiders and little snakes. Apparently Mattel believes young kids with a flair for imitation will always wait until someone buys them Incredible Edibles and not try to act out the commercial with real backyard bugs and insects. Even just eating the various eatable toys isn't too wise, since most of them contain artificial sweeteners of the cyclamate class, plus a variety of preservatives. " (1970:54)

II Smoke Screens

The eating of kets represents the assumption of a particular bodily style through controlling the intake of substances into the body. This action marks the beginning of self control; the social self is realised through controlling an action predictated upon the physical body. Self awareness is gained in spite of adult control through symbolic confrontations.

As the children mature the eating of kets diminishes although children of fifteen and sixteen still buy kets. There is, however, a movement towards the consumption of more conventional sweets, that is those preferred by adults. This change in techniques of the physical body mirrors the social changes such children are undergoing as they move towards adult status.

"Jacky, aged 16, gives me his money and asks me to choose him some kets from the tuck-shop. Deliberately I choose a mixture of ketty sweets and more conventional ones. I give him a 'Kit Kat' chocolate bar, two
jelly caterpillars and a packet of 'Refreshers', sherbert based sweets. He refuses the Refreshers and changes them for wine gums, less esoteric sweets.

This decline in the eating of kets can be understood in relation to the process of social maturation. As the children mature there is a lessening of the restrictions imposed upon them by adults over eating. They have more freedom over the food which can be taken into the body. However, new restrictions over other substances begin to impinge upon them. Tobacco and alcohol become the central focii for confrontations with the adult world for kets have begun to lose their symbolic role. The rituals of rebellion played out through the eating of kets are transposed onto the smoking of cigarettes and onto alcohol.

It is significant that the use of cigarettes and alcohol are restricted in law. Children cannot buy either of these substances until 16 and 18 respectively; they cannot publicly be seen to be ingesting them. Both these substances therefore become privatised, consumed in places and times outside adult order. Until the age of majority- the symbol of adult status- the children cannot assume total control over their bodies in the public world. They must remain socially marginal until they are physically mature, that is until they are old enough.

This private and secret act of ingesting forbidden substances must take place, therefore, in the children's own separate culture and it is through utilising the techniques of the
body and the bodily styles learnt through the eating of kets that these actions can be performed. Cigarettes are smoked and alcohol consumed in terms of a particular cultural style.

It is often suggested that smoking among young people is an 'image' technique; children ape their elders through acquiring their habits. Although in one sense this is born out through the field data - for smoking cigarettes is seen as a necessary part of 'doing nothing' - the manner in which cigarettes are smoked, the places where they are obtained, smoked and extinguished are culturally defined by the children themselves. The culture of cigarettes is of and about their own structured world and is played out through their own bodily styles. They learn about structure through participating in their own culture, rather than passively accepting adult models. The drinking of alcohol, as I show later, is similarly structured by this liminal mode.

Smoke signals as signs

There is a considerable wealth of lore attached to the act of smoking. Firstly, the cigarette is classified by the children in a number of ways. They distinguish between a King Size cigarette and an ordinary sized one; between tipped and untipped cigarettes. The preferred cigarette is a King Size tipped; the children rarely smoke untipped cigarettes.
"Mog tells me that Rocky asked him to give someone a message and that he gave him a King Size just for going into the other room."

Those who are seen smoking untipped cigarettes are often accused of having stolen them, for untipped cigarettes are not prized.

Words for cigarettes are employed according to size. A whole cigarette is either a fag or a tab with the latter being the more common. Tab, Cecil Geeson suggests, derives from a 'once popular brand "Ogdens Tabs" (1969:169).

Tab is used by both adults and children and appears most commonly in the phrase: "Giz a tab" meaning, 'give me a cigarette'. The children, however, further conceptualise the cigarette into discrete parts. A nipper is that which has been 'nipped', cut short and extinguished before all the tobacco has gone. On the other hand, a dump is that which has been dumped and left aside as useless. A nipper is therefore larger than a dump; a dump rarely has much tobacco left in it. One lad informed me that the term seconds is used as a more polite term for dump; seconds should be used when addressing a girl. Adults do not generally use these terms.

Nippers, dumps and seconds are all highly valued. All are second-hand cigarettes, cigarettes which others have finished with. Cigarettes for children, therefore, are a currency of exchange and sharing. Just as a child can ask another
for a suck of a lolly a **nipper** or **dump** can be requested. Frequently used by the children were the following phrases: "Leave us yer nipper " or " Give us yer dump ". Anyone who is smoking will be asked for a **drag** of the **fag** or requested to " leave a couple on " or " couple off " and " second off ". All these are demands for puffs of the cigarette and, as in the eating of **kets**, the separation between own and others bodies is diminished through the communal smoke.

The acts of communality expressed through smoking are paralleled in the drug culture where a ' **joint** ', that which is jointed together, entwined and constructed, is shared round as a communal smoke. The marginality of this act reflects the peripherality of the children in their smoking of ordinary cigarettes and the use of left-overs, the rubbish of other people's smoking, reflects the collection of butt ends by tramps, another group marginal to the social structure.

