PLAY, RISK AND CHILDREN'S SOCIALITY IN URBAN VANCOUVER



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I) ABSTRACT

This thesis demonstrates how children challenge the boundaries adults place on them, out of concern for their safety, through child-specific cultural practises. The thesis argues that these boundaries emerge from contemporary changes in the perception of risk to children and have driven the systematic limitation of spaces that children are allowed to experience on their own. Based on data collected among elementary school-age children during twelve months of fieldwork (2008-2009), across multiple sites in the city of Vancouver, Canada, I argue that children creatively adapt to spatial and social limits imposed on them through play, consumption and exchange. Moreover, the research demonstrates that through gathering social knowledge and experimenting with self-presentation and systems of social order, children create a sophisticated peer culture. This incorporates social differentiations and hierarchies that differ from those of adult society however, are interdependent with it. My work thus challenges the position of children as objects and 'anecdotes' in anthropology: considered 'works in progress' and lacking full status as persons in society. Rather, I argue that they should be treated as competent social actors in their own right with their own social meanings and cultural practises.

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1.1) INTRODUCTION

It seems one of life's most ordinary interactions with a child, to play a game where both of the players know they are 'pretending'. To play 'hide and seek' where it's obvious to the adult where the child is hiding, but to play along anyway. To suspend 'real-world' disbelief and all sense of adult 'dignified' behaviour and pantomime sneaking around a creaking house. To find the child who has clearly run away from you to hide, and is giggling under their bed covers. To wonder aloud, 'Is he under the carpet? Under the book case?' as the giggling turns into a torrent of laughter. To throw back the bed covers dramatically as the culprit is revealed, to be tickled mercilessly until all the fun has been had, and both are weeping with laughter.

(Adapted from the author's fieldnotes, Vancouver, 10 November 2008)

Who has not witnessed the joy of a young child's play? The continuity of the game against all the evidence of reality, the keeping up of pretence and just 'playing along'. This is the delight of children, the ability to rescript the world to silently or laughingly draw others into their own play universe, to share a simple game and then as spontaneously as the game began to resume being the sophisticated, urban, 'cool' child, talking about the school day or the latest film or music video they've seen. In this thesis I engage with the micro-level of urban children's lives from their own point of view and present the emerging concerns and contexts of their sociality from a grounded perspective. My aim is to explore the role of commercial material and visual culture in shaping play in children's lives and how it complements and feeds children's social relationships.

This leads to the following research questions. Firstly, how are the spaces that urban children play in affected by societal pressures surrounding risk and danger, and in turn how do these shape the types of play that happens in each space? Secondly, how important is television and television-related consumption to children's play and how does it affect the physical qualities of their play? Thirdly, what use is media knowledge to children socially and personally? Fourthly, how does children's exchange of media-based toys and commercial foods rival adult transactional orders of value and produce peer-group social relations? Lastly, how are children's friendships formed through playful and material exchanges and how do these relate to their negotiations with and obligations to adult society?

RISK, DANGER AND THE SOCIO-SPATIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDHOOD

Most children living in urban environments in Europe and North America are continually seen as in danger by the media, their parents and their educators. Firstly, in the case of the public realm, systems, sayings, urban legends and statistics are all invoked to keep children away from the majority of adults, cast as 'strangers'. They inhabit an island-like existence, contained 'safely' in schools, after-school care and at home; being whisked from one space to the next. Through an ethnography of middle and working class children in Vancouver, my thesis will investigate how children engage with the limits of these spaces. Vancouver offers substantial insights into how

children engage through discourse and action with the places they encounter. It is a city that is clearly adult-orientated and dominated by risk-aversion in both large and small issues. That is to say that there is a moderate, cautious nature to the tone of the community's politics, which values consensus and an appearance of unity in a highly ethnically diverse city. This results in the turning of a blind eye to serious social problems, such as the prevalence of hard drug use and homelessness, which are often explained away with reference to outside forces, such as the mild climate of Vancouver. This is tempered with the individualistic spirit of the litigious nature of North America, where prevention of accidents and risks is seen as the highest priority. Particularly in the case of children's safety, where they are not seen to have individual responsibility for risk because of their age, adults' role in space for children is increasingly cast as primarily that of guardian.

Richard Sennett's (1977) work, based on British and European society, which considers the lived spatial experience of children in public and private space has particularly influenced my analysis. Sennett argues that from 19th century industrialisation onwards, the creation of social importance surrounding the immediate, nuclear family played an important part in separating the private realm from the public. The state aimed to withdraw children from the perceived cruelty of the industrial labour market to protect them and thus created them as an internal, private class of person that was not strong enough to withstand or enjoy the rigours of public life. Children, as a result, became a separate group of people, protected in the private home and differentiated by different clothing and, later, toys that became the symbols of childhood. The maxim

'play is the child's work' became popularised at this time, and liberated children from the responsibility of direct contribution to family subsistence. Replacing children's work with play evolved a new type of institutionalisation for children; not only was regular schooling considered vital for each child, but a new wave of Sunday schools, scouting movements, organised playgrounds and sports groups arose, directed to minimise idleness in the child's life. Thus, play moved from a leisure and reward-oriented activity to one that became the moral equivalent of the adult's labour (Sennett 1977).

In the early 1800s, these ideas led to the creation of spatial experiences unique to children, such as large purpose-built playgrounds designed to exercise and physically challenge the child's body (Frost 2009). In Europe, the kindergarten, whose invention is attributed to the German educator Friedrich Fröbel in 1837, is based on the comparison of the experience of childhood to a (biblical) garden (Kline 1993). Indeed, Fröbel advocated 'free work', games, gardening and other activities for small children and invented a series of building blocks and geometric pattern books for educational play. The kindergarten/garden constructs children as innocent, untarnished and un-fallen and casts the child as a Romantic, Rousseauian 'natural'. In parallel with this spatial enshrinement of children back into their garden, toys, sporting equipment and items like school uniform, connected with the creation of a private or institutionalised childhood began to appear in the mass market. The home became a private sanctuary against the realities of mass production and the focus, most prominently in Victorian

Britain, shifted from children's productive power in the public sphere to that of their consumptive abilities within the home (Ewen 1976).

Thus, the home has become idealised, particularly through the founding and on-going work of child protection movements such as the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children), as a presumed 'safe' space and the primary setting of a child's spatial experience (Slater 1998). Yet, my research also identifies a third category of space that children encounter between the public and private world, namely semi-public space. This is a type of a space that reflects changes in urban, public experiences of space in late modernity. It is firmly controlled and monitored for 'safety' yet takes on the appearance of public space. The category was introduced by a number of urban theorists who consider the condition of the post-modern, American city, but primarily through Mike Davis's (1992) analysis of Los Angeles, another west coast city. Davis presents this category of bounded, 'fortified' space at its extreme, for example exclusive shopping malls and office block atriums which give the appearance of publicness, but in reality exclude the city's underclasses. They do this through armies of CCTV cameras and private security personnel which are harnessed in combination with large tracts of no-man's-land parking spaces which act as a militaristic glacis. That is a space, similar to a moat in a castle, designed to give warning of the enemy's approach. These tactics, and others like the gated community, have been discussed as 'the architecture of fear' (Ellin 1996; Ellin 1997). The semi-public space I examine is not exactly Davis's 'fortified' space in a literal sense, but rather the type of space that is socially controlled to the same levels, through vetting procedures,

gatekeepers and systems of monitoring. Thus, these types of semi-public spaces both extend arguments from urban studies into our social understandings of space, and offer windows into the complexities of urban spatial discourses. The foremost of these discourses surrounding spatial control is for the care and monitoring of children and limitation of the risks they are exposed to. For this reason, most of the spaces children encounter are not truly public, and rather draw on elements of semi-public space which create a childhood that is almost continually institutionalised. Also, most of these spaces are indoors, so children often do not have the opportunity to explore the dangers of the natural or urban environment on their own. Many of children's 'landscapes' are created through their imagination to provide interest and excitement in controlled spaces. Often this imagination takes the form of risky or dangerous play to work against the sterility of their secured environments.

In the modern west, as Ulrich Beck's (1992) sociological account of danger shows, risks are particularly dangerous if unseen, and my study will show how this has led to the prevalence of adults' fears for children in the public realm, especially that of the unknown stranger. Beck's work primarily considers the role of industrial pollution, such as chemical pollutants in the air and in waterways, as being risky, seemingly a malevolent, lurking force that is out of the control of the ordinary person. Within anthropology, this argument has also been developed by the work of the eminent Mary Douglas, whose approach has been highly influential in the construction of my argument. Douglas famously described polluting 'dirt' as 'matter out of place', (1966: 36) which indicates both the importance of understanding the notions of danger and

pollution as being cultural, but also draws attention to their spatial qualities. Dirt is only polluting to the home when it crosses the barrier from outside to in. Douglas's later work with Aaron Wildavsky (1982), similarly to Beck's, expands these concepts of pollution and danger to a societal level. The authors argue that it is the cultural construction of the environment, particularly the natural environment in the case of industrial pollution dangers, that influences the framing of what constitutes a danger. Individuals in general are considered to be emotionally neutral about risks they knowingly take upon themselves; however, it is the unseen and involuntary risk that are considered the most damaging to society as a whole. Douglas and Wildavsky go on to argue that the logical end point of their argument that risk is culturally and selectively constructed, is that different societies with differing social organisations will construct danger in a different fashion from the cohort of known and unknown threats. Thus, the authors argue that in order to further understandings of the anthropology of risk it is vital to consider differing conceptions of risk emerging from a range of societies.

Douglas has been criticised by other anthropologists for her approach of linking pollution, danger and risk together as societal constructions. According to Tom Beidelman (1993), for example, her work is characteristic of 'stodgy Durkheimian conservatism' (166). While my work certainly does not take a structural-functionalist approach, I see a resonance, certainly in spirit, between the idea that society is shaped by socio-spatial ideas on danger and the position that urban western children find themselves in in relation to adults. If one accepts that what we can see in children and

in adults are two forms of a linked society with differing notions of risk, it is worthwhile to examine how these two groups interact on the issue of danger. Douglas herself, in her later work with Michalis Lianos (2000) argues that as risks are objectified by society, say for example in the case of children and adults as 'the stranger', a process of 'dangerization' occurs which recasts society's definitions of deviance and has placed them in the forefront of our collective priorities, overtaking pollution in level of threat. That is to say, as industrial pollution of natural resources was seen as the largest (unseen) threat to society in the 1970s and 80s, a new moral panic has developed surrounding lurking deviancy in the public realm, particularly in the case of 'stranger' danger to children. In other words, deviance has become a 'configuration of social relations' that seems dangerous, but is not necessarily or statistically so (Lianos and Douglas 2000: 263). An example they give, that I also discuss, is the fact that legal gatherings of adolescents in public space, for example in doorways or parks, has been cast as indicative of danger, rather than the social reality of lack of other employment. Thus adults see, as their primary role, the function of threat-avoidance on behalf of their children, both by excluding them from certain spatial realms but also by socialisation into distrust of the public realm particularly. In essence, this teaches them the discourse of dangerization.

Anthropologists have been critical of Beck and Douglas's 'risk' argument that unseen, environmental, problems are social problems, particularly in terms of how Beck allies his work with Anthony Giddens's conceptions of late, reflexive modernity. Pat Caplan's (2000) volume, 'Risk Revisited', that aims to build on Douglas and Wildavsky's earlier

work, in particular demonstrates through its various chapters gathered from throughout the world that some people are more affected than others by risk, and that the global distribution of risk is not evenly applied. For example, in Third World environmental problems attributed to First World industrialisation, risks are often worse for the weakest groups in society. Yet, this seems to clearly correlate with the position of children in society. Clearly, in Third World contexts there are other threats to children, such as malnutrition, that outweigh the risks of the 'stranger'. However, children often occupy a marginal place in society, behind that of adults. Despite the efforts at risk-management on children's behalf by adults, children as active social actors may have to deal with problems of risk on their own, or indeed may choose to play at risky behaviour, to challenge the dominance of this controlling aspect of their lives. In my ethnography I show that for society, the issue of risk- management comes to mean that the responsibility for the 'monitoring' the child is the parents' alone and there is little co-operative parenting within the urban neighbourhood. Thus, the child only seems 'safe' within the home, and in particular in the bedroom, the child's inner sanctum.

Evidence of a child's material presence in the home is often confined to the bedroom, and shared spaces within the home remain overwhelmingly adult. Even when children take action in a shared bedroom to create 'private' space, this is really an attempt to assert spatial control, in the form of a boundary. Truly the children have little privacy, in the western, modern sense of the word; that is to say their socio-cultural entitlement to an inner and outer self is not recognised by (adult) society. The

anthropologist, Deborah Pellow (1996) argues that the functions of boundary-control recognise a social distance between individuals, which is exacerbated by the modern, urban condition of close living. Privacy is not a concrete right, but rather an illusion, accorded to a person through the grace of others in return for the same consideration. Children, have limited status to be awarded or award privacy, because they are seen as extensions of their parents rather than autonomous individuals. Furthermore, because of their desire for this status but the caution of the parent to 'monitor' risk, they are accorded some territory within the home, usually a bedroom, which is subject to invasion or inspection by the parents at any time. Thus, I will show that a number of children's spatial behaviours within the home become semi-covert practises, for example their retreating into a 'nonsense' world of fantasy games, or physically hiding themselves or their 'private' collections of objects away from their parents.

In terms of space, children are often not awarded any recognition for their creativity in dealing with the limitations of the increasing privatisation of family life. Allison James, in her (1993) ethnography of a British school, gives the example of the differences in the social construction of a playground space for children from how the playground is perceived for adults. She explains that the children were particularly enamoured with a drain cover in the middle of the monotonous tarmac of the playground. While adults saw this as insignificant or at the most potentially polluting because of its connection to sewage, the children saw it as a spatial and later social marker that could be a safe 'den' in a game, or be identified as belonging to a particular group of children. Edwin Ardener (1987) has argued that space by its very nature is a physical representation of

the classification and categorisation of the lived experience of a group. By this he means that the way that groups enact and talk about space, or their power to control or change it, sets them apart as performing one or the other social category. For children this means that they can also be seen as active participants in the construction of the category of childhood, if they are awarded recognition for their efforts to control and claim spaces, just as adults are in defining and setting its limits. Because of the transitional nature of childhood as a social category, like many categories of culture, this creates a shared history between adults and children open to interaction and interpretation by both groups. This interpretation is often negative, for example, the 'when I was your age' opening to a conversation about playing outdoors rather than in, or a lack of understanding about the thrills of virtual game-spaces. This absence of connection or consideration of children's own meanings about space is another indicator of their lack of 'full' status as individuals in adult society's eyes. However, for anthropology, where recording a group's own view is paramount, considering these meanings from the children's perspective and what they make of adults' interpretations of them is primary to our understanding of how children make their public realm and how adults interpret the place of the child in the 'adult' public.

Notions of spatial boundary construction and the status of the child as an individual are also key to the way children engage with the public realm. Thus, my ethnography will show how the physical use of spaces on the playground is connected to the social dynamics of the pupils. I will explore how children's social games use space to assert claim to a particular position in the playground hierarchy, and the implication of this

for children's social ordering. However, in greater society, children's subversive use of public space such as shoplifting and lurking on play equipment after hours, is also important in terms of their reaction to the adult order, particularly in terms of challenging their status as society's 'protected and innocent' (and therefore powerless). Children's place in the adult public realm is precarious and often separated out, even if that separation is seen as reification of the 'innocents' from the contaminating influence of adult publics. For example, in children's trails in museums, children are both awarded special privileges to access parts of the museum ahead of adults, but also directed away from others where they may be a polluting disturbance.

Unpopular or unclaimed territories are particularly good sites for re-imagination through 'pretend' play. The difficulty of reconciling rank within the school micro-public and the lack of status in the home, gives rise to behaviours that cross-cut across various spatial realms in the pursuit of exploring and presenting the self. This is further influenced by children's spatial curtailment, and the amount of time they spend in the 'safety' of their bedroom, where solitary 'pretend' play and television-watching dominate. This, it can be argued, gives rise to another casting of television and media-based consumption as part of the 'risky' pollution that Douglas outlines in her body of scholarship. Despite the strong arguments made in play studies, sociology and anthropology for the active, individual nature of a child's television consumption, children's television and television-based fantasy play is treated overwhelmingly with nervous distrust by parents and the print-media alike. Theorists working on television, for example Richard Haynes (1978), Donna Eder (1995), Anne Haas Dyson (1997) and

Gerard Jones (2003), have argued that children do not absorb everything television presents to them, or absorb it in the same way. Yet, parents are worried about long-term effects of media usage, and some researchers are worried that educational goals are subsumed by the growing strength of peer socialities, which are fuelled by children's consumption of television and media-based products. Through an examination of what children use television for, my thesis will question how sets of narrative explanations derived from television are used to test social boundaries, or to position the individual's life challenges, through 'pretending' and other types of play.

The question of audiences and effects is a primary concern in childhood media studies, particularly from a sociological standpoint; see for example David Buckingham (1993, 2000, 2007) and Mairé Messenger-Davies (2001). From the view of parents and wider society, children react to the media according to the 'hypodermic' model of audience effects. That is the hypodermic 'syringe' of the media is like a drug to the audience: it both numbs and stupefies them and they cannot help themselves in being affected by everything they see, particularly in the case of children who appear more vulnerable to media messages. Social psychologists, Albert Bandura *et al.*'s (1963) 'Bobo doll' experiment seemed to conclusively prove that when children were exposed to television images of violent behaviour, they became violent themselves, 'copycats' of what they had seen on the screen. In methodological terms this type of artificial laboratory reality seems questionable as a context in which to understand children's reactions. Moreover, these sorts of experiments are ethically problematic in terms of trauma to children. Yet they do draw attention to the popular concept that is

inextricably linked with childhood behaviour, mimesis or imitation, and the idea that if children are copying something, it is affecting them, often negatively.

Play and Children's Cultures

Helen Schwartzman, in an essay on the anthropology of childhood in the 1976 Annual Review of Anthropology, defines the key problem of anthropological research on children: namely, that the great majority of it has been performed with some other research aim in mind such as childhood socialisation, culture contact, development and so on. Few thorough anthropological examples have been recorded of children's play, except on the basis that they might provide an amusing anecdote to the main ethnography. For example in Bascom's ethnography of the Yoruba, during his fieldwork with the adults in the group, the children invented a game of 'anthropologist' where one would affect Bascom's mannerisms, another would act as 'interpreter' and the third as a slightly baffled 'informant' (Schwartzman 1976). This type of simple socio-dramatic play neatly illustrates one of the primary criticisms of anthropology's general treatment of children. Namely, that they often simply appear as a cameo part in the 'main' ethnography, and that these ethnographies do not provide information on both the text and the context of the play itself (Hardman 1973; Hirschfeld 2002).

However, evolving as the study of children's play might be, this area does have a long intellectual history within anthropology: in Edward Tylor's (1880) work on the geographical distribution of traditional games, he assumed that games, as the most obvious form of play, were a way to explore a society's past. Striving for the 'pure', non-acculturated state of a society, Tylor used adults as participants, enquiring as to the games they played as children and ignoring the versions of these games played by the society's contemporary children. These early projects in childhood anthropology often took the form of a cross-cultural comparison, one of the most influential examples of which is the 'Six Cultures'[1] project of the late 1950s (Whiting 1963). The project drew together the work of a number of well-known field researchers to look at the effect of child-rearing on culture, and emerged out of the strand of thought called the 'culture and personality' school pioneered by Franz Boas's students, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict. The comparative element of the project was unique in that the field data itself had been collected specifically to look at games and play and it was thought that perhaps they could offer important insight into children's socialities and behaviours. What was collected and reported about these groups has often been referred to in studies of play, such as the fact that Guissi children are said not to engage in fantasy play and that Okinawan and New England children are said to engage in high levels of fantasy play (Segoe and Murakami 1961). In fact, this study has been so influential that it was only in the 1990s that anthropologists revisited some of these ethnographies, questioning their methodology, terms, rubric and ultimately results (Goldman 1998).

[1] The six cultures in question are the Nyansongo: A Gusii community in Kenya (Levine and Levine), The Rajputs of Khalapur, India (Minturn and Hitchcock), Taira:An Okinawan Village (Maretzke and Maretzke) The Mixtecans of Juxtlahuaca, Mexico (Romney and Romney), Tarong: An Ilocos Barrier in the Phillipines (Nydegger and Nydegger) and The New Englanders of Orchard Town U.S.A. (Fischer and Fischer).

The methodology of studies like the 'Six Cultures' as well as those reliant on laboratory, survey and developmental psychology data, have become increasingly criticised as fieldwork techniques for working with children. In the main this is because of their tendency to remove games and children from their comfortable and natural social contexts and attempt to examine them 'scientifically' either under laboratory conditions or under the assumed control of variables offered by comparative methods. These methods and other data drawn from evolutionary and primate anthropology during the 1960s, created one of the bedrocks of our understanding of childhood which contemporary anthropology has come to critique: that is, the view that play is 'practise' for adulthood, by which children become Johan Huizinga's *homo ludens* (1938 (1964)) in adulthood. These definitions of play as practise were reinforced from work emerging through social psychology, from Sigmund Freud's (1963) early assumptions that all children wanted to do was 'grow up', and the work of the influential George Mead (1934) who understood play as a practise that allowed the child to later take their place as a full member of society. These assumptions, together with the intellectual connection of children to 'primitives' and primates led to the most common anthropological description of childhood play prior to the 1970s; namely that children were purely mimetic beings, with no creativity. In common parlance, they were little 'monkeys' and 'copycats'.

However, not all anthropologists agreed with this assumption. Margaret Mead (1975) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1922; 1929), to a certain extent, both reflect the view that

it is a potentially flawed position, and one mainly borne of the fact that adults assume that because they spend so much of their time working for and rearing their children, children will naturally reciprocate and spend much of their play time directed at imitating the (noble and selfless) work of the parent. Indeed, even if the intellectual parentage of the imitative theory, of children 'aping' adults as it were, were laid at the door of primate anthropology, theories in this area have also moved far beyond this as an understanding of animal play. For example, recent work by biologists such as Marc Bekoff and Bob Fagen (2009) have created a more nuanced viewpoint on the evolutionary purpose of play which primarily argues that play, rather than practicing the known, is training for the unexpected. The amount of energy in calorific terms spent by all animals on play must be justified in the return of rewards, pleasure being one, but also play must have preparative purpose. In humans, the neurologist and play theorist Stuart Brown argues, this prepares the brain to forge new connections under stressful conditions (Brown and Vaughan 2009).

In terms of the history of anthropology, the investigation of children and 'primitives' and thus 'primitive children' was seen as holding some insight into the difference between modern and pre-modern society. Herbert Spencer (1873), similarly to Tylor, drew attention to what they saw as common between children and 'primitives', namely that there was the ability within each object to become another one. Spencer argued however, that while a child may endow his or her toys with personalities they are aware that this is make-believe. Tylor's similar position saw the child's toys as a tool or crutch to help create a narrative through a working of their familiar objects into

a series of dramatic pictures. Emile Durkheim (1912(2001)) also saw the child's relationship with toys as expressing a need to play imaginatively and socially as so fundamental to their existence that they would imagine the living from the inanimate or the imaginary, meaning that the child's relationship with the physical object is a proxy for a transformed imaginary 'friend' or playmate.

In later studies, such as Mead's 1929 fieldwork in Samoa, Bali and with the Manus, the allusion between the cultural categories of the toy and fetish, the imaginary friend and ghost/ancestor and play and ritual became a clear direction in childhood anthropology (Mead 1932; 1975). Mead's work was one of the first ethnographies to investigate the comparative features of a 'modern' childhood to a 'primitive' one. Mead was particularly concerned with discovering whether animism was present in play universally or the product of environment, and she used her work with the Manus to argue for the case of environment. The main critique of Mead's work by later ethnographers such as Laurence Goldman (1998) have been methodological, despite her influence both as an ethnographer and a forerunner in the study of 'culture and personality', a school also on the receiving end of general criticism for its reliance on Freud. Her work at the time was heavily influenced by the Swiss developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, who in turn was influenced by Lucien Levy-Bruhl's concept of primitive mentality as childish. Mead's method (in the Manus children project 1929 pub.1932) was to analyse the drawings of the children, none of whom had drawn before, in order to show that 'ghosts' that surrounded adult life in Manus society were culturally learned and not simply a product of an extension of child-like imagination.

Mead's work did however, advocate for a distinction between children's culture, stories and play and those of the adult world. Particularly in the case of the Manus, the ghosts that so obsessed the adult Manus and governed their social existence were hardly present in children's conversation or drawing except as incidental (Mead 1932). Mead's work supported the idea that children's culture in general, while seeming to ignore aspects of adult culture, has a high level of affinity with elements of magical and mythical thinking. This, for example, can be seen in the great proportion of modern popular culture for children dedicated to both mythological thinking, such as hero myths, or in the use of guns or magic wands to affect magical transformations during play. The universal determinism that scholars such as Claude Levi-Strauss (1963) saw in the worlds of mythical thinking seems to echo in the magical and fantasy worlds of the child. The potential for an all-encompassing imaginary universe is, for example, something that chimes very well with the world of contemporary childhood and its associated commercial products.

Mead's work, like others interested in childhoods in the 1950s and 60s, was so highly influenced by the theories of childhood psychology, particularly those of Piaget, that his work bears a brief mention here, if only for the fact that it has been absorbed into the popular canon of known 'facts' about children. Piaget was a supporter of the idea of natural 'pretend' play for children as the most indispensible to their emotional equilibrium and intellectual development. He pointed out that children are 'obliged' to function as part of an adult social world which they do not fully comprehend, the rules

of which remain externalised (Piaget 1951). The purpose of play is that the child has a mechanism in which he or she is not forced to adapt their behaviour to society, but rather can mould society to his or herself. Piaget calls this process the 'transformation of reality by assimilation' (Piaget 1951:170). Whilst in principle Piaget seems to advocate for the needfulness of play and to support the idea of 'children's culture', his work is essentially geared to the production of developmental schema and tables which have been heavily criticised by the more anthropologically-based Brian Sutton-Smith for a lack of ability to engage with imitation in his schematics. That is, according to Piaget children develop the skill of animistic thought by age seven, the so-called 'symbolic function' stage, but are constrained by their ability to see the world only from their perspective. To illustrate this point by an experiment, Piaget used photographs of different perspectives of a mountain and asked a child what a doll coming around the side of the mountain would see. The children could only choose their own (head-on) perspective, not that of the doll (Piaget 1951).

Sutton-Smith (1966) argues that Piaget does not accommodate the phenomenon of imitation because of his drive to find alternative functional explanations for play and that within a play-based scenario the children would be able to naturally imagine different perspectives. However, in a response to this criticism Piaget (1966) has argued that his theory of play is entirely based on the transformation and assimilation of reality into schemes of understanding in order for the child to comprehend reality. By implication the mechanism by which this occurs is the imagination. It is through Piaget's work that play became seen as an instrument of social learning both by

psychologists and later by teachers because of children's intensity of engagement with it. It was seen that if children naturally were inclined to dedicate large proportions of their time to play, then to allow them to learn through using playful processes in the classroom would replace rote memory learning with volunteerism and self-productive processes. However, the developmental schema presented by Piaget and the related tests on children have been shown by Margaret Donaldson (1978) for example, to limit children's ability to perform well on them by their own framing. Presenting the same tests in more child-friendly frameworks means that the children record higher scores than by Piaget's method. Geographer Gill Valentine (1997) argues that Piaget also ignores the socio-cultural influences in children's lives which can affect their ability to fulfil schemas of development. Furthermore, recognising children's own competencies and awarding them the status of social actors in their own right, rather than ones simply on the path to becoming something greater is something that Piaget arguably does not acknowledge.

Sociologist William Corsaro (2005) notes that psychology not only dominates research into children's socialities, but also into children's material culture, particularly under the umbrella of determining helpfulness or harmfulness to children's fulfilment of developmental and educational schemata. This leads, Corsaro argues, to a marginalisation of the child's decision making and the parent-child interactions present in children's consumption of material culture. Similar psychologically based studies in the 1980s, for example Mikael Cskikszentmihalyi and Edward Rochberg-Halton's (1981)'s work, characterise consumers as dupes, similar to the 'hypodermic' model of

audience effects, unable to resist the allure of marketer's messages. However psychologist's affinity for laboratory experiments with children, particularly on the issue of consumption, denies the interactions and meanings present in the natural society of their peers. Martin Richards and Paul Light (1986) argue that the understandings that children bring to the laboratory, of social rules and the types of objects used and their position in children's networks will influence the results in a fashion the investigators cannot account for or attribute without context from the children's peer lives. Yet, as Allison James and Alan Prout (1990) point out, terms such as 'development' and 'socialisation' which draw from (developmental) psychology are exceptionally resilient and defy criticism. These terms they argue, turn children into the 'cultural dopes of socialisation theory', rather than allowing scope to explore children as active and independent social beings (1990: 23). This means looking at age-set behaviour alongside other anthropological and sociological categories like for example class, gender, kinship, exchange and so on.

Children's goals, as Lawrence Hirschfeld (2002) argues in his analysis of the state of childhood anthropology as a sub-discipline, are not as Freud and Piaget lead one to believe, to attain certain standards and thus grow up, but rather to be a successful member of children's culture rather than adult's culture. Much like prison culture or deaf culture, the child draws on elements presented by adult society, but adapts and manipulates them to their own purposes. Hirschfeld goes on to argue that children can be seen as 'students' of culture rather than mimics, but that furthermore it is in children that culture comes to be represented, and that it is through the manipulation

of these representations that the child makes sense of the world and his or her place within in. James, in her ethnography of children's sweets in a northern British town (1979) argues that there is a 'creative process of interdependence' between the adult and child's world. Moreover, through a process of 'inverting elements of the adult order, the social world of children generates its own meanings' (83). Her ethnography of 'kets'[2], shows an inversion of adult confectionary, that is 'sedate and natural' with the values indicated by the silly names and hyper-saturated colouring of children's sweets. James argues that in fact, this inversion is part of the appeal to children as the eating of these sweets forces confrontation with adults over the timing and manner of their consumption (1979: 87).

When it comes to investigating children's cultures and their interdependence with the adult world, no area has received more attention in both anthropology and in related disciplines than the concept of 'pretendership' (Goldman 1998). Pretence, for anthropology, is defined in terms of its ability to transform an ordinary object, situation or action into a 'flexible signifier', for example when a cardboard box becomes a fort, or a stick a sword (Goldman 1998: 2). By considering television back-stories for imaginative games, I demonstrate in my thesis that 'pretend' play, is not only about pretence and the exploration of concepts for their own sake. Rather, it has embedded within it complex sets of rules and understandings on the communication between players, of asides out of character and non-verbal communication for the end of games. Goldman's ethnography of Huli children's 'pretend' play (1998)

[2] for adults the term means rubbish, for children, sweets of the cheap bubblegum and marshmallow type.

demonstrates a type of play that when seen with North American children's television play is often interpreted negatively. Yet, importantly as an anthropological case study, is part of a perfectly rich and sustained play life in this group. In their 'pretend' play Huli children move between two modes: a mimetic mode that is partly creative and partly a reproduction of common myths and tales and the mode of *muthoi*, which is essentially a vocal register for poetry and oral history used by adults. Goldman states, following Mikael Bahktin (1934 (1994)),

> Most certainly this is a form of *hetroglossia* – the use of multiple voicings to index social roles – there is no direct Western analogue which precisely captures what is going on here. Though the behaviour of Western school-age children who adopt a sportscaster register while playing football comes close, in Huli the mythological register is by contrast directly overlaid onto dialogue even as it progresses in the first person – e.g. 'I'm doing *x*, and now I'm doing *y*. (1998: 13)

I would argue that children who engage in fantasy play with television toys are doing exactly this. Far from their play being 'repetitive' and 'limited' (Kline 1993), they are overlaying a highly complex narrative world over their fantasy play. This type of play moves beyond simple socio-drama, rather they are absorbing the stylistic devices of a particular television show and incorporating that into their play. In a hypothetical popular culture example this is not a child, who when playing 'Star Trek' says, 'Beam me up Scotty!' but rather a child who using the correct vocal intonation states, 'Captain's Log: Star Date 3240' and proceeds to detail their own creative play scenario. The implication of the Huli case underscores the fact that this type of behaviour is an equally valid and creative form of social play, worthy of attention by anthropologists working in Western contexts.

Children inspire tension in anthropological literature not only in the analysis of their role, in cross-cultural comparisons and methodology, but also because attributing significance to children's culture, by way of this tension, seems to threaten canonical knowledge of adult culture, however illogical this threat may be. This can be demonstrated through the idea that the study of play and childhood is somehow anti-intellectual or inconsequential. It seems that if children are simply human becomings rather than beings, then why should one bother studying them until they are 'complete'? This tension about the place of children in society has led to the majority of literature on which contemporary 'childhood studies' analyses are based being fragmented between disciplines, and not often being purely anthropology or even sociology. It is important to acknowledge the contribution of these other theories to the development of a contemporary anthropology of children's play, while realising their histories and limitations. The dominant powerful concepts of children as 'imitators' and in a process of social 'development' need to be deconstructed as not necessarily anthropological nor useful, particularly as they may not afford the children the independence as social actors that they demonstrate in their contemporary lives.

TELEVISION, TOYS AND CONSUMPTION

Despite these suspicions of imitative behaviour, in contemporary North American society children do use media, and they use considerable amounts of it (ERIN research Inc. 2005). David Buckingham's (1993) work on children and advertising contradicts the application of the 'hypodermic' model of effects to children and shows that they use

sophisticated logic patterns in their explanations of the meanings of TV commercials. Buckingham's work also concludes that the children knew that if they pestered their parents for toys they had seen on television, they might not get them and did not ask for things they knew there was no chance of getting. Furthermore, the children actually found advertisements helpful as they could use them to generate a 'Christmas List', a phenomenon I shall discuss in my thesis. Children's judgements too of the quality of advertisements and the technical aspects of toys led Buckingham to conclude that children were active and discriminating consumers who would interpret and potentially reject the messages they saw on the television. In this way Buckingham concurs with the conclusions reached by Mica Nava and Orson Nava (1990) that children actually consume commercials independently of the products they advertise. This is witnessed by their repetition and adoption of jingles and catchphrases regardless of the product they sell.

The importance of the study of consumption derives from the modern focus on the object as separate from the subject and the primacy in day-to-day life of the massive quantity of objects produced through industrial processes. Moreover, tendencies towards rationalisation and secularisation, also bound up with modernity, mean that an equally great number of social processes are bound up with 'things' (Slater 1997). Marxist views on consumption, which were primarily negative, were challenged in the 1970s and 80s through work that recast consumption as resistance and part of the formation of postmodern identities. From this viewpoint arose the approach to consumption that I take in this thesis, through the work of Daniel Miller (1987; 1995).

He argues that the processes of alienation and production are only one half of the story of objects and that more interesting and important are the processes of appropriation of the mass produced good and its sublimation, following Georg Hegel, into the individual's life-world. That is to say, that we produce logics of praxis and interactive processes that socialise objects into our existence, not in an alienated, hollow way, but in an active, social and emotional one. For children, part of this process of making discriminations about what to like and what to play at from the media can be seen to challenge the assumption made about them that they consume blindly, but also it works against societal notions of children as purely imitative, mimetic beings. In this trope, children are always in the process of 'becoming' adults and therefore gaining powers of discrimination, and are never credited with already possessing them. Yet as I have shown, the history and development of the anthropology of childhood and play is also embedded and intertwined with these assumptions.