One further kind of cigarette is identified by the children as a **duck's arsehole**. The description is used for an untipped cigarette which someone else has smoked and made too wet at the end which enters the mouth. It is an insult which comments on the other's inability to smoke and may be linked to one lad's cryptic description of another: " he looked like a monkey with a cigarette up its arse". Adults have no need for a **duck's arsehole** as a descriptive term; they do not share
cigarettes in the manner of children.

The communality of cigarettes as shared commodities is reinforced by their price. The cost of purchasing cigarettes increases their value and cigarettes are only distributed among friends. Giving cigarettes to others is a sign of comradeship for implicit within such largesse is the idea of reciprocal exchange. The most common expression used by the children is "lend us a tab"; with the emphasis laid upon 'lending' rather than 'giving' there is the idea that the cigarette will be returned. The children always have knowledge about whom they have given cigarettes to or received from and reciprocation is important:

(1) "Jackie gave me a cigarette. She said that she owed me one."

(2) "John gave me a cigarette and one to Stephen. Stephen said that John owed him five."

(3) "Grahamy asked me to 'lend him a tab'. I said that I had often given him some and this time I would only lend it. A few days later Grahamy asked me again to lend him a tab. I refused, whereupon he said: 'I'll have to smoke one of my own then.' I held out my hand and he gave me two cigarettes."

Those who do not willingly heed these unwritten rules of exchange are known and indentified.

"K: Who wants a fag?  
GL: Finally...I've seen him with a fag... What's happened. Genchy's fainted.  
A: Where did you get them from?  
K: Nicked them.  
A: Thought you might.  

/..
This mediatative role of cigarettes in social relationships is particularly well illustrated in the following example:

"Julie and Shaz tell me of the lads they met on Saturday. They were both standing outside this shop when a group of lads came out. One of the lads asked if either of them smoked. Julie had replied, "yes" and Sharon had been shocked at her quick response. The lad then said: "Give us a fag then" which Julie had done. Later Julie and Shaz went to Presto's for some coffee and met the lads in there. The lads beckoned them to come and sit in the group. Julie and Shaz are both excited about it and are going to meet them again next Saturday."

Cigarettes, like kets, are therefore bound by rules similar to rules of commensality. Cigarettes, like meals, are only exchanged between friends. David, the outsider to the group recognised the symbolic importance of this kind of gift exchange. He would buy packets of cigarettes and distribute them to others. He did not smoke himself but in this manner purchased friendship with those who did. However, his attempts to participate with style were doomed to failure; the giving and receiving is a cycle of symbolic exchange and, because he did not smoke, David was always a provider and never a receiver. The obligation to repay, the cement of the cycle of exchange, did not have to be fulfilled. David, therefore, only gained temporary and occasional friendships which ran out when his cigarettes were gone. The intricate patterning of this form of gift exchange is generated through the style of 'doing nothing' ; to participate with style, to be

1. See pp. 391-392.
included within the group can be achieved through smoking, and only a handful of the children did not smoke.

Obtaining cigarettes is therefore crucial. Cigarettes are used as a form of currency and to curry favour among their friends children employ many methods for obtaining this legal tender. Often, when I asked one of them to do me a favour, he or she would barter with me and perform it if payment was in kind. I, along with other ambiguous adults, was continually pestered for cigarettes and, if I refused, the children would attempt to bargain with me through offering me money. During 1978 the price for a single cigarette was 3p and on one occasion a boy offered me 5p for a cigarette. When I still refused to give him one or to sell him one he tried to persuade me of the profit I would be making.

The trade in single cigarettes is carried out both among the children and also in two of the local shops:

"Caz tells me that single cigarettes can be bought at T's ....... and P's ........ (two of the local shops). She says that in both shops the price is 3p, but that P's ...... is now trying to undercut T's ...... trade in cigarettes. P ....... started to sell King Size cigarettes for 3p rather than ordinary ones. But P's ...... King Sizes are mild cigarettes, and when T ....... too started to sell King Size for 3p the children went there. T ....... sold stronger cigarettes for 3p."

Those who cannot afford to buy a whole packet of cigarettes can nevertheless still participate in the style through buying singles.
Other ways of obtaining cigarettes is to steal them.
Throughout my fieldwork the children continually warned me that others were stealing my cigarettes, whilst some would attempt to win my favour in other ways:

"Paul and Stephen come to visit me and ask me for a fag. I refuse and they say that Baz comes here and he only comes to get a free fag. They, they said, came because they liked coming. In flattering me the two of them attempted to gain a cigarette."

Another source of cigarettes is the Bingo. Many of the children played Bingo and they won tokens which could be spent in the shop attached to the Bingo Hall. Here they traded the tokens for cigarettes. On one occasion Milt arrived to see me with packets of cigarettes stuffed about his person. He had won 120 cigarettes at Bingo and had only spent £1. This achievement gained him a lot of admiration and he insisted that I take a packet for myself. If all methods of obtaining cigarettes fail intimidation may be used:

"Jackie tells me that Molly used to bully other girls at school. She would demand that they gave her cigarettes and would "bray (hit) you if you didn't give them to her."

A child may threaten to tell another's parents that he or she smokes; silence and secrecy must be bought through the gift of a cigarette.
Where to smoke

The illegitimacy of the act of smoking for the children imbues this activity with a shroud of secrecy. It is this which fosters the systems of exchange and tacit symbolism; through reading the cultural signs the children learn how to smoke and to obtain their cigarettes. Where to perform this illicit activity is similarly culturally defined by the children and such knowledge is stored in their culture.

Of prime importance is that the activity of smoking which is publicly carried out amongst themselves must remain hidden from adult eyes. Safe places for smoking are in the children's private domains:

"Mog came round this evening and was preoccupied. His father had caught him smoking. He said that he would kill him for smoking and said that he was "shitting" himself. He asks me if you can be taken away from your parents if they hit you. Mog, who is 12, said that it wasn't fair because his dad lets Sam and Caz, his elder siblings, smoke. By the end of the evening Mog had fabricated a tale to explain his actions. He was going to say to his father that Daz had given him the fag to hold but that he hadn't actually smoked it."

Although his father must have smelt the smoke it was important that his father did not know, had not seen with his own eyes, that Mog smoked. It would be public knowledge of a private act, the intrusion of the adult world upon the culture of 'doing nothing'. This is exemplified in the
following memories of a 20 year old:

"Benny tells me how when he was younger he used to smoke in secret from the age of 8 onwards. He used to smoke at home and blow the smoke up the chimney so his mother couldn't smell it. He would buy 5 woodbines and some bubbly, which he reckoned would take the smell away from his breath. One day his mother caught him smoking and said that he could smoke in front of her. However, he was embarrassed and whenever his mother gave him a cigarette he would never take a puff. He would let the cigarette burn down without touching it."

Smoking is a symbolic act; it represents a further step in controlling what can be taken inside the body. It is symbolic of the movement of the children towards adult status, and, precisely because it is forbidden for them, secrecy is critical. It is an act of self control which must be carried out in private. Adults must not know or, at least, they must appear not to know:

"Maz tells me that her parents know that she smokes and let her smoke but that usually she does it out of sight."

Smoking is a symbolic screen between the worlds of adults and children and the children resent intrusion by adults into their private affairs.

Places to smoke are therefore well known and their merits often discussed:
"Gench tells me that at school there is a place to smoke called Cancer Corner. It is by the shed and scrawled on the wall is a notice. This reads: "Don't talk-smoke. When you've finished your fag, play the nick". He says that if a teacher comes by you throw your fag behind the shed and pretend you're playing Blocky".

Lung Corner and Cancer Tree are also places for smoking within the school itself. All these places are marginal to the school building, distant from the sphere of adult control. They are suitable, therefore, for anti-structural activity.¹

The illegitimacy of the act makes smoking an interesting topic of conversation. The children sit and talk, telling tales of how they were caught or nearly caught smoking or how they avoided being discovered:

"Stephen tells me that they smoke in the Geography room and keep their fags in the desks there. They tell me that they have both been 'breatherlised' for smoking. The headmaster, they say, has a 'breatherliser', like the one used for alcohol. They both had to blow into the plastic bag but neither of them were caught."

"Bouch and Delly came to tell me that they have been caught smoking by a policeman. He had asked them for the fag and demanded to know where they'd got it. Bouch says: "We wouldn't sprang you (that is tell on you), so we told him that this lad gave it to us." The policeman asked for their name and addresses but they pleaded with him not to tell their parents, as they would get belted. Delly says: "Bouch faked crying" and the policeman said he wouldn't report them."

¹. See pp. 174 - 213.
"Delly asks me to keep his fags for him till Thursday. He wouldn't take them home so his mother couldn't find them. He used to hide them in his coat linings but his mam found out and once he buried them in the garden. Another time he gave them to Bouch to keep but Bouch handed them out to everyone and then threw the rest on the fire."

The risk of incurring parental wrath rarely acts as a deterrent; it merely spurs the children on to more devious solutions to the problem of secrecy.

During the fieldwork period I witnessed the emergence of one of these tales. One Christmas Day I was at home and my family came for the day. In the afternoon two of the boys came to visit. They were obviously embarrassed by my visitors and sat on the floor in the corner. They asked me if it would be alright to smoke. I told them to make up their own minds and one of them began to ask my non-smoking relatives if any would care for a cigarette. They all refused and the two lads sat and smoked alone in the corner. Later this event became a real tale to tell; both of them would relate how stupid they felt when no one took the proffered cigarettes. On one occasion when this tale was told, I asked them why they had felt embarrassed. "Well, said Bouch, "I was only twelve and a half at the time."

1. These tales are stylistically similar to other sets of tales, see pp.266 - 272.
The symbolic confrontation between the culture of children and the adult world involved in the act of smoking is given explicit form in some contexts. The youth club's rules stated that those under the age of 16 were forbidden to smoke in the club. Compliance with this rule was rare. The children would hang out of the window to smoke, arguing that they were smoking outside the club although their feet were inside it; they would borrow another's cigarette and take a couple of puffs behind the Youth Leader's back; they would stand in the road outside the club and smoke whilst looking in at the windows. Such disorderly acts brought the jokers considerable acumen for they deliberately and directly tested the limits and workings of the rule, explicitly challenged adult order.