A number of theorists in childhood studies have considered in detail the role of television-based toys in children's play lives. Sutton-Smith is perhaps the most influential anthropologist and educationalist working on play and toys, focused on children in Westernised settings. In particular, Sutton-Smith (2001) argues that toys are by their very nature a paradox when it comes to their representation of reality. By this he meant that because materially they are caricatured, miniature or schematic they are signposted for play, for fantasy and fun, for 'pretend'. Unfortunately, Sutton-Smith, notes, adults particularly often do not see this paradox and infer that play with

these objects will function in the sense of what James Frazer (1890(1947)) called sympathetic magic. That is, the child that plays with a toy gun becomes violent, unable to discriminate between play and reality or the child that plays with a 'mommy-to-be' doll that displays a pregnant stomach, becomes pregnant themselves. [3] Sutton-Smith further develops this argument in a later work to particularly address the concerns of parents and society for this notion of cause and effect surrounding television-based toys. These toys, he argues, further stretch society's fears about morality particularly because of a distrust of the commercial. Yet, he argues that the very fact that children enjoy such toys means that they fit into children's social fantasies even though they seem even more un-realistic in their materiality and betray their meanings far less obviously than earlier toys such as guns and dolls.

Other authors have pursued this argument further than Sutton-Smith who leaves his discussion of television there. Ellen Seiter (1993), for example, a film and television studies specialist working in Southern California, takes issue with the negative presentation of television and commercially-based toys to parents. She argues that the reaction against merchandised children's television cartoons in the 1980s was driven by the ACT (Association for Commercial Television) a European-based agency that took legal action to ban the programmes with the FCC (The Federal Communications Commission) in America. One of the strongest arguments against the licensed character shows were because of their 'feminine' appeal, which Seiter sees as being

[3] A more recent example surrounding 'The Breast Milk Baby' doll was reported on Gurgle.com, later syndicated to Yahoo News headlined as 'Educational or Inappropriate? Would you let your daughter breastfeed her doll? (Gurgle.com 2011)

'dopey, contrived and schmaltzy', borrowing narratives from popular women's genres such as soap operas and family melodrama (Seiter 1993: 151). The very formulaic and mass-marketed appeal of these toys means that they, rather than limiting creative play, encourage children to co-operate as they all share an understanding of the narrative and style of the show, or indeed genre. Seiter warns that the negative reactions to these toys have been driven by their competitors (such as the ACT) and represent an elitist snobbery. That is, she argues, agenda setting from those in positions of power over the content of the media, who deem commercial cartoons to not be 'tasteful', to borrow Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) term, children's media.

Sutton-Smith (1976) has also argued, like the historians of childhood and modernity I have discussed earlier, that modern industrial toys direct children towards a bourgeois existence, based on solitary play. In his view the increasing complexity of modern society and its reliance on verbal skills has moved play away from a simple unstructured form towards a more narrative-based one (Sutton-Smith 1976; Singer 1973). The main criticisms of Sutton-Smith's work originate from these two areas. Dan Fleming (1996), a media theorist, for example, argues that toys are part of social development rather than solitarising objects, and further, that toys prepare children to deal with consumerism as an aspect of sociality. He also questions Sutton-Smith's claim that the relationship between adult anxiety over children's toys is a simple contradiction rather than, as he argues, an 'interpenetration' (32). By this Fleming means that if we treat the child's social context (or the adult's) as the origin for the meanings of toys, then all these 'contradictions' that Sutton-Smith points out, for

example adult's interpretation of toy-guns as leading to violent behaviour, are incompatibilities in children's versus adults' meanings. Rather, Fleming seems to indicate, that in anthropological terms, parents' and children's meanings are inter-related and inter-dependent, much as other anthropologists have argued is true for the relationship between the two groups generally. Thus in the case of toys, there are likely to be conflicts about their possession and use, but this is equally true of many interchanges between adults and children's cultures, as I show through ethnographic data in this thesis.

However, other theorists' work has been less positive about the role of television toys in childhood than the tone my thesis takes, constructed as it is through the eyes of my participant children. Somewhat reflective of a general, middle-class, societal view, that is one of distrust and suspicion, Stephen Kline (1993), a psychologist, sees toys as a symbol of consumerism, an embodiment of the distancing of children from the industrial realm. Particularly, he is concerned with the tendency of theories of television to overlook afternoon children's television in favour of the popular imagery surrounding prime-time family shows. He sees the afternoon slot as the key area of television's effect on socialisation for children, arguing that a focus on prime-time live action television distracts us from the overtly commercial voice of children's television, projecting peer-culture and interests into stories told to sell products based thereon. How children's television and thus the associated toys and marketing efforts became part of a peer culture in this view is attributed to the widening of the position the of toy as standing for children's leisure and pleasure, while in contrast the definition of

play has narrowed to simply be the relationship between the child and the toy. The implication of this for Kline is that children's desires for certain toys and the playing of certain sports or games has become unified; that is that they cannot play certain games without the 'correct', that is commercial, apparatus. Unfortunately Kline's work does not pursue the reality of these assumptions in children's lives through field research. In this way, elements such as children's inventiveness, where they might perhaps draw a Pokémon card they desire on a piece of paper as a proxy for the 'real' thing, are not acknowledged.

Like Kline, another psychological study by Cskikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) argues that inherent in the toys and objects in general are goals that are calculated to make the child conform to the toy's intended use. This of course is, rather unfairly, assumed to be the agenda of toy marketers. Perhaps the most balanced critique of this comes, once again, from Sutton-Smith (1976; 1994) who argues that on the one hand, with the continual exposure to repetitive (marketer's) themes in children's television, a child may come to accept only a narrow definition of what a toy 'means' and be unwilling to engage in imaginative play outside of the narrative boundaries set by the television show. On the other hand, however, Sutton-Smith clearly argues that in spite of the prolific influence of marketing and advertising on children, children as players control their toys rather than the other way around. A number of interesting assumptions are embedded in these two points. In the case of the first scenario there is no actual or anecdotal evidence in current research to support the idea that children might stick to the marketer's meaning for a toy, rather

the opposite, even though media consumption literature does argue that children are highly aware of intended meanings. Even with children, particularly girls, who are obsessed with the minutiae of the 'back-story' they are more likely to invent new action stories that are in harmony with this than re-enact one from memory (Almqvist 1994). In the case of the second point, as much as the children invest the toys with 'agency', Fleming (1996) argues that the marketer's and the child's peer group equally are a source of agency for a particular toy. Whilst this is a good point, and one that no doubt plays a role especially in group play with television toys, there is a limited argument, and certainly no evidence, that children are controlled by their toys in any way, or are somehow guided by an unseen hand originating in television studios. As far as I could personally discover in Vancouver, through some informal interviews with animators working for television series for the 'Cartoon Network', a large global children's cable TV station, these individuals were unaware of the context of what they were animating, hardly even knowing whether a show was intended to be for young children or older, boys or girls. The idea that these individuals have 'agency' in this matter seems far-fetched: they have as little idea as the next adult as to what will be popular with children or not.

Most research about children's use of television, but particularly research on the new media, is based on quantitative data, particularly large-scale studies like Sonia Livingstone and Moria Bovill's (2001) edited work. It could be argued that these studies have a universalising tendency that pushes the study of children's media away from children themselves and into the realm of large-scale societal concerns, and they leave

us dissatisfied in terms of actual detail of children's lived experiences. This is something my research tries to address. However, both qualitative and quantitative studies demonstrate that children's media use, particularly in the home, where they spend much of their play time, is a key part of their social lives. This approach to the study of the Internet has been used in a number of anthropological investigations that have looked at the micro-sociological contexts of Internet use. These locations can both limit the Internet's use, such as in schools and business, and frame the type of website an individual will look at. Miller and Slater's (2002) review of Internet usage in Trinidad both gives evidence for the importance of distinguishing private and public viewing of webpages, even in open contexts such as cybercafés, and charts some of the uses of the Internet for secondary school children, particularly those with home-based Internet access.

My thesis will highlight the limitations to children's media use in schools, because of the institutional 'rules' of the school itself. In practice, this means that children are constrained by 'educational' media and limited to certain websites at school (Seiter 2005). In contrast, with the use of the Internet in the home, children have more freedom to choose use media for leisure. The function of media-based play is, as with any type of play, a way to allow children to explore functions of sociality and society in a controlled, 'safe', environment. However, the presence of the Internet in children's homes threatens that control, and can make their (private) play a spectacle for a wider audience. In particular, through public websites, such as YouTube, where they may post videos of themselves for their friends' consumption, not realising or caring they

are exposing themselves to anyone with an Internet connection. Commercial websites connected to their toys such as Webkinz and Littlest Pet Shop, offer some degree of protection. However, Internet-based play also harnesses the social nature of these media. Often this type of play, while spatially isolated because of the children's confinement at home, is intended to be social by the children. In a sense the growing popularity of this type of play, despite the risks it poses, demonstrates the importance for children of social interactions with their peers, and that play itself is best when social.

EXCHANGE, HIERARCHY AND CHILD SOCIALITY

When children do meet face-to-face with their peer group, for example at school, their interactions are also playful. However, children have a number of other modes of interaction that go towards their production of sociality. Trading and gifting, for example, of small commercial toys and food products are a key part of a child's play world and one of the building blocks for children's peer relationships and friendships. Children will often remind each other to 'play properly' and to meet their social responsibilities to not be a 'spoil sport'. Similarly, how trading 'properly' occurs is arguably, for the anthropology of childhood, an important topic. This is because the study of systems of exchange has long been a focus for the discipline of anthropology more generally.

Frederik Barth (1966), is one anthropologist who has attempted to form a theory of social exchange that is useful for all forms of society, particularly accounting for the individual in exchange processes. His 'transactional' view was developed through ethnography initially conducted with Swat Pathan people in Pakistan and later with a group of Norwegian fishermen. Barth argued that the processes of exchanges or social transactions between people led to the creation of their social, kinship, economic and political groups. This view was developed by Bruce Kapferer (1976) in an edited volume where the approach was applied to a number of research situations, both western and non-western. Barth's work at times seems overly economical and creates social actors as operating purely in self-interest and never in that of the group. Moreover, he casts the individual as unconstrained by their societal position in terms of class and hierarchy. However, it is useful as a basis to invite the consideration that traditional societies are not the only ones where gift relations and exchange relations are socially meaningful and go towards the creation of broader social groups. For children, who have no independent economic means, this is certainly demonstrable in their school-yard social relations, where both gifting and other types of exchange create social relations quite deliberately.

For anthropology, the term hierarchy is often taken to mean caste and class relations, in societies where, often through birth-right, some members of society have inherently more privilege, rank and status than others. However, for children's social groups, particularly the playground groups that their exchange and play behaviour supports, are what Morton Fried (1967) defined as an 'egalitarian' society. That is not to say, one

where rank and hierarchy does not exist, but rather one where there are as many positions of power and influence as there are worthy individuals to fill them. Fried further qualifies that this happens only in any given 'age-sex grade', which is certainly true of playground social relations, where there are institutionalised age-grade divisions and definite, but occasionally fluid gender divisions also.

James Woodburn (1982), in his ethnographic study of Hadza and !Kung hunter-gatherer societies argues that at the heart of the egalitarian economy are principles of reciprocity. In anthropology particularly the term 'reciprocity' has come to have special meaning in the study of exchange, particularly connected to a specific form of exchange, that of gifting. However, market exchange, the creation of wealth through the transfer of goods and commodities, is not mutually exclusive with that of gift exchange, as pointed out by Arjun Appadurai (1986) and Igor Kopytoff (1986). Similarly, my study will show where these two forms intersect and occur side by side in children's lives and how they use different forms of exchange to influence their friendships and hierarchical relationships. Much as Woodburn argues, these principles of reciprocity are only within the age-set group, for example in his study, the prime cuts of a killed antelope are required to be shared with the initiated males in a hunting group. However those prime cuts are not required to be shared with the group as a whole, or the families of the groups in such an equal fashion. Woodburn shows that this nominal equality, of initiated males, in this case, is only a starting point for shows of strength, wealth and virility that enhance the prestige of the individuals from within that group and create an informal status ranking within the group. Food exchange, like

in the example of hunting, and as my ethnography will show, is key to cementing one's position within this ranking, or affecting popularity within the group. In traditional societies, despite Levi-Strauss's (1949 (1969)) account of the position of women as part of exchange goods, women's control over access to food, and reproductive capacities linked to nutrition, also invest them with power in the group. However, even in a so-called egalitarian society there is often a lack of equality when it comes to age and gender; often these types of equalities are only 'won' by exceptional individuals (Chowning 1987). Within kinship groups too there are special hierarchical relationships, relating to birth order, for siblings that can compete with companionship relationships which have been argued are constructed and reinforced through sharing and exchange (Paine 1976).

For childhood in westernised, urban settings, little research has been done on the ways in which hierarchy and exchange interact, an area I seek to address my thesis. Howard Chudacoff (1989) argues that age-grade sets in industrialised, particularly European and North American, countries, have become the most important structuring factor in people's lives. Indeed, age-grade sets have become a way to categorise entire populations as 'youth', 'middle-aged' and so on. However, it is my contention that children in the age-grade I examine exchange in a playful fashion, which is different to the style of consumption practised by other age groups. Yet, play is a part of building the children's peer sociality and hierarchy through shared camaraderie and testing of physical prowess, and exchange does the same. However, I will argue that children do not practise these exchanges in isolation and their ability to negotiate access to the

means to consume from adults, like their parents, and to deploy that access into increased status in peer networks, is a driving force of their lives.

The framework that my thesis creates begs a concluding discussion of children's social lives, particularly surrounding the relationship between hierarchy and friendship. For example, it seems that the most popular child, the one with the highest status in the hierarchy, has the most friends. However, as these relationships seem instrumental because of their hierarchical nature, it begs the question of what children's friendships exactly represent. The most recent research that addresses this question, such as Mizuko Ito *et al.'s* (2009) edited volume, argues from multiple standpoints that friendships in peer groups that are organised around school and activity groups are the most influential in children's lives. The modes of social engagement that children use in their lives such as gossip, bullying, and 'jockeying for status' are all part of the way they define different forms of interacting in their own terms namely, 'hanging out, messing around and geeking out' (27). Particularly for teenagers, the authors show, modes of engagement with their peers 'follow' them online and into new media generally, indicating it is the social forces in the peer group that are the most influential as they are reproduced and amplified in these new arenas.

However, sociological and anthropological research alike has argued that the family, or kinship group, are the primary forces of socialisation for children and structuring force in their adoption of values and roles. Influence from peer groups, educators and so on

are only considered secondary factors in this equation. This aligns with a general trend in anthropology towards the prioritisation of the study of kinship over that of friendship. However, my thesis seeks to consider how these categories interrelate for children and how they understand them in practice in their lives, particularly as each group of kin and peers competes for the child's loyalties. My work aims to demonstrate that structural categories for children's friendships have not been fully defined, nor indeed has the operation of 'making friends' itself been fully explored theoretically. Children's priorities are pulled between their desire to mobilise themselves hierarchically within their peer group and their negotiation of their position within their family and home. My thesis shows how these two competing value systems are managed by children in order to obtain maximum benefit from both. In this I chart both failures and successes as my participant children negotiate their social world.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

The thesis is divided into three sections. In the first part of the thesis I outline the theoretical and methodological issues that my research raises and detail how previous work has informed my approach to fieldwork and guided my data analysis. The second section deals with the presentation of the data and its analysis as follows: in the first chapter of the second section I discuss children's actions surrounding space across the three spatial categories I define in the introduction, public, semi-public and private, through use of theory and ethnographic material. I concentrate on the notions of

privacy, territoriality and spatial autonomy for the children across the three types of space, considering the definition of these classifications in anthropological terms. After I outline the constraints, freedoms and risks of the real lived-in spaces of the children's lives, my particular focus in this chapter is in understanding what spaces children play in and how space affects the characteristics of their play. Through this, the chapter aims to provide a context for the social and material relationships that make up my participant children's lives and to detail how these spatialities influence their productions of social relationships.

The second chapter of the second section considers how children use television and its related material culture and contrasts these with public discourses surrounding its consumption. While much of these discourses focus on passivity when watching television and see children's consumption as negative consumerism, I demonstrate how children often consume television and its related toys in an active fashion. While toys are of course important to children, access to them is strictly monitored by parents acting as gatekeepers, who have their own agendas and social pressures that surround their children's consumption. Detailing particular forms of imaginative 'pretend' play that children use television for, I will thus argue that active use of television as a tool for play is what is most important about the medium for children, and can be consumed independently of toys and other commercial products.

The third chapter of the second section considers active play in more detail by arguing that children's creative modifications of commercial visual and material culture are part of a process of exploration surrounding how they see themselves and how others see them. I will consider this by demonstrating how children consume trading cards and television to produce collections and drawings. Secondly, I will show how children produce videos and online social worlds for the consumption of others. Thus I argue that creative acts consumption and production are part of self-legitimation and self-presentation. This shows that children's play works as part of personal exploration, which I shall link to social exploration in the following chapter.

The fourth chapter of the second section considers children's place in their peer social hierarchies and how they are reinforced through the material relationships of trading and exchange. I address the public worlds of the children and the relationship between exchange and play as social processes. I explore the mechanisms and negotiations of exchange between peers and the facilitation of consumption by parents with its commensurate tensions in detail. This goes to qualify my assertion that because of its social nature, symbolic and competitive exchange is part of children's play lives. I will consider both the values surrounding what is traded and what forms their exchange takes, but also how the children negotiate for their 'trade goods' in the first place, through their parents. This show the relationship between market and non-market systems of exchange and their schemas of value in the child's social world, and how these allow children to produce social relationships. Through exchange, in conjunction

with forms of co-operative play, such as ‘pretending’ and game playing, I argue the children form their peer networks and make their friends.

In the final chapter of the second section, I analyse this friendship forming in more detail through Nigel Rapport’s (1999) notion that friendships are made through proximate objects and related actions. For children who create shared actions through toys and game playing, this appears most apt. The thrusting together nature of age-set and age-grade relations present in schools does not preclude friendship, but the immediate politics of the school yard is its most apparent feature, and it seems this should be distinguished from ‘emotional’ friendship. Therefore I also consider how children’s friendships form out of the school context, and in other ones, and use this to reflect on the category of friendship as it has been constructed in the North American, urban context. Through this I discuss where the boundaries lie for children in their wider categories of sociality, particularly considering the separation of kinship and friendship. Particularly, when one considers complicated kin/friend definitions, I argue that it is in what the child considers the ‘making’ of friendship, and the choice implied therein, that separate these categories for them.

The third section concludes the thesis by summarising the arguments presented and detailing their relationship to the categories of literature that I outline in the introduction. Lastly, I discuss the directions for future research that have emerged

from this research. I also offer a glossary with short descriptions of the various commercial products that are mentioned in the thesis for informational purposes.

1.2) FIELDWORK AND METHOD

INTRODUCTION

My approach to fieldwork practice with children has drawn on cross-disciplinary material concerned with 'childhood studies'. However, scholars working in this field vary in their choices of methods according to disciplinary background and conventions. Ethnography is commonly used by anthropologists, sociologists and human geographers working with children. However, factors such as time spent in the field and methods of recording vary by discipline. With this in mind, even though my work can be seen as concerned with 'childhood', I have tried to remain true to the Malinowskian tradition of conducting fieldwork, both in terms of time spent in the field and representation of participants as social actors (Weiner 1994). I see this as having two clear advantages over the structural-functionalist school of Radcliffe-Brown or Boasian cultural anthropology. Firstly, Radcliffe-Brown's theory, in the broadest, simplest terms is one of consensus, demonstrating how individual's social actions contribute towards the smooth function of an overarching system (Atkinson 2007). It is my opinion, like Malinowski, that this type of approach to studying childhoods presents the children as puppets on a string with no independent recourse to challenge their socialisation. Secondly, while the Boasian tradition aims to document every detail about the social and material life of a culture, which is of course very useful, there is a tendency within this school of thought to use elderly adults as informants and retrieve oral histories of a culture (Keesing and Strathern 1998). This method has been used in childhood studies in the past, asking adults about their

childhood experiences. Yet, especially in the fast moving pace of technological change in urban cultures, this method has a tendency towards producing a static view of a culture that is portrayed in a historical sense. Thus, Malinowski's approach to unveiling conflicts in society and the long, unbroken fieldwork period that his method advocates, separates my research from that of other 'childhood studies' contributors within other social sciences and places it firmly into the traditions of anthropology.

The model for ethnographic fieldwork with Western children has been largely determined through research in educational settings. In terms of research informing how I approach my research questions, the work of interpretivist sociological scholars, such as Marjorie Goodwin (1990) and Eder (1995) who both focused on peer group-talk in United States high schools as a method of investigating children's socialities, has been particularly influential. Barrie Thorne (1993; 2005), another sociologist, with a strong interest in gender, who works in schools on the west coast of the United States, has developed the concept of playground 'borderwork': the divisions between social and spatial categories that children create in their peer lives. Similarly, anthropologist James's Hilltop School ethnography (1993) in a British primary school has also been important as a model of how to view children's playground social relations in a spatial context. Dyson (1997), working in San Francisco and other educationally concerned observers such as Seiter (2005), also working in California, often prefer to focus on classroom time, and specifically children's school work as a window into the influences from peer group popular culture. These wider frameworks of analysis have undoubtedly influenced my own even if only as comparative studies. Children's folklorists, most notably Iona and Peter Opie (1967), in Britain, have been followed by

other collectors of children's school-yard stories and rhymes such as Donna Lanclos, in Belfast (2003) and Gary Fine (1980 (1995)), in the United States. Their detailed recording of children's voices has been an important concern in the methodology surrounding the taking of fieldnotes and also my direct representation of the children's speech through quoted text in the final thesis.

One of the key differentiations of the anthropological approach from the sociological one is that many sociologists working with children have stressed the interview as their core method and use participant or non-participant observation (observation schemes) to supplement that data. There also tends to be a significant difference in stance to the periodicity of the research, both in terms of time spent with each group of children, and the total time spent on a project. A typical sociological research design would be two interviewer-observers working in tandem with one class of children at a time, twice a week for three hours for ten to twelve weeks (Kelle 2000). My work, in contrast, mainly ran in parallel over the entire fieldwork period[4] , meaning that I saw each group of children personally and regularly over nearly a year of their lives. Although, like many other researchers working in complex urban settings, I was limited in that I did not see 'all' of their lives, only sequential 'snapshots' of their behaviour in various field sites. The usefulness of long-term participant observation with children is that it can reveal coherence to younger children's thought and decision-making processes which they often do not reveal when being questioned, as unlike adults, they are not pre-disposed to long or logical, by adult standards, answers. However,

[4] Collected over the period of March 2008 until August 2009, with the bulk of the research being conducted in a single ten-month stretch starting in September 2008.

using this method demonstrates the potential for children not to simply be anecdotes in anthropology, and their ability to reveal their own life-worlds through observing their actions. This is made especially clear, in the following example when one of my key participants, Zuleika[5], (8), told me the first time I met her and her mother that she does 'skipping' every break and lunch time where they sing a rhyme something like: 'strawberry shortcake, blueberry pie, who will be my lucky guy…a, b, c, d, e….' Wherever the person lands up with their skipping they must choose a boy's name that they know starting with that letter. I accepted this on face value at the time, and had I been relying on interview as a methodology I would have faithfully reported it. However, it became obvious, during my many weeks of playground observation at Zuleika's school that she did not, ever, play this game, nor did any of the other children. What Zuleika's motivations were for telling this story, I never re-visited, as I did not want her to think I was accusing her of lying. Very possibly, this reveals a key factor of the relationship between adult researchers and children, that of power differences, where children tend to see adult researchers as a 'teacher in disguise' (Bell and Osborne 1981). However, it also demonstrates the strength of long-term participant observation in building a relationship of trust with young participants in order to give the most valid picture possible of their lives, without needing to be confrontational over obfuscations such as the example above.

This is reflected in my methodology, for, as far as possible in this thesis, I have taken what James (2007) and Daniel Cook (2004) frame as a child-centred approach to the

[5] All child participants' names have been changed to pseudonyms, in line with CUREC ethical guidelines.

writing up of the research. However, this is not to say that I do not acknowledge the importance of adults in shaping and contributing to children's worlds, indeed I intend to discuss adult-child relations in detail, but from the child's viewpoint. In some cases this has been quite challenging, especially in the world of children's consumption, where it is neither children's nor adults' values that influence decision-making, but rather is an interdependent and often conflict-ridden negotiation between the two: where it is easy to lose the child's voice to that of the dominating reasoning of their parents. I have analysed the material as an anthropologist, however, standing apart from the children and away from the field, and clearly using comparative anthropological literature and concepts that themselves were sometimes generated from adult societies. However, it is my intention to present the data from the children in an honest light, no matter how brief their comments sometimes are, and to allow my analysis of it to stand clear in the text. I am sure that as research in this field continues there will be different and competing theories that better reflect the child's-eye-view of the world, and that children's collaboration with researchers will become far more sophisticated. However, I have endeavoured to learn from the methodological lessons of the pioneers in this field and hope that this research is seen favourably in its intention to be sensitive and empowering to the voices of the children who were part of it.

VANCOUVER AS A FIELD SITE

I initially chose to base my research in Vancouver because I was particularly interested in cross-pacific flows in global consumption and Vancouver is a cosmopolitan city with a large number of East Asian migrants. [6] Furthermore, Statistics Canada's 2007 census data showed that half of the 2.1 million person population turns over every five years, demonstrating the clearly mobile and transient nature of the city. On simple visual survey of shops and playgrounds it was clear that Vancouver's children were awash in Asian toys, comic books, anime DVDs and games of all kinds and thus Vancouver seemed an ideal place to study the global consumption of East Asian children's media and toys. I prepared for fieldwork aiming to work with members of the Canadian *Nikkei,* the Japanese diasporic community, on the basis that the presence of a significant, culturally powerful, migrant community would perhaps have contributed to the availability and popularity of children's products, such as Pokémon, that had taken the world by storm. While the notion of Japanese diaspora, particularly on the western coast of the United States and Canada, has been documented and examined in great detail by Ken Adachi (1976) and Nobuko Adachi (2006), work has mainly addressed historic inequalities faced by these communities and their redress in 1988 by the Canadian government. Work on the contemporary community is sorely underdeveloped.

[6] Vancouver has a visible minority population of 875 000 approximately 380 000 of whom are Chinese, with other notable ethnic populations of Koreans (45 000), Indians (90 000), Japanese (25 000) and Filipino (80 000). Many of the prominent members of the Chinese community are Cantonese speaking dating from a 1980s immigration wave anticipating the transfer of Hong Kong to China. Furthermore, there are approximately 800 000 households in Vancouver, 230 000 of which have children (Statistics Canada 2007).

The more *Nikkei* I met, the more it became clear that there was not really a discrete 'diasporic' boundary to this community which had been given a second wind by a wave of Japanese migrants in the 1970s. The new members were keen to fully integrate their children and families with the existing community, and often decided to remain in Canada. However, many *Nikkei* still maintained connections to Japan in spite of what they felt was a stigma from their family members back home for leaving permanently. This decision was particularly influenced by what is seen as the difficulty for children to re-enter the Japanese schooling system, where they may be considered developmentally delayed on their return, a phenomena discussed by Roger Goodman (2003). Like many anthropologists before me, once in the throes of fieldwork with this community, I soon found that my initial research questions surrounding the connections between Japanese children's products and Japan did not accurately reflect the reality of the situation. Firstly, I soon became aware that it was not really the presence of the *Nikkei* or their connections to Japan through trade and consumption that caused the popularity of Japanese toys. Secondly, the children I began to work with revealed that they did not really care whether something was Japanese or not before deciding to like it. This moved against McGray's (2002) theory of 'cool' Japan, which has been a highly influential contemporary discussion in Japanese studies. That is to say, that Japan is seen to globally hold so-called 'soft power', cultural capital and influence, which promotes an intense interest in its popular culture, seen as able to symbolically compete with established North American products as a result of its 'Japaneseness'. As a consequence of these early results, I decided to broaden my research to work with children from a wider range of backgrounds, to hear their voices, and record their actions in the places that they thought important, and so set

out to discover the real social forces behind television and toy consumption in Vancouver.

The intersections between knowledge, power, commodities, exchange and economies have been of growing importance to anthropology in the last twenty-five years. Cities particularly offer a wealth of opportunities to consider how these processes come together, and so have become increasingly common field sites for anthropology (Low 1996). However, historically anthropologists have largely neglected to conduct ethnographies in cities. Firstly, traditional ethnography has most commonly focused on small-scale communities that were studied holistically. By contrast, urban field sites are not easily bound, read and contextualised. Secondly, the specificity of cities is presumed to have some bearing on the type of research conducted there. For example, British cities, like London, are said to be good places to study class, while, South African ones, like Johannesburg, are linked with informal dwelling.

In order to question established anthropological assumptions about the city as an ethnographic site, I decided to invite and encourage the children themselves to suggest possible sites of investigation to me. This approach draws on the collaborative approaches advocated by contemporary childhood scholars, but furthermore allows the research to hear the request for the child to be seen as an individual, as well as a citizen of the socio-spatial category labelled as 'childhood' (James 2007). My fieldwork thus occurs in various sites in Vancouver. Each site represents inter-connecting levels

of scale, while the data collected and the number of participants at each site reflects various levels of intimacy. My research is thereby an extension of the concept of multi-sited research as discussed by George Marcus (1995). Marcus argues that research over multiple sites engages with the complexities of postmodernity by acknowledging that, unlike in traditional ethnography, the urban life-world is not completely shaped by an over-arching world 'system'. This implies that circulating sets of cultural meanings, objects and identities are only partly intertwined with the institutions of media, capitalist market exchange, state and so on that create the 'system'. In many senses, the life-world of the child is revealed through how it cross-cuts with these institutions, not only in defining how they inhabit the category of 'childhood', but in how the cultural logics of contemporary childhoods are interlocked with them.

However, unlike Marcus's approach, my research does not 'follow the thread' (97) of the system, and I condense the method from an inter-continental scale to a technique with which to frame engagement with a large, contemporary city over multiple sites. Indeed Marcus himself has argued in his (1998) work, that this approach may reveal the city as a network[7] of temporal nodes. However, the more multi-sited and noded research becomes, the less the ethnographer is able to achieve 'thick description' at each site. This is furthermore compounded by the fact that when a network is seen as a whole, the detail at each node is usually lost to a flat description that can become a quasi-mathematical, almost positivistic, detailing of connections. However, it can also not be forgotten that each 'node' is part of a greater network, and 'context' is far more

[7] This draws on the 'network society' approach detailed by Castells (1996).

fluid than in single-sited approaches. In this light, Debras Wittel (2000) argues that in order to overcome this 'flatness' to research a city-network effectively, the ethnographer must spatially delineate their sites. He argues:

> Networks are somehow infinite, they are open structures and highly dynamic. By drawing boundaries, the ethnographer actively and consciously participates in the construction of spaces. (Wittel 2000: 12)

This means that, like James Clifford (1997) argues cultures are 'constructed' by the ethnographer, the site is likewise constructed, as the ethnographer selects and frames which sites to include and where the boundaries of those sites lie. Thus, my approach has been to be distinctly spatial in how I approach the field sites in conjunction with my participants, considering them both as 'systemic' spatial typologies that influence how they are inhabited, and as physical places, connected by individuals' life experiences of Vancouver.

However, what life 'in Vancouver' means connects to the second difficulty of city ethnographies. That is to question how the field site is positioned in terms of questions of modernity and postmodernity and how that impacts the theoretical approach to conducting ethnography. While many ethnographies choose a phenomenological or categorical approach to fieldwork, the nature of my initial change in fieldwork topic, as I have discussed above, leant itself to draw on Grounded Theory strategies to engage with the field (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Emerson *et al.*, 1995). The Grounded Theory approach particularly advocates not entering the field with pre-constructed hypotheses, but rather through inductive and deductive logic developing theoretical

analysis that explains participants' actions. Thus, the method does not generate description, but relies on a body of qualitative data that is coded through open and axial coding processes to systematically look for 'causal conditions,' 'phenomena/context, intervening conditions, action strategies' and 'consequences' (Kelle 2005: 49). This approach, as a micro-ethnographic method, overcomes some of the 'flatness' that occurs with systems-based approaches, like Marcus's, and, because of its focus on revealing participants' strategies, highlights how they shape and are shaped by these systems.

This approach has been useful in other non-traditional ethnographies engaging with city sites. For example, Meaghan Morris (1999) argues in her research in shopping centres, that occasionally it is not what is 'unique' or most visible in a field site that is useful for the researcher, but what is 'ordinary' and typical. For those taking a thematic or categorical approach to research, narrowing the field site down by choosing a site where one hopes to observe the themes or categories one is interested in, is in many ways about 'discovering' the unique, when the results are anything but a discovery. Postmodern ethnographies, such as Morris's or John Dorst's (1989) well-known ethnography of a 'typical' suburban town, Chadds Ford in Pennsylvania, construct the field site therefore, as a Site. That is to say, a place that offers much in common with other places, in the way that those that live there experience them. As I have discussed in the Introduction, North American approaches to controlling risk, mean that children's (limited) experience of the city have much in common with the notion of city as Site. This has been discussed particularly in the case of spatial

typologies, because the confinement of children to various 'nodes' means that their experience of the city is not the 'infinite, open' network, but a series of spatially static, but temporally dynamic experiences (Wittel, 2000). Thus, the multiple sited approach that I take means that children's experiences of their Site let us see these individuals both as symptoms of (post) modernity, but also active agents in its construction.