The prohibition against smoking was also used by the children for their own ends. To tease or offend another child was simple; through merely shouting out that someone was under age when he or she lit up a cigarette meant that the rule had to be enforced. The delight and eagerness with which the children gave each other away over smoking was at the expense of the Youth Leader. Through public declaration of an offence the Youth Leader was forced to apprehend the culprit and would be involved in endless arguments and discussion, complaints of unfairness and favouritism with the prosecuted. It became an uncomfortable battle of wills which the onlookers delighted in.
How to Smoke

The veil of secrecy which screens off the act of smoking from adult eyes has led to the creation of a set of culturally defined techniques of smoking specific to the culture of 'doing nothing'. It is highly developed and is one which contrasts with the use of cigarettes among adults. The eating of kets, that which is frowned upon by the adult world, rejects many of the conventional uses of real food; similarly, cigarettes, which are forbidden for children, are used unconventionally by them. Cigarettes are not merely used for smoking.

Amongst the younger children the mere act of smoking represents a symbolic act of confrontation, an act of self control in the face of adult disapproval. As the activity becomes commonplace the children begin to employ a whole range of smoking techniques which, I suggest, extends this action: through using this they reject the mannered conventions of smoking in the adult world and create their own meaningful symbolic order.

Just as food is not only for eating, cigarettes are more than smoking substances. Cigarettes are used as a source of entertainment and games: whilst sitting about 'doing nothing' the children compete with each other over their ability to smoke, their ability to do things with cigarettes:

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a 'Postman's whistle' involves putting a lighted cigarette into the mouth and sucking the smoke back; another test is to see how long the smoke can be kept inside the mouth. Both of these are tests of physical endurance, demonstrations of bodily style. Less dramatic in their physical effects are the following games with cigarettes: making the cigarette climb the ladder involves manipulating a lighted cigarette between the fingers of the hand making it move between them; Dracula imitations are performed through blowing smoke from each corner of the mouth or smoking two cigarettes at once; lighting a cigarette halfway down and seeing how long it can be smoked before it splits; and blowing smoke rings is an art to be practised.

A variation of Fag-chewing was told to me by one lad as a game called Chew the Fag:

"In Chew the Fag the one who has to chew the butt end - the loser - has to chew it the number of years of his age and one for luck. If he doesn't do it then he has to pass another test. Two lines of children stand facing each other and the loser has to run between them: "The first time they hit you hard once on the back and the second time they pummel you with their fists." This is a very painful punishment for failing to chew the fag. However, as Del remarked: "You get a bad back and have to stay off school".

There are also superstitions associated with smoking. If a cigarette lights on one side alone then the children say that someone is thinking of you. They also rigidly adhere
to the belief that third light brings bad luck, an idea originating from the war: three soldiers lit up cigarettes and the enemy saw the flame; on the first light the enemy noticed it, on the second the enemy took aim and on the third light he fired. Many of the children would refuse the third light and I was told that after two lights with a single match the match must be broken in half with one hand in case anyone should later use the match and inadvertently accrue the bad luck:

"Kirby lit up his cigarette and asks: "Who believes in magic?" Tucker replies: "Me, I don't like the third light.""

Cigarettes are a symbol of the self; smoking, in flagrance of adult disapproval, is an act of self will and its widespread importance in the children's world is symbolised by its inclusion in the following Valentine's rhyme; the cigarette here is used as an image of romantic love:

I wish I were a cigarette,  
All rolled up nice and neat,  
And everytime you took a draw,  
Your lips and mine would meet.

Just as the children ridicule adults through getting them to consume kets, they delight in disrupting the act of smoking among adults. Tiny bangers and 'Stinkeroos' are purchased from the joke shop and inserted into the cigarette. These substances ignite and give off a loud bang or a terrible
smell. I was once caught out by a boy who had put a banger in a cigarette he gave to me:

"A: What was that? What did you put in my fag, Kirby?
G: It's a banger.
K: It was rare wasn't it.
A: (ironically) Terrific.
GL: Remember that one I put in our Stephen's fag. Put it right down. Benson and Hedges, right? Put it halfway down - no lying - even the tip went off. He was blacked out. He was in a bad temper.
K: Stinkeroos too.
A: No, thank you.
A: How do you get them in?
K: Triangular things with gunpowder on the end. You push them down with a matchstick and put tobacco over it and it looks like an ordinary fag.
A: I suppose you knew you'd given it to me.
K: Yes.
GL: He'd have turned it round in his packet (that is, put it upside down to distinguish it from the others)
G: Any more in?
K: I'll get some of those snowflakes - put them in and all the snow comes out.
G: Like tablets.
K: Aye, little tablets."

Another lad remembers using a Stinkeroo:

"Bouch and Stephen tell me how they put a Stinkeroo, which looks like a tiny piece of lead, into Bouch's father's cigarette. His father sat and smoked and "thought someone had pumped ( farted )" because of the smell that was exuded."

The importance of cigarettes for the children is further highlighted by the existence of an equally well defined set of techniques for using matches. Many match games are played by the children whilst sitting smoking and 'doing nothing':
(1) trying to strike a match whilst rubbing it with the foot on a concrete floor.

(2) trying to strike a match by holding the match still and moving the box.

(3) trying to blow out the match before it gets to the end of the red tip.

(4) placing a match on the end of a heated poker and waiting till it explodes.

(5) making a bomb, by putting a lighted match into a full box of matches.

Matches are also made to work as cigarettes:

(1) putting a lighted match into your mouth.

(2) putting two matches in your mouth and lighting them with another.

(3) sucking in the smoke from a lighted match which is "geet strong".

(4) extinguishing a match by putting it in your mouth.

Other games are more formalised as in the following examples:

"Caz shows me a trick with matches. She places three matches in the end of a matchbox and says: "Imagine these are three wires, live, positive and negative." She says: "Now, put the positive and negative together." As I do so she moves the matchbox towards me and shouts "Bang". I jump. She thinks it's "a good laugh." She adds, that she couldn't do it on Jeremy as he "knows all about wires and plugs and that."

"Kirby shows me a match trick. He places one match sticking halfway out of the end of the box. The match at the end wavers up and down. This is the dirty old man in the raincoat."

"To make a match fly across the room: Wrap silver paper from a cigarette packet round the end of a live match and place it in the end of a matchbox. Light another match and hold it to the silver paper. After a while the match with the silver paper shoots across the room."
"How to make a match burn twice. Break the match in half and then (i) strike one half and (ii) light the other half from it. Alternatively, take a match and light it - (the first burning) then touch someone with the lighted match - (the second burning)."

For children, therefore, smoking is a symbolic act. It represents a movement towards controlling the self through controlling what substances enter the body. As with kets it is the symbolism of the act which is most important; through the meanings which they themselves attach to cigarettes as mediums of social exchange, as conflictual symbols, as elements in their games and jokes, the children define who they themselves are. Cigarettes for them are more than an addictive habit; they have been appropriated from the adult world and reinterpreted through the culture of 'doing nothing'. Cigarettes, for the children, are invested with a variety of private social meanings. Stealing them from the adult world children use them as symbols of communication about that world.

III An alcoholic haze

Alcohol, like tobacco, is a substance of the adult world and forbidden by law to children. Only at the end of childhood can they gain legal entrance to adult drinking spaces, the pubs and clubs. At 18, therefore, the body becomes under the control of the self and thus the consumption of alcohol is seen by the children to represent the last hurdle towards complete bodily control. Prior to this moment the consumption
of alcohol, like the eating of kets and smoking of tobacco, take place in their own world, in the secret times and spaces over which they have control, the spaces and times between adult order.

For the younger children the consumption of alcohol is most often talked about rather than done; knowledge of alcohol is gleaned from a variety of sources, from tales told about others, from observation and, if possible, from experience. Being able to talk about drinking mirrors the importance placed upon talking about sex for both acts are symbolic of adult status:

"Dale, aged 12, told me that he got "drunk" last night. He had a double whisky, a brandy and a sherry."

"Macca, aged 15, says he can drink 15 pints now without getting "drunk", he just gets a a bit tipsy."

"Chris and Delly tell me what they drank at one party. Both are 12. Four whiskies, 2 sherries and some beer."

"Mog, aged 12, tells me that he and his friend drank a bottle of whisky between them. Stephen says he doesn't like "the stuff" - only sherry."

"Jim and Sam say that they waited for me for an hour and a half and had "got drunk" whilst they were waiting."

This use of the language of alcohol prefigures the real act of drinking it.¹ None of the above incidents actually took

¹. c.f. prefiguration of the adult world of work through the telling of tales, see p.228.
place but the children use the language with great fluency and ease. It is a form of symbolic appropriation which mirrors the esteem to be gathered from collecting the non-verbal signs of participation in the adult world of alcohol:

"All the children are currently collecting beer mats. To hear them talk about this activity hints at its importance. "My dad's getting me some Harp Lager and a Skol". This is in place of the beer they cannot legally consume." 

"Terry gains a certain amount of kudos. Her mother cleans in a local pub and has got her a lot of beer mats but also a Babychamp pony and a Cherry B sign. She also has one of the cloth, rather than the paper, mats."

"A: Are you collecting beer mats?
K: Yes.
G: Aye
K: (to me) Have you got some?
A: No. How many have you got?
K: Me? 200 or something.
A: 200 different ones?
K: Different ones - I've got 300 swaps - I've got a big drawer full. I keep them in me drawer.
A: Why are you collecting them?
K: It's good fun."

Actual participation in the drinking of alcohol occurs often during the transition from the world of school to the world of work, the movement from the child to the adult world. As they prepare to leave school at sixteen actual participation in the adult world through drinking begins; it prefigures their final incorporation at eighteen, the time when they are old enough.