VANCOUVER AS A CITY

Vancouver (see Figure 1-2) was first settled by Europeans in 1860 following the Fraser and Cariboo Gold rushes and the city's industry was primarily based on logging and fishing. Today Vancouver is the largest metropolitan area in Western Canada, and third largest nationally. Vancouver's port is the fourth-largest in North America, and is a crucial receiving point for many electronic goods originating in Asia for both the US and Canadian markets. The largest industry sector remains forestry, followed by tourism and film production and Vancouver is North America's third-largest film production centre after Los Angeles and New York. The history of the city affects present-day social-economic factors in the various areas. This is because of two factors: firstly, contemporary Vancouver is still physically shaped by historic ethnic enclaves and exclusion laws that until 1947 imposed restrictive



Figure 1: Map of Vancouver in the context of North America (removed - copyright restrictions)

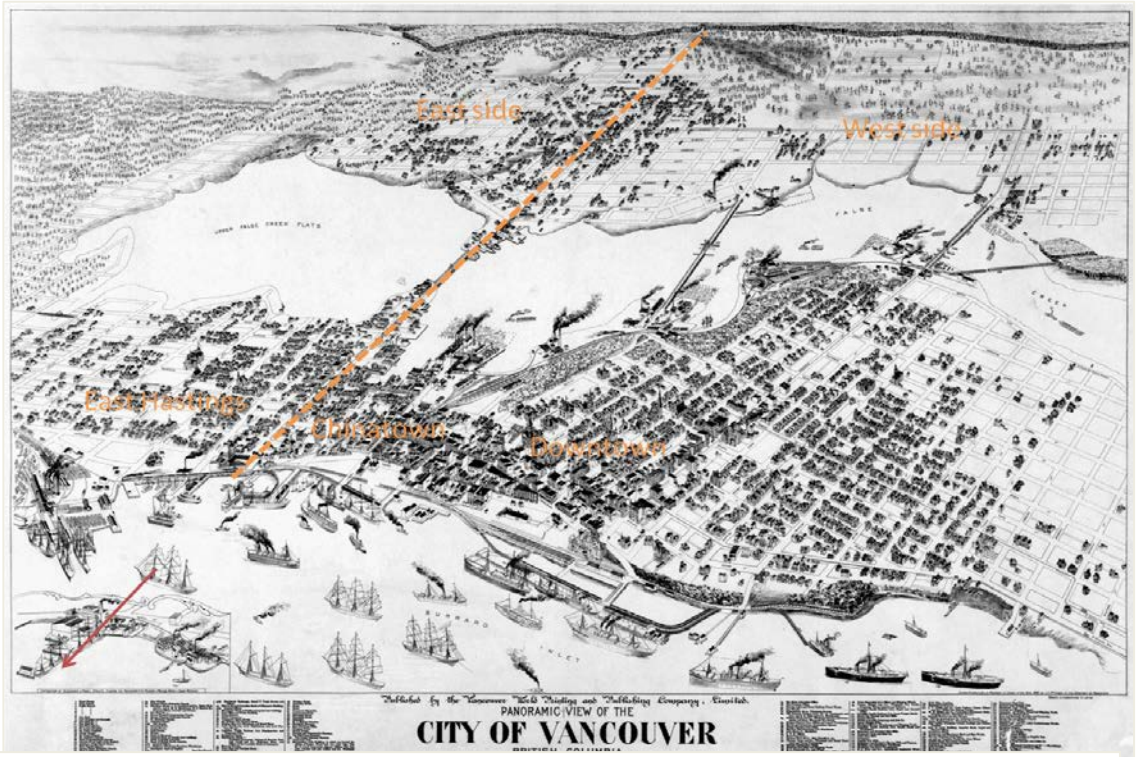


Figure 2: City of Vancouver 1898 annotated with key (contemporary) areas)

immigration policies on particularly the Asian community, as well as a high head-tax which prohibited the greater majority of immigrants bringing their families to Canada. This means that enclaves created during this period, such as Chinatown, still have a presence in the city today. Pierre Trudeau, the former Canadian prime-minister, was a proponent of multiculturalism policies in the 1980s, which contributed to maintaining these enclaves by giving tax relief to those who stayed in historic areas. But these primarily business communities struggle to maintain themselves against drug-related rising inner-city crime. Historic Japantown and Little Italy, which neighboured Chinatown in downtown Vancouver, have all but fallen to the pressures of the homeless, drug and crime problems of the lower eastside area, known as East Hastings. Most of the east of Vancouver retains working-class and immigrant demographic, with community and Native housing projects, which are part of state-sponsored welfare, all in this part of the city. While the eastern part of the city represents the areas with the most deprivation, the western part of the city is characterised by established and wealthy neighbourhoods.

This is also reflected in the street naming system. For example, the main spine of the city flows east/west along a street known as 'West Broadway' which numbers descending until the crossing of the north/south 'Main Street', then becoming 'East Broadway' with numbers ascending again. As a grid city, these divisions are felt far more acutely in the east and west division than in the north and south direction as the landscape of the Fraser River, False Creek and the Burrard Inlet create natural divisions in this latter direction. These geographic features separate out the more distinct areas

in the city, such as North Vancouver, and islands of Stanley Park and the Downtown Core, as well as the island of Richmond in the greater metropole; which are connected to the main city through a series of bridges linked to main arterial streets, such as



Figure 3: Map of Vancouver showing arterial roads and suburbs (removed - copyright restrictions)

'Main Street' and 'Granville Street' (see Figure 3). Richmond has, particularly with its large plots of land and development of Hong-Kong style shopping malls, become one of the primary residential areas for wealthy immigrants, as well as one of the main shopping areas for Vancouver with a number of pan-Asian stores, such as Daiso and Beard Papas, being found there.

An excellent public transport system is in place in the city, and families and children are highly mobile and easily travel between west and east. On a number of occasions

as I headed east after school, I would observe children from my school site making their way home by bus, obviously circumventing the local catchment system to go to a better school. A number of families, especially those living in the east side will register a business address or a family-member's home as their address as schools are funded according to the tax-base of the residents in the area. Thus, wealthy areas have better schools, and while some checks are in place so stop this manipulation of the system, it was common with my participants that they would go to a 'good school', hence at another field site where I did research with children in after-school care most of the group went to the same school, despite all their homes being in different areas of the city.

As my site selection both reflects the recommendations of my participants and the construction of the city as Site, I aimed to represent both a diversity of children's spatial experiences, using the spatial categories of private, semi-public and public space, and to balance my site choice across the socio-economic areas of the city. Therefore, in the category of public space, I worked in a centrally located toy store and a school playground on the west side of the city. For semi-public space, I worked at a large social-services organisation on the east side of the city. In the category of private space I worked with one child in her home on the west side and a brother and sister in their home on the east side of city (see Figure 4).

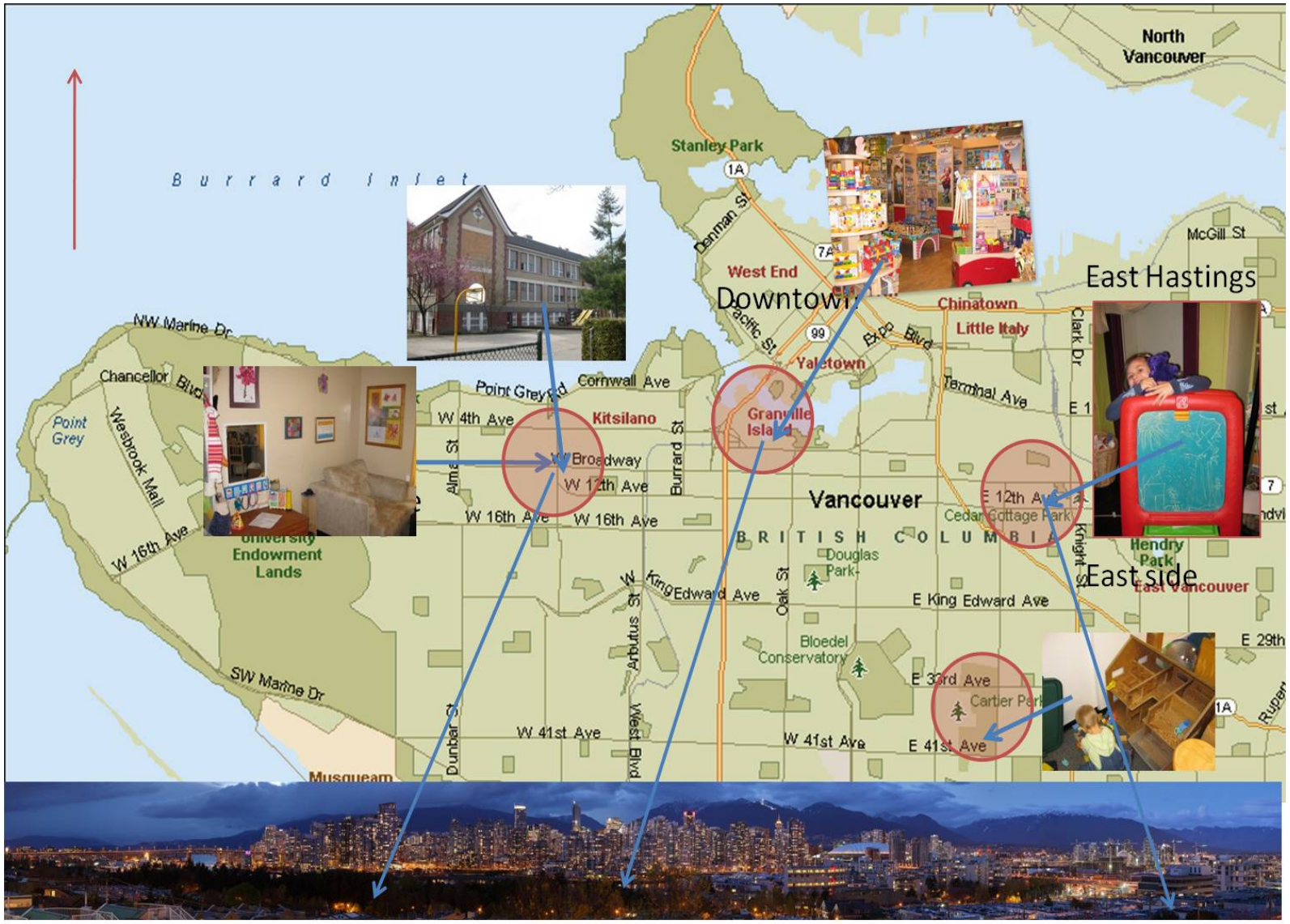


Figure 4: Position of field sites Key: from west to east, Zuleika's house, school, toy store, social services organisation, Brianna and Zach's house

FINDING PARTICIPANTS AND PLACES

In total my data is collected from four main sites and the contributions of forty-one children are represented in the thesis.[8] These children are not all the children that I worked with in my time in Vancouver however, as my approach to refining my data has been an iterative one. Rather, these individuals are symptomatic of the common patterns of behaviour that I observed. I chose to sample my participants in two ways. For the public and semi-public realms, the participants were conveniently sampled; that is, drawing on those who passed by the store or children who happened to be in school or after-care that day. In the case of the individual children in their homes, I worked with parent-selected respondents to my research advertisement. With ethical issues of consent in mind it seemed expedient to choose the children most enthusiastic to participate, after their parents had agreed, and to use their recommendations and connections to create my network of field sites. However, in reality I could not observe many of the children in every site. Thus, I began my fieldwork by recruiting participants whose parents would be prepared to let me into their homes for extended periods of time.

PRIVATE SPACE:

While living in Vancouver I was a visiting scholar at the University of British Columbia, which did not offer any academic input into the research, but proved a useful introduction to the people and organisations with which I worked. Both of the local

[8] Full participant table in Appendix A.

universities in Vancouver, the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University, commonly advertise research studies on a local free classified website called 'Craigslist'. It is widely used for everything from renting apartments to employment, and adopting the style of other listings, I advertised the project as looking to observe and talk to children who like to play imaginatively at home. I set an age limit of between seven-and twelve-years-old and no gender requirement. I also specified that siblings would be welcome even if they fell out of the age limits and that the children must have access to television, or there should be one in the home. Once I had received a response from the parents, I emailed them a far more detailed explanation of the research and answered their questions which resulted in me meeting the mother and the child/children in their home. A total of four families responded. I had to disqualify one family on the basis of age as neither of the children fell into the specified age range, and in another family the eleven-year-old son was described as 'developmentally delayed' by his mother and was very distant interpersonally, and so I felt that his consent would not be clear.

In all cases the parents that responded were very enthusiastic, mainly as they saw it as an opportunity for free child care, but they were also interested in the research; one of the mothers had studied anthropology at university for example. Through this route I met Zuleika (8) and her mother Amira and begun to spend a fair amount of time in their home, as well as Brianna (7) and Zach (8), who I also worked with in their home. Although only including three children as part of my sample for private space seems very small, and ideally I would have preferred more, the data that these children

offered was invaluable in the thesis for its level of intimacy and richness. In this sense, methodologically and in the written ethnography, I do not position these children as 'representative', rather, like many anthropologists and sociologists I have used these children and their families as key participants and gatekeepers to the community. The use of key informants in ethnography, as Joseph Casagrande (1964) demonstrates in his research about well-known anthropologists and their relationships with key participants, has been a core technique for pioneers in socio-cultural anthropology and their data provides depth and intimacy to ethnography. This is paralleled in sociological ethnography, for example, William Whyte's relationship with Doc in 'Street Corner Society', where Doc became such a key part of the research that he moved from the level of participant to collaborator (Whyte 1955). This, in my perception, is very much how Zuleika, Brianna and Zach felt about 'helping' me with my 'school project' and is of ethical importance in terms of empowering the children as participants to collaborate in the research. While these three children are perhaps the most significant to the research, they do fall into a far larger body of data, and are by no means its only source. Other social scientists have also argued that one can do an ethnography of a very small group of people and still achieve valid results because the depth of knowledge one obtains from these participants about their life-world, in turn reflects on greater human experiences (Crang and Cook 2007). Miller (2009) has argued that the individual is the 'minimal exemplification' of 'society'. Consequently, he advocates that urban ethnographies focus both on the individual and the societal institutions and forces that they live within, in order to demonstrate how these mutually frame and shape social experience. In Ian Cook's (1992) 'Drowning in See-world', for example, five blind participants were used to write a critical ethnography of

blindness in contemporary, urban society that reflects on their experience of space and the social stigmas surrounding the impairment.

PUBLIC SPACE:

After I had discussed doing research at her school with Zuleika and she seemed enormously enthusiastic about the prospect, Zuleika's mother, Amira, facilitated for me to do part of my research at John Smith[9] Elementary. I was introduced to the principal, who readily agreed to help, subject to the approval of the Vancouver School Board, who ethically reviewed the research (See Appendix A). In total the school had 425 pupils at the time I was there, ranging from Kindergarten (age five to six) to Grade Seven (age twelve to thirteen). Apart from my relationship with Zuleika, I was enthusiastic to spend time at this school for detailed observation as it was one of the few schools in Vancouver that offered a split recess. This separates out the children's break time with Kindergarten to the third grade in the first half and grades four until seven in the second half, which allowed me to focus my observation. Some of the children on the school playground were anonymous to me, something that is characteristic of work in public spaces, but over the entire year-long fieldwork period many became familiar, and I learnt most of their names. However, I was particularly close to Zuleika and her friends and classmates in the second grade, as I was also interacting with them outside of school hours.

My aim in the consideration of a school site was to look at how children experienced public space, influenced by Sennett's (1977) work on the divisions between the public

[9] Name changed to protect participants.

and private realms. A school is particularly concerned with the safety of children which influences how they experience spatiality. The second public site I conducted research at was a toy store in a busy, central shopping complex called the Granville Island Market, where there was a separate 'Kids' Market' building filled with toy shops. A number of children I worked with suggested it and I reasonably frequently recognised children from other field sites shopping there with their parents. An interesting feature of this market is that the children's shops are separated from the main market. This, in many ways, seemed characteristic of the societal stance on risk and children's existence in public space that I was interested to document.

For the two public sites, the school and the toy shop, most of the children and members of the public identified me as a worker. In the school I acted as a playground supervision aid, although I did not wear the fluorescent jacket that identified them, or give any censure to play. In the shop, I sat behind the counter taking notes and on the whole deferred questions to the store clerk, Jennifer (17). If any members of the public asked me what I was doing, I was prepared to explain and deliver information sheets to them. This situation never arose. To access the school, I had to submit a lengthy document to the Vancouver School Board for ethical review, before I conducted my research. In these public settings my role as an observer was more obvious, and I had limited but regular personal interaction with children. In most instances in the public realm, the children are wary of authority, especially people writing. Particularly at school on the playground it seems children see this as writing down what they have 'done wrong'. Thus, I found the technique of what Magdalena Craciun in her

ethnography of markets selling counterfeit designer goods calls 'anthropology from the corner of one's eye' (2009), essentially feigning disinterest but recording immediately afterwards the events, a useful one. This method was not really necessary in my other research sites however, as the children were all interested to contribute to my research, sometimes even offering to write or draw a picture in my notebook, or giving me pictures to paste in, which I felt was an invaluable contribution to the research process.

SEMI-PUBLIC SPACE:

Drawing on the analysis of spatial theorists of large North American cities, particularly the work of Davis (1992), it is vital not only to address the notion of the public/private divide in children's lives as being part of their spatial lives, but also the type of semi-public space typical of after-school care that children are placed into. I considered this type of space as an extension of the dialogue on monitoring children and spatially containing them in 'safe' places where the risks from 'stranger danger' are limited. Thus, in order to gain access to these spaces, I decided to respond to calls for volunteers from non-profit organisations concerned with children such as scout troops, after-care projects called 'Neighbourhood Houses', and the social work group that I eventually built an excellent relationship with.

In particular, I looked for non-profit organisations where I could work with groups of children divided by age and also where I would not be constrained by a fixed set of

expectations of the children while they were there. For example, the 'Neighbourhood Houses' generally looked for volunteers who could help children with their homework. Eventually, I was welcomed by a social services centre that dealt with family reunification issues and was helpful to families like that of Zach and Brianna, who had difficult circumstances. At this organisation, various structured programmes are run which support and train parents to better fulfil their obligations to their children (as the Canadian State defines them). Individual counselling and support is also offered by 'family workers' (social workers). My role was to look after groups of children whose parents were in group-based programmes. These usually ran weekly for twelve weeks each, and lasted about four hours per week. Many parents would participate in more than one programme or repeat the programmes for on-going support, and so my relationship with these children was on the whole long-term.

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the family situations being dealt with by the social services centre, I only collected data in connection with one particular programme and group of families that participated in my research. I spoke to the individual children and their parents initially about helping me with my research and tried to chat about my work quite often as I felt ethically that this was necessary, as particularly the children are quick to forget over a long period of fieldwork that there are multiple roles at stake in the relationship i.e. that of friend, confidant, carer and researcher. Particularly in the social service environment I was careful not to my mix roles with the other programmes, particularly if individual families themselves moved between the programmes. At times this has proven frustrating as I have been privy to

information I cannot ethically include in this project. Yet, ultimately as I set out and continually emphasise through the thesis that the data I collected would be child-centred and child-directed, this allowed me to focus the work without being overly absorbed into the occasionally difficult family-lives of the children.

On occasion in this semi-public setting there were institutional pulls. For example, when one of the children demonstrated anti-social behaviour in the child-care group, it caused social workers to think that this was the result of being 'at risk' at home. This is not something that is unusual in ethnographic work that has been conducted with children in this type of setting. Research conducted by Fiona Smith and John Barker (2000) in Wales, most closely parallels this aspect of my own research in an after-school programme. They document tensions between adult caregivers' ideas of normative behaviour for children and that of the children themselves. Another example is Fine's (Fine and Glassner 1979; Fine 1980 (1995); Fine and Sandstrom 1988) extensive research with young boys in Little League Baseball in the United States. In the research he demonstrates that the expectations placed on children by adults to perform certain roles, and the expectations of children's peers may not always be in alignment. In the case of the social services organisation, I was to some extent presented with pre-made groups of children who arrived for child-care. [10]I purposefully chose to omit two of the groups of under six-year-olds from the study on the basis of age, as I had decided to work with age six to eleven-years-old, elementary school-going age. Furthermore, having considered the work of Donald Winnicott (1971; 1953) on

[10] See participant table in Appendix A

transitional objects with young children and Corsaro's (2003) ethnography with both North American and Italian pre-school children, I found working with these children diverted too greatly from elementary school children on two major factors. Firstly, children under four are only beginning to speak and as such it seems dangerous to attribute much significance to the things they do say. Often parents are dedicated and deliberate in teaching their children things like names and counting. A young boy of two, David, who was part of one of the social service groups, would often name a myriad of objects and count groups of them, but instead of counting accurately would count the same objects more than once until he could count up to the number he knew. Equally a co-worker's child had been asked by their grandmother while she was colouring-in, 'Can you name your colours?' After a long silence, the child replied, 'The blue one is Ken, the green one is Isabelle,' and so on. Similarly, many of the children could name the popular pre-school television characters such as Elmo from Sesame Street or Caillou or Dora the Explorer. This seems to me to be a similar process of learning names from the environment around them, rather than any indication of greater significance. I often observed parents including television characters in their teaching, perhaps hoping to refer to something the child likes. Thus, it became, much like Winnicott's (1971) theory of transitional objects, very difficult to separate child from parents, and even more so, to maintain a methodological integrity where I did not completely direct the children's play myself. However, for the older, school age children, who have started to form their own identity separate from their parents, it seemed more useful to consider the role of media, television toys and so on by observing their play and social interactions with each other. It was my opinion that very seldom with children under four, who formed the bulk of the groups at the social

service organisation, was there much sociality produced between them, and play occurred on the whole in parallel, to use a term from child development, rather than co-operatively.

Relationships with Participants

Corsaro advocates a 'reactive' (2003: 10) methodology in working with children. This draws attention to the importance of careful positioning of oneself as an adult in the children's worlds. A key strategy I employed was not to react to a situation 'as an adult would' automatically, particularly if there was a question of potential danger. By this, I particularly refer to the highly cautious nature of adults placed in a sense of responsibility for the care of children, who at times appear to forget that urban children themselves are intelligent and mainly capable of judging basic risk on their own. In the more personal scenarios I virtually never chastised or stopped the children for doing anything dangerous or rough, only sometimes warning them if I thought something might result in an accident. Often something being perceived as dangerous made it 'funner', in the words of Zuleika (8), but since I felt that I could still bodily intervene in a serious scenario, I was content to let the children live and learn. The result of this strategy was that I became well-liked by the children, and though it might surprise those who take it to be irresponsible, none of the children harmed each other or themselves in any sort of serious fashion. Annika (9) commented, 'I wish you were my mom, you're cool, you understand', in the early stages of our relationship, but slowly the indicators with all of the children shifted from me being 'an adult' to being

their friend. Some of the physical strategies I employed in this was to participate in games, even 'pretend' games, to always engage with the children on their own level physically, such as sitting on the floor with them, or mentally, by using children's humour in between discussions and questions, yet not trying too hard to seem child-like, which may seem forced. The awkwardness of this sort of situation reflects the general anthropological issue of 'going native' which according to Maurice Freilich (1970) exists on a spectrum from being a marginal member of a community, to being a 'privileged stranger' or finally 'going native' where the anthropologist's dress, sleeping, speech and social patterns all reflect that of the participants. Whyte in his (1955) research put it succinctly when he argued that he started the research as a non-participating observer and ended as a non-observing participator. Clearly, when working with children, 'going native', as in many circumstances, is highly inappropriate. For my purposes the role 'privileged stranger' seems to be an apt description of the intimacy I achieved with children that was different to that of parent or teacher, the two main types of trusted adults in the children's lives.

In the school setting my research was completely focused on the recess period, for two reasons. Firstly, there is a large tradition of ethnography with children conducted within the context of education and it was my assessment that the most fruitful material of the sort I wanted to collect seemed to occur on the playground rather than within the classroom. Lanclos's (2003) research on children's folklore in Belfast, Helga Kelle's (2000) on territoriality and gendered space in German primary schools and James's (1996) research on the making of friendships in English ones are all

ethnographies rich in detail about children's lives that are particularly sensitive to the child's viewpoint; and all three of these examples mainly draw from playground data. However, these studies do differ from my approach in a number of ways. Firstly, they are all targeted to gather data on specific topics in childhood research, such as gender relations, and that means that methodologically the researchers often questioned and prompted the children in their studies on these topics. While this is most certainly a product of a limited time spent in the field, and may be an effective way to conduct research, my research was much more passive in this sense. This was primarily because I waited for the topics that the children were interested in or their behaviour suggested to unfold to me without pre-determination.

Secondly, much research in schools uncritically accepts the school as the best site to study children without problematising it; presumably because of the ease of access and the large groups of children of similar ages and backgrounds one finds in a school. Yet, the institutional nature of the school, with its rules and adult supervision, affects children's behaviour, language and relationships with each other. This is particularly true in the classroom where they are required to conform to a set of adult-imposed norms, and where they are rewarded for doing so. This type of research is often conducted with in a development psychology framework which is a field that dominates childhood research. At its most problematic it can completely ignore the biases present in the classroom setting, and even harnesses children's desire to please and 'do well' on tests to administer field experiments. An example of this type of research is Carol Guardo's (1969), 'Personal Space in Children' experiment where cards

with drawings (not to scale) of boys and girls were placed at distances closer together or further apart and the children were asked to comment on how much the two people 'like' each other, essentially trying to demonstrate correlation between physical and emotional closeness. This type of research, in my opinion, is the antithesis of the attitude towards child-centred research that has been advocated by James and Prout (1990) and James *et al.* (1998) for the 'new' sociology and anthropology of childhood, involving the child fully and ethically and placing them in the driving seat of the research. This approach, giving the child input and control into the research process, and looking for child-driven not adult-driven research topics, addresses a number of key concerns for ethnographic research. Firstly, this approach narrows the gap between researcher and child and compensates for unequal power balances that are magnified in classroom and experimental research designs. Secondly, in line with international guidelines on the rights of the child (UNICEF 1989), this style of research draws attention to the contributions reflections on children's voices can make to large-scale concerns, and works against notions that children are merely in the process of becoming 'full' human beings.

Yet I was still required on most occasions to take a sense of responsibility for the children, at least be cast by other adults as a 'monitoring' force, a role that works easily with the role of observer, but less so with that of participant. When in the wider, semi-public, social service environment, it was difficult to separate the responsibilities of being a 'child-carer' and other adults' perceptions about the need to regulate the children's behaviour, especially as I was indebted to the other adults for awarding me

access to the children. The position of guardian, though, has not been classically observed , for example in Erving Goffman's (1961) study on asylums, where the tensions between the roles of 'guard' and 'captor' were the chief producer of social conflicts with patients. In my case it was easier to negotiate a middle ground of seeming permissiveness to the children, being a 'soft touch', while maintaining the minimal boundaries of regulatory behaviour other adults expected. Some of the ways I would do this would be to engage the children in dramatic re-enactments if they seemed to want to fight, asking them to work it out in 'slow-motion', or to let the children participate in their own care by bringing in DVDs they wanted to watch, or going to rent DVDs for them that they told me they'd like to watch.

Ultimately, engaging with the children on their own level with 'pretend', creative play and humour allowed me to access their world sufficiently to understand their sometimes destructive or violent behaviour in the context of their peer relationships. This avoids a significant methodological trap as Jean La Fontaine points out in her article on Satanism and child abuse, 'It was common for the alleged 'disclosure' of satanic abuse to be a composite made up of remarks to a foster parent, answers to questions in interviews, play 'therapy', and serious behavioural problems' (1998: 286). As a critique of the value of play therapy as a diagnostic tool for psychologists La Fontaine's article is quite damning, not because play cannot help a child to learn to process difficulties and fears, but because the popular paranoia of the therapists through the media and their own position of taking every whimsy of the child as cold evidence of trauma, resulted in these contentious 'diagnoses'. Thus, in contrast to play

therapy, it was important for me to not overly guide the children's play except when my help was asked for, and to not over-interpret behaviour. This was an easy task working with children in their homes, as surrounded by their possessions and familiar circumstances it is a simple matter of common sense to understand their values. In the social service environment, the pressure to debate and 'therapise' a ten-year-old boy called Brendon, who often showed social awkwardness and violent outbursts amongst my colleagues, was difficult to surmount. However, through engaging with the children's shared meanings first and foremost and looking at the group's response to these sorts of social problems, it was possible as a researcher to document the situation from the children's points of view.

METHOD AND ETHICS

My primary method was that of participant observation however, this was not a default choice, but rather one that I felt respected children's autonomy and was the least invasive. This differs from other researchers who have used unstructured and semi-structured interviews as part of their ethnographer's armoury. Novel methodologies such as photo-elicitation and combinations of participant tasks and elicited interviews have been particularly popular in recent years, as researchers try to achieve both depth and accuracy in data collected in a short space of time. The efficacy of open follow-up questions, interview strategy and question order and construction techniques are widely discussed (Dean and Taylor-Goodby 1992). In the case of the unstructured and semi-structured techniques, the goal is to allow the interviewees the freedom to talk in their own terms about issues that concern them, with the interviewer's probing designed to help formulate and develop the participants ideas. Often the setting and manner in which the interview is conducted is vital to the outcome of the research. William Labov's (1973) interviews with young, black American children is one such example, where he was interested in the linguistic development of the children. When they were interviewed in a formal manner they seemed tongue-tied and linguistically underdeveloped. When Labov deviated from the role of formal interviewer and seated the children on the floor, spoke in informal language and allowed the children to bring a friend to the interview, the results were completely different. Children's need to please the teacher/interviewer in this situation can and does seem to prove a significant and primary disadvantage that

counts against the interview as a technique in the study of children, particularly in in a study such mine, where I am primarily interested in obtaining the child's perspective.

Obtaining their points of view is the most challenging task of research with children, particularly when it comes to considering difficult or fraught issues in their lives. Survey and questionnaire data can suffer from similar disadvantages. Jo Deakin's (2006) sociological research, based on data from the (British) 'Children and Young People's Safety Survey' which had 2000 respondents, suffered from what seems to be a typical blockages in survey work with children, and offers a significant critique of the method. These can be that the children do not always understand the questions, or simply answer what they think the interviewer wants to hear; that the children become stressed during the questioning, lose concentration, or that the child's parents *de facto* answer the questions on their behalf. Particularly in cases when adults are asked to assist children, both the adults and children may feel the need to answer in a way that reflects societal notions about appropriate childhoods or good parenting. It seems fair to say that interview and survey methodologies do not often respect children's own competencies.

Karen Wells (2005), an urban geographer who also uses an interview methodology, expresses her frustration with the brevity of her participants when asked questions, something which is an unavoidable feature of research with children in my experience. The use of 'adult' interview and survey techniques on children might compound this

issue as it seems to produce responses from children where they reflect the opinions of adults around them. However, the convenience of having a questionnaire administered by a familiar teacher and that of taped interviews with children in their classrooms, mean these methods have become the mainstay of research with children. Particularly from the point of view of educational research, the reliability of these methods and the representative nature of a group of similarly-aged pupils make significant contributions to the research which compensates for what suffers in validity in terms of the problems I have noted. However, for my ethnography, where I am not concerned with the 'educational' framework but rather am interested in children's peer interactions, the classroom seemed to be too loaded with external meanings to be a good site to consider the children's natural behaviour with each other. Therefore I particularly chose to work with children outside of the classroom, on the playground, in their homes, in child-care and in public space where I felt that would be easier to achieve. These sites particularly lent themselves to being studied with an unstructured method.

Another 'new' methodological strategy is to engage children's powers of imagination to access their deeper meanings. In the sociologist Madeleine Leonard's (2007) study of risky environments she asked each child to imagine that they were the parent of a teenager and wanted to move to North Belfast (where the study was conducted) and asked what they would tell their children about growing up in the area. A similar method used in this regard is 'directed drawing' which aims to engage children's visual representative powers which are seem to be superior to their verbal ones. Margaret

Mead, who conducted a number of ethnographic studies amongst the Manus and was interested in the presence of animistic thought patterns within children in a society that had been observed to lack such a conception, has been critiqued for her use of crayons for drawing amongst Manus children because Manus culture did not usually produce visual depictions (Goldman 1998). However, in urban ethnographies the technique has been used fairly widely, mainly again in the classroom context. Mary Stokrocki (2000), for example asked Brazilian private-schooled middle-class children to draw to a variety of questions such as, 'What do you like to do?' David Gellner (2004) also used this technique as part of a pilot project for work with Nepalese school children. The results of this method are typically analysed by content, as if the drawing was an answer to an interview question, and can be coded as such. This is because drawing is seen as giving the children the opportunity to provide a more nuanced answer than they could perhaps verbally communicate. I have not employed this method directly, both because it is mainly conducted in classrooms, and because the 'answers', may be seen within the expectations surrounding roles that children are used to in an educational setting.

However, I have cautiously included and examined drawings the children produce of their own initiative to supplement my participant observation work. In line with my basic 'reactive' strategy, I would often look at or sometimes photograph the children's drawings or ask what they were of, but would never suggest that they should draw. Where children draw to a suggested theme or question, particularly in the classroom environment, the researcher is always limited by the performance of a version of

childhood that the children deem suitable for the school environment, and for adult consumption. They are concerned with drawing 'correctly', and presenting a (visual) answer that the interviewer wishes to obtain, as that is how children are generally taught to achieve good marks for drawing projects in schools. Any analysis of such material, while perhaps good as a general indicator of children's lives, or a pilot study such as in Gellner's work, should be subject to contextualisation in a much wider sphere of social interaction amongst children and not simply seen as an end in itself. The advantages of eliciting drawings as a methodology is that it allows reflection by both the participants and the observer on the process of collecting data, and how that data is contextualised in its presentation. This type of co-operative process with children, where the drawing is seen as a 'gift' by the children to the researcher seems to embody the ethics and poetics that Clifford and Marcus (1986) argue is so necessary to move anthropology away from the imbalances of power between the researchers and the researched that that typify the history of the discipline.

Drawing was also a technique I often employed to 'join in' with the children. As Rudi Colloredo-Mansfeld (1999) noted in his ethnography in the Andes, drawing as an ethnographer positions the researcher to obtain comments and corrections from participants which encourages collaborative research to occur. Also, drawing as a method of recording is something I have employed in the thesis where ethical restrictions prevent me from obtaining photographic records of events. The two major role players in the ethical review of this research were the Oxford University CUREC

process and by the Vancouver School Board's ethics committee.[11] CUREC required that I disguise the identity of children being recorded or photographed, and VSB refused permission for photography or any sort of recording, and so I have used a few hand drawings to illustrate the thesis.[12]

Obtaining both direct parental consent as well as the children's consent was very important to my own moral feeling about the research not only in the light of the obvious high sensitivity a child researcher must have to how the material is recorded, but also, wanting to give an accurate picture of the children's worlds on their own terms. Nigel Thomas and Claire O'Kane's (1998) offer the maxim that 'bad ethics is bad science', from their paper advising on correct procedures for participant observation research with children. Certainly, it has been my best endeavour to adhere to their advocacy that methods that afford children control and respect in the research process are the most ethical. Furthermore, in the diverse and sometimes ambiguous world of who is empowered to give consent for the research, particularly in the case of foster children, where the state is sometimes their ward, it was very important to remain 'reactive' to the children and make sure that they were not behaving unnaturally. This was in order to make sure that what Virginia Morrow and Martin Richards (1996) in their sociological review article on ethics in child research call the 'biggest ethical challenge' for working with children was met. Namely, that the difference in power

[11] See Appendix B for a sample letter to school parents, adapted for other field sites and VSB approval that formed part of the ethical clearances of the research.

[12] Geertz (1988)argues that as photographs have come to replace drawings as a *de facto* standard for illustrating field research, drawings have become seen as less 'accurate'. However, in the light of ethical restrictions on the photography of children, and the dynamic environment of working with children, I have found them to be necessary to help describe certain places, which might otherwise seem physically de-contextualised.

and status of my position as an adult made as little impact as was possible on the data collection process, and that the level of respect for each child as an individual was continually maintained.

One area of interesting new research into children's worlds is in the use of children themselves as researchers.[13] This is typified by the collaborative approach that has been used in visual anthropology. For example, James Hubbard's 'Shooting Back' (1994), based on work with homeless children in Washington DC and Trish Brennan's 'I Spy: Representations of Childhood' (2000), working with children in Hackney, East London. Both projects put children either directly in control of the camera or in a position where they directed the photographer. Yet these projects cannot necessarily so simply overcome the difficulties of the adultist view. Much like asking children to draw, the photograph must be explained, justified perhaps, and the audience for the photograph is known to the children to be adult, with commensurate expectations for behaviour. Furthermore, photographs of children taken by other children, does not necessarily exempt them from the ethical restrictions surrounding photographing children. However, while all of my (few) photographs of the children are taken with their and their parent's consent and the children's identities are masked, I often found that in the fast paced world of children's play, time for this sort of recording was limited. Removing myself from the play or social group to take on the role of recording or photographing would have impacted on my relationship with the children and the

[13] See for example, Helen Roberts (2000)details research conducted by UK Children's charity Barnado's where young, disabled people were trained as interviewers and sent into schools to talk to and interview other children. As part of the process the children interviewed asked the researchers about their disabilities and the tone of the research became overwhelmingly collaborative.

quality of data I obtained. In this light I mainly photographed groups of material objects as a record of the complex mass consumption culture that many adults are not familiar with. I have not collected any video material except where the children have self-published such material on the Internet and it was already in the public domain. These considerations impact in a definite sense on the aesthetic qualities of the thesis illustration as, where the ethnography indicates play and activity, the photographs perhaps seem a little sterile and desolate.