The retail outlets for alcohol, however, are not as numerous as those for under-age smokers. To buy alcohol a child must
act older than she or he is. They must practise their own futures through bodily style. Knowledge of how to drink and where to do it is stored in the culture of ' doing nothing ', paralleling the cultural techniques of smoking; ' safe ' pubs are known and frequented:

" Jue tells me that she drinks in the pubs in the next village. One of the landlord's sons drinks there too. He is only 17 so, she says, " he can't really say anything about it. " . She is aware that they will " get wrong " for selling alcohol to under-age drinkers. "

" Susan tells me that they were drinking in this pub - her and her sister and some lads. The cops came in so Susan, who is under age, swopped her lager for her sister's coke. Her sister doesn't drink. This she finds rather strange. "

Drinking can take place in public if the children can appear older than their age, i.e. if they have great bodily style. But some of the children adopt the technique of drinking in pubs outside the village for here there is less likelihood of them being recognised:

" We took the children to the ice-rink. Sam and Plewsy came on the bus and, having arrived, Sam said he wanted to go and visit his aunt who lived in the city. He was allowed to go, along with Plewsy, although we knew that he was going drinking. Sam and Plewsy returned to the bus on time. We asked if they had enjoyed their drink. They grinned and replied:" Yes ".

Most drinking under age, however, takes place in private. The children get others to purchase the drink for them and consume it away from public gaze:
"Joanna is telling Jackie of a party. Everyone got drunk on whisky and one boy tried to get off with her. He tried to kiss her but she collapsed in the bath and was sick."

"Paula tells me of a party she had at her Uncle Charlie's. The had beer and 'all sorts' and had raided his drinks cupboard which he had locked. Drinks were spilled all over the white rug so she had to wash it so that they wouldn't know what had gone on."

"Tres tells me of a party they had at Christine's. She had got drunk on "snake bites" (a mixture of cider and beer). She had "stopped over" at Chistine's for she didn't want her mam to know she had been drunk."

Secrecy is important for drinking cannot be done in public:

"Shaz and Mary tell me about how once they had been babysitting. They had bought a bottle of cider which they hid in the garden before going in to baby-sit. When the parents had left they tried to get their cider. The man had locked the back door so they couldn't get into the garden. Shaz had to climb through the window to get the bottle of cider."

In contrast, there is one occasion on which children can publicly perform that which is usually done in private: New Years Eve. As befits its status as a transitional time between the old year and the new a ritual inversion takes place. Adults sanction their offsprings' public consumption of alcohol; the children demand that they have the right to drink. Children can play out the role of first-foot and, for bringing good luck to the house, they are given a drink. Traditionally, the role of first-foot was assigned to a black-haired man but the children now regard this as their right. On the two New Years Eves spent in the field the first-footers
were always children; they drank the proffered drink then quickly left to attempt to first-foot another house and gain more alcohol. Adults recognise their intent and many parents remarked to me of the irony of this event. They could not refuse the children alcohol:

"Mog tells me that last New Year he got so drunk that he had to spend the night asleep in the bin outside."

Throughout my fieldwork the children were continually attempting to get me to give them a drink; I always refused and they would reply that, in that case, they would be our first-foots. Then I could not refuse.

Most of the children, however, did not drink seriously. The tales of alcoholic hazes and drunken scenes are told for their effect; it is learning how to tell these tales which is important:

"A: Did you go to the firework party?
K: Yes- Genchy had a can of beer - he wouldn't give... yes, you did give us a suck didn't you. It went down the wrong pipe all. I gans:' Give us a sip of that ' and I lugged it back and it went down the windpipe. (imitates the effect by coughing and spluttering ).
A: You're too young to drink.
K: I like it.
G: I like it.
K: Cus we was hurrying up you see I tried to get a gob full quick, because I had to go babysitting you see and it went down the windpipe (chokes and splutters). It was nice like - geet strong- strong on the arm - strong arm.
A: Strong Arm beer. "

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Furthermore, the children in general recognise the dangers of excess alcohol. Many of them would refer to some adults as alcoholics; this term was never used as a sign of approval. Rather, it was an abusive term, directed against those whom they felt lacked self-control. Those who can drink and still retain self-control are admired; those who are dependent upon drink are despised. One boy stole a bottle of whisky from his mother and drank the lot; he was found collapsed in the street and taken in by the police. The others were not impressed and he himself was embarrassed about the event. He would not talk about it and seemed to have lost rather than acquired acumen through his actions. As a tale to tell it might have excitement; as a real event it was hardly ever mentioned.

Conclusion: adolescence as a rite of passage

The transition from childhood through adolescence to adulthood is imaged, then, through the transition from consuming kets, to smoking cigarettes and finally to drinking alcohol. The culture of kets is the most systematic through its exploitation of a particular kind of confectionery despised by the adult world. In that kets represent an antithesis to the major food categories in the adult world they are meaningful to children. The culture of cigarettes, on the other hand, represents the appropriation of a substance by children which is forbidden by the adult world, rather than merely despised. Cigarettes, like kets, are invested with a whole range of
alternative meanings symbolic of the culture of 'doing nothing'. It is, however, a semantic system which is not as resonant as the culture of kets. Finally, alcohol too is appropriated by children through real and symbolic actions but their reinterpretation of this adult substance is but poorly articulated.

Represented in the children's use of these three substances is, then, a progressive decline in the children's reinterpretation of elements of the adult world; the older the child becomes the less kets are eaten and the more cigarettes and, then, alcohol become the focus for cultural experimentation. This sequential movement images the transition the children are making to adulthood for the nearer they move towards this new social status the less force the culture of 'doing nothing' has. But, the older the child becomes, the fewer also are the restrictions placed upon the physical body and, as I have argued throughout, it is the physical body which is a symbol of the social body. In this sense, therefore, the culture of 'doing nothing', replete with its images of inversion, transformation, appropriation and conflict becomes semantically redundant as the children begin to participate in the adult world; the complex of structures which it had provided as an alternative and meaningful frame for the children's self-socialization during their childhood and adolescence give way to those of the adult world. As a way of knowing about the world the culture of 'doing nothing' also, therefore, provides the vehicle for the children's passage into it.
The culture of 'doing nothing' is, then, a culture of and for the experience of adolescence, the process of 'growing up' and, as I have shown throughout the thesis, it is both powerful and semantically rich. In conclusion, then, I shall consider the contribution this analysis can make to current debates on socialization for, as Coleman has recently argued, there is an 'urgent need for new theoretical approaches' (1980:1). He suggests that the classical theories, which stem from the disciplines of psychology and sociology, fail to adequately account for much of the empirical evidence derived from research: 'research provides little support for current theories and fails to substantiate what psychoanalysts and sociologists believe' (ibid:178). In reply to Coleman, then, I shall retrace some of the earlier themes to show how anthropology can contribute effectively to this debate through examining the culture of 'doing nothing' as a metaphorical *rite de passage*, as a period of normative communitas, during the socialization process.

Firstly, as Coleman notes, in more recent research there has been 'a preference for viewing adolescence as a transitional process rather than as a stage or a number of stages' (ibid:2). As he suggests 'the individual passes from one state-childhood- to another- maturity, and the issues and problems faced by individuals during this period are predominantly the result of the transitional process' (ibid:2). Transition, as I have shown, is part of the adolescent
experience. It is demonstrated in the lack of discrete definition of the categories 'child', 'adolescent' or 'adult' in contemporary Britain whether in terms of age or social maturity; category status is context specific and subject to variation, fluid rather than fixed. Here, then, is the first reason for seeing adolescence as a period of normative communitas.

Secondly, as Coleman points out, in most classical accounts of adolescence, certain features are picked out as characteristic of this phase in the human life cycle. Significantly, these are comparable with the characteristics of the liminal phase of a rite of passage as defined by Turner (1969). For example, within the psychoanalytic approach four main themes are identified: (i) disengagement from the family and the seeking of love-objects outside that context; (ii) regressive behaviour, a resort to child-like phantasies and emulation of others; (iii) an ambivalence in attitude, one which stresses both freedom and dependence, leading to uncertainty and self doubt; (iv) non-conformity and rebellion in behaviour as a culmination of feelings of separation and loss which are resolved through the peer group.

Sociological theories point to similar features but account for them through reference to social rather than psychological factors: (i) role conflict, for example between son and boyfriend; (ii) role discontinuity which occurs 'where there is no bridge or ordered sequence from one stage to the next.
or when behaviour in the second stage necessitates the unlearning of some or all of what was learnt earlier ' (ibid:8); (iii) role incongruence when the role ascribed by others is not the one which the individual would have chosen' (ibid:9).

Common to both these theories is the idea of 'storm and stress' and the problematic teenage years; the suggestion that the peer group, although crucial, tends to encourage anti-social behaviour. Coleman concludes: 'there is the general feeling that when young people spend a considerable amount of time with individuals of their own age more harm than good is likely to come of it (ibid:10). As he sees it 'there is, as yet, no theoretical approach which embodies as its main tenet the essential normality of the adolescent process' (ibid:11).

But, within anthropology, there is such an approach. According to Turner (1969), normative communitas, characteristic of initiation rites in tribal societies, is 'a time and place of withdrawal from normal modes of social action' which allows for the 'scrutinization of the central values and axioms of the culture in which it occurs' (1969:156). It is a period of relative freedom from structural constraints through the adherence to the new structure of the liminal phase itself, a time when individuals 'confront one another, as it were, integrally and not in compartmentalized fashion as actors of roles' (Turner, 1967,101). It is a period of transition and transformation for 'a society's secular definitions do not allow for the existence of a not-boy-not-
man, which is what a novice in a male puberty rite is (ibid: 95).

And, it is this emphasis upon transformation through transition which is crucial to normative communitas, giving to it its powerful aspect. As Terrence Turner has suggested this power stems from the 'ability (of initiates) to transform relationships and categories that are mutually exclusive' in ordinary society, the ability to link together 'mutually contradictory states' such as those of son and father, boy and man (1977:57). It is here that the ideas of role incongruence, role discontinuity and role conflict can be situated and accounted for as normal, rather than aberrant, forms of behaviour.