I seriously considered using digital sound recording, but discarded the technique after a few attempts as the pace and tone of children's conversations are difficult to capture inasmuch as they say short sentences, words or exclamations, often with no coherent narratives. Secondly, the children often talk over each other, jump around the room away from the microphone and so on. Ultimately, following the guidance of Robert Emerson *et al.* (1995) in 'Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes' as closely as possible, I used as system of recording 'headnotes' in a notebook, either in real time or after naturally extracting myself for a few minutes from the observation. Emerson *et al.*'s work divides the experience of fieldwork into two types, the 'experiential', where the researcher is fully immersed and active in a setting for days or weeks at a time with no opportunity to write down notes and the 'participating-to-write' style of research where the jotting of key words or phrases occurs in real time or immediately after an active participating period, known as 'headnotes'. For my purposes the latter proved the most effective as the average time I spent at one field site was approximately six hours at a time. In the case of any exceptions, for example long periods of babysitting,

there would always be an opportunity after the children were asleep to work on my notes. Thus I was able to record full sets of fieldnotes immediately onto my computer after each instance. This technique worked very well because the children's conversations were short enough to be fully remembered and I was able to cross-check the technique at the toy store site where I was able to record verbatim transcripts of conversations. In comparing the two data sets I felt that the quality of the transcribed data did not noticeably change from that of the headnoted data. In total I recorded over 300 hours of observations over an unbroken ten month period, in addition to spending two months establishing community links. This compares favourably with another urban ethnography with significant public realm observations. Stuart Cahill's (1990) study set out to document evidence of the position of children in public spaces and their interactions with adults across them, and in total recorded 300 hours of observations over two years, using a team of researchers.

CONCLUSION

The data used in this research was collected primarily in a ten-month unbroken period of fieldwork conducted in the city of Vancouver, Canada with elementary school-age children. The fieldwork is multiple-sited in that it occurs over four main categories of space, which help to construct the city as a network into a distinct Site (Dorst 1989). These categories derive both from the work of Sennett (1977) and contemporary urban theorists, such as Mike Davis (1992) and Nan Ellin (1997) charting the impact of postmodernity on how city spaces are made, controlled and monitored. The categories

are as follows: private space, where my sample is three participants from two families, one on each side of the city; semi-public space, where my sample is six participants from a raw sample of twenty-three; finally, public space where my sample is thirty-two participants from a raw sample of *circa* 500 children split across a toy store and school playground site. The primary methodology used in the fieldwork is participant observation with a 'reactive' (Corsaro 2003) entry strategy. The research was ethically approved by Oxford University's CUREC board and the Vancouver School Board.

2.1) SPATIAL EXPERIENCE, PLAY AND RISK

INTRODUCTION

The word 'risk' derives from the Italian risicare*, 'to dare'. It is thus not a fate, but a choice that will depend on how much knowledge on has and how free one is to exercise options. Risk is therefore a cultural construction that is the result of active agency, not some passive reaction.*

Tarzan was an eco-tourist: and other tales in the anthropology of adventure (Vivanco and Gordan 2006: 4)

Widely, and increasingly in North American urban settings, public space as an entirety has become an interstitial experience for children. If they were to find themselves in public on their own there would no doubt be panic and disorientation for the young child, or temptation of mischief for the older 'youth'. Addressing Vancouver's extensive problem with homelessness and street living, for both adults and youth, has been a key part of current mayor Gregor Robertson's election and mayoral campaign (Vision Vancouver 2009). Similarly, British Prime Minister, David Cameron, famously advocated in the campaign for his election for the public to 'hug a hoodie'[14] (Hinsliff 2006), the sweatshirt-wearing youth. In essence, advocating for the re-socialisation of 'threatening' young people back into the role of the innocent and protected child; un-ringing the bell, as it were, on what are seen as contemporary, urban, changes in the performance of the social category of 'child'.

[14] A hoodie refers to the hooded sweatshirts part of youth fashion in certain sectors of Britain, but also is a contraction of hoodlum and it is used in both senses of the word.

The creation of a threatening underclass of children 'polluting', in Douglas's (1966) 'matter out of place' sense, the public realm can be interpreted in the face of the overwhelming threat of so-called 'stranger danger' as reactionary and in self-defence on the part of children. Populist media-based sociologist Frank Furedi goes as far as to say that: 'a culture of fear has been constructed around the issue of stranger danger' (2008: 23). His work, and the type of media reporting it draws on, comes to represent the media discourses on risk which underlines the public realm as a liminal space to be feared, where children are conspicuously absent for their protection. Even the 'postmodern' semi-privatised public realm, particularly the spaces of consumption, are haunted by the case of the shopping centre abduction and murder of two-year-old James Bulger. Cahill in his ethnography of children in public space points out:

> The widespread impression that practically all public places expose children to the dangers of abduction, mutilation, and murder has proven remarkably resilient. Serious questions have recently been raised about the accuracy of frightening estimates of the number of American children who are abducted by strangers and journalists have repeatedly debunked the "attempted abduction "and "mutilated boy" legends (Cahill 1990: 393).

A recent headline, in the Canadian national newspaper 'The Globe and Mail', is an example of the questioning of how pervasive this anxiety surrounding public space is. The article begins: 'Child abductors usually a familiar face' (Mick 2009). It points out the fact that most abductors are known to their targets, and that stranger abductions are incredibly rare. Due to public panic surrounding fears of child abduction The

‘Amber Alert’ system was introduced to Canada from the US, following the 1996 kidnapping of nine-year-old Amber Hagerman in Texas. The system sends out an all-points bulletin (APB) and a description of the suspect to all law enforcement agencies and border posts within hours of a suspected kidnapping, and is used particularly in stranger cases and/or where the child’s life is at risk. Since 2002, in provinces Ontario and Alberta, the system has been called on only sixteen and twelve times respectively, all with successful return of the children. British Columbia has never needed to activate the system, despite it being in place. These figures are particularly interesting in the light of the fact that sixty thousand missing children are reported across Canada each year (Walton and O'Neill 2009). That is to say that there are only a very small number of cases where the types of ‘stranger danger’ abductions children are warned about are actually suspected to have occurred.

Cahill further reports that, despite the widespread myth of so-called free-roaming children in past generations, in a 1975 study of four to seven-year-olds, only sixteen percent of the children were permitted further away than their own suburban block unsupervised. A 1982 study of low-and middle-income urban homes in California showed that only sixteen percent of eleven to twelve-year-olds had visited more than two nearby public places in the year (Cahill 1990). This indicates that the generation surveyed in these studies, now parents themselves, were also under considerable restriction from public places, as adults would define them, and are cautioned by the media to be even more restrictive with their own children.

Therefore, two types of rumour fuel the removal of children from the public realm for their own protection. Firstly, those surrounding 'free-range' children of the past, where selective cases of freedoms for children in past generations are set against what 'one cannot do now.' Secondly, and often as a justification for the previous case, 'stranger danger' has irrevocably marred public space and cast it into interstitiality for children. Child abduction cases, while undoubtedly tragic when they happen, have become this generation's moral panic (Cohen 1972), and not on a small scale. If we consider as an extended example, the narration of two public information videos for children, one an iconic 1952 atomic bomb 'emergency plan' called 'Duck and Cover' (Figure 5 for stills), and the second a 2008 'emergency plan' for 'stranger danger' by the children's safety foundation 'Lil'Iguana USA', called 'Run, Run, Run, Yell and Tell' (Figure 6 for stills) one can see a remarkable similarity, (both in plot and aesthetic) between the two.



There was a turtle by the name of Burt and Burt the turtle was very alert.

When danger threatened him he never got hurt, he knew just what to do.

He ducked and covered, ducked and covered.

He did what we all must learn to do, you and you and you and you,

duck and cover (Duck and Cover, Figure 5 left) .

We told you about the danger of walking alone

We told you not to talk to someone you don't know

Told you that a stranger is a danger to you

But there's more to say, cause we're not quite through.

Figure 5

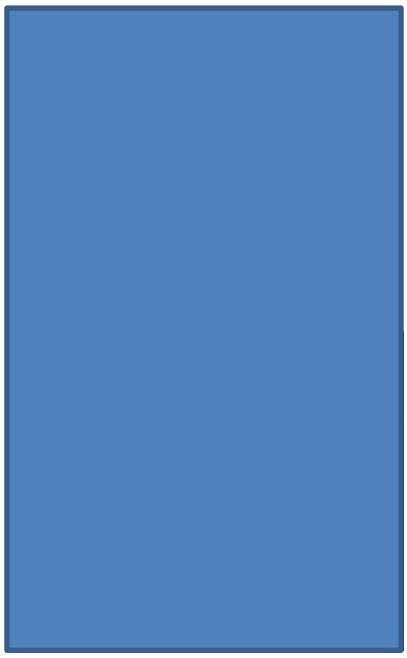


Figure 6 (removed - copyright restrictions)

If you get in trouble and feel afraid

If a stranger tries to grab you and take you away

Remember this phrase, know it well, you gotta

Run Run Run, yell and tell (Run, Run, Run Yell and Tell Figure 6 left).

Other public safety films from the 1950s such as 'Boys Beware' about the danger of lurking 'homosexuals' in public space now seem dated, often amusingly. Furthermore, it is now common knowledge that the American 'safety plans' for children in case of nuclear war were meant simply to placate. Equally, an argument could be made that the countermeasures of a young child running, yelling and telling away from an abductor determined to kidnap them are likely to be as ineffectual. Certainly, real child abductees have not suffered from a noticeable lack of this message in their school or home educations.

Fear about kidnap, either child or adult, particularly where the abductor has sadistic intentions for the victim, is not unique to North America and Europe. Other parts of the westernising world demonstrate strong parallels to the paranoia surrounding 'stranger danger' with rumour and fear surrounding bodysnatching either for purposes of witchcraft (Moore and Sanders 2001) or human organ theft (Scheper-Hughes 1996). The media, popular or semi-official, also has a strong role to play in the perpetuation of these rumours. For example, the ethnographer Misty Bastian (2001) relates the case of 'vulture man' a trickster-figure turned gang member in urban Lagos, where through

witchcraft he gains the power to fly. Vilified by the public, a suspect is caught and beaten in a kangaroo court, only to be arrested by police on suspicion of holding unnatural powers. The press follows suit publicising and fuelling the rumours that the suspect is in fact in possession of otherworldly powers, thereby promoting further panic over the issue of witchcraft and super-human bodies.

Likewise, La Fontaine in her (1998) article, 'Ritual and Satanic Abuse in England' offers a nuanced reading of the effect of moral panics for children's safety on children themselves, considering child abuse cases with alleged 'Satanic' connections. This can be situated within a wider body of work in modern folklore on 'urban legend'. Fine (1980) points out that the term 'urban' does not confine these stories to urban areas but rather indicates a 'socio-psychological' condition of urbanity. He argues that institutions such as fast-food restaurants as embodiments of change and progress in society become the seat of guilt, suspicion and fear of devaluing home cooking and family in favour of convenience. In his collection of multiple examples of a legend of food contamination at Kentucky Fried Chicken he demonstrates that while the peripheral characters of these stories often change, the salient details remain the same. Phillips Stevens, (1990) an anthropologist and folklorist argues that particularly the case of 'Satanism', including elements such as child abduction and the 'Black Mass' can be traced as far back as 17th century anti-Jewish demonology.[15] Child body-part kidnaps and 'satanic' kidnaps are common elements, Stevens argues, of folklore from around the world from oppressed peoples about their oppressors and neighbouring societies about each other. In the modern sense, particularly in the Third World where

[15] The blood-libel myth itself has been charted to at least the 15th century (Dundes 1991).

child mortality rates are high, he notes a simple correlation to folk stories of demonic or occult interest in children for nefarious purposes. Unfortunately, it seems that this is an argument that may be self-fulfilling in some cases, as Nancy Scheper-Hughes's (1993) ethnography demonstrates with case-studies of the devastating effects of actual child-ritual witchcraft in Brazilian shanty-towns.

In modern, urban societies however, as La Fontaine points out, connections to moral panics of the time such as Satanism, often mask a reality about children's knowledges that is too terrifying to face without such an explanation. The basis for allegations in many of her case-studies were made up on behalf of the children based on their answers to interview questions, behavioural problems and foster parents' assessment of their speech and character.

> It was often said that children could not possibly 'make-up' their accounts. But inventing them was not the only option, information from parents, social workers, or other children, either in the foster home or at school, television accounts of other cases, as well as videos were probably elements in many children's accounts… One child reminded her social worker that she 'was in her dream'; another, when asked what happened then, said 'Nothing. I woke up.' But the interviewer, by this time, was unable to accept that they were talking about dreams. (La Fontaine 1998: 287)

While the portrait painted by social workers and allied professions, such as play therapists, is that these allegations come directly from the child, in many of the cases, lack of direct evidence from the children themselves was not taken to mean the events did not happen. La Fontaine argues that, particularly in the case of the so-called

'Satanic' component of these rituals, many cases where abuse did occur was merely masked by the abuser in terms of magic and ritual to appeal to children's natural curiosity towards fantasy, and thereby lure them to the abuse. Furthermore, children who had not been abused at all were put through the process of trying to 'find evidence' of the abuse purely on the basis that they demonstrated 'unchildlike' knowledge of sexual practice. This is so shocking to the adults that care for them that they see it as being involved in 'extreme evil' painted as Satanism, and so by corollary are no longer 'normal' children. Jill Korbin (1998), in her article 'Good Mothers' shows much of the penance of women in prison for infanticide is to come to terms with the act and demonstrate that they have or had the capacity to be a 'Good Mother', as to be the reverse is to admit something biologically and culturally contrary to what is considered 'normal', 'good' and proper.

Furedi argues that it is the nature of this urban moral panic, of abuse and abduction of children that creates an atmosphere of distrust even of those chosen to care for children like nannies or teachers. He argues:

> The depreciation of adulthood coincides with the idealization of childhood and childishness, positing adults as morally inferior. In a secular variant of the religious theme of humanity's fall from grace, innocent children are said to be ruined by toxic parents in a toxic society. Campaigners promoting the idea of stranger danger contribute to a climate where the stranger – that is, the vast majority of adults inhabiting this planet – is not worthy of a child's trust. (Furedi 2008: 126)

Thus, the spaces the child encounters that were cast as places of nurture, socialisation and education in the past, are now cast in the light of protection. Furedi gives the example of an upmarket London nursery school fitted with CCTV connected to the Internet for parents to monitor remotely, and palm-recognition keypads to give entry to the buildings. It seems that parents are less engaged with the social aims of parenting and more with the protection of the child through environmental and spatial control. Yet, as I will argue in this thesis, even a climate so controlled by the fear of 'stranger-danger' leaves children room to create their own peer socialities, and for influences like television to become connecting points between children who are taught to experience the world as islands of permissible spaces in a sea of personal danger.

Much of this island-like mentality has been attributed by cultural theorists, geographers and urban planners to the spatial and lived qualities of the postmodern city. Davis (1992) was particularly influential in writing about Los Angeles as a 'fortress city', where spaces are so tightly controlled through security and surveillance that they are no longer public. Los Angeles itself, shown through Allen Scott and Edward Soja (1998), Michael Dear *et al.* (1996), Dolores Hayden (1995) and Roger Keil's (1998) case-studies, has become ubiquitous as the archetypal detached, sprawling city. The antithesis to what celebrated 1960's urbanists, like Jane Jacobs (1961), advocated as they began to critique the flawed vision of the utopian Modern project. Modernism was typified by the rebuilding of social housing in Europe after the destruction of the World Wars, and above all the work of Le Corbusier (1947 (1987)) and the group of

architects called CIAM[16], of whom he was leader. The familiar characteristic of what Le Corbusier called the 'Engineer's Aesthetic'; off-shutter (raw) concrete, strip windows, raised pilotis and so on, became quickly demonised as anti-human architecture, betraying the ideological foundations on which it was built. The backlash of this dislike for the aesthetic of Modernism meant that the fullness of the vision of the Modernists for egalitarian public spaces in the city only became realised in isolated cases, Le Corbusier's designs for Chandigarh, India for example.

The post-modern urban condition, as opposed to the inclusive vision of Modernism, is seen as one of privacy, exclusion and fear. Urbanists such as Mike Davis (1992) and Nan Ellin (1996; 1997) argue, supported through a certain amount of ethnography, for example Dorst's (1989) study of suburbia, that the exclusion of muted groups such as the homeless from the postmodern city typify the movement from city space as truly public, democratic realm into a semi-public, selectively inclusive one. Scholarship on urbanism in general, such as Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp's 'In Search of New Public Domain' (2001) casts the condition of the city as one of loss and possibly danger. They argue:

> The urban field is no longer the domain of a civic openness, as the traditional city was, but the territory of a middle-class culture, characterized by increasing mobility, mass consumption and mass recreation. (18)

It is within this climate, and particularly within the middle-class culture which dominates standards on parenting, that children are absolutely not expected to occupy

[16] Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne.

public spaces: certainly not on their own. Older children, too, have been revised by society as a potential threat and rejected into the interstices, with their resultant problems. Sutton-Smith (1976), a celebrated play scholar, has pointed to a change in child socialities towards the private, arguing that the influences of 'bourgeoisification' of westernised private life leads children towards a solitary 'pretend'-play model, taking place in their own bedrooms within the home.

Sennett (1977) argues that it is the shift in focus from public life to family life that has led to the dearth of public spaces in cities and this is particularly acute for children (Sennett 1994). Sennett charts the origins of this change for children to a shift in attitude surrounding breast feeding mothers in middle-ranking 1730s French society, which led to a fall in child mortality. These children took on a new sacredness, dubbed '*enfants de la patrie*' (291), children of the nation, future mothers and soldiers themselves. This connection of children to the sacred is reflected in other societies too, Japan for instance, where young children are seen as able to cross between the spirit and material worlds (Iijima 1987). Or in more contemporary scholarship, Christina Nippert-Eng (1995), argues that the material evidence of very young children, like art projects, and even babies in the womb, are tolerated in the workplace more easily than evidence of older children who are seen to lose 'sacredness'.

Part of this growing reification of the child's status in the home is reflected in changing historical attitudes to the place and quality of children's sleep. Social historians such as

Peter Stearns *et al.* (1996) have charted this change which was particularly marked between the 19th and 20th centuries. Sleep, its location, its measure and its quality became part of medical and child-rearing discourse. For all members of a household the move from the 19th century where bed-sharing for sleep was common between adults, even adults of the same sex in hotels, to individual beds and later bedrooms marked the turn of the century. Co-sleeping in Anglo-American countries general is thus marked by the social history of the Victorian health literature on parenting and sleep. This, in contemporary society is corroborated by various myths surrounding SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). However, literature from anthropology as well as sleep studies show, that in countries where co-sleeping is normal, there is actually a lower risk of SIDS than in countries where sleeping apart is rigorously enforced. However, this can sometimes be attributed to differences in the materiality of the bedding. In Japan, for example, co-sleeping is common, with futons laid out for children between their parents often until they are teenagers (McKenna 2007). Economists such as Grant Becker (1981 (1991)), have noted that it was around the late 19th and early 20th century, where separate sleeping became the norm, when child mortality dropped the most sharply in the urban, Euro-American world, and concerns about overpopulation grew in the middle classes. Giving each child their own bedroom would discourage large families and in a sense enshrine the individual child's position within the family. For contemporary children the bedroom has become in spatial and functional terms, an inner sanctum, and place to explore the most private space of all, that within their imagination.

Erik Erikson (1977), the doyen of developmental psychology, argues that environmental mastery for the child comes through three levels of interaction with the outside world. Firstly the 'autosphere', that of the child's own body and senses, and what geographer Stuart Aitken (2001) calls 'crib geography', the immediate environment, its presence and absence, as a game of peek-a-boo with a baby might suggest. Secondly, the child expands his definition of self and other to meet the 'microsphere', a small and safe world of toys and experiences within the home. Finally, the child encounters the 'macrosphere', the world inhabited by others outside of the home and encompassing differing sets of spaces with their own object and people occupants.

This type of developmental schema is, of course, already fulfilled by the participants in my study, they are familiar and knowledgeable about all three of these realms by school-going age. Yet equally, if one considers Davis's (1992) critique of much 'public' space as controlled and sterilised, the guiding hand behind children's spatial experiences are their parents who react strongly to the fears about public space that make children such an alien sight there. In a sense, all of these spheres of existence are highly influenced by parents' gatekeeping. This seems to turn children into a group who can only articulate their own spatiality fully through Homi Bhaba's (1994) notion of 'thirdspace', that is the physical co-option and alteration of the spaces of adults or the inversion of their meanings.

For many children a totalitarian control of their spatial experience is exerted by their parents in the name of protection and care. For example, for Annika (9), one of the children I worked with, it was arranged that should she need to ride home from a dancing practice without her parents being able to collect her in their car, that she would have a mobile phone from which she could call a taxi, and fare to pay it, despite her parents being able to ill afford it. Thus, even in their absence, her parents controlled her experience to exclude the public realm of mass transportation, as they saw it as a more careful and competent approach to parenting.

It is seen by society as the duty of the parents to protect the 'sacred' child. Kyra Landzelius, working on the material culture of motherhood, argues that the placing of objects into new-born's incubators, such as toys, a photograph of the mother or a religious icon, are a method to counteract the medicalization of the child, and his or her separation from their mother. She argues that by re-socialising the incubator into a realm of childishness keeps a promise from the mother to 'be there in spirit' at all times. Landelius states:

> The inventiveness of incubator ornaments embodies the power to reorder a mother's life-world in ways that may attenuate its colonization by the techno-medical system. Considered from this perspective, mothers' performances encapsulate desires to revitalize a familiar horizon of meaning. (Landzelius 2001: 339)

Ultimately this performance highlights the divide between the private and public spheres, placing the baby instead, especially premature babies, into a liminal space,

where their very personhood is linked to whether they can be drawn from the public to the private realms. The toys and objects used in this process thus become irrevocably theirs, despite the child's own lack of awareness, from a developmental perspective, of objects outside of themselves (Winnicott 1953). The complex relationship between the child, types of space and the protection of the parents is often played out until well into teenagerhood. The role of public space for children, until this point, continues to be cast as threatening, 'strange' and alien, that is to say, the public realm represents an exceptionally culturally-dense placelessness.

The children's absence and limitation from and around certain spaces and places speaks volumes to the position of children within society, particularly about the nature of adults' control over children. Yet, to return to the central theme of this thesis, and my position as a child-centred researcher, it is vital in the light of these debates and difficulties for adult society to better understand the meanings of spaces for the children themselves. It is of particular importance to see what they make of the limits of their social worlds and how they engage with a spatial life of the imaginary, unbounded by the realities of urban life.

CONTROLLED SPACE: CARING FOR CHILDREN OUT OF SCHOOL

In considering a case study of this experience of space, I draw on my ethnography from a referral-only (from governmental welfare structures) social-services centre where parents can receive training loosely termed as 'anger management'. Really this

amounts to a support group for the strains of parenting, framed as a ten-week course, taught by a 'family worker'. In each group, which runs in the daytime for parents with

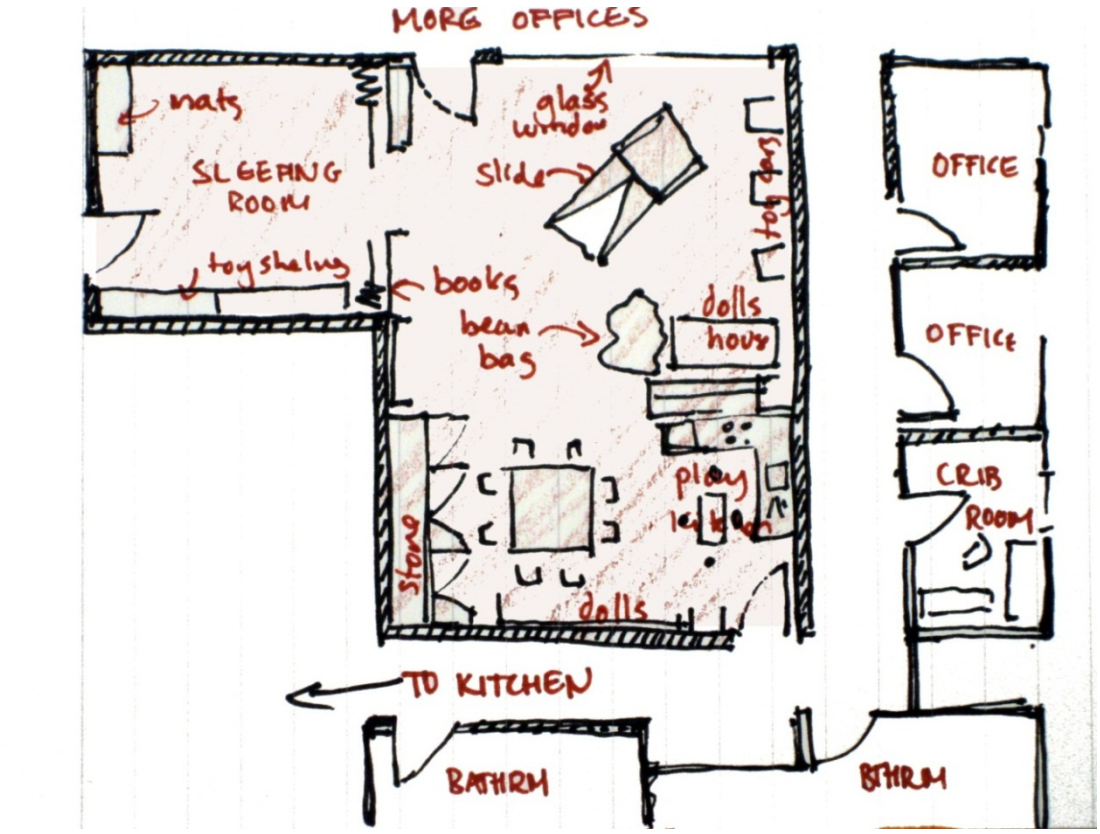


Figure 7: Not to scale plan of playroom and surrounding offices

young children, and in the evening for parents with older ones, the children are brought to the 'playroom' (Figure 7) to be looked after by one or two volunteers. The room itself has a preschool quality to the space, with small tables and chairs, a doll corner, beanbags and a small slide in the room. Around the sides of the playroom are internal windows that look out onto the individual offices for the social workers, a large communal kitchen, a counselling area and a small TV room.

Primarily, the play room is used for another programme, which is oriented towards parents with younger children who are struggling to cope, or whose children may

already be in foster care. The aim of the centre is 'family preservation and reunification' and, although it is a non-profit organisation, it manages cases on behalf of governmental social services, provides supervised visits, which also occur in the playroom, and training for parents. The older group of children's parents are part of a special run of the 'anger management' course, being taught in Cantonese. All of the children speak English fluently, and choose to speak it with each other. Most of the children are enrolled at the same, local school, Bob Jones[17] Elementary. The age range is broad, with a number of sibling pairs however, three of the children become particularly close to me, Annika (9/10), Brendon (10) and Grant (10), who are all in the fourth grade at Bob Jones. Not friends at school, their initial animosity is mitigated by these group meetings until they form a fast friendship, something I return to in detail in the final chapter of the thesis. At the end of the ten weeks none of the children want to stop coming, begging for 'more courses' to be added for their parents.

Annika is a small girl for her age, but lives in continual movement, bounding and leaping from room to room, pirouetting and dancing as she goes. Annika comes to the group with her father, Mark, who looks after her and her quiet older sister Selena (11), while their mother works. One evening when Brendon asked her why her mother wasn not at the group, and did she have a mother, she angrily responded, 'my mother is out working right now!' She is a muscular and athletic child who says her favourite activity is 'ballet and tap dancing', and she dances at a high level. After her major yearly recital took place at an enormous downtown stadium, I asked how it went:

[17] Name changed to protect participants.

> ‘It was good, and when we ran off all we heard was so many people clapping’, she said.
>
> Her father commented, ‘It was at GM Place! And a full house.’
>
> I asked Annika if she was nervous.
>
> ‘Very nervous, very’ Mark answered with a smile.
>
> ‘It was OK though, I thought of them in their underpants!’ Annika said laughing.
>
> ‘Very proud! Number one Chinese dancing teacher in the world! I couldn’t be more proud’, said Mark as he left to begin his group.

Annika has a fierce streak to her, and holds her own with the others in the group, often insisting that they play her games and getting cross if she loses. However, Brendon, a tall and slightly overweight boy, is the most domineering child in the group. His mother is widowed and struggles to keep him under control, having given up on disciplining him. On first meeting him, he playfully insisted that he was ‘not Brendon; I’m Mr Hyperactive 100!’ Brendon is confident talking to adults and enjoys trying to provoke a reaction from the family workers, often being contrary, telling me his hobbies were ‘killing people and murder’ when I asked. He is willing to join in with any game, even younger children’s games like hopscotch or skipping, but will often resist letting others play with him. When Annika is away from the group for extended dancing practices, he will complain loudly that, ‘she is the only one who can play with me!’ He often plays roughly with other children and will take any opportunity to get one over on the others, to the point where the family workers set a policy of ‘no touching’ (of other children) to try to control him. With no outlet, he becomes even more difficult to manage, deliberately teasing the other children by trying to disrupt their games, hiding their possessions or trying to stick Sellotape to their feet as they walk. Grant is a particular target for Brendon, as he is not only in the same grade as him, but the same

class. Grant is a shy boy, who is particularly close to his older sister, Tarryn (11), who he says is 'amazing'. He is slightly built and is often on the receiving end of teasing from Brendon, who will sometimes sing his name in a taunting fashion, or when no adults are watching give him a 'wedgie'.[18] He is patient with Brendon however, and will let him play games with him however, tends to give up if Brendon criticises him, 'No Grant, I'm a genius, do it this way', being a typical refrain. Grant tells me his favourite activity is to 'be creative', particularly playing with his Transformers action figures, and he loves to read comic books. 'Calvin and Hobbes', and the English translation of the Japanese digest 'Shonen Jump' are his favourite, and he always comes to the group with a number of hardback copies in his backpack, although he seldom reads them.

The children seem initially to form what Patricia Adler and Peter Adler in their study 'Peer Power' (1998) categorise as a 'compartmentalized friendship', in that it occurred initially in a particular niche in the children's lives. They state, 'compartmentalized friendships could span the gamut from the importance and intimacy of close friendships to the relative distance of friendly acquaintances' (1998: 136). For most of the children in the group, relations remained towards the acquaintance end of the scale, but for Annika, Grant and Brendon, the friendship migrated into a clique where the children interacted as friends in school and out of it, in this sense eventually excluding the other children completely from their games in the play room, see Chapter 2.5.

[18] This is when one child pulls the underpants of another high up their back, sometimes painfully, but most often this is simply embarrassing and awkward to remedy.

The parents ranged in their reaction to being 'requested' to attend the programme: some felt put upon and others came across as desperate to prove their credentials as what Korbin (1998) calls the 'Good Mother'. They were not without cause to perform such a role either, the climate of social services is characterised in North America at its extremes by advocates such as Jack. C. Westman, who calls for the licensing of parents by governments in his book 'Licensing Parents: Can We Prevent Child Abuse Neglect?' (1994). Such an attitude was critiqued as early as the 1970s in fiction by Phillip K. Dick in his short story 'The Pre-Persons' (1974), which postulates the existence of a government requiring expensive licenses for each child under the age of twelve-years-old to make sure each child is wanted and cared for. Unlike the economic value of a license to have children as Dick posits, the values Canadian parents have to show the state are demonstrations of care, attention and 'love' for their children, making decisions for their well-being in their school and home environments.

This necessity to demonstrate love through correct performance of standards of parenting was not only demonstrated by those parents already afoul of the system. One mother from a wealthy, Jordanian family justified placing her daughter in private school, withdrawing her from John Smith Elementary where her best friend Zuleika (8) went, because the family felt the child's education had 'slipped back' in the public schooling system. She was worried about self-esteem problems because her child was 'anxious', and that she was a 'middle child didn't help', presumably because she had to live up to her elder sister. I suggested that it may just be part of her personality, but

the mother was insistent that this had to be changed. Being 'unconfident' in this sense, is often demonised in parenting literature and seen as a sign of unhappiness in a child. Children in North America are to some extent encouraged to be precocious, outgoing and to some extent, loud. Failure, as a parent, by these standards, especially for immigrant families is something also reinforced indirectly by social services. The 'Family Day' programme at my field site, educated all parents, but often immigrant families, in a set of Canadian-based guidelines for 'correct', implicitly middle-class, parenting. This used texts and information derived from parenting manuals on the justified by governmental guidelines for what is defined as 'child abuse' (by neglect mainly) or not. Many of these definitions of 'warning signs' could be seen as cultural, reinforcing a Canadian standard of parenting, such as in one set of government-issued guidelines, where 'poor self-esteem' and 'problems at school' were seen as indicators of possible abuse (Child Welfare: Your Role 2007). Goodman's (2000) work on the 'discovery' of child abuse in Japan also demonstrates the mutability of how child abuse is defined. He argues that, as the topic was initially raised and debated in the press, reported cases rose dramatically, fuelling panic that there were many parents inadvertendly abusing their children through traditional stances on areas such as discipline. The set-up and maintenance of social work centres designed to seek our and remediate abuse, results in a overtly cautious stance on every area of parenting, where correct parenting is framed as part of necessary self-improvement .

The chief area of concern for the social workers at my field site was in creating through education the 'monitoring' parent, the manager of risk for the children's emotional

and physical well-being. Particularly in the case of parents of small children, children with frequent bruises and bumps continually caused suspicion, and continual explanations were offered for each injury, however minor. Furedi, in his sociological work on 'paranoid' parenting states,

> We used to talk about good, worthwhile risks as well as bad, foolish ones. Risks were seen as a challenging aspect of children's lives. Today, we are so afraid of risk that we have invented the concept of children at risk. A child that is at risk requires constant vigilance and adult supervision. (2008: 41)

To the parents on the edge of the social service radar, all their children were recast as 'at risk', that is to say, like Annika and her taxi rides, continually sheltered from it, for fear of attracting further attention from the state.

Parents have been convinced that it is their input and decision-making alone that will mean the success or failure of their child, what Furedi sees as the opposing force to the paradigm of the vulnerable child, the expectation of the 'omnipotent parent' (Furedi 2008). Furthermore, Furedi argues, that working in tandem with this concept is the sword of Damocles that parenting is no longer considered a universal ability and that 'many people are simply not up to the job, and society would be better off if they did not have babies' (Furedi 2008: 98). However, Furedi's concept of 'paranoid parenting' is limited in two respects. Firstly, his approach is a populist one which attempts to appeal to parents' rational selves to disavow, through 'anti-advice', the moral panic he sees as being fuelled by media sensationalism. Secondly, in so doing he reveals himself as a rather patronising Marxist, scorning the media for being lowly

scaremongers capitalistically motivated to fuel a siege mentality in the public on the issue of child safety. This may, in fact, mean that Furedi, while claiming to represent a reasoned approach that will liberate parents from their fear of risk for their children, is actually dismissive of parents' own abilities to selectively filter media messages about children's safety, thus patronising parents' real concerns. Nevertheless, Furedi's approach does demonstrate that the media can come to represent discourse about risk, and that parents are undoubtedly influenced, if not entirely so in the way that Furedi implies, by these discourses. This is reflected in particular in parents' attitude to parenting that they demonstrate around other adults, where steps taken to control risk, and a fear of being seen as too cavalier in regard to controlling it, is seen as a hallmark of good parenting.

Thus, many parents tightly control the spatial mobility of their children on one hand, but equally let them play only in purpose-built environments, often commercially run, that range in nature from large indoor play parks, like Playworld, to after-school care clubs (McKendrick, Bradford and Feilder 2000). Within these urban spaces, compounded by the litigious nature of society, the richness of play materials for children is often limited by the notion of acceptable dangers or risks, and so it is within these resource constraints that the creative child learns to overcome the limits of the physical environment through the creation of a play landscape.

Michael Taussig, in his essay 'The Beach (A Fantasy)', (2002) remembers his childhood growing up in Sydney where the sea itself was a symbol of potent and real danger from shark attack. Even young sailors would not push boats out into the shallows for fear of attack, constructing elaborate countermeasures to avoid touching the sea. Revisiting the places of his youth Taussig is shocked to see young children swimming in the 'dangerous' water, the advent of shark-proofing technologies having changed the conditions by which man could relate to the sea, the landscape of the park surrounding the bay, and the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1980(1990)) of the children now swimming freely and fearlessly in the previously deadly water. In this way, each generation of children engage with space differently. The curtailed space of the playroom at social services, filled with its nursery school toys, dolls and blocks, did not present a challenge to the older children, who having *habitus* of their own, simply begin to reconfigure the space, to use the toys together and in complex ways to create play landscapes that challenge the sterility of the space and environment for these older children in a pre-schoolers' 'classroom'.

Grant, often on the receiving end of teasing from Brendon about his 'pretend' and imaginative play, arrived, one evening, to the social services playroom for example, with his own 'dark Spiderman' action figure. He was immediately absorbed into imaginative play with a game of 'stick-bricks' he found in the cupboard, a plastic toy with 'combs' and pins on each block which allow them to be stuck together. Using the blocks, he made a 'base' for the Spiderman toy, and a complex spiky star-like 'satellite', which he later declared was a 'city of the future'. He, while often talking to himself

about the game in nonsense sentences, told me that 'constructing things makes (him) feel creative.' The combination of toys not (adult) designed to go together to create a more complex play world is a hallmark of the type of play this group made for themselves in the 'playroom', like building 'forts' with the furniture. In another game, Tarryn and Grant started to play a 'pretend' game with simple Playmobil people that they found, humorously referring to one of the grey haired men as 'Steven Harper' (The Canadian Prime-Minister), and submitting him to all sorts of torments, including capture by pirates and being made to walk the plank. Tarryn found some furniture for the doll's house that was in a corner of the playroom already, and proceeded to integrate the second floor of the open sided dolls house with a landscape of layered play mats, foam triangles, the slide and climbing frame and the 'wooden' pirate ship (actually made of plastic) which Grant started to add detail too with small bits of Lego used as a crane, with blocks as barrels on the decks and many people in different positions. The carpet seemed to be (as blue) *de facto* 'the Sea'. The result was complex and elaborate and seemingly allowed for an enormous variety of scenarios to be played out.

However, even the most benign of creative spaces and landscapes can be imbued with danger, when the children interfere with and destroy one another's playing, tempers run high. As a result of such an incident, I was asked to take Brendon out of the group. Not wanting to frame this as a punishment, I took him to have a game of 'catch' in the corridor area of the building that is off-limits to the children usually, as play there can disturb anyone working late in the offices opposite. Brendon and I made a pantomime

of creeping around and checking that there were no people in the offices before setting up a game similar to tennis in the passageway, which lent itself spatially, by providing a set of boundaries on either side to contain the ball. This idea of being included in a spatial 'transgression' appealed to his character and made him clearly feel special and attended to, which kept him happily playing with me and away from disrupting the others.

Yet, not all of the children's spatial activities took the forms of transgressions: they would also try to create their own spaces within spaces and then control the entry of adults to the space. Similarly, Smith and Barker, in their study of children's after school clubs in England and Wales argue 'children's sense of place in the out-of-school club links the material environment to the meanings they attribute to it' (2000: 315). Particularly, in their study, the authoritarian attitude of the carers, who were concerned with the children's safety, drove the children to spend a large part of their time making dens and forts out of boxes and furniture, deliberately making the dens too small for the adults to enter, and forbidding them from doing so. In effect, creating 'a private place within the public realm of the club' (Smith and Barker 2000: 323). For the children at social services too, reconfiguring the babies' sleeping mats, the play furniture and equipment into forts was a task that could occupy much of an evening, and Grant, Annika and Brendon would build these specifically to have a place to play their video-games in, despite it taking far longer to build than the time they would spend in them playing. I discuss the specifics of these incidents further and the role of these particular objects within them in the final chapter of the thesis, where I examine

the role of shared experience and play in the creation of friendship. The fort-building was particular to this setting and to this group of children perhaps, because while in school it might be desirable, creative play is limited by the fixity of playground equipment, health and safety regulations and so forth. At home, the limiting influence of parents, not wanting the children to make a mess, or to turn their furniture into a toy also restricted this type of play.

A second intervention in the material environment Smith and Barker's study children made was to use art and craft materials 'wastefully', according to the adult carers, to make paper planes to fly around the club. However, despite the disapproval, they were allowed to do this. This causes Smith and Barker to argue that through this they successfully 'contest the production of space as adult' (2000: 323). Brendon, too, cemented his late-blooming friendship with the other children by teaching them to make little paper dart guns that they could then have 'pretend' games with. Not only did the subject matter of this 'craft' project worry the social worker assigned to help monitor the children, the way they enacted their play was specifically and sometimes spitefully physically centred around her, where they knew this performance of playing at 'violence' would disturb her.

It is clear through looking at 'controlled space', that the children accept as normal the limits and boundedness of being asked to remain in a space and be watched by adults. Yet, equally, they accept that this means they need to be more creative and

constructive in order to play within these constraints. Furedi argues that the continual vigilance surrounding children and their almost continual institutionalisation, whether it be in after-school care, or sports clubs encourage children to develop specialisations rather than their natural 'chaotic generalism.' According to Furedi referencing Bourdieu (1972 (1977)):

> Play becomes transformed into games, and games into work… If these experiences prepare youngsters for the corporate work world – partly through their enhanced 'cultural capital' of additional knowledge, skills and disposition and partly through the 'habitus', the attitude and experience of achievement they acquire – then after-school activities are yet another route to reproducing social inequities (Furedi 2008: 205).

What is more concerning from a childhood studies perspective, see for example (Frost 2009) or (Louv and Goodenough 2008) , is that 'controlled space', call it semi-public or semi-private, acculturates the child into a non-natural environment. Thus, the only landscapes they do encounter are those based in their imagination, or created out of essentially 'recyclia' from purpose-built play spaces. Research has yet to concretely demonstrate that these concerns result in 'damage' to the child, beyond nostalgia perhaps on the part of researchers. Past forms of free, spatially unlimited play have become idealised in society as the antithesis to the current, limited environments that are seen as necessary to protect children. Yet equally, children also spend more time in their homes and within their bedrooms in their homes as a result of this protective monitoring, as the sanctuary of the home is also idealised, not unproblematically, as the safest of spatial realms.

PRIVATE SPACES: TERRITORY AND SPACES FOR PRIVACY

I was fortunate enough to be allowed to spend a large amount of time working directly with three children, a brother and sister and an only-child, in their own homes. Both of the families were single-parent families. I made contact with both families advertising my research project on the Internet on a local classified website. Zach (8) and his sister Brianna (7), were newly arrived in Vancouver, under the foster-care of their aunt, Debra (32) who had been looking after them for two years. Originally a family of four with two toddler brothers, their aunt had made the difficult decision to give up the two younger children to other foster families, and to move Zach and Brianna to Vancouver from one of the Gulf Islands, Galliano, in order to find work as a teacher. Both Zach and Brianna had spent time in state foster care, sometimes separately, and found it a large adjustment to come to Vancouver from a very small community like Galliano. Their previous elementary school only had 40 pupils, all taught in mixed classes whereas their new school, Queen Alexandra, had ten times that. Over the course of the year I worked with them, Debra found a job teaching English as a second language at a local language school. Her first priority was to move the family from the dingy, rat-infested apartment she had lived in as a student, to a large, three-bedroom family home on the east-side of Vancouver. Debra further supported this move by taking in study-abroad students from the language school as lodgers. Debra lives in very modest circumstances, but scours second-hand stores to find the type of toys that Zach and Brianna like, and their room is packed with all sorts of games, books, videos, art materials and stuffed animals. Zach is very attached to Debra and is reflective

about her parenting abilities compared to those of his mother. He commented on one occasion, when we were choosing a video to watch:

> The same kid that's in 'Home Alone 2', he's in this other movie called 'The Good Son'. I've watched it but it's not very good for kids. And in this movie the kids dies; he gets thrown off a cliff at the end because he throws a body down into traffic and stuff. My mom made me watch it, we had the video, but Aunty watched ten minutes and then threw the video out.

In contrast to Zach, Brianna often speaks of her mother and grandmother in a positive light, telling me she is her 'mummy's little princess'. Brianna has an album with photographs of her past foster homes. In her play she will often mention 'her little brothers that were adopted', and will make little gifts and cards for them. Debra arranges as regular visits as possible with the younger boys, who are placed with different families on the Gulf Island of Salt Spring, a nearby island to Galliano. Zach's comment on the younger boys is that, 'their new families love them a lot' and he is far more pragmatic about their circumstances than Brianna. Because of Debra's limited financial circumstances, Zach and Brianna only participate in activities and hobbies that the school arranges as 'clubs'. Zach is in the yoga club and is very enthusiastic about it, and Brianna is in the art club whose products adorn the walls of her side of their shared bedroom. Debra regularly takes them swimming to the public pool and to the library to borrow books, however much of their free time is spent playing at home.

This is in contrast to the second family that I worked with, a divorced mother, Amira (40), and her daughter Zuleika (7), living in the wealthy suburb of Kitsilano on the west side of Vancouver. Amira is Iranian by birth and had left Iran in the 1980s as she was

threatened with possible imprisonment for her part in women's rights demonstrations. Amira started a family day-care[19] in the basement of her home when Zuleika was a young child in order to be able to work from home and also spend time with her. Now that Zuleika is in school she is no longer an active member of the day-care, but 'helps' her mother from time to time with the younger children, and has a good relationship with all of them. Zuleika's father lives in North Vancouver and is re-married with a small child. Zuleika has a weekend visit twice-a-month with them. In her day-to-day life Zuleika seems to hardly have a moment that is 'un-programmed'. She also participates in after school clubs, but prefers active sports like soccer and basketball, which are the most popular activities at her school. When she returns from these at about four-o'-clock in the afternoon, her evenings are set with piano practice, homework time, and then either piano lessons, drama class or Kumon (a mathematics tutoring system) class after dinner. On Friday afternoons the routine is slightly different as she has her 'best friend' Peter (see Chapter 2.5) over for a play-date. Zuleika describes herself as an 'actress' and while Kumon and piano lessons are her mother's choice on her behalf, she is enthused by her drama classes, and will give impromptu recitals at every opportunity. A poetic child, Zuleika commented on the streetlights' reflections in puddles as I walked her to piano one damp evening, 'I love walking at night. The ground looks like fireworks.' While ambivalent about her piano lessons, Kumon is a

[19] In British Columbia an individual is allowed to start an unlicensed 'family day-care' in their home as long as there are fewer than five children who attend. Originally, I worked with all the children as a 'free' babysitter, but after Amira had seen how happy Zuleika was with me, she asked me to work for her in the day-care. I accepted as this meant I would be able to be a part of the daily routine of school and home for Zuleika, however being under the employment of Amira meant that I was less free to be a friend for Zuleika, so over the year the data with Zuleika changes from a more personal interaction to observing her and her friends in pairs or a group. I also observed Zuleika at school, as she attended John Smith Elementary where I did my school observation.

bone of contention between Amira and Zuleika. Often Zuleika will complain how 'boring' it is, and how much she 'hates' it. On one occasion, after she had been very diligent at completing the exercises, her mother said she could have a reward. Zuleika muttered in response, 'If you want to give me a gift then make it that I never have to go to Kumon again.'

For many parents, including Amira, the standards of normative parenting exerts, through parent's peer groups, a host of restrictions on children's movements and what can be considered 'safe' practice. That is to say what one is seen to do to prove one's good intentions to keep your child and other's children safe. Despite living a matter of metres from the school gates, Zuleika's mother delivers her to her classroom in the morning on foot and waits for her outside the classroom when school is over. The level of responsibility required of each parent in monitoring their children's movements paints a far different portrait to the approach for co-operative, urban living 1960s theorist Jacobs, called 'eyes on the street', meaning that if homes looked out over communal play areas then the community could jointly monitor the children (Jacobs 1961). Despite a number of Zuleika's classmates living on the same street as her, on the whole each child would have an adult waiting for them. Even as a trusted friend of Zuleika and her mother, if I were to go instead of Amira, I would feel a sense of intense scrutiny from the other parents, who although they knew me well enough on sight, seemed to be subtly judging the meaning of my presence over that of Zuleika's mother. This emphasis on the parental collection, perhaps an extension of their 'monitoring' of their child, does not seem to be a universal part of urban parenthood. In Japan parties of children often walk to school (now with supervision in some cases),

whereas it is still common in many parts of Europe such as the Low Countries and Scandinavia for children to cycle or ski to school on their own or in small groups. In the United States, the Department of Transportation supports a programme known as the 'Walking School Bus' with a sub-programme of 'Bicycle Train' (2005) which is similar to the Japanese example of an adult walking a large group of children to school.

For the Canadian parents however, the sense of each family or parent/child unit as standing alone, rather than in community, would perhaps be the result of what Sennett (1994; 1977) illustrates as the bourgeois movement to a privatisation of family life. The culmination of this effect is that the child is only truly 'safe', to both their and adult perspectives, within the home, moreover, due to spatial pressures within the home over space-sharing between adults and children, within their own bedroom. Yet equally, within the home, shared sociality can occur in liminal areas and times, such as at shared meals or television-watching in a 'family' space. However, these spaces and times often grant temporary permission or access to these spaces for children, which may not be allowed at other times. For example, a specific dining room space may be used, or set up temporarily with fold-out tables and chairs, as was the case in my participants' homes.

Matthew Cooper and Margaret Rodman (1974), in their anthropological study of a Toronto housing co-operative, examined the relationship between built form and social boundaries within the home and community. Their study considered a number

of transitional, barrier, edge and border spaces. Especially in the case of the blurring of common areas with private apartments they argue that boundaries are not always built, but rather, are observable in the 'discourse and action' of the residents. This is remarkably useful as a template by which to consider the child's space within the home. In a spatial sense, for all of the homes I have visited in the course of the ethnography, including those participants I worked with in detail, the built boundaries of the child's bedroom, or in some cases a playroom also, remain absolute. The only exception to this is in the case of very young children, who are hardly separated from their parents, even when sleeping, the material culture that marks their existence can often colonise an entire house. In the case of my participants the boundaries between their (bedroom) space and that of their parents is clearly marked, even between those who share bedrooms with their sibling. In general the evidence of the child's material presence in communal spaces is strictly controlled by the parents, confining for example, school bags, coats and outdoor play equipment to a hallway or area close to the front door, or creating separate log-ins on the family computer so that the children can separate their brightly-coloured desktop wallpapers and games into a separate 'profile' on the hard drive.

Much of the physical and material constructions of boundaries in the home can best be described through the notion of 'territoriality' rather than simply degrees of 'private space' (Altman 1974), as that conveys the negotiation or dictation of these boundaries between the adults and children in the household. A true negotiation of 'privacy' is understandably difficult for the children. Privacy as it is seen by sociology is

a term with widely variant definitions, yet ultimately is linked to western conceptions of modernity and the self. Children, who in Canadian society are often not offered a true sense of self by adult society and are instead seen as parent's extensions of self, find that their negotiation of spatial behaviour and construction reflects certain tensions: namely, that between their possession of a strong, independent selfhood within their peer group, and their struggles to contravene their lack thereof in their most intimate place, the home.

I often found that, with the children like Zuleika who sometimes spoke a different language with their parents, expressions of her mother's ethnicity would be a difficult negotiation between the adults and the children, and perhaps be used to keep information from outsiders. This, in a way, creates a form of privacy between the family and the outside world. At the school or social services organisation, children would never speak their home languages unless it was to a parent. Even then, often the children would respond in English to a question in the 'home' language, or mix English into their response. Zuleika, despite having learnt to speak Persian before English, spoke it with a noticeably 'North American' accent, even to my uneducated ear, something verified by her mother, and often would switch between the two languages around me if she wished to fight with her mother and did not want to 'embarrass' her around me.

In an illustration of this interplay we were all sitting on the sun deck outside the house. The kitchen window turned itself into a mirror in the bright spring light and Zuleika began to dance around, and then asked us what type of dance we'd like to see, to which she would provide a little parody as we shouted out, 'tap' or 'ballet' or 'Irish'. After a few rounds her mother shouted out 'Iranian'. Zuleika looked a bit embarrassed and her mother cajoled her saying, 'come on Zuleika, show us'. Zuleika ran into the house and then ran back outside saying 'I've done it', having gone into her bedroom and out again. Her mother tries again to get her to do it, but she procrastinates and asks for the right music, and then eventually gets out of doing it in front of us altogether. My reading of this incident in the light of the socio-spatial condition of the child within the home is that for Zuleika, despite her enjoyment of performance generally, being asked to perform an 'ethnic' dance in the presence of outsiders, triggered this difficulty of lack of a fully-formed private selfhood away from that of her mother. Her response was to physically retreat into her bedroom, the only space in the home that could have any correlation to her desires for autonomy in this case. Whether or not Zuleika actually performed the dance in the 'privacy' of her bedroom I cannot tell, yet no doubt the difficulties of negotiating her 'embarrassing' role in an ethnic identity performance versus her desire to please her mother were the catalyst for this series of social/spatial movements.

The sociologist Ralph Taylor (1988) argues that the concepts of privacy and territoriality are often confused as the two processes parallel each other. Whereas, the above example, I would argue, links the social issues surrounding the nature of



Figure 8: Brianna's 'Private' area

selfhood, that is to say 'privacy' in western terms. The fact that Brianna (7) has and controls access to the area under her bed, which she curtains off and calls her 'Private Area' (Figure 8) is more an issue of territory than privacy. In one instance, where the curtain was not in place and I was careless of where I sat on the floor Brianna commented diplomatically, 'This is my private area (under her raised bed). I don't like people going in there, but this time it's special so you can sit there.' This offers a clear example of Cooper and Rodman's enacted, rather than spatial boundaries. As a response to Brianna's comment I immediately shuffled over a few centimetres, obviously satisfactorily as she did not raise the issue further.

'Privacy is a more comprehensive set of person-person and person-place processes than territoriality…Privacy mechanisms encompass a range of behaviours: spatial behaviour, manipulations of the environment, verbal and nonverbal communication, and so on' Taylor argues (1988: 105). Psychologists Julian Edney and Michael Buda (1976) have argued that they can separate the experiences of privacy and territoriality and that to their (laboratory) participants they 'feel' different. However, in field studies, Irwin Altman argues that these two concepts function together as 'an interrelated set of boundary-regulation processes' (1974: 104). Altman further argues

that privacy functions let people emotionally be 'off-stage' so to 'deviate from rules and customs in a protected fashion' (Altman 1974: 6). This definition echoes the type of reasoning for the purpose of complex 'pretend' play child-development scholar Erikson (1963) gives, and certainly in the case of children, the type of play one most associates with the child's bedroom. For Maxine Wolfe and Robert Laufer (1974), psychologists working with children in psychiatric facilities on the issue of privacy, they concluded that simply 'being alone' was not what made having a private bedroom so desirable in this context. Rather, it was a sense of control, together with the ability to be alone, that was these children's definition of privacy. Thus they argue:

> Adults control the time and space of young children (and sometimes of not-so-young children). Frequently adults and older children may act intrusively toward younger children who control little except perhaps their own object possessions. Thus, one of the child's earliest experiences with control is as it is exercised by others. Children learn where they have autonomy and where they must comply (Wolfe and Laufer 1974: 34).

The corollary for many of my participant children for the private realm was the fantasy realm, with complex play with toys, television and games occurring in the bedroom (see Chapter 2.3). These children very much reflect the movement that Sutton-Smith (1976), Sennett (1977) and historians of sleep (Stearns, Rowland and Giarnella 1996) point to in Anglo-American society. That is a movement from, group outdoors, mass play towards a 'bourgeois', to use Sutton-Smith's term, private play within the inner sanctum of the bedroom.

For Zach (8), the fantasy realm seems to interplay with the issue of outsiderness that mirrored his experience moving to Vancouver from the small community on Galliano Island. Zach often complained that he had no school friends. He explained:

> 'All of the other kids are mean to me and don't sit with me at lunch because they say that I stink. If I sit at one side of the table at lunch they all sit on the other side. One time she (Brianna) wanted to sit with this other mean girl and sat on the other side of the table.'

Zach is obviously hurt by his sister's choice. Brianna does not argue, but draws attention to the mystifying qualities of the lunch room:

> 'If you drop one tiny piece of food (at lunch) they all laugh. Once I was sitting at lunch and I dropped a piece of corn and they all said 'eeeeeewww' and went to sit at the other table. It's weird… They do it to everybody though.'

Zach is also accused by his new school mates of 'stinking', and is struggling to find his place at the school. Zach is reluctant to brush his teeth, and can have smelly breath, but equally the school's response to this situation of a 'polluting', dangerous outsider is to single him out for special attention. He is sent to the guidance counsellor at the school who gives him pencils, pens, highlighters, a calculator, a backpack and pads of paper as well as some toothpaste and a toothbrush. Apparently he 'gives them to anyone who asks for them' according to Zach, but it seems perhaps some of it is related to his social standing. Zach is also accused of having 'cooties' by his classmates. This is a type of game that strengthens the relations of those in a group by casting an outsider as a polluting influence (the cootie carrier). The folklorist Sue Samuelson regards the game as 'an informal index of the social status of children, not just within their schoolyard peer groups but in relation to their family's standing in the larger social context' (1980: 203). The game is most often hurtfully practised, especially by

older children. This is echoed by Thorne's classroom case study where she argues, 'Some games like cooties clearly cause emotional pain. When pollution rituals appear, even in play, they frequently express and enact larger patterns of inequality, by gender, by social class and race, and by bodily characteristics like weight and motor coordination' (1993: 75). In adults, similar types of pollution rituals adhere to people and objects and have been documented in many forms (Douglas 1966). In a clear example, psychologists Jonathan Haidt *et al.* (1994) argue that the provocation of a 'socio-moral disgust' reaction might mean that one was reluctant to wear second hand clothes, but even more or less so should the previous owner be categorised as 'good', say Nelson Mandela, or 'evil', say Adolph Hitler. This type of pollution ritual, most certainly in that of children's case of 'cooties', has been classically described by Frazer (1890(1947)) as 'sympathetic magic', that is 'things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on one another at a distance even after the physical contact has been severed (11).

Even in shared bedroom space, the differentiation of Zach and Brianna's possessions and bedding can be tempered by the potential of pollution one to the other. The use of curtained-off 'private areas' for the two children with a shared space in the centre meant that the type of material culture that was permitted to cross into the shared space seemed to divide along soft and hard lines, soft toys, bedding, clothes and so on being more liable to pollution and kept in the private areas whereas hard plastic toys, books, videos and so on were strewn about the shared space. For the only-child, Zuleika, who did not have to negotiate private space within her bedroom, but had to

fight for non-environmental privacies (of knowledge or control of her body), territory was more flexible. While not allowed any more than a few piano-music books in one corner of the living room as an assertion of her existence in communal space, when her mother departed, all furniture and objects became fair game in a world of imaginary play, and Zuleika would cheekily move furniture and objects around, restoring them before her mother returned. As Wolfe and Laufer note, 'some important childhood experiences with privacy may be as an intruder (intentional or unintentional) as well as one intruded upon' (1974: 34). Thus both in Zuleika's wider use of the home and Zach and Brianna's shared bedroom with its negotiated communal and 'private area' spaces, the frequent fights that occurred over disputes of control of the shared television[20], books, toys or pens and their location may be also be seen as a way to negotiate boundaries, and assert rights to space, either through allusion to pollution, territory or 'privacy'. However, children's experiences of territoriality do not only occur in the home. The playground, where every action increases or decreases social standing, also creates poles of territory as a discourse surrounding hierarchy.

[20] While Zuleika's home had a large shared television set in the living room Zuleika was very seldom allowed to watch it. Brianna and Zach had a small television set in their bedroom solely for videos and DVDs, as it was not connected to receive broadcast material.

THE CHILD'S PUBLIC

John Smith Elementary School is set in the leafy and well-off suburb of Kitsilano in the western part of Vancouver. Like many schools in Vancouver, the playground that surrounds the large red-brick school building is easily accessible from the street, surrounded by a low hedge, with multiple gaps for pedestrians. It is often used by mothers with small children or by parents in general, after school, as a community play-park space, but in school recess hours it is understood to be the domain of the school's children alone. Although it looks like a physically open space it is held tightly in a social sense with restricted sign-in access for outsiders. The school has two, fifteen-minute recess periods, separating the younger (kindergarten-third grade) from the older (fourth to seventh grade) children with the same adult supervision aids acting for both periods. The children are very wary of adult presence in general; a supervision aid that reports on a child can get them sent to the Principal's office. When the first bell rings for recess, the younger children flood out of a number of exits surrounding the building, hoping to claim a spot under the asphalted, soccer pitch that is covered with a tin, lean-to roof, or on the basketball court. The school has a bit of sports equipment that the children can sign out of the office, but this is time-consuming and so often it is the first child with their own ball who gets to each place that will be allowed to be in charge of the game there. On the opposite side of the school buildings is an area with a number of different jungle-gyms, monkey bars and swings, all on raised wood-chipped platforms. The children will divide up into groups of five or six, after the most popular spaces have been claimed, and spread themselves out in the other areas. Typical activities are playing on the swings or climbing frames, playing small ball games, sitting

in a circle chatting or playing 'pretend' games. On a normal day, near the basketball hoop, a group of five 2nd Grade boys and a girl try to play an imaginative game that involves a ball, 'bases' and a 'jail', and the following scene unfolded.

> 'I get to say what's puppy guarding and you're in jail.' Samantha said loudly while pointing towards other areas of the playground, holding a ball behind her back away from the other children playing.
>
> 'You're not doing it right!' says Mark, standing on one of the bases.
>
> 'It's just a game, c'mon let's just play.' Say two others together trying to resolve the conflict.
>
> Samantha continues to argue and will not put the ball into play, so the others move off their 'bases' and drift about. Mark goes over right over to her and they start a scuffle:
>
> 'I'm going to come into your home base and see how you like it!' Samantha says walking off in a temper and taking the ball with her.



Figure 9: Red and Yellow jungle gym that is the most popular 'territory'.

When the older children have their recess, soccer and basketball are also very popular activities. However, many of the sixth and seventh grade children tend to walk around the buildings in small groups chatting. For the remaining children, the physical use of spaces in the playground reflects the social dynamics of the group as a whole. One example of this is how the large red and yellow jungle gym (Figure 9) is used mainly by the boys, and is claimed by a group of them as a vantage point, rather than to play on it as the younger children might. The boys continually play what I come to think of as

the 'mongoose'[21] game over the time I spend at the school, where it happens almost daily. What happens in the game is that a large crowd of maybe eight to ten boys, with a couple of girls on occasion, rush to the top of the large yellow and red jungle gym by running up the slides and ladders in a pack. They seem to claim the territory by milling about and observing the playground from the top deck for a few moments before rushing down to a tree or another jungle gym as a group whooping and knocking over children in the way. While seemingly a purposeless game, on one occasion, Sam confronted Jason, both fourth graders, about his lack of participation:

> 'You have to join in and go up there.' Sam says red in the face, from all the running about.
>
> Jason responds, 'No, I don't want to it's stupid.'
>
> 'Why are you being an idiot?'
>
> 'You're being an idiot!'
>
> 'No you're being an idiot. This is you (puts on a melodramatic whiny voice and rubs his eyes in a pantomime of crying) I don't want to play; I'm not going to, waaaah.'
>
> Jason storms off to the swings area at this accusation and paces the edge, kicking up the wood chips for a few seconds before coming back over to his friend.
>
> 'Well are you playing or not?' Sam asks again.
>
> 'I'm playing, 'comes the reply and the boys run to join the others on top of the jungle gym.
>
> They all jostle and push, sliding down the slides on their feet, like they're surfing. Someone shouts:
>
> 'We have to go!'
>
> They all rush right up to me and cluster onto a small tree planter right next to the bench I'm sitting on. They jostle and scream a bit, ignoring me, but testing whether I will stop them, then they run and leap back up the climbing frame.

[21] This is the name I chose to refer to this game in my field notes, as the children just call it 'the game'. This way simply because their behaviour of surveying from the highest point of the playground reminded me of that of mongeese.

This example, and that of the dispute over 'bases' with the younger children, visibly illustrates the world of space on the playground in regards to territory. It is easy to recognise physical manifestations of the vying for social hierarchies Adler and Adler, write about in respect of in and out-group cliques on the school yard in their study 'Peer Power' (1998). For many of the children the (micro) public of the school yard is their only experience of social relations outside of the home. However, they learn that social rules surround who may engage with the playground of the school, both in terms of restricting the access of 'strangers' and through their own discourses of social standing that affect with who and where one plays at recess.

Thorne's (1993) popularly-cited work on gender frames the relations between groups as 'borderwork', characterised by invasions and tests. I would argue that forms of borderwork occur throughout the children's social lives, both in the physical testing of borders, such as the boys who claim a sense of territory through their mobbing of playground equipment, and in the testing of social borders through inviting children to play at various forms of television or popular culture play. Amongst the boys not participating in the 'mongoose' running game, which is the realm of the dominant, popular children, a second smaller group half-heartedly occupy the wooden lower jungle gym across the pathway and closer to the classrooms. Before they start to play, and are clambering up onto the platform, one boy, Jack, with rosy cheeks, wearing a pale pink t-shirt, pretends to throw himself over the edge of the structure saying 'I can't take my life anymore' in a melodramatic tone. The sense of spatial and enacted hierarchy between the two jungle gym spaces indicates that this smaller group were

relegated there, because of their relative unpopularity to those children who play the 'mongoose' game. While there is a sense of loss with these children that they are excluded from the main activity, they use the opportunity to play 'pretend' games away from the competition or derision of others. This second jungle gym has a wooden deck structure that is raised a meter or so off the ground, it is accessed by climbing up a small ladder and exited by a slide. The platform is ringed with a wooden railing also about a meter high which is able to be used as a 'stage' for 'pretend' games. In one such example, the three boys, Jack, Aidan and Chris, are in the process of negotiating a game when a fourth, more popular boy, Dayton, seeing the game starting wishes to join in. Jack puts his hand on Dayton's shoulder as Dayton will play the role of Ben 10, a popular cartoon hero:

> 'We have a new assistant today, this is kung-fu Ben.' He says in a tone of voice like he was reading a story.
>
> 'Ben' demonstrates a 'kung fu pose', raising his knee and arms into the air.
>
> The first boy continues to narrate, 'This is our friend, this is Aidan kung-fu.'
>
> There is a short 'pretend' play scuffle and 'kung-fu Ben' lies down and covers his head with his hands, while the other children make what only be described as 'karate noises'.
>
> The game seems to end and Ben pushes himself up on his elbows to check, seeing that a couple of the other boys are still playing lies down again. Shortly after this, the game has obviously ended as two of the boys run down the slide and onto a different section of the playground. At a slight disadvantage because of his 'playing dead', Ben and his fellow 'dead' teammate follow shortly after, chasing the others who then take off running at a sprint round the side of the school building, the game transformed to a chase.

While these boys do not overtly 'claim' the territory of the second jungle gym, using it as a stage invites a more popular child over from the premier territory of the playground to join in their game. However, while Dayton is given the leading role of

Ben 10 in this scene due to his social position, he is also quickly left behind as the other boys run away, metaphorically thumbing their noses at his popularity. A second example of children outside of the dominant groups challenging for authority, occurred around the soccer nets, prime territory for popular children. One of the soccer net areas is under the cover of a large metal roof lean-to and at the back behind the net is a ramp that leads out from a fire door of the school. The sides of the ramp are grey plaster and there are sturdy metal railings all around, cemented into the top of the ramp walls. On one occasion, three children, one boy and two girls, used the rails and the ramps to heckle the soccer players, participating in the game from the outskirts, shouting and then swinging themselves into a crouching position by the railings (hiding) and then using the rails to swing and pop back up to heckle the players some more. More than just spectators, these children, while not part of the game of soccer itself, are most definitely playing with the players. Their use of the physical setting afforded by this odd area of the school, in combination with their use of their bodies, swinging up in confrontation and then hiding again, blurs the borders of the game of soccer into the wider setting of recess games.

The French philosopher-anthropologist, Michel de Certeau (1984) argues that part of the joy of play derives from what he calls ‘spatial capitation’ (109), that is to identify the process of self and the other with the potential of being in one place, and another, imaginary place, at the same time. Thus, in the sense of borders, de Certeau argues there is a joining but also an imagination, much as the child plays a game of ‘pretend’ transforming from themselves to other characters in other spaces and times. In a more

practical sense, these borders or paths through walking can be inscribed, sometimes physically but most often as patterns of expectation or social experience marked by the to-and-fro nature of play. It can also be argued that it is violations of borders that make territories visible (Lyman and Scott 1967). On the school playground such borders and territories could be illustrated by boys going over to girls to try to coerce a desirable food from them, such as potato chips, jostling for position between the boys themselves so as to obtain food while stopping other, lower-ranking boys from participating in the invasion. So while, in one sense, using physical force and social standing to obtain food from an unwilling donor is a type of role enforcement, the more pertinent hierarchy reinforcement is between the boys themselves. These types of invasion and border-forming interactions are part of children's sociality, playful for some, and marked by physical sets of bodily and spatial relationships that are like a beacon to other children who may approach such an interaction hoping for success themselves. In such a way space, territory and social relations reach a fluid confluence that can mark differences and then move apart again. Contrary to Thorne's ideas about the relationship between borders and gender for children, none of my participant children ever mention gender or differences between boys' things/places/games and those of girls, hence my limited treatment of the subject. The main performance of spatial relations amongst the children at John Smith was marked by its presence as a set of fluid borders characterised by movement towards the imaginary 'other' as De Certeau points out.

Kelle (2000), in her ethnography of school yard territoriality, argues that, rather than focusing on a strict gender separation, it is more useful to look at social-spatial relations as a type of geography. By this it is inferred that with groups and games, if they congregate according to gender it is likely that the games being played are gendered in some sense. Perhaps an example could be a 'pretend' game based on a particularly feminine television series, skipping or clapping games, which might only attract few male participants, however, these were not games I observed at John Smith. In a corollary, Kelle argues, that if a particular area of the playground is often used for a type of game that more attracts boys rather than girls, it can become known as a 'boy's area' and then retain and self-perpetuate that title. This could be illustrated by the example I gave earlier in the chapter about the boys' jungle gym territory game which tended to mean that, for the older children, the red-and-yellow play gym, was manifestly the territory of the boys, and those girls who adducted themselves into the boy's games, and therefore nominally the boy's territory. While both Kelle and Thorne argue that it is this type of relationality of 'boy's areas' and 'girl's areas' that set themselves up for inter-gender competitive 'invasion' type play, this type of sociality seemed not to be often present at John Smith Elementary. Rather, while some areas were predominantly held by one gender or another, those gender groups also held a particular rank in the peer structure of the school. Kelle argues that, 'from both the sociological and ethnographic point of view, the question is, then how gender differentiation takes place in the field, since it is not continuously relevant but bound instead to situation and context' (167). Thus, challenges for territory could come from mixed gender, lower ranking groups, and were likely to be more noticeable and impactful on overall social relations than a simple gender-divided relations. Children's

playground relations and struggles for territory manage to remain reasonably internally regulated as long as careful note is made of the location and attentiveness of the adult playground supervisors. However, other public spaces, where children and adults interact, speak more directly to the place of children in adults' public spaces.

The 'Kids' Market' at Granville Island, where I worked in a toy store as a clerk, is one such example. Located in a separate building to the main market, the shopping centre had specialised facilities for adults to entertain children, change small children and co-shop for children's toys. However, when children were unaccompanied in the market they often behaved in a fashion subversive to this adult order. Not infrequently I noted, for example, a child unsubtly shoplifting a toy underneath their sweatshirt or a group hanging around on the play equipment outside after hours. This experience of children in the (adult) public realm leads to the dual characterisation of children as playing the roles of angels or devils. The innocent, small child must be protected from the eyes of other adults, away from the main shopping centre, playing the angel. By contrast, the shoplifters and the teenagers smoking on the swings outside the market after dark, wearing 'hoodies', play the threatening devils. Geographer Stuart Aitkin argues that childhood studies should 'then take issue with some contemporary commentators' insistence that childhood and youth disappear as categories of experience towards the end of the twentieth century' (2001: 120). Furthermore, he argues 'we need to understand the transformation of childhood from the vantage of the disillusion of the public and the private which, among other things, highlights unchildlike behavior' (2001: 120). Hugh Matthews and Melanie Limb (1999), also

childhood geographers, point out further examples of clashes between adults and children, where children are 'hanging-out' on street corners, indoor shopping centres and playgrounds in the evening. They argue that, 'children transgress the boundaries defined by adults and their visibility and nonconforming usage of places are seen as threatening' (69). The issue of visibility is key in this regard, 'good' (to use Lanclos's (2003) term referring to the performance of a category of child) children are not visible in the public realm because their lives are presumably kept under strict control by their parents for their own safety. Thus, the conclusion is that it is the 'bad' children, like the case of the so-called 'Devil Boys'[22] from Edlington in the United Kingdom, who aged ten and eleven lured younger boys to an abandoned shed where they beat and tortured them, that are at large in the adult public realm. Or that those children who are present in the public realm are 'at risk'. One result of this mind-set in the day-to-day lives of children is pointed out by Furedi:

> Most children are enterprising creatures, for whom adult insecurities provide an opportunity to exercise their power…It is tempting to blame malicious children for making life hell for some of their teachers. But it is not really their fault. They are merely manipulating a dirty-minded world created by obsessive adults. (2008: 38)

By this he refers to the ability of children to seem more 'at risk' than they are, perhaps to falsely report abuse, to attempt to extract some power or personal satisfaction from a teacher or parent.

[22] This became an often referenced term for the pair in the tabloid media cf. (Carroll 2010).

Limited amounts of real danger is, as we all know, part of fun, and children too, especially those with sterile, indoor lives, try to find danger where they can. Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett puts down the car games of Israeli children, such as running across the road in front of cars and playing 'chicken', to their factors of risk. She argues, 'the imminence of terrorist attack and war, explain their fascination with the game in terms of "bravery", tempting death, and heroism' (1990: 189). However, to most ears, that sounds like a typical street-child game, regardless of the war context, where the levels of danger they are exposed to are not strictly controlled by middle-class parents (or those expected to parent to middle-class standards) of continual supervision outside the home. Children's place in adult public life is precarious, as Cahill points out, public amenities like public telephones and toilets are always built to adult heights. Those children who do go out in public with adults are threatened with removal from the public, 'If you don't stop that, we're going home right now!', as a penalty for misbehaviour in the adults' eyes, or are used by nearby adults as a source of amusement, pulling faces and so on. This all reinforces the case that society does not give children the right to be alone in the adult public realm. Children's parks and theme-parks or child-oriented restaurants, while giving evidence of a cognisance to the importance of children in decisions of family consumption, are also ways to separate parents with children away from the rest of adult society, making sure the children cannot disturb other adult with their playful or potentially 'disruptive' behaviour, or equally cannot be interfered with by the general adult population by clearly marking them as separate from the general visitor.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that children's spatial engagement with the city is dictated by notions of risk. Particularly, the public realm is marked out by children's independent absence from it, and their only limited permission to access it accompanied. It is arguable that children's systematic withdrawal from public space, because of the perception of danger, has in fact created that danger. That is to say, how would we know if a solitary child was unduly absent from a public space, as we would not expect them to be there in the first place?

I have contended that the discourses surrounding risk that have formed children's relation to space in the city are driven by two 'rumours'. Firstly, a nostalgic interpretation of past childhoods as being carefree and 'free-ranging' and secondly, the cautionary tale of 'stranger danger'. There is evidence that neither of these rumours are borne out through statistical information on their occurrence. However, I have argued 'stranger danger' is in reality a moral panic which self-justifies why city childhoods cannot be 'free-ranging'. Thus these debates both contribute to and fuel discourse about the implied moral decay of cities, which finds its home neatly amongst the panoply of threats posed by the failure of the rational, modern grid city. Particular among these, the seeming lack of ability of 'utopian' city planning to resist struggles surrounding the diverse race, culture and class characteristics of what Leonie Sandercock and Peter Lyssiotis (2003) call the '21st Century Mongrel City'.

There is substantial correlation between other sorts of urban legends, drawn from ethnography, and the pervasiveness of 'stranger danger' talk. This is both in content, as themes of abduction for nefarious purposes echoes with stories from other parts of the world about body snatching, and in method of dissemination, through word of mouth and the media. Many of these legends and myths, serve to shift the burden of what are considered 'unchildlike' knowledges from children and adults charged with their care, to other seemingly malevolent forces. The discourse of 'stranger danger', serves as fuel for the enshrinement of the 'sacred', 'innocent' child within what are debatably 'safe' spaces. The result is that the child experiences the city as a series of confined spatial typologies. That is, a series of islands of 'safe' space, in a sea of danger. This is spatially reinforced in a grid city, where a differentiation of 'safe' spaces from all other seemingly similar spaces, must be made. Controlled, semi-public spaces, as I have termed them, emphasise this withdrawal of children from the public sphere through adducting them to the discourses of protection and privatisation running through middle-class society. Furthermore, the monitoring and physical safety of the child is placed at the forefront of what it means to be a 'good' and responsible parent, both in terms of legal and moral obligations. This role of monitor extends to the spatial experience of the child in these places, where facilitation of this monitoring is given highest priority over richness of environment for children. However, I have shown through ethnographic excerpts how my participant children themselves create their own meanings for these spaces through creative re-configuration of their limits, within the envelope of the 'safety' boundary.

Within their homes, my participants also negotiate the spatial boundaries that surround them, primarily presented through struggles surrounding privacy and territory. Because of the balance of power within the home, children are usually only awarded a bedroom, or part of one, as their own space, and are moreover metaphorically enshrined within it. However, their autonomy within their bedrooms is still limited by their age, where their rooms are frequently subject to parental inspection and invasion and disobedience can result in sequestration there. Children can express their desires for independence as 'privacy' which often conflates with notions of territory.

I have also argued that territory has a vital role to play in shaping the discourse and action surrounding space in the micro-public of the child's playground world. Here particularly, as an expression of social standing in the hierarchy of playground popularity. Much of the play I observed on the playground, revolved around the reinforcement of orders of dominance and leadership related to occupation and control of certain areas and fixed objects in the school yard. This is particularly acute in the case of play that enacts social borders as spatial ones in the process of maintaining social hierarchies. Through the joining of social borders with spatial ones, the children's hierarchies are 'written' into their actions within space. Adler and Adler's (1998) work on children's social groups argues that children's social stratification manifests into 'tiers and subgroups within cliques' (57). I have demonstrated through spatialised examples, how not only can the children's groups be seen to influence not

only what they play and who they play with, but where and how they choose to play certain types of games.

However, not all of the spaces that children play in are concrete spaces within the city. Urban children, perhaps due to the limited range of 'real' places available to them, are also exceptionally aware of alternative spaces and publics, such as online spaces and imaginative spaces. Furthermore, some spaces facilitate play indirectly, such as spaces of consumption like toy stores. In the following chapters I will investigate the nature of some of these spaces and demonstrate how they intersect with how children play. Furthermore, I will argue that the media has specific social functions as a form of knowledge for children's whose range of 'real world' experiences is limited, that acts as a bridge between their spatial and social worlds.

2.2) TELEVISION AND CONSUMPTION

INTRODUCTION

When my eldest daughter was in the third grade, she's 27 now, the teacher called me in and asked me whether she watched Beverly Hills 90210, I said of course not! She's nine, that's really inappropriate. The teacher said that she was the only kid in the class who didn't watch it and was clearly being left out because of it. So I decided to let her watch it and I watched it with her and explained things and made comments. I don't think she liked it that much because of the comments I made, but we watched every single episode.

– Jan, child-care volunteer, social services organisation.

Television and the commercial toy products that relate to it permeate every sphere of children's lives. From branded food items, backpacks and pyjamas to the shows themselves, beamed directly into the home and often right into the child's bedroom.[23] Children's social lives too are indivisible from the toys, games and shared knowledge surrounding the visual media, with playground talk and play being continually woven through with the narratives of films and television series.

Television for leisure in particular, primarily in response to adults' use of it, is treated with great suspicion by parents and educators because of assumptions made about the passive nature of the medium. Other sectors of the media, such as

[23] According to the Kaiser Family Foundation Survey (Rideout, Foehr and Roberts 2010) 71% of all eight to eighteen- year-old North Americans have a television in their bedroom, and television remains the most popular of all media in this age group.

the print media, have in many ways fuelled this concern, demonising the 'boob tube' (see Figure 10) as it is often called in North America, and focusing parents' worries for their children's future onto the uncertainty surrounding the long-term effects of the medium. These fears about the dangers of television have also been selectively endorsed by official reports, such as Elizabeth Newson's controversial (1994) review on violence and television, and emerging work based on fMRI (Murray et al. 2006), despite methodological problems which limit their ability to consider long-term effects conclusively. [24]

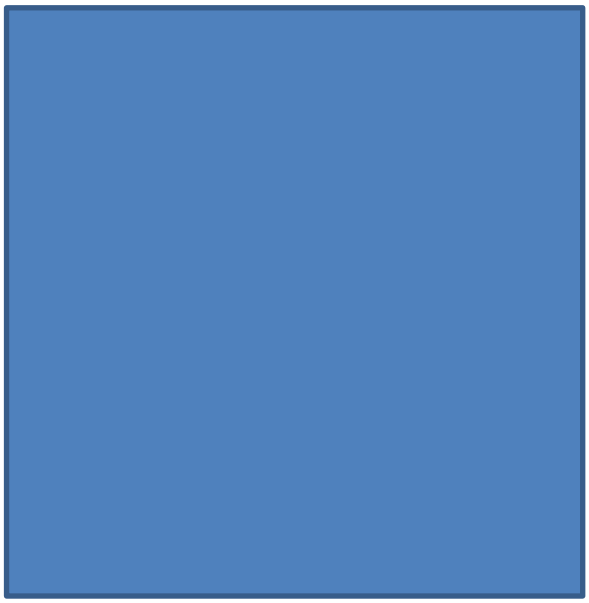


Figure 10: This was sent as an email around the social services centre, to much hilarity, although taken as a truism. - (removed - copyright restrictions)

This worry about the dangers of television becomes compounded for parents when they see their children basing much of their imaginative play on the back-stories of television shows. Primarily this is because the quality of passivity associated with adult viewing of television is then attributed to this sort of 'pretend' game. This casts these games, in the minds of those outside the play, as an impoverished form of 'lazy' play; see also Kline (1993) . These assumptions dovetail with middle-class

[24] These criticisms particularly refer to studies where participants are shown excerpts of television shows while in stressful fMRI machines in order to visualise the brain's response to the images. These images are then used to generalise about the long-term effects of such material, despite the immediacy of the fMRI process (Jones 2003).

dominant ideologies surrounding the consumption and thus implied consumerism of television-based toys, which are often aggressively marketed on children's television. Consumption, in the case of children, is particularly seen as negative, as the assumption of their passive relationship with these products is perceived to socialise them into a culture of greed and superficiality. This debate often revolves around so-called 'pester power', where children's assumed unquestioning acceptance of marketing messages translates into wanton consumerism that parents struggle to control. However, there are a number of inherent false assumptions in these public discourses, which I aim to demonstrate in this chapter. These particularly revolve around the supposition of children's undiscriminating, passive engagement with television as a medium.

The first of these assumptions is that children consume all television and television-based products indiscriminately. This seems patently untrue in the face of a multi-million dollar advertising industry that still cannot guarantee which product or television show will be popular and succeed, and which will be consigned to history as a failure. Nor can it be guaranteed that a toy will become popular simply through prolific marketing. This suggests that children are active rather than passive consumers with discriminating tastes in what they like and dislike, independent of the influence of commercial messages. The second of these false assumptions lies in the public belief about the nature of the play that children use television as a tool for, in comparison to other types of play. Specifically, the concerns raised in the media relate to the outcomes of play as part of socialisation and tend towards

simplistic causal relationships. Many of these theories extend to childhood advocacy, such as in this example from a parenting guide:

> For just as a child gleans his parent's mannerisms, he can also acquire the television hero's violent patterns of behavior, especially if he's actively participating in the on-screen action with his own weapon. These ideas and patterns of behavior are seen in the games children play and in their methods of solving conflict. As they imitate the television characters who are rewarded for aggressive behavior, they learn the language of guns. (Tuchscherer 1988: 2)

The global print media, too, is fond of publishing articles supporting these sorts of arguments, particularly those selectively given authority by academic research, regardless of discipline and often taken out of the context of the research questions. From the earliest examples of children's cartoons, there have been advocates against them, such as the 1913 New York Times headline, 'Comic Supplement Evil: Bad for Children' (Moore 1913). Or, for example, the 1975 refusal of American television networks to screen the cartoon 'Tom and Jerry', in the broadcast media: 'Networks say cartoons too violent for home view', reported in The Bulletin (Marguiles 1975). Media reporting on recent studies and opinion on television for children has intensified in its derision of animated shows, as shown in the following headline: 'Violence Finds a Niche in Children's Cartoons' in the New York Times (Rutenberg 2001), or 'Beware the evil agenda of cartoons' in the Monterey Herald, (Livernois 2005). The British press too has produced a choice selection of negative reports about children's television; for example the Daily

Telegraph and Daily Mail headlines, 'Cartoon Violence "makes children more aggressive"' (Clark 2009), and 'Cartoons like Pokemon (sic) "can make children aggressive"' (Moore 2009).

The inference of these reports is that, like the popular media arguments of so-called 'gateway' drugs, cartoon violence will lead children to want to consume more serious forms of violence. This model is known in sociology, for obvious reasons, as the 'hypodermic' model of audience effects. However, particularly in the Canadian press, typified by moderate views, occasionally these extremely negative positions will be balanced with a discussion of the 'educational' merits of various children's television. These tensions have typified debate on television and children since the medium was introduced into the home (Bryant and Bryant 2001). Robert Morrow (2006) argues that these debates were an extension of Victorian and protection of children from 'dangerous' literature and moral censorship in this regard has always been widespread. In the 1970s the concept of 'educational' television became wide-spread throughout North American syndicated television with the introduction of 'Sesame Street' in 1969. [25] However, Sesame Street was oriented at offsetting disadvantages in background through systematic emphasis on early educational goals. In contemporary Canada, debates surrounding education and television for older children are also keenly reported. For example, an article published in the Canadian 'Globe and Mail' based on a 2008 Children Now report headlined as

[25] Interestingly, the BBC, traditionally a bastion of 'educational' programming, rejected the show for its overly 'authoritarian' aims in favour of its own 'Blue Peter' and 'Playschool' children's programming. Monica Sims, the head of children's programming, called the show 'indoctrination' in reference to its aims in trying to change children's behaviour (Geoghegan and Lane 2009).

'Hannah Montana Schools Curious George' (Pearce 2008). This article reported findings that showed that some television series, such as 'Hannah Montana', taught children more, according to the educational researchers, than television series created to be 'educational', suggesting that there are some positive aspects to children's television, even if only in terms of reaching adult-set developmental 'goals'.

This is also exemplified in the debates surrounding children's use of television in their play: particularly, the idea that television has nothing valuable to offer children and that the 'dangers' inherent in the medium are not 'worthwhile' risks that add to their understanding of the world (Brown and Vaughan 2009). Many of the concerns raised by this discourse emerge from the acceptance of arguments surrounding mimesis in play and 'practice' for adulthood, as I have outlined in the introduction. However, I aim to demonstrate in this chapter that the way that children use television cannot be simply categorised as either of these instances.

The concerns raised by media debates about television do not reflect children's own priorities surrounding its consumption. Educational anthropologist, JoEllen Fisherkeller argues that these theories of the relationship of television to play do not account 'for how culture is learned by active and inventive individuals. People do not learn all that culture presents to them, and different individuals do not learn in the same way' (1997: 467). This stance is supported by Messenger-Davies (2001)

'Dear BBC', and Cynthia Carter's (2007) research on the children's show 'Newsround'. Although particular to the UK context, these studies convincingly argue that children themselves are active and thoughtful about what and how they consume television, and are interested in the medium as a source of knowledge. This type of research supports positions taken by childhood studies and media theorists, such as Haynes (1978), that children are active 'decoders' of the information television has to offer them. Yet, what children are allowed to 'decode' is largely subject to parental control. Parents are set between moral caution regarding what their children are exposed to, and children's own desire to engage with the media targeted to them. Arguably, social knowledge is an important part of the information television has to offer children. One of the primary worries the children in my research discussed at home was over the fear of being left out of their social group at school. A strong element of being a successful member of the group is the ability to show that they 'know' a certain television show, music video or toy and can interact with elements of, and play 'pretend' games based on it. These sorts of games are a common ground of understanding between children with a variety of different family, ethnic and class backgrounds, and act as a social lubricant for the formation of peer groups that form the basis of the child's public world at school.

The lasting social importance of media in childhood can be further demonstrated by the multiple instances I observed of adults wandering through the toy store where I conducted fieldwork as a store clerk and connecting with other adults around them

over the toys. For example as two women shopped together, one exclaimed, 'Anne of Green Gables! I love Anne of Green Gables' poring over a doll based on the animated television series. As often as five-times-a-day, adults in their late twenties and early thirties would, to much hilarity, sing the Transformers TV jingle or quote the slogan as they passed by the display racks of the store. This nostalgia shows the permanence and permeability of these television shows in popular culture through the long retention of the theme tunes and awareness of characters. Often the singing of the theme tune of a show would be performed by the adult shoppers as a call-and-response, echoing the turn-taking way in which children play 'pretend' together.

These anecdotes about adult reactions to children's television toys demonstrate that children's television play is not as new and as threatening a phenomenon as the media frames it to be. Neither, is the source of television-related knowledge necessarily directly from the shows themselves: children are often quite inventive about finding out about television shows, even if they are not allowed to watch them by their parents. Natalya, a three-year-old child I worked with, could for example, sing word-perfectly the theme tune to Spiderman, which she had been taught by her father, not having seen the show herself. Children's consumption of television-related toys is likewise much more complex than the 'pester power' debates imply, with parents and social rules setting a number of boundaries around children's leisure shopping. Thus, I intend to demonstrate, through the use of ethnographic excerpts, how and when children shop for television-related toys,

how they creatively use television as a tool to play with and how their parents try to control this process. Through this I will show that children's use and consumption of television is not passive, and furthermore that children's own priorities do not entirely emphasise material gain, but rather co-operative play based on the shared social knowledge gained from television.

TOY CONSUMPTION: BROWSING, SHOPPING AND NEGOTIATING

Many parents, educators and play scholars are concerned about the impact of commercial toys on children's play (Cohen 2010) and are doubtful that children have the developmental skills to resist the 'false needs' (Marx and McLennan 1885 (2008)) implicit in advertisers' messages. This further positions children as purely passive in the face of media messages. However, through my ethnography of children's consumption in a toy store that sells exclusively television-based material, I will show that media messages are in fact, subsumed by the social rituals of shopping that constrain children's consumption. Furthermore, I will argue that children's participation in processes of consumption is part of a wider play-dynamic that encompasses many of the diverse forms children's media takes.

Consumerism, which is seen as insatiable consumption for its own sake, is embedded in public discourses surrounding children's relationship with toy buying. However, the sociologist of childhood consumption Daniel Cook (2001), argues that

within these discourses are seeds of moral panic, which he attributes to the threat the negative forms of consumption pose to society's conception of the 'ideal', innocent child. He argues that by letting children be 'tainted' with consumption, society admits its fallibility in protecting our supposedly most vulnerable from a host of social ills. Children's passion to collect and their desire for certain popular toys, like Pokémon cards or 'chase' toys, becomes a nexus for further panic, as moral concerns over adults' lack of control is conflated with their perceived impotence in guaranteeing children's safety in a wider sense.

Neither are parents immune from marketers' counter-messages about what alternative toys may be 'better' for their children, particularly as these often prey on the fears about the negative effects associated with children's own choices. It has been argued, by Birgitta Almqvist (1994) for example, that 'educational' toys in their entirety are a myth perpetuated by marketers. The recent well-popularised scandal about the 'Baby Einstein' series of products which falsely promised to improve children's intelligence is a case in point, (Zimmerman, Christakis and Meltzoff 2007). Jennifer (17), the clerk of the Stay Tooned toy store where I conducted my research, observed:

> 'In retail you have to have new (contemporary) stuff for the kids and some old (old-fashioned) stuff for the adults who want their kids to relive what they had. Kids like playing with anything, but if they had their (free) choice that would be different.'

Here Jennifer points out, that despite so-called 'pester power', it is the parents' choice what the child gets to play with, particularly in the home, and they set the

obligations a child must fulfil to obtain the toys they want. When it comes to commercial toys that do not fall easily within the category of 'educational' toys, which parents may be more disposed to give freely, parents become stern gate-keepers. They may for example, partially edit a child's birthday and Christmas wish 'lists' when disseminating their contents to friends and relatives, in order to better suit their ideas over what sort of toys their child is allowed.

Patently, there is more to children's consumption than a simply automatic response to advertising, particularly when one considers the role of parents' opinions and desires for their children's development. Furthermore, it is evident, as I have argued in Chapter 2.2, that young children do not shop alone in public spaces, and are always in the presence of adults, usually family members, who will usually conduct the transaction on their behalf. Even when children have a small allowance to spend, they may be subject to judgement and censure by their parents for the choices they make. As I have discussed, parents' concerns surrounding the educational and moral values toys are seen to present are often contrasted to the child's own desires. However, the judgements parents make can also surround other concerns regarding the child's socialisation. In my observations in the toy store environment, I witnessed a number of incidents of which the following scene between a mother and her four-year-old daughter is typical:

> 'Look Mom, Spiderman!' The little girl says excitedly.
>
> The mother pays little regard and turns around with a 'My Little Pony' toy in each hand.
>
> 'Look it's Twilight Sparkle and Applejack!'

> The daughter looks longingly at the Spiderman and then turns to the My Little Pony toys and says:
>
> 'We should get that.'
>
> 'Yeah, good girl.' The mother says and she puts down the toys and they leave.

This exchange between mother and daughter might be an exercise purely in control, or more likely in 'teaching' a daughter to like what the mother does; in this case, something perceived as gender appropriate. This could be an example of what Seiter has called class distinction, created through the use of so-called 'educational toys'.

> Upper middle-class parents want their children to like things that are 'better to like', they struggle to teach them the tastes for classic toys, the aesthetics of natural materials, and the interest in self-improving 'educational' materials favored by their class. (1993: 8)

While this interaction between class, taste and toys is obvious on occasion, shopping can also be a site for parents to teach their children other sorts of values, like lessons in the meaning of money, a 'real' versus 'fake' toy and so on. This is illustrated by the following example when a boy of about five-years-old and his father start looking around the shop.

> 'Hey Daddy, I found a purple Goblin. Remember him from Spiderman?' the boy says looking at the box in some detail.
>
> The father glances at the box and says:
>
> 'This is the cartoon one, not the real one.'
>
> He calls the boy to his side showing him something on the small racks at the back of the shop. After a few more minutes browsing they walk around to the till. Paying for some Batman stickers, the father remarks:
>
> 'He picked the cheapest thing in the shop! Good boy!'

On the whole the parents are firm about what they are prepared to buy their children. A three-year-old, for example, was laughingly rejected by her father when she points to a watch under the glass counter at the till. 'Yes, I did say you could have something small,' he says, 'but not that. How about some socks?' The purchase of toys by parents is often conditional on the child's behaviour, or represents a social contract in some form (see Chapter 2.4). Sutton-Smith (1976) has noted that the toy idealises family structure and love, and toy gifts are a type of contract between parent and child to ensure the good behaviour of the child in the future. This parallels the types of safe, 'educational' television that parents often allow children to watch, where good behaviour is emphasised (and often demonstrated) as a social value.

The December shopping season, surrounding Christmas and other seasonal religious holidays, is a key example as to how television and children's shopping link to children and their parents' relationship. Santa's question of 'naughty or nice' is itself originally a contract of behaviour, parental control disguised in myth. It is also around this time of year that children see many more advertisements for toys on television, and are also encouraged to create a 'Christmas list' that details their wishes. Parents too are exposed to messages about what the 'hot Christmas commodities' are, in newspapers and in parenting magazines, see for example 'Gifts for Kids' in the Canadian national newspaper 'The Globe and Mail' (Kelly 2009). James Carrier (1995) has pointed out that Christmas is a time when social rules are

followed very closely surrounding the ritual of gifting, and I would argue that between parents and children, these rules also extend to the Christmas 'list' and shopping.

The Christmas 'list' is an often notional, rather than physical, list of toys and purchases that the child decides they want for Christmas. After the list is made, the child's parents facilitate the oral dissemination of the list to family, friends and so on who ask the question, 'what does so-and-so want for Christmas'? Some items may also be edited off the list by the parent or saved for a gift from 'Santa'. [26] As the list is often not a physical one, writing letters to Santa at the North Pole having somewhat fallen out of fashion, the parents facilitate the children browsing for toys in their company, by taking them to the toy shop to look at the toys. Often smaller children will be told to 'look not touch' as they browse, and as Christmas draws closer fewer toys are bought for the children, even for the very young. As a mother and a small child of about three passed the shop, the young boy exclaimed, 'It's a inja turtle.' The mother immediately replied, 'Ninja, say nnn… Christmas is coming up, so no toys today'. The young clerk of the shop, Jennifer, (17), comments to me in response, 'A lot of people are saying that now.'

On the whole the adults accompanying the children do not take great interest in what the children look at or linger on, hurrying them past, or getting annoyed if

[26] In my research, it is variable between families as to whether all the gifts are presents from Santa, or some are presents from the parents and others from Santa.

they dwell on a particular item. In an exception, a young woman came past the display racks right at the entrance to the store with a boy of about nine or ten-years-old, who seemed not to be her son. He looked excitedly around all the racks picking out boxes to inspect the toys behind the thin plastic windows and then putting them back.

> 'What's this black box thing?' the woman asks him about the toys linked to the 'Transformers' TV series and films.
>
> 'That's the All Spark, it's like their power.' The boy replies.
>
> 'If it gets taken out of them they shut down?' she asks. The boy nods distractedly agreeing.
>
> 'This is pretty awesome tank.' He says.
>
> 'Maybe you could talk to your Dad about getting one for Christmas.' The woman advises.
>
> He replies:
>
> 'I'm thinking about a Christmas list already.'

In a similar incident a boy and his mother are looking through the action figure racks.

> 'I'd like this for my Christmas and that Anakin and that R2.' The boy says excitedly pointing out about five different characters.
>
> Exasperated and annoyed the mother replies:
>
> 'You won't get everything on your list if you make your list so long!'

As Christmas drew closer, the parents seemed to exclude children from the toy-buying process and leave them behind; presumably to make sure the gifts were enough of a surprise. The notional list then 'moves' into the parents' custody, who may disseminate its contents to relatives. Two weeks before Christmas, for example, on a Sunday morning, there were perhaps sixty adults browsing the

market and only fifteen children, mainly under the age of five-years-old. The store I was most familiar with had depleted its stock by about fifteen percent in the first two weeks of December, but was empty of customers, as were a number of other shops in the market. The adults were concentrated in the stores that sell 'educational' toys aimed at the five to twelve-year-old market, focusing on construction like Lego and Playmobil, sets of craft materials for beading, sculpting and so on, and science toys like microscopes and crystal-growing kits. Browsing the shop was a young couple with a large Playmobil bag in one hand and a dump truck in the other. 'We're knocking them off the list!' The woman said happily. 'This is great, we're nearly done!' her partner replied. Further into the shop I saw the only two older children in the market, a boy and girl of about six and eight years-old, shopping with an aunt. They were looking at the Playmobil toys, particularly related to the Christian nativity. The boy explained:

> 'This is what we're missing. We have the whole nativity scene but not the three wise men.'
>
> Their aunt replied:
>
> 'Oh well, let me get this then as a gift to the family.'
>
> The younger girl immediately asks for a toy she has seen for herself. The woman replies:
>
> 'No it's close to Christmas so no individual gifts, but this is for the family.'

Despite the fairly bizarre combination of the Playmobil aesthetic applied to the traditional Christian nativity scene, I know that this is a popular toy and one that adults do not seem averse to spending rather large amounts of money on. Zach and Brianna, in this same year, have a Playmobil advent calendar (Figure 11), which is made in the 'traditional' way one usually finds with chocolates. That is, a large



Figure 11

cardboard box with small compartments behind perforated windows that one opens each day of the advent until Christmas Eve. Their advent calendar gifts small pieces of the nativity scene day-by-day until finally, the figurine of baby Jesus is gifted on the 24th of December. They take turns between each other to open the window and place the new objects on their window sill where they are assembling the entire scene. The full set remains there even well after Christmas has passed, Brianna or Zach occasionally moving a figure around as they walk by.

These scenes demonstrate that parental control around children's shopping and consumption is highly monitored and regulated by social rules like the Christmas 'list', even at times where the general media environment promotes 'excessive' consumption and would seemingly be ripe for 'pester power' to be at its fullest. This shows that for the children themselves, media and advertising messages are not necessarily absorbed wholesale and then translated into desire. Rather, due to the relationship of the child to the public realm of the shopping mall, and the guardianship of their parents, children must find other ways to manipulate and consume television and media through toys. Nava and Nava (1990) and Patrick Alexander (2010) have argued that the way in which children 'consume' and use media messages is not only about directly buying the objects associated with that

media. Alexander's research on the popularity of the 'Cadbury Gorilla' advertising campaign with British children shows that what became most popular among them was the 1981 song 'In the Air Tonight', which provided the soundtrack to the advertisement. Inadvertently, a commercial for chocolate became a vessel to create a new generation of Phil Collins fans who would sing and invoke his drumming style in their play. Similarly, I will show how young children's consumption of television is not necessarily through commercial product spin-offs and 'passive' viewing, but also through imaginative 'pretend' play based on television back-stories.

PLAYING WITH TELEVISION



Figure 12: A Selection of Zuleika and Brianna's Valentine's Day cards

The significance of television as a basis for play is that it is accessible to children in a way that toys are not, both due to limits on children's movements and the financial means to consume. Furthermore, for many children, commercial television

becomes a lived and embodied practise through play, whether they see the shows themselves or learn about their contents through friends. For example, on one occasion around Valentine's Day Brianna (7) showed me a number of small cards (Figure 12) that the children swap as 'Valentine's cards'. [27] Most of these relate to a particularly television show or film particularly Pokémon, High School Musical and Kung Fu Panda. Brianna showed me an example saying:

> 'This is a High School musical one, even though I don't really know what it is about, this is my favourite character, Gabrielle. Sometimes we play it pretend at school.'

Despite not having seen the film, she does have a favourite character in terms of the way it is portrayed in 'pretend' games amongst her friends. In general, Brianna finds it easier to make friends than her older brother Zach (8), because she is adept at playing along with other girls' games even if she does not know the background of the television show or film they base them on. Social exchange between the play world and the television is a key site for the creation of amiability among children at school and can mitigate the difficulties of political allegiances and friendships on the playground. These often make and break with the flows of social capital gained through friendships and trade. These latter aspects are discussed in detail in Chapters 2.4 and 2.5. Even though friendships and play at school are exceptionally socially important to the children, 'pretend' play linked to television is not confined to this spatial realm and can often be a large part of play within children's homes. For children, television provides ease of access to pre-set narratives to play with, that all the players can quickly absorb and relate to, either first-hand or via the

[27] Zuleika (8) and the children at her school, John Smith Elementary, also swap these Valentine's cards. They are widely available throughout Vancouver in the weeks running up to the holiday.

popular culture trends that television inspires. This tends to mean however, that as television back-stories become a major part of the common play lexicon, parents and educators become concerned about their ubiquity, rather than focusing on how these narratives are hybridised by children into their own play.

FREE PLAY WITHOUT PROPS:

Children's consumption of 'pre-set' television narratives has regularly been compared negatively to other types of imaginative 'pretend' play perceived to be less 'creative' or lazy (Kline 1993). In my observation, all of children's imaginative play uses some sort of back-story, to give direction to the players as they improvise their dialogue. Even the most structured of television-based play is never a verbatim performance of a particular episode or scene. Most often it will be a brief vignette inserted into everyday life. For example, Grant (10), when moving from one area of the playground to another walked stiffly with his arms and legs out straight, making 'hydraulic' noises saying, 'I am indestructible Iron Man', followed by saying 'Pokémon engage', and running off.

In the case of more protracted scenes there is a need to have some consensus among the players over the content of the play for it to continue. Because of this, many traditional 'pretend' games, such as domestic role-plays, have a tendency to descend into normative stereotypes or remain fairly banal in their content in order to maintain the framework of the back-story. In an illustrative example, three third



Figure 13

grade girls, Jenna, Tory and Robyn, began to play out a scene of 'Christmas Morning' in a small tucked-away area of the John Smith playground (see Figure 13). The following scene unfolded as Tory leaped off a bench, stretching and yawning while saying:

'It's Christmas Morning!'

Jenna, clearly playing the role of mother said:

'Not yet, go back to bed'.

After a few seconds of returning to 'sleep', Tory springs back up again with the announcement,

'Now it's morning.'

'Yay yay!' Says Jenna.

Before they can continue the game, Robyn interjects, showing them both a posy of some daisies and bits of green bush:

'This is the most beautiful arrangement I've seen in my life,' she says to the others.

A few moments pass and Jenna and Tory look at each other, clearly puzzled, trying to find a way to incorporate this bizarre statement into the game:

'Yes Gran', Jenna says in reply.

'Gran' says, clearly not playing:

'You two are so tiresome.'

Jenna and Tory ignore her and carry on, Tory asking Jenna:

'Can I open my presents now?'

Before the reply can be given, a small boy from their grade, James, arrives and pushes himself up against Tory, not in an aggressive way, but very close.

'Can I play?' He asks.

A small scuffle ensues; clearly he wants to change the game.

Jenna threatens:

'I'm going to call a supervision aid.'

James quickly leaves and the game ends.

This scene quickly unravels when James arrives, not only because of his challenge to the content of the game, but also the difficulty the three girls had to achieve a coherent 'script'. This form of play is difficult to maintain in the school environment where disruptions of this sort were frequent and where players often joined and left games at odd intervals. More frequently this type of 'pretend' play with a loose back-story would take the form of brief vignettes, that were more action oriented, such as when Zuleika used her scarf as a set of 'reigns' looped around her friends' waists so that she could play at being Santa's daughter, 'driving' his sleigh.

Zuleika's preferred form of 'pretend' play at school were much like what Brianna reported, that is playing a game based on a television series or film often by being 'taught' by others who have seen it. Zuleika was very limited in the amount of television she was allowed to watch at home by her mother, Amira, who only allowed DVDs as a 'treat' and not television on a regular basis. When Zuleika would go to visit her father's home, her parents being divorced, she was given free reign over cable television, but still preferred to watch films, rather than television series that she could not continue to follow. Zuleika also taught me to play 'High School Musical', much like Brianna described being taught, before I had seen the film myself. Zuleika would tell me to 'just make it up', but also steer the themes and

characters within her pre-set ideas of how they behave in the films, in order to give the play structure. Many of these ideas have a tendency towards normative middle-class values, particularly in the case of Disney products, of which High School Musical is one. The appeal of such sentimental and 'schmaltzy', to use Seiter's (1993) term, storylines seems to be particularly tantalising to young girls who relish the social drama as a basis for their 'pretend' games.

In a spare moment one afternoon, in a gap between her homework and piano practice schedule, Zuleika asks me whether I'll play High School Musical with her. I express concern at not having seen the film or knowing the plot, but she offers to lend me the DVD, before saying:

> 'Don't worry, I'm also just making it up! …First you be another girl and you're sitting on the (school) bus, writing in your diary and I'll be Sharpay.'
>
> I sit in a chair and scribble in my note book, pretending it's my diary. Zuleika minces into the room and fanning her nails says:
>
> 'Oh my God! You ride the bus! You are such a loser!'
>
> I am uncertain of how to react but decide to pretend not to be bothered. Zuleika breaks character and says:
>
> 'I'm another girl now.'
>
> She then goes back into a more 'acting' tone of voice, and sits next to me.
>
> 'Can you believe that Sharpey girl, she's such a cow.' I say playing along. 'She'll get what's coming to her, do what you learnt in yoga[28] and be at peace with the world, even the nasty people.'
>
> Zuleika then does some 'yoga' poses stretching to one side and the other and sits cross-legged.
>
> 'Cut!' She exclaims. 'That means it's the end, like in the movies.'
>
> This ends this little scene, she seems happy enough with my contribution.

[28] Zuleika does not, in reality, do yoga classes.

Later, we are in the kitchen preparing dinner and Zuleika says:

> 'You be Sharpey now and I'll be another girl. Now I want to see your nails and pretend I broke one.'
>
> I decide to go for melodrama and call for the 'nail paramedic'.
>
> Zuleika's character pretends she's sorry, fawning and scraping in deference.
>
> I threaten to 'call the principal and charge (her) with assault.'
>
> She then offers to 'pay for the repair. And I'll polish them for you'.

We move into the lounge of the house, now I have to be Sharpey's friend and Zuleika is Sharpey. In a scene which most closely resembles the actual film, I later learn, there is a concert rehearsal where the three main female characters, Sharpey, Gabriella and Ashley, all sing in turn, all played by Zuleika. Zuleika explains that Sharpey's friend is supposed to 'hate' the other girls but claps louder for them than Sharpey.

> 'Pretend to clap really loud, even though you don't like her because she's better than Sharpey.'
>
> Zuleika playing Ashley sings a song from the film called 'Na na na na' and then playing Sharpey comes to her friend (me) saying,
>
> 'That should be my song!'
>
> The Sharpey character then sings the same song badly.
>
> Zuleika interjects a commentary out of character:
>
> 'I'm trying to sing it bad, OK.'
>
> I, as the friend, play along commenting that she sings it so much better than 'that Ashley girl'.

There are a number of elements of confusion in Zuleika's play which leave me feeling uncertain and foolish throughout. However I seem manage to negotiate the

acting dialogue with interstitial speaking our real selves on Zuleika's instructions. In some instances she tells me to 'cut', but mainly the end of the game is simply understood. In terms of the content she chooses to enact, there is a certain feeling of Schadenfreude from Zuleika. She likes to play the so-called 'popular', vacuous antagonist, Sharpey, but takes great pleasure in setting her up to be shown up by the other girls in the story. This type of 'reversal' play, is documented by Sutton-Smith (1974) (following Norbeck (1971)), where he argues that part of delineating children's worlds from those of adults is to 'set-up' the world, only to destroy it as part of the game. Furthermore, these scenes demonstrate how Zuleika actively modifies the back-story of High School Musical to play her own 'pretend' games, based on it.

In many ways Amira, her mother, has taken pains to make sure that Zuleika understands the difficulties for her of being a single parent. Particularly these are in terms of restrictions on money and so Zuleika has some understanding of the ideals of the anti-materialistic values that Amira holds. However, Zuleika easily switches between the desirability of being the wealthy, popular Sharpey, forgetting her mother's 'lessons', or delighting in 'bringing Sharpey down'; and the moral superiority and physical talent of the working-class, fish-out-of-water heroine, Gabrielle. Dyson, an educator-ethnographer, writing about children's use of television narratives in classroom assignments, argues that her pupil's small, dramatic plays based on their creative-writing stories, functioned as such:

> Many of her peers used popular cultural symbols - like the media superhero - to achieve a sense of personhood and social belonging, of control and agency in a shared world. In making use of these symbols, children could assume identities within stories that revealed dominant ideological assumptions about relations between people. (1997: 2)

Zuleika too, seems to relish testing and exploring dominant ideological assumptions through her play, particularly in the middle-class socio-drama of High School Musical or Hannah Montana, media that working-class Zach and Brianna scornfully deride, despite Brianna's playing along with 'pretend' games based on it at school. Even more so than Dyson's pupil-participants who would have certain limits on behaviour because of the school setting, such as overt nastiness or swearing, playing out television-based dramas forms a key part of Zuleika's social understanding and relations. However, these understandings are distinctly private, and she does not repeat them in the school environment. While Zuleika may love to play the antagonist, in reality she has none of the character traits of Sharpey, for example, and is sensitive and humble girl, well-liked by her peers, but neither popular nor unpopular. I ask Zuleika why High School Musical is liked so much by all the younger children when the characters are all in high school, and in the latest film, starting college. She answered, 'I don't know it's weird…I guess it's because we like to think about them.' I asked, 'Like what it's like when you're in High School and stuff?' 'Yes.' she said nodding. Like many television shows in the 'high school' genre, these shows create a fantasy of being older, freer and more glamorous, presented by Disney as a life without limits. However, they are ultimately concerned with the type of 'playground' politics of young children, never with more obvious teenage

issues of drugs, sex, peer pressure and so on, something that would certainly make the films and shows more realistic, yet then obviously unsuitable for children.

IMAGINATIVE PLAY WITH PROPS:

Due to the need for some sort of agreement on a structure to unite the players for play to happen successfully, another form of imaginative play revolves around the use of props to guide the scene. This can vary, depending on how sophisticated the children are in their play, from 'dressing up' style play, to the use of objects of various levels of realism or combinations of both. This type of play is also frequently the most common form of directed play in educational settings, such as 'building-block time' in kindergartens. However, educators tend to express concern when blocks, for example, are used to 'build a house for my Webkinz' or to 'make a base for Spiderman', as they perceive that the child's creativity is limited by their being 'scripted'. Similarly to the case of 'pretend' play, a direction for play set ostensibly by the influence of television, is met with suspicion at best (Cohen 2010).

However, most of the prop play I observed in group settings is similar to the following scene, which unfolded between two girls at the social service child-care group one evening. Sally (6) found a pair of rabbit ears on a headband and a pair of fluffy pink slippers in the dressing up box of the play room where the children are looked after and quickly got into them, saying to her friend Susie (8):

> 'Look! I can hop like a bunny rabbit…hop…hop.'

Susie looks, but is playing a game of 'shop' with another girl in the corner of the room and does not say anything.

Sally then turns to me and says:

'What do bunnies eat?'

I reply carrots and lettuce and so Sally goes to the part of the playroom where we keep plastic kitchen equipment and food and gets out a plastic carrot and lettuce leaf. She puts the carrot in the corner of her mouth like Bugs Bunny.

Looking through the other plastic food items she asks, 'What else? Do they eat eggs and bread?'

I say, 'No, bunnies are vegetarian and don't eat things from other animals.'

Sally breaks character and asks, 'Where do eggs come from?'

I answer, 'Chickens'.

She then hops across the room with the carrot and lettuce and goes to the small slide in the corner, saying 'This is my house and under here is my attic and my bedroom'.

She breaks character again asking, 'Do bunnies drink milk?'

I say no and then call to Susie, 'Bunny is thirsty Susie, do you have anything for her?'

Susie stands behind a table as if it is a counter and replies, 'Bunny will have to come to the store.'

Sally then hops over and they play on a while longer before ending the scene.

This scene combines the use of dressing up with the structured toy props designed to facilitate imaginative play in this educational environment, however Sally's body language and use of the carrot prop is clearly drawn from the image of Bugs Bunny, as she plays out a quasi-domestic role play with Susie.

Another way that media can simply be a reference in prop-based play is demonstrated by the following incident at John Smith Elementary where an ordinary 'folk' children's game is imbued with a mystique by creating a television reference where none really exists. As recess is called a mob of children exit by the side doors alongside the covered

soccer area. Three boys from the third grade, James, Darryl and Josh, peel off the group and are unusually excited about a piece of paper and marker pen that Josh is holding that is filled with drawings, lines and scribbles. They congregate in a small group and study the page. James announces:

> 'My guy has a fire sword!'
>
> And is pointing to the page then jumping about making sounds like,
>
> 'Woosh, Nyawh'.
>
> Josh, holding the marker and the pen, pulls it quickly to his side and says:
>
> 'Let's go over there.' Looking at the picnic tables in the grassy garden area of the playground.
>
> They go over to the tables, but are now well out of earshot as they have resumed the game *sotto voce*. Not long after a fourth boy, Harry, approaches them and talks loudly.
>
> 'Hey guys are you playing Manhunt?' This disrupts the game, the 'secret' out, the other boys staring daggers at the newcomer.

Essentially these boys have re-titled a type of 'battleships' paper-based strategy game, 'Manhunt', after the stigmatised video-game, categorised as 'ultra-violent' and controversially implicated in the murder of a teenage boy. [29] This imbues a sense of the forbidden into this game, which is really quite old-fashioned, by referring to a more modern video game. The children whisper to each other, act suspiciously by hiding the page and so on. This is, in a sense, playing with the phenomenon surrounding danger that children's folklorist, Donna Lanclos (2003), refers to as related to the societal threat of the 'Bad Child'. By this she implies that if a child is seen to be 'unchildlike', in a sense not innocent, he or she is at risk of not being treated like a child. Many children's folklorists, such as, Opie and Opie (1967),

[29] The parents of Stefan Pakeerah called for 'Manhunt' to be banned after the fourteen-year- old died at the hands of Warren Leblanc, (17), who was said to be obsessed with the game.

refuse to collect examples of children swearing or referring to scatological humour because of the connotation of pollution, equating verbal 'dirt' with corruption. Yet all the children in my research groups at some point, made a 'dirty' joke, often a quite harmless one drawn from a film or television. Toby, one of Zuleika's friends at school, for example, told me that his friend had 'lost' three 'DSs' (Nintendo DS, handheld games console). 'He was playing in the washroom and dropped it in the toilet…' began the tale that resulted in much hilarity from all the children. While the Opies equate 'dirty' language and humour with a pollution or corruption of innocence, children's humour, as part of their play, seems, in contrast to adult humour, puerile and obviously child-like. They often draw this sense of humour from engagements with the 'taboo' areas of the human body, which they find mysterious. However this is obviously so, as to betray 'unchildlike' knowledge of genital functions would most certainly not be interpreted as a joke, particularly not by adults. In a sense this type of verbal 'dirt', like the mystique attributed to 'Manhunt', shows precisely the children's innocence of these matters. The fact that they draw their material equally from the media and from life experiences, learning and modifying jokes and 'risks' between each other, reflects their inclination to unite social information from a variety of sources. Furthermore this demonstrates how creative group narratives are formed that makes children's risky (or risqué) humour and 'dangers' an example of irreverent manipulation of forces perceived by adults as dangerous.

There are other ways in which prop-based play becomes a way to draw and blur boundaries between the child's world and that of adults. On one afternoon when I was with Zuleika at her home a series of discussions happened interspersed with her play. In the middle of a typical High School Musical 'pretend' game, she dropped out of character for a moment to ask me whether she could have a cupcake her mother left out in the living room. She then cheerily began a word and action perfect recital of the songs from the film Mamma Mia, bouncing around the room grabbing and pulling over a standard lamp as a microphone stand to sing into. I asked her where she learnt the songs and she replied, 'at my Dad's the movie is on the TV all day. I've seen it four times.' She skipped past a mirror and noticed that the food colour in the cupcake dyed her lips bright red and so she immediately resumed her High School Musical game as the vacuous and superficial antagonist, Sharpey. Zuleika began to walk on her heels with stiff legs, mimicking high-heeled shoes and then sat in front of the small vanity in her room putting on lip gloss, which she retrieved from the back of a small drawer full of hair elastics. She soon drops out of character again and tells me in hushed tones, 'My mom doesn't allow me to wear lip gloss outside of the house.'

She does, however allow Zuleika to wear nail polish to school and so a fair bit of Zuleika's invented dialogue for the character Sharpey revolves around 'getting her nails done', pink or yellow, Zuleika's two favourite nail polish colours. Zuleika drops out of character again and says:

> ‘There’s this girl in my class at school who wears black nail polish, and her mom dyed the front of her hair pink for the fall concert. She’s so weird. And her mom is weird too because she has two purses, one long one (here she demonstrates a cross body motion with her hands) and one small one under her arm.’

I try to get more information as to the origin of these definitions of ‘weirdness’ but am met with an overdramatic shrug of the shoulders. I decide to use the topic of conversation to ask Zuleika what she keeps in her purse and she proudly shows me her pink IPod, the sole content. I have a look at the music which is mainly by Hannah Montana, the protagonist of a Disney television show of the same title and Miley Cyrus, the actress who plays Hannah Montana.

There were also some Marc Anthony songs that were her mother’s, and it seems as if the IPod is shared between them to some extent. Zuleika went through most of the songs excitedly giving me one half of the earphone to listen too. She skipped through all of them singing small parts and then said, ‘I love it when they sing Give me a Reason!’ She says giving me her best straining pop star impression of how Marc Anthony sings and collapsing into giggles. I asked if the kids at school talked about music and she said, ‘Not really, more TV shows and what was on.’ I asked her what shows she liked and she said ‘the Suite Life of Zack and Cody’ and ‘Hannah Montana’, both of which are Disney shows.

We then watched an episode of Hannah Montana on the family television in the living room. Zuleika was fairly quiet, in contrast to when she sees films or hears

music she is familiar with, where she sings or plays along. She giggled at the silly jokes and prat falls in the show but her sole remarks were during the opening credits, where she pointed at the name of the lead actress, Jamie-Lynn Spears, and said , 'She's not a really good person in real life because she was pregnant when she was sixteen. Her sister too, do you know her sister?' I reply I do (Britney Spears). Zuleika says excitedly, 'Yeah and it's not good to have a baby because they're so young and they have to do their movies and acting and go to school. It's like a kid having a kid!' This dialogue is interesting because Zuleika is not really allowed to watch much television by her mother, and these stern admonishments on the moral character of the actress sound like parroting the guidance of a parent. I think what is more relevant is that Zuleika feels she needs to demonstrate that she understands the failings of the actors and wants to watch the show anyway. In a sense this is revealing as the watching of the show is clearly most important to demonstrate knowledge and ability to her peers, rather than to dismiss it because of the 'dangerous' example set by the actors, as perhaps her mother would wish.

Zuleika demonstrates that she is aware of the adult debates surrounding the negative effects of commercial children's television, her mother being particularly prohibitive in this regard. Nevertheless, her knowledge of television and films is extensive, and much of her play (especially when her mother is not watching), incorporates the threads of television and films. Likewise, Almqvist (1994) argues that children's television-based toys suffer prejudice because of their origins in commercial children's television. Particularly, this is as they are seen as not being 'educational' because they are too



Figure 14: A 'My Little Pony' on exhibition at London's Science Museum - 'Playing with Science' 2007. Children were asked to 'lend' their favourite toy. The text reads, 'My pony is my little friend. She makes me happy. It is cute.'

'realistic', meaning closely modelled on the characters of the show, rather than more abstract. By this, it is implied that the more structured a toy (or prop) is and 'realistic' in its depiction of a particular television show, the more directed a child is to perform pre-set narratives based on that show. By contrast, an unstructured toy, like a broomstick or an empty box can, in theory, be transformed into a part of any narrative. This is taken to mean, for example, that a broomstick can become a horse, but a 'My Little Pony' toy will always remain focused on the narratives in that television series, because the former is non-realistic, and the latter is. However, Almqvist argues that while this is a powerful argument for one sort of 'pretend' play, it does not account for the fact that fantasy toys, like 'My Little Ponies' are not very realistic horses at all, they are the wrong colour, shape, they talk and so on. This leads to a host of alternative forms of 'pretend' that do not fall into the narrow scope of the creative/uncreative divide (Figure 14).

Fundamentally, however, Almqvist's argument is persuasive, as it places television-based play within the spectrum of what children play, and argues that all types of play

have an element of learning within them. It does seem to be true, from an educational perspective at least, that some forms of play develop cognitive skills that help children in meeting the goals of the educational system better than others. However, it also seems fair to say that other forms of play develop emotional and social skills invaluable in peer-group relations. Both prop based and non-prop based role play offers opportunities to develop social skills surrounding turn-taking, co-operation and negotiation, while also offering opportunities to experiment with the workings of social roles and mores in an environment where consequences are limited. Television play is particularly useful in the second instance, where it can, through the shared understandings the children have of the pre-set narrative, allow the dialogue to move beyond the limits of other forms of narrative, like domestic role-play. Through these shared play stories and roles surrounding television, children can experiment with more complex forms of social knowledge that they often do not access in their sheltered engagement with the public world. Thus, for my participant children, the active use and manipulation of television narratives for play, even if communicated second-hand, is the most important part of their relationship with the medium, rather than passive consumption of the 'boob tube' that adults assume it to be.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that there is a contradiction in how children and their relationship with television is perceived by the media, and by the children themselves. Particularly the print media, perhaps for obvious reasons, drives suspicion surrounding

children's relationship with television, arguing that for children this is a primarily passive relationship. However, many sociologists, such as Buckingham (1993), have argued this is not true, and the data I have presented supports the challenge to this seeming passivity. I have argued that children's television is a formative part of how my participants construct and gain social and real world knowledge. This is not only demonstrated through the children's play itself, but also through adults' positive relationship with the television shows of their youth.

Much of the argument surrounding children's so-called 'passive' consumption of television is said to result in their unquestioning desire for television-related toys with which to play, fuelled by television commercials that they are perceived to be powerless to resist, or even 'pester' their helpless parents for. However, I have demonstrated through my research in the toy store that children's consumption is most often moderated and controlled by parents, for example in the case of Christmas 'lists'. Furthermore, other researchers, such as Nava and Nava (1990) have shown that children consume television advertisements and jingles, separately from the products they are promoting, essentially taking an 'active' stance on children's relationship with television. Children's television generally has been considered in the light that it is a version of an extended advertisement to sell toys, and so these conclusions on children and their role as an active audience are potentially very revealing. However in general, the anthropology of the media has been less concerned with audience and effect and more concerned with how the individual or group makes these discriminations and decisions and to what end. In this way Kelly Askew and Richard Wilk (2002) argue that

the anthropology of the media, by focusing on the reception and interpretation of meanings in the consumption of media as separate from the producers' messages or intended meanings, creates people as 'active audiences'.

For children, often these discriminations, and 'activeness' are required by the media itself because of its highly social nature, for example the Pokémon range of products that encourage the child to move through multiple media forms, carrying the same 'backstory' along with them (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 2004). Nava and Nava suggest these discriminations are evident in children's play, particularly 'pretend' play and the creation of fantasy worlds based on the material presented through television series and films, as they are inherently selective. These types of worlds have much in common with what Tom Boellstorff (2008) calls the 'virtual' in his ethnography of adults in the online world 'Second Life'. Because these people define themselves through technology and essentially 'play' through it, they are moulding themselves through a cultural practise, albeit a technologically-mediated one. This has much in common with how I see the role of television and the media in children's play. That is to say that children's television-based play itself, while often frivolous, fun and inconsequential, has a role in mediating their social actions and performances, which is a key part of how children's groups develop sociality together.

This type of active relationship as cultural practise is particularly shown through examples of 'pretend' play. A large part of being a successful player is to 'know'

television shows, and despite concern from adults about the impact of pre-set narratives on play, I have demonstrated a number of instances where television narratives are creatively hybridised with other sorts of narratives to produce 'pretend' games. These can be either games using props or free play without props, however the second case tends to use television more directly, in line with children's 'traditional' use of domestic tropes as fuel for games. Play with props, as I have particularly shown with an example of Zuleika's High School Musical play, demonstrates the children's active bricolage of ideas from television with items from their environment. These explorations mean that in prop-based play, as a sequence the narrative is often less 'coherent', from an adult perspective, in comparison to 'pretend' play with a pre-set narrative. However, this equally seems to demonstrate the most 'active' form of creative consumption of television that 'pretend' play offers children, and certainly the form of television that is most actively enjoyed by the children.

Fisherkeller (1997) argues in her ethnography of American high school children's media-use that not everything that mass media-based cultures present is absorbed or utilised by children, as inventive individuals. The ethnographic method, as I have exclusively used, presents specific preferences of specific children for certain television shows, games based upon them and types of play behaviour. While these particular shows or toys may be popular in Vancouver, I certainly do not claim that they are popular in the same ways in other places. However, these data show, both through the types of play and the types of media my participant children draw on in their play, that popular culture is an indispensible tool in the children's social and emotional

development. In this way, as Miller (1995) and Judy Attfield (2000) argue in general about active consumption, children socialise what they consume into their life-world. However one of the key purposes of this is that it goes towards the production of shared meanings in their peer group. Like micro-fashion trends in schools, shared meanings surrounding consumption cast the children as active consumers who choose, within parental control, what objects and media they consume from a vast array of options that producers advertise to them.

Yet, while television 'pretend' play is an important example of how children are active and creative consumers, it is not the only type of creative play that they are involved in. In the following chapter I will show how social knowledge gained from television and other media is deployed through play that mixes forms of media and involves new, 'social' media. In this way I will show how creative play is a key form of social production for children and a critical part of their social knowledge, both in terms of the individual's emotional development and in their relationship to their peer group.

2.3) JUST MESSING AROUND: CREATIVITY AND PLAY

INTRODUCTION

The ambivalence is about capitalism itself – what it has wrought, what it teaches, the posture towards self and other it favors. The middle class, mostly White suburban kids, whose parents made such a stink about chase cards and Beanie Baby excess, are on a cultural trajectory to enter the same world of speculation and risk upon which their lifestyles have been built.

Exchange Value as Pedagogy in Children's Leisure (Cook 2001: 95)

The mass media is of increasing importance as an agent of socialisation in children's lives. This is represented by the growing emphasis in children's play on television-based narratives and the declining influence of domestic scenes representing the family. This implies that the presence of media-knowledge as a fundamental part of the social world of the child indicates a significant change in how the child's life-world is traditionally constituted. Furthermore, while I have demonstrated that the way that this social knowledge is developed and absorbed by children is not a passive process, it is also clear that the influence of the media is far more widely felt, in children's lives, than simply through 'pretend' play. The nature of children as active participants in how and what they choose to consume, places the act of consumption as part of a positive dynamic. Furthermore, it is key to how children begin to constitute social relations in a way that positions them as members of a group with coherent values and narratives.

Miller (1987; 1995) argues that when 'consumption studies' comes to mean production, rather than considering individual consumers' negotiations regarding the positive and negative aspects of consumption, anti-materialist ideologies are produced. Many examples of these ideologies permeate discourses on child-rearing, particularly culturally pessimistic versions such as the following advice from Sue Palmer, an educator and advocate:

> Over the last twenty-five years, huge technological and cultural changes have transformed the lifestyle of people in the developed world largely for the better. But it's all happened so fast we haven't noticed that changes which benefit adults aren't always so good for children. A toxic cocktail of the side-effects of cultural change is now damaging the social, emotional and cognitive development of a growing number of children, with knock-on effects on their behaviour. (You Tube video 2009)

Palmer's work (2006) casts all consumerism in a negative veil, arguing children should be protected from the 'aggressive' marketing of commercial children's television, the 'excesses of celebrity culture', and be severely limited on the Internet in order to 'save' their childhood from the dangers of modern, urban life. These sorts of discourses highlight the overarching dichotomy between the benefits of mass consumption, in ensuring global access to resources, and a tension surrounding loss of authenticity that accompanies greater access to commercial goods. This tension weighs even further on children, cast in their roles as society's lifeline to our biblical, unfallen selves, where their enthusiasm for mass consumption seems to declare innocence as beyond salvage for modernity. However, as Miller (1995) argues, the mass-produced good and its socialisation into the individual's life-world, is part of re-investing the personal into the commercial. In this vein, this chapter aims to discuss the wider dynamic of children's

consumption and production of play in the media context: how play works for the creation of social relations. I shall argue that children's play, even within the context of the media which is often accused of impoverishing its creativity, remains fundamentally inventive and adaptable.

Smadar Lavie et.al (1993) have argued that, for anthropology, creativity is 'human activity that transforms existing cultural practices' (5) and it is precisely through this sort of practise that children incorporate the media into their play. Other anthropologists, such as David Parkin (1987), have argued that creativity fundamentally represents the role of the individual in their challenges to society's boundaries. Comparably, Cook (2001) argues that contemporary children's play, even when transformative and creative, remains indivisible from the material culture of capitalism. By this, he implies that children's play is fundamentally about acts of production and consumption that transform existing frameworks, as I have argued in the case of pre-set narratives, into creative explorations. Taken in combination, these definitions imply that the way that children challenge and constitute their position as an individual in networks of social relations is through manipulations of the media. The process of manipulating media and environment is often called 'just messing around', by the children who practise it. In this chapter I will demonstrate that children 'mess around' at home in two ways: in the first instance the children consume commercial products, which they then produce as a creative output. In the second, the children produce a creative output for their own or others' consumption. This approach, like Attfield's (2000) demonstrates that as objects of mass consumption are brought into

the home, they can be subject to further work, and take on new meanings and social lives. It also shows how the home can be a site of production that allows the child to create social linkages with their wider peer communities, despite the physical spatial restrictions inherent in discourses of privatisation (see Chapter 2.1). In this way, children's active processes of play demonstrate that there is parity between commercial toys bought for them and those types of creative plays that they make themselves, as both contribute to positive creation of the self.

CONSUMING TO PRODUCE

Jeffrey Goldstein *et al.* (2004) in their book 'Toys, Games and Media' point out that much of children's play that draws upon the commercial media interconnects in various forms. They argue:

> Children's culture is now highly interstitial: Every 'text' (including commodities such as toys) effectively draws upon and feeds into every other text. When children play with Pokémon cards or toys, for example, they draw on knowledge and expertise they have derived from watching the TV shows and movies, or from playing the computer games: Each play event is part of a broader flow of events that crosses from one medium or 'platform' to another. (2004: 3)

I would argue that to simply consider children's material culture as 'text' capable of being 'read' is an overly simplistic view for anthropology, as it de-emphasises the child's creative role as a social actor, where producers' intended meanings may not be recognised much less respected. Pokémon particularly, is a very good example of this

type of interconnected commercial product, and while I was conducting my fieldwork in Vancouver, it was certainly the most popular children's media property. Pokémon often stood out, over my range of field sites, as it seemed so easily connected to different types of play and games. However, the main ways that the children engaged with Pokémon was through watching the television shows, studying up about the characters and learning to draw them, and through collecting and exchanging the collectible cards. While the exchange of the cards, forming part of a larger world of social exchange will be discussed in the following chapter, these processes of television-drawing and card collecting are a primary example of children engaging with the media as consumer-producers. By this I mean that they consume the media images or cards and then productively transform them, through play, into drawings and collections.

CARDS

The history of trading cards in North America charts from small promotional cards included in packs of tobacco. Initially, popular inserts were coquettish drawings of women, but their collectability became cemented when they turned to including drawings of well-known baseball players. Later, the Topps-Bowman and Goudey Gum Company began to popularise baseball cards amongst children, and modified the format to include key statistics about the player's history and performance (Fitts 1997). This enabled children to study and compare the attributes and skills of the various players, which has much in common with how contemporary children study their Pokémon cards. However, although baseball cards have remained enduringly

popular, they have now become carried into the adult world, with clear market and exchange values attached to the cards. John Bloom's (1997) ethnography of adult baseball card collectors shows that this is a world dominated by adult men. While children's interest in cards was tolerated at, and they were occasional participants in large card trading shows, their participation in the adults' dealings was considered by the men to be a 'symbolic loss of innocence' (85). This is due to the cut-throat nature of the trading world, where although adults were prepared to buy and sell with children, they were also equally willing to 'take them for a ride' and give them an unfair deal if they could. This means that pure trading cards, have taken a back seat for children in favour of trading card 'games', where one's odds of winning are based both on skill and on having better, and therefore more valuable, cards.

In order to understand the basic rules of how my participant children play the Pokémon trading-card game I asked Brianna, (7), and Zach, (8), whom I spent time with at their home for a lesson on how to play. Brianna first explained that some of the cards work in pairs where if you have an 'evolved' form of the Pokémon card as well as the 'basic' form you can use them together in the game and play a more powerful turn by 'playing it (the evolved form) over the other one' (she placed one card on top of the other slightly drawn back to demonstrate). The players also require 'energy' cards to power the Pokémon's turn taking attacks against the opponent.[30] All of these cards

[30] The Pokémon can also 'evolve' essentially gaining more access to the element that makes it powerful, which also physically changes the Pokémon into a different character, as Brianna explained in the layering system. When the Pokémon, as cards, computer games or in the television show 'battle' each other, this elemental nature comes to the fore, where the Pokémon 'trainer' will pit one contrasting element against another to try and beat the opponent, sometimes for fun, and sometimes for a pre-negotiated wager of certain 'good' cards.

come from the 'deck' of cards that the player has collected and then selected to play with, in combinations that they feel will make their 'deck' more likely to win than that of their opponent. The Pokémon cards each detail the statistics of each creature, like a baseball card, who encompass a huge range of personalities, sizes and shapes. Notionally, the Pokémon live in different 'habitats', forest, mountain or lake, and this influences their characteristics and power and assigns an 'energy' element of fire, water, earth and so on to the creature that allows its owner to understand and 'tap' its abilities. The knowledge of elements and habitats as well as of how Pokémon evolve, mean that the amassing of knowledge about Pokémon is a key part of successfully playing the game.

Despite the popular history of collecting trading cards in North America, and 'chasing' for rare cards, card-trading games such as Chaotic, CardCaptors or Pokémon[31], are often claimed by parents and adults to be an insatiable habit for children and moreover, an incomprehensible one. While trading the cards is an important, social component of Pokémon, see Chapter 2.4, collection and study of the collections is the primary focus within the home. It has been argued that the importance of the function of collection for children, according to Walter Benjamin (1969 (1999)), is that of the ability to touch, arrange and manipulate a collection which is a way to control part of the environment. This is a particularly acute problem for many children who often feel disempowered in their normal lives, or

[31] Nintendo, as the main licence holder for Pokémon has created an exceptional number of marketing tie-ins with other global companies, such as Wizards of the Coast, who created the original trading cards along similar lines to an already popular card game. Their licence was revoked by Nintendo in 2003 to allow a direct Nintendo subsidiary to take over the incredibly lucrative line.

who may feel that the space in the home that is their domain is limited and carefully managed by their parents. Particularly, this relates to shared spaces such as the living room, where they may not be allowed to 'mess' i.e. spread their possessions or the flotsam and jetsam of their daily lives. In Zuleika's home the only evidence of the eight-year-old resident of this house in the shared spaces, is a small bright pink bag and some basic piano tuition books in one corner of the living room. Because Amira, Zuleika's mother, runs a day-care in the basement section of the house, she is careful to separate her 'work' from her private home, and does not allow any toys upstairs. Even in Zuleika's room, the only toys she is allowed are neatly underneath her raised-up bed, or on top of her bed where she had a 'Powerpuff Girls' quilt (but plain linen) and few stuffed toys.

Zuzana Burikova, (2006) in her study of young au-pair's rooms within family homes expresses a variety of ways that the women react to an awkward living experience. In their cases, no space is their own, not even their bedrooms, nor are they allowed or encouraged to make it so. This completely differs from the way that other temporary accommodation, such as college dorm-rooms, are perceived in studies such as Samuel Gosling *et al.* on Personal Living Space (PLS) (2005). For the young au-pairs, making their room deliberately 'dirty' or messy in reaction to the requirement that they clean the family house was one strategy to assert their ownership, but another was to hide small collections of personal objects on windowsills, behind the curtains, or in drawers away from where a cursory glance of the room could perceive them. For the children in their homes, the adult spaces

outside of their bedroom are subjected to a reluctant 'truce' similar to the au-pair's bedroom. The children will often hide their possessions in groups, under couches or on shelves behind the adult's ornaments, aware of the spatial difficulties of their co-presence. Zuleika and Zach and Brianna all have raised-up beds in their bedrooms, underneath which they are allowed free reign to personalise and play. However, this is the only space, even within the 'private' bedroom, that they are not subjected to frequent injunctions to 'clean up' or have cleaned up. Thus, the grouping of possessions into collections and their spatial locations, either hidden in bedroom drawers as Zuleika does, under the living-room couch, as Zach does, or behind a wall of stuffed toys, as Brianna does, can be said to be an extension of socio-spatial relations.

The approach that cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard takes in his (2005) 'The System of Objects' is to argue that, 'for children, collecting is a rudimentary way of mastering the outside world, of arranging, classifying and manipulating' (93) which echoes much about the functions of play. However Baudrillard, like many other key consumption theorists, has nothing further to say on why this is particularly significant, yet it indicates a fundamental difference from adult attitudes to collecting that children play with their collections. 20th century archaeologist Gabriel Moshenska (2008) demonstrates in his study of children's shrapnel collection in London during World War II, that while the content of a collection might seem non-sensical, like a rock or pencil collection, it is through the physical process of collection, assimilation and haptic connection that the children recast their collection as a control of trauma. Clearly, however, the collection of Pokémon

cards, characters, manuals and so on cannot be cast as control of trauma, and it would be a stretch to argue it as such, even in the light of the so-called difficulties of assimilating modernity that Cedric Cullingford (1992) argues is the purpose of play. Nevertheless, collections for children do particularly give a sense of control of the possession, its presentation and form, which, particularly in the home, may be something children are not routinely awarded.

Russell Belk (1988) sees collecting, and especially the presentation and spatial ordering of collected objects as a process of 'self-extension' and 'legitimization'. In my participants' case, for example, winning territory covertly within the home seems to challenge their feelings of disempowerment over control of space. Stacy Baker and James Gentry (1996) suggest it is the process of 'legitimization' that is more important in the understanding of children's motivation to build collections. 'Children learn (from adults) that behaviour which is done for "rational" purposes (e.g., creating, investing, building history) is not considered to be self-indulgent if one labels it as "collecting"' (132). The authors discover a variety of motivations amongst the children in their study, some report to collect 'to look at' their collection, some because the collection is unusual, some so that they can play with their friend's similar collections together, such as Barbie dolls, or some simply because no-one else collects that item (Baker and Gentry 1996). In the case of the collection of Pokémon cards, for example, their ubiquity means that they are used both in play and for manipulation and presentation. The marketing of Pokémon 'albums' with clear plastic pockets designed to protect and display the cards and the

assignation of monetary value to the trading of rarer cards means that the children use them for trade, collection and play. This implies that their consumption is significant as it contributes to 'producing' the child's sense of self, through processes of acquisition and presentation of the collection.

DRAWING FROM TELEVISION

A second way in which children's consumption leads to production of the self is through 'messing around' with drawing at the same time as watching television. These activities might link to other parts of their play lives too, for example drawing 'proxy' cards of particularly powerful or rare cards, to simulate cards that are gaps in the collection. The children who were the most interested in Pokémon (and its spin-off series of products Digimon) amongst my participants were brother and sister, Zach (8) and Brianna (7). Much of the time I spent with them was sitting and watching Pokémon videos and films on the small TV in their bedroom. Debra, their aunt, would hunt down episodes of Pokémon on VCR for them at second-hand shops like the Salvation Army, and they had an impressive collection of videos as well as a number of DVDs related to the series.

On one evening the children were virtually pushing Debra out of the door and beckoning me into their room when I arrived, where they had preloaded a film called Pokémon 4Ever (the fourth Pokémon feature film) for us to watch together. The day before they had shown me their impressive collections of Pokémon stuffed



animals, books (manuals of the types and information about the Pokémon) cards and videos. The main character of Pokémon is a boy of about ten-years-old called 'Ash Ketchum', as Brianna says, 'Catch-em gettit, cause you gotta catch em all' quoting the Pokémon marketing slogan. Ash has a number of friends who travel with him to collect (capture) Pokémon and train them to fight.

Ash's first and favourite Pokémon is Pikachu (Figure 15 -**(removed - copyright restrictions)**), whose image is synonymous with the franchise, a small squat yellow and black rabbit-like creature with a lightning bolt tail. A rare Pokémon, Pikachu can zap its opponent with its electric power just by squeezing its cheeks. The evil 'Team Rocket' is their enemy, who, according to Zach, in this particular film have a senior trainer who comes to steal Pokémon and put them into 'evil balls' which instantly 'evolves' them to the 'highest level' that they can be, but in an evil form which he can control against Ash and his friends. Even though Ash also captures and controls Pokémon, they are framed as his 'friends' who are free to help him in battle or not. Much discussion has taken place about the symbolism of the 'cute' aesthetic found in the basic level Pokémon, and then the obvious change to the not-cute, powerful, evolved Pokémon (McVeigh 1996). Anthropologist Kyra Landzelius (2001), for instance, argues that the cute aesthetic associates nurture (for adults) with children's media because of the similarities of neotenic features between babies

and ‘cute’ cartoon characters. These in general are the use of juvenile physical traits such as large eyes and heads and other senses of disproportion in the characters. Yet, for the children this transition, an evolutionary metaphor, or a growing-up metaphor, was obvious and a part of the appeal of the Pokémon concept. ‘It’s cute but it’s powerful.’ Brianna would say, signifying the latent potential in the Pokémon to ‘evolve’, physically transform and rescue their ‘friends’ (owners/collectors). In some senses, for the children, this seems to signify a parallel with their ideas surrounding an ideal state of their own lives. That is to say they seem to wish that they could both be ‘cute’ children, with commensurate levels of protection, but also have the latent potential for power, which they see adults as primarily possessing.

For Zach and Brianna, watching films at home, the film (or television show) and its content form only a part of what may be going on in the ‘playscape’ of their bedroom (Figure 16). Not only do they play or draw in different areas of the room, at the same time as watching the film, each of the children have their own ‘side’ of the bedroom next to their beds. They always sit or lie on the floor towards their side when watching the television, which is on a low bookcase filled with Pokémon manuals, videos, DVDs and books, in the centre of the room, below the window. Zach was particularly keen that I watch the



Figure 16

particular film, ‘Pokémon 4Ever’, because it revolves around the ‘legendary’ Pokémon ‘Celebi’, who is his ‘favourite’ character. Celebi is a reclusive and highly powerful Pokémon who is portrayed in the film as a benevolent nature spirit, living deep within a forest, similar to Miyazaki’s portrayal of the Totoro in his 1989 film, ‘My Neighbour Totoro.’

As the film started Zach and Brianna had a small argument over who ‘was’ Celebi, adding a little ‘pretending’ into the movie, because clearly they could not both be Celebi at the same time, since there is only one Celebi, as with all the ‘legendary’ Pokémon. I asked Zach why he likes Celebi, and he replied, ‘because I think Celebi can time-travel.’ It is interesting that the children will always chose a Pokémon to ‘be’ rather than one of the more obvious human characters. This runs counter to the industry perspective, where according to Jones (2003), ‘Pokémon also included a human heroine who appealed to most girls as much as or even more so than, the male protagonist’ (65). The range of powerful and fluid characters that do not have direct gender associations is a useful way for children to explore fantasies not limited by stereotypical gender or age portrayals, which can only add to the wide-spread popularity of these media.

In the film, Ash and his friends use teamwork to allow their weaker Pokémon to defeat the stronger fully evolved Pokémon of the ‘evil’ Team Rocket leader, who has enslaved Celebi and turned it into an evil slave. In the process of the battle Celebi is hurt and Sam, one of Ash’s friends, brings him back to life by taking him to a lake which has been polluted and corrupted. Zach explains, ‘Celebi can come back

to life, but only in the Lake of Life' (see Figure 17). The children place Celebi under the water which acts as an elixir of life connected to the 'spirit of the forest', Celebi, and the wellbeing of the forest as a whole. When Celebi enters the waters, the film's voiceover tells us, 'the spirits of the past and future surround him and bring him to life' (Yuyama and Malone 2001). The waters of the lake clear, turning blue and healthy, and he (it) is revived. Seeing the 'spirits' around him, I ask Brianna what they are, as they all look like Celebi. I ask if there's more than one Celebi: 'No' she says, 'Those are just angels or something.'[32] Brianna's attitude is not unusual; in general in children's media there is widespread appropriation of the Japanese anime aesthetic and essentialised themes surrounding Japanese cultural and spiritual practise. The very successful Disney/Pixar film 'Kung-Fu-Panda' is an example, deliberately in certain 'dream sequences' of moving from an American cartoon aesthetic to an anime one, the commonalities in narrative content aside.

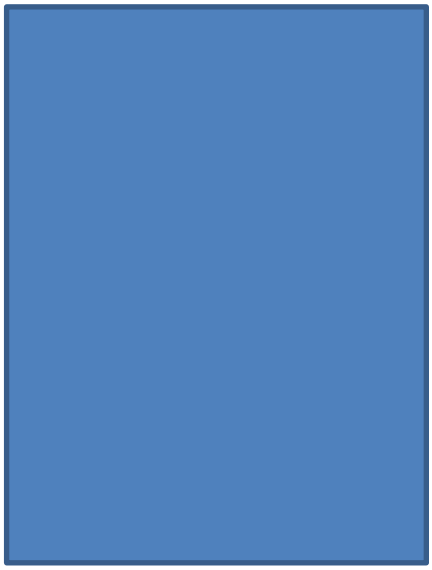


Figure 17: Scholastic Publishing's version of Pokemon 4Ever, aimed at improving literacy skills.
(removed - copyright restrictions)

[32] While early Japanese forays into the international toy market in the 1950s with tin toys for export often worked with themes familiar to the western mind set like 'Cowboys and Indians' or innocuous robots cast as home helpers, contemporary Japanese popular toys are very much constructed with the domestic market in mind. However in the export scenario the influence of so-called 'cool Japan' (McGray 2002) on global popularity and consumption, what Anne Allison calls for Japan 'the desire to achieve not only real but symbolic capital in infiltrating the realm of kids' mass/popular culture' (2006: 236), has been argued to creates a market for an overt display of 'Japaneseness' in children's television.

At points during the film Zach would say things like: 'Now they're all dead! Just kidding!' He was aware that I had not seen the film, and did not want to 'ruin it' for me, whereas Brianna would unconcernedly reveal the plot, only to be told off by Zach for spoiling. In the second half of the film the themes grew quite bleak. Celebi, captured by the evil trainer, wove an enormous monster out of twigs and bark from the forest, who then started to attack Ash and the other children. Zach started to intensify his 'messing around' at this point, perhaps because it was quite scary for him, by drawing weird monsters of his own on sheets of paper, assigning them attributes like on the Pokémon cards. Each was in a different place, in Ontario, in Saskatoon and so on and went '4 km/h, 7 km/h and 30 km/h'. Zach described one drawing as having 'invisible eyes', the other, with 'his eyes on his teeth' and so on (Figure 18). While it may seem tempting to 'therapise' this type of drawing activity and argue it is a way of safely controlling fear, or some such, drawing analysis has been severely criticised as an alternative methodology for understanding children. Lisa Mitchell's (2006) criticism on drawings as a visual research method, for example, strongly argues 'drawings are not a substitute for children's voices' (69). This is in reaction to assumptions that have been made about the use of children's drawings as alternative sources of information on their perspectives through visual and representational analysis. Rather, I would argue that children's drawing in this sense is part of their play on a dynamic system between consumption and production to



Figure 18

explore their sense of how they see themselves and the world around them. After Zach had drawn these monsters he told me that he 'was from Saskatoon too!' Thus, the intensification of Zach's 'messing around' activities may indicate that more of this type of information is being processed and that he is creating more relational links between his self and environment.

Zach's drawing of monsters in this way has partly been absorbed through a Pokémon spin-off called Digimon, which he and Brianna really like. The series has a similar premise to Pokémon, the collection and training of Digimon (digital monsters, as opposed to pocket monsters). The protagonist of the film's drawing of his ideal Digimon, much like Zach's monster, magically 'transforms' to become a 'real' Digimon, which he then trains in and around his school and suburb. Zach and Brianna's room is scattered with multiple A4 sheets being divided into odd sized rectangles with a recognisable drawing of the various Digimon and their names, 'Togemon', 'Motimon' and so on written next to them. From one week to the next their continual parade of drawings changes, from Digimon to Pokémon, to general monsters, to Littlest Pet Shop. On one visit, Zach proudly gives me a drawing called 'Zach and Brianna's Toy Galaxy' (Figure 19) an impenetrable web of connections and stories, drawn as a series of planets, starting from the elemental 'fire, water, grass' and moving around a central empty 'sun' naming toys and proto-words before reaching planet 'Poko', where Zach thinks Pokémon are from. Cathy Machliodi (1998), taking a multi-disciplinary approach to how children's drawings have been understood argues:



Figure 19

> Although children may use drawing to explore, to problem solve or simply give form to ideas and observations, the overall consensus is that art expressions are unique personal statements that have elements of both conscious and unconscious meaning in them and can be representative of many different aspects of the children who create them. (1)

Like the 'Toy Galaxy' example, many of the drawings the children produce seem to



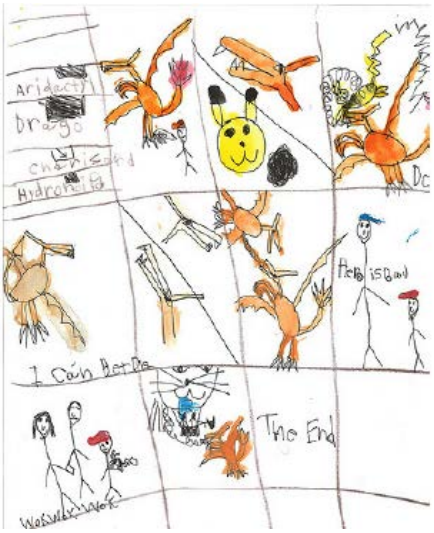


Figure 20-21



Figure 22-23 (removed - copyright restrictions)

be characteristic of Malchiodi's 'unique personal statements'. However, the 'practicing' of drawing specific Pokémon or Digimon characters is a form of drawing that is far more instrumental than other forms, in a sense that it directly reinforces

the social currency that the children gain from learning the names and attributes of Pokémon (see Chapter 2.4). Zach can draw many of the Pokémon freehand (Figure 20-21), and although not entirely accurate, he is happy to fill up a page with them. Brianna still draws from the manuals and tries to make her drawings more accurate, copying the circles and basic shapes the manuals show (Figure 22), but struggles to complete the character and erase the construction lines. Scholastic publishing, the educational publisher, has a reading book licence for Pokémon, but also makes other sorts of books like their 'Pokémon Pop Quiz Brain Busters' series (West 2002). In some well-worn second hand copies I have of this, and other types of Pokémon manuals, it is interesting to look at the previous owner's marking of the pages. In the quiz books, many of the quizzes are 'educational' in nature, like crosswords or word-searches directing the child to learn specific types of vocabulary. However, one of the most popular (from the markings) parts of the books are the quizzes asking the child to identify various Pokémon through either looking at their eyes only, or tails only or so on (Figure 23). It is this type of 'study' that Zach and Brianna spend their free time preparing for, interacting about and testing each other on, arguing over the correct names for the various evolutionary stages, reciting for example, 'Pikachu comes from Pichu and goes to Raichu. Charmander goes to Charmeleon who goes to Charizard' with each other and looking through manuals

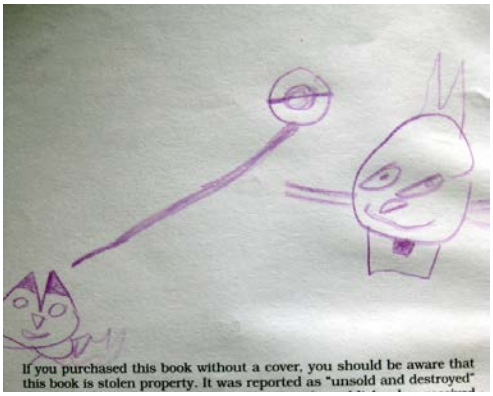
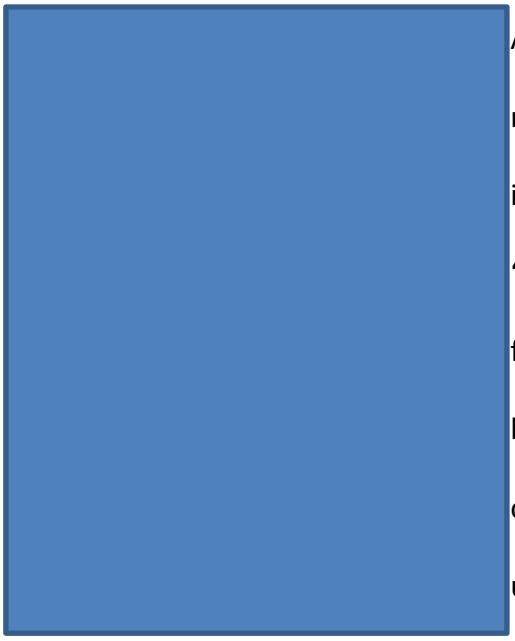


Figure 24

to 'check' things. Yet, one can see from the drawings that Zach makes, or this scribble by 'Samuel Moore' (Figure 24) who carefully printed his name in the front of my second-hand copy of Scholastic's Pokémon 4Ever (West 2002), that the Pokémon do not stay static in their minds, they creatively change attributes and aesthetic with the creativity of the child, who might make them fly, spit fire or electricity in their minds, or use them as inspiration for their own series of monster drawings.



As the children become more confident to move away from pre-set aesthetic-narratives in their drawings, such as those offered by 'how to' manuals, their focus of activity shifts from consuming to producing for self-legitimisation purposes, to producing for others' consumption. One of the ways children use drawings for this is encoded in their choice of anime aesthetic, see Christine Thompson (2006), which signifies that the drawings are for 'fun', and challenge adult-imposed styles of drawing and 'art' that happen in school classes. Tarryn, (11), who was an excellent artist, often showed

me her drawings, or would draw on the white boards in the social services centre, often in the manga/anime style. I asked Tarryn where she got her ideas from and she said, 'Gaia online', which is an American children's social-networking website. All of the 'avatars' (Figure 25 **(removed - copyright restrictions)**), that is a fantasy character substituted for the user's image, are drawn in this style on this website, that is highly popular with children around her age, albeit slightly out of the age-category this study focuses on. This style of drawing has become so ubiquitous as to disassociate itself with its East Asian aesthetic origins for the children, but stands a signifier for a willingness to communicate with a global network of like-minded 'tweens'. Similarly, the children use other types of creative outputs, acting primarily as producers for other children's consumption.

PRODUCING TO CONSUME

The media debate surrounding the consumption of cards or television and their manipulation into creative play has much in common with those concerned with the influence of television on 'pretend' play, see Chapter 2.2. This is because when a pre-set 'commercial' product is a setting off point for play it is said to lead to impoverished creativity and less imagination in play (Kline 1993). This can be demonstrated through the many examples of negative media debates about Pokémon card and Beanie Baby collection, Cook illustrates his (2001) paper with: media phrases such as 'cardboard crack (cocaine)' (84) and 'unhealthy and addictive' (82). However, when new media forms enter the picture it is difficult to

characterise children's activities as strictly creative consumption, as 'messing around' on the computer becomes so much more about production (Sefton-Green and Buckingham 1998). Two such examples are the making of video animations, and the use of the Internet for games and leisure.

ONLINE AND OFFLINE VIDEOS

The production of video is one activity that was particularly popular with Zach, (8), and his friends. Both Zach and his sister are very computer literate and have a high level of access to the Internet. The following scene shows the range of their abilities and the multiplicity of social and technological linkages in media-based play.



Figure 26

After Brianna's turn on the computer was finished, Zach fetched a CD and asked me if I wanted to see an animation that he and his friend Perry [33] made. It is made in a 'stop motion' style using Lego pieces to form the characters (see Figure 26 for stills). I'm very impressed but Zach says dismissively:

'It's easy you can get the software on the new Macs. All the kids at school are doing it!'

The basic plot of his animation is that a large monster comes and kidnaps another character and drags him away. There is another passive character that Zach explains:

'Just stands still. See his head turns, but he's just watching.

I ask Zach about the background.

'I drew that. See there is an alarm on the wall, but it's too high so they can't reach it.'

[33] Perry (11) is a slightly older boy than Zach, who he knows from the time he, Brianna and Debra lived on the small Gulf island of Galliano. On Galliano there is only one elementary school where all the children are educated in one classroom, so inter age-group friendships are the norm.

There are many indications of Zach's fears being processed through play in the video, and it seems significant, in light of his brush with foster-care, that the themes of abandonment and kidnap are what he chose to record on the 'animation'. Sometimes his fears are misconceived, for example on one occasion, quite upset, he said:

> 'A kid at our school went to BC Children's hospital and died of cancer. Her friends only found out on the morning announcements. They say that you get cancer from eating an old sandwich.'

However, Lego play, with or without recording it to make an animation, seems to be one of his favourite ways of thinking through more taxing problems. In one scene we were playing together in his and Brianna's room, as Zach promised to show me how to make the videos. Zach made a 'Luke Skywalker', a character from Star Wars, in white and yellow with a green block as a light sabre and pitted him against a 'Darth Vader', also from Star Wars, all in black and with a red light sabre. He started to tell me about the film 'Attack of the Clones'. He explains:

> 'After Anakin's mother gets kidnapped by these monsters she's really sick and she dies, and then Anakin is tricked by the Chancellor who tells him that he can bring back people from the dead if he is in the dark side, and Padme (his wife) gets really sick so he thinks he can save her, so he has no choice, but to go to the "dark side."'
>
> 'Is it kind of like in Pokémon where Meowth isn't always bad even though he is in Team Rocket?' I ask.
>
> Zach replies, 'Well, he is actually evil, because he is mean and traps those two guys even though they are just working for their masters.'
>
> 'But they don't really have a choice either like Anakin, if their masters are evil? 'I comment.
>
> 'Yeah it is kind of the same, like Celebi in 'Pokémon 4 Ever'; he's not really evil but turns evil because someone is choosing for him.' Zach concludes.

At this moment for Zach, playing with Lego ostensibly for making an animation, becomes prop-based 'pretend' play, using 'Star Wars' as a back-story. For Zach the difficult issues of good and evil and choice are referenced to Pokémon to explain the subtleties of the 'adult' theme in 'Star Wars'. In Elizabeth Grugeon's classroom-based research, 'From Pokémon to Potter' she notes similarly that:

> They (the children) were not necessarily playing with the objects but using them as a stimulus to develop very involved drama based games requiring discussion, collaboration, negotiating, and listening. (2004: 73)

For Zach, these dramatic games are played through the proxy of Lego most often, and similarly to Zuleika's acted 'pretend' games, see Chapter 2.2, they are most effective when played with a partner. For Zach, his sister Brianna is often that partner, but for Zuleika she relies on the co-operation of her 'best' friend Peter (8 ½). Peter is never willing to participate in Zuleika's High School Musical games, because he likes to lead the play in their relationship, see Chapter 2.5. He is, like Zach, fond of using props to play his games and will, for example, weave complex narratives of police car-chases into games that Zuleika starts as 'Cinderella' narratives, using her fairy-tale castle Playmobil set.

Julian Sefton-Green's (1998) research shows that children 'messing around' with music and graphics packages, essentially producing digital versions of school 'arts and crafts', has somewhat dated with the advent of Internet cultures and a more sophisticated use of technologies. However, these qualities, like those Sefton-Green discusses, are fundamentally playful for children rather than technical, as Zach

dismissively notes when he comments ‘it’s easy’. For the children the benefit of this type of technological play is an engagement with the visual that is under their control, a ‘safe’ encounter with difficult issues for their own, or their friends’ consumption. However, not all media is as easy for the children to control, even that which they usually would enjoy, or is directed at them. On one afternoon, I monitored closely Zach’s use of the Internet for play and for ‘messing around’ to see how much of the play involves consumption of others’ productions or production of his own. When left to his own devices, he has an eclectic range of activities and websites he uses, but the website YouTube is a particularly rich source both of information about the outside world, and for social interactions. As it was his birthday in a couple of months’ time, he was excitedly looking at home videos that had been posted on the video sharing site of rides at the large local amusement park, Playland, that he was hoping to be taken to as a birthday present.

He had a well-worn map of the park from his last visit, three years-ago, and excitedly pointed out each ride he hoped to go on in turn to me, before looking at first-person perspective videos of the rides online. One or two he judged to be ‘too scary’, and Brianna expressed concern that she did not like rollercoasters and wondered if she would have to go on them if she did not want to. After he had looked at each ride, some twice, and I had passed my judgement on what I thought of the ‘scariness’ of each one, he decided to show me some other videos on YouTube, that children at his school had made and he thought were ‘cool’. The first was a movie style ‘preview’ for the school play, complete with anime style drawings

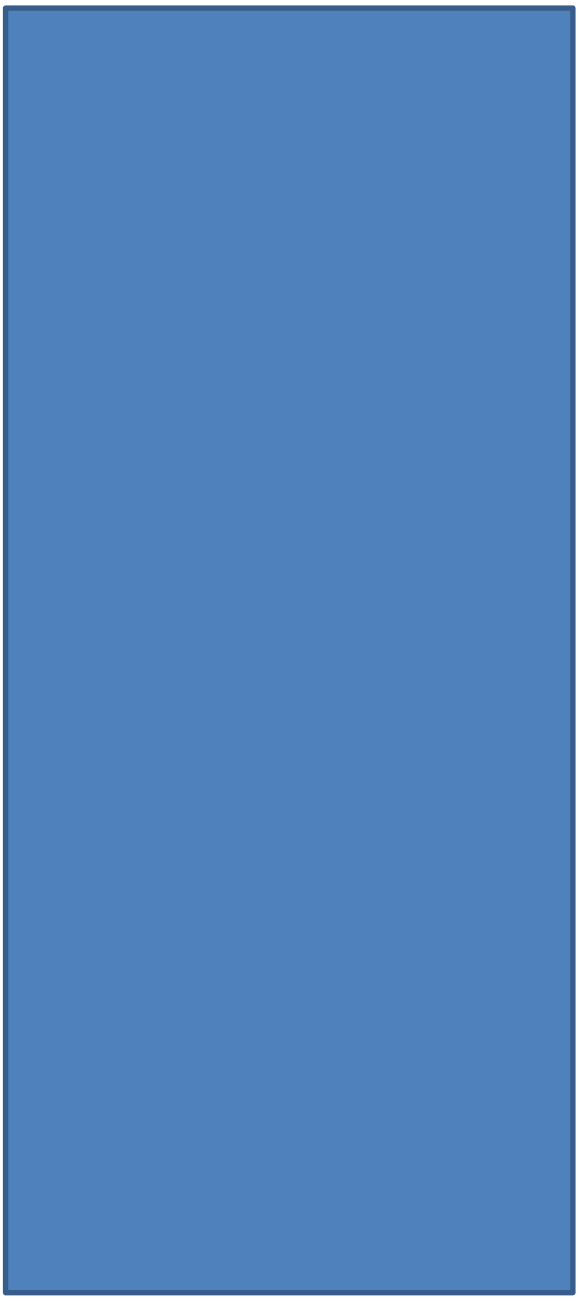


Figure 28 (removed - copyright restrictions)

(Queen Alexandra 09 Voices from the Wall, (Figure 27) and another called 'The adventures of Rachel and Thomas' (Figure 28 for stills). The second example was made by Zach's friends on Galliano Island, where he previously lived, including animations by his friend Toby, who he made his Lego animation with. Zach is rather in awe of this slightly older boy, and tells me in hushed tones that he is 'the best at drawing on Galliano.' In the case of the play 'trailer', the website's public comments board reveal that there are nineteen unique handles commenting on the video. Mostly the comments appear to be children from the school, which it is revealed is made by the 'Grade 7s' (approx. twelve-year-olds). However at least eight of the children reveal their real names in their posts, which is worrying in terms of Internet safety in this public forum. This is mitigated by the low, in terms of YouTube, view-count for the video of 577 views.

This holds true for many of the videos made by the children, they tend not to reach wide public awareness except amongst their own friends' group, if one is to judge by comments left. However, it is impossible to tell who is watching a video, particularly in the case of live-action videos, such as 'The adventures of Rachel and Thomas'. It is ironic and worrying in the light of ethical strictures regarding the filming and publishing of images of children the fact that the children themselves may subvert these restrictions. While they are aware these are meant for their safety, there is a thrill in toying with danger, by socially re-constructing the website comments area as a 'safe' arena. That is, because they are only discussing the video with their 'real' friends, albeit in a publicly accessible forum, they 'forget' that anyone can see the video and what they write about it. One cannot help but wonder how these small subversions may lead to larger ones later on that may actually threaten their wellbeing. One student comments for example,

> 'ralph, why would u say ur name???' (sic)

However, careful reading reveals this is less a concern for his privacy, as for the fact that he simply commented, 'this is Ralph' rather than giving feedback on the video itself. Two studies which consider these aspects of children's production and consumption of new media are Heather Horst's 'Aesthetics of the Self: Digital Mediations' (2009) and dannah boyd's[34] 'Why Youth (heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life' (2008). While both are specifically concerned with teenager's use of social-networking sites, they raise a number of important issues that apply to children's use of the Internet and new

[34] dannah boyd chooses to spell her name in lowercase.

technologies generally. boyd's article asks the question of whether online friendships on sites like Facebook and MySpace are similar to real world interactive friendships. While children may choose only to talk to their face-to-face friends online, their conversations are essentially witnessed in a public sphere that means that, she argues, 'friends are publicly articulated, profiles are publicly viewed, and comments are publicly visible.' (boyd 2008: 124). However, boyd argues, that rather than a general, open and nebulous public, there are specific 'networked publics', to use Ito's term (Ito, Okabe and Matsuda 2006; Varnelis 2008), of people with interest in these children that they are exposed to, be it friends, parents, teachers or paedophiles.

Generally the users of sites assume that their obscurity as an individual, especially as a child, will guarantee them a form of anonymity, as I observed in my data with children commenting on each other's videos on YouTube. Yet, the phenomenon of social voyeurism, by any of these publics, ultimately exposes the children to what boyd calls 'social drama', either in the case of falling in and out with their friends, or being subjected to other unwanted attention through their use of networking sites, such as adults or school principal's tracking down their activities with negative consequences. The moral panic arguments that envision long-term damage to children from Internet use including addiction and inability to conduct an outside social life, seem to be challenged by this sort of research. That is there is an assumption of inauthenticity in the Internet, a lack of consequence, something perhaps seen by the playful flirting with danger that young children bring to their

Internet use. However, the consequences, boyd shows, are clearly painfully real, when the 'flirting' with attention, becomes real, unwanted attention.

Horst's (2009) work, in this vein, focuses on the constructions of person, enacted through social networking on the Internet. She considers how the bedroom, traditionally the most private of spaces, is to a degree made public through the presence of Internet-connected computers. In Horst's case study this is most keenly demonstrated by the holding of MySpace parties, where her participant, a teenage girl, and her friends would dress up, often worryingly provocatively, and take multiple photographs to put on MySpace. Secondly, her participant coordinates the colours of her profile page with the colours of her bedroom, thus according to Horst, blurring the boundaries between private and public presentations of self. In many ways the scene that Horst describes and how Zach shows the children at his school use the Internet do much to draw attention to children's produce-to-consume type of play. Unlike consuming to produce, this has, especially in the case of the Internet, possibly uncontrollable consequences. In many ways, this type of play encompasses more of the definition of play as 'experimentation with risk' (Brown and Vaughan 2009) than perhaps is desirable. Moreover, this definition of play tends to be more comfortably applied in the case of a child falling out of a tree and breaking an arm, than it does to the flirtations with risk that the Internet provides. Even so, the type of videos that are posted and consumed on the Internet by the children are subjected to their own barometers of what is appropriate, what is too risky and what is likely to be acceptable; judging by the examples I saw across

my fieldwork, with younger children, these very seldom crossed the types of lines Horst describes.

ONLINE GAMES

The flirting with danger that comes from the blurring of boundaries between production and consumption is certainly present in the virtual worlds of online games (Boellstorff 2008). However, the types of games my participants were involved in, bearing in mind their ages, were mainly small scale or directly related to off-line toys, such as in the case of virtual pets, and ranged in their emphasis on consumption or production. On one occasion both Zach and Brianna wanted to have 'computer time'[35] straight after breakfast on a Sunday, and the following typical scene occurred. Zach went online first and started to play some small online games. I asked Zach about what games he liked, he replied:

[35] In the Media Awareness' Network (2005) Survey 'Young Canadians in a Wired World' Addicting Games (29.6%) was the most popular website for boys aged four to seven, a similar site to Mini-clip, which was only one percent less popular (28.6%). Interestingly YouTube does not feature in any list or in the report at all, despite this being the one website many children mentioned to me as a useful source of information and entertainment. A survey conducted by Childwise on British children, and reported in the Daily Mail (Bates 2008) newspaper, gives average times for boys on the Internet as 1.9 hours per day and 2.1 hours for girls. This is compared to television watching at 2.7 hours for boys and 2.6 hours for girls. This is much higher than any of the children I worked with reported being allowed. The 'Young Canadians in a Wired World' survey presents similar amounts for those with time restriction, 1.1 hours for grades four to five, and 1.7 hours for grades six and seven. However much higher times are reported for those without time limits, namely 2.2 and 2.8 hours respectively. The Kaiser Family Foundation Survey (Rideout, Foehr and Roberts 2010) of eight to eighteen-year-old North American children's media use reports astonishingly high numbers, 7.5 hours a day watching TV, using mobile phones the Internet and so on. For children under ten-years-old, this number drops to 5.29 hours. Despite being an outstandingly large-sampled and thorough survey with 2002 respondents, methodologically one cannot help wondering how thoroughly and with what level of aspirational thinking rather than real answers the eight-year-olds managed the twenty-six-page questionnaire that on average took the children forty minutes to complete, presumably longer for the youngest.

> ‘I’m on ‘Mini-clip’ (a website). There are lots of games but some are inappropriate for children because they have lots of shooting and things.’
>
> I ask if there is a specific children’s section, but Zach replies that he ‘just knows’ what is aimed at children.
>
> I ask, ‘Does your Aunty say those ones are not good?’
>
> He replies:
>
> ‘No, I just read the instructions and then I’ll know.’

Similarly to when he spends time on YouTube, Zach self-censors and picks a number of games he feels are ‘appropriate’, essentially producing a filter for his consumption. His excitement to play is revealed by his stream of commentary. In a sing-song voice, he remarks ‘zing, nywah!’ and then, ‘my guy got hit by spikes, and then he wanted to go to the hospital.’ Clearly this sort of violence is allowable, whereas ‘shooting’ was not, excluded by him on that basis. This is again different to the example of Brendon, (10), that I discuss in the final chapter of this thesis, who uses YouTube to learn to make a paper dart gun that he makes for and teaches the other children to make out of brightly coloured construction paper. Educator-ethnographer Dyson argues that in her classroom study on the cartoon ‘X-men’:

> Children who don’t use media in stories/don’t have access to them cite their parents’ ‘too violent’ reasoning rather than ideas surrounding stereotyping/class divisions…In the unofficial world, all of the children engaged in at least some play involving violence inspired by the popular media. (1997: 115)

Dyson’s argument is that children use material from television to explore, as I have argued Zuleika does in the previous chapter, class stereotypes and social roles. However, Dyson emphasises that the ‘fun’ component of play acting, particularly super-hero games, is not the social drama, but rather the physical action,

particularly fighting ‘bad guys’ and so on. However, the excuses used to avoid violence means that children are conscious of the trope of what Lanclos (2003) calls the ‘Bad Child’, and take steps around adults to demonstrate their discrimination against violence, particularly ‘shooting’. Yet, as Zach and Brendon show this discrimination filter is ‘fuzzy’ logic, not equally applied across all media or toys, that is to say not a blanket injunction against violence.

Brianna, Zach and Zuleika were also all involved in a rather more obviously ‘productive’ form of Internet-based play which loosely relates to the phenomenon of ‘virtual pets’, which started with the Tamagotchi in the 1990s and became the popular website ‘NeoPets’ in the 2000s (Seiter 2005). The two types of toys popular with the children in Vancouver are called ‘Littlest Pet Shop’ and ‘Webkinz’, and are widely available in the local toys stores. However, the ‘Webkinz’ give the impression of being a more local toy and less mass-marketed, due to being primarily distributed in small stores, whereas ‘Littlest Pet Shop’ is available at big-box retailers. These toys have their own virtual, animated lives as well as being stuffed animals that come with ‘adoption certificates’ and a list of attributes, much like a Pokémon card, tagged to their paw. This seems to either introduce children to the notion