The characteristic stress on storm and tempest in the classical accounts of adolescence is a result of this perceived power of contradiction. As Turner shows this is structure's perception of anti-structure: 'communitas as seen from the perspective of structure...is a potentially dangerous but nevertheless vitalizing moment, domain or enclave' (1974:243). Those who look from structure to study adolescence can only see the chaos of communitas rather than its own structured setting wherein the individual 'may learn the total pattern of social relationships involved in his transition and how it changes', that is he may 'learn about social structure in communitas' (ibid:240).

The anthropology of children which I have outlined through
the presentation of my fieldwork incorporates these ideas and, through the adoption of a semiotic and semantic approach to the study of social life, has as its main objective the exploration of the children's point of view, their interpretation of the world. Through intensive and prolonged participant observation it situates itself within anti-structure rather than structure. It works from within the children's cultural experiences rather than remaining distant and aloof from them. It is an approach which allows for a rethinking of the question of socialization in terms of the cultural and social experiences of young people themselves.

For example, the question of role conflicts and discontinuities can be seen as a normal part of the transformatory process involved in 'growing up' whereby children learn, during their adolescence, to be part boy and man, part girl and woman, a process reflected in their attitudes towards the normality of their bodies and their interest in the physiological changes occurring at puberty. As I have shown such changes are classically held to account for the turmoil and stress of adolescence but through exploring the children's bodily style an alternative interpretation can be offered: through transforming external perceptions of their own bodies the children maximise their own internal use of the body as a medium of expression about the social and conceptual transition they are undergoing. That is, through their
culture of 'doing nothing' they socialize one another in a manner which, to the adult world, can be explained and thereby partially neutralized in its power through recourse to biological explanation.

The culture of 'doing nothing' deflects external perception of the children's activities and it is this which allows them considerable freedom of movement between the controlling boundaries which work to contain them. It allows the children to come to know about the adult world before their entry into it. As I have shown the style of 'doing nothing' is highly structured providing for multiple contents within a singular form.

For example, the three case-studies discussed above, all recall features of 'doing nothing' discussed in earlier chapters. To be able to talk about smoking and drinking illustrates a child's facility with language, his or her ability to provide a good linguistic performance. To be able to eat sawdust or smoke a cigarette backwards shows the strength of an individual's bodily style, a confidence in the body which is put to the public test in the context of 'doing nothing'. To be able to smoke within the grounds of the school shows knowledge of the spaces and times between adult order, an intimate knowledge of the culture of children. In performing each of these three activities the children draw on the resources of the culture of 'doing nothing'.
But within all of the children's activities there is an underlying theme which gives unity to the style of 'doing nothing'. 'Doing nothing' is a way of being and doing which emphasises both conformity and individuality, something which, as Geertz has shown, is fundamental to socialization in its broadest terms:

'Becoming human is becoming individual, and we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point and direction to our lives'. (1975:52)

For example, in both the children's verbal and non-verbal activities the tension between individuality and conformity is continually explored. Competitive tale telling and riddling mirror the non-verbal competitions played out by the children through the medium of the body. Permutations performed upon the physical environment reflect those performed on the physical body. Nicknames operate to rigorously define the conceptual boundaries of the group and to instil conformity just as concepts of gender are learnt through the adherence to culturally defined norms of behaviour and appearance. Through a multitude of different kinds of performances in a variety of domains 'doing nothing' allows the children to explore concepts of the 'self' within the protective walls of their own cultural context. The doubt and uncertainty, held to be characteristic of the transitional period of adolescence, is contained by the style of 'doing nothing'.
And the experiences of the children documented in the foregoing chapters are those of 'normal' adolescents. The children did not participate in visible subcultures which Turner (op.cit.) would class as examples of spontaneous or ideological communitas, a hierarchical structuring which reflects, through opposition, the structure of wider society. Instead, the children merely came together and confronted one another through their shared experiences, forming free relationships within the context of a separate culture, the culture of 'doing nothing'.

As Coleman points out the failure of most theories to account for adolescence as a normal, rather than an abnormal, phase is due to the overreliance by psychoanalysts on hospitals as research areas - thereby prejudicing their results - and a failure by sociologists in general to disentangle 'youth' from 'youth subcultures'. He concludes that there has been a tendency 'to confuse radical forces in society with the beliefs of ordinary young people' (1980: 180). And, yet, as I have argued 'youth' or 'adolescence' is a metaphor for change but it is change which is highly structured. The children with whom I worked were, as I have shown, massively conformist and radically conservative in their attitudes and beliefs. In agreement with Coleman, then, 'young people, by and large do not reject adult values in favour of those espoused by the peer group' for, in most cases, 'the peer group values appear to be consistent with those of important adults, rather than in conflict with them' (ibid:180). The
transformatory and manipulatory mode of ' doing nothing ' is, therefore, but an educative process whereby children acquire, through participation, their knowledge of the adult world. As Turner has argued, ' only those who know how to build know how to collapse what has been built ' ( 1974 : 298 ). For the children, then ' doing nothing ' is a form of normative communitas which allows for the working out of a new conformity through a process of creative and meaningful reconstruction, a way of knowing about the future through the restructuring of the present.
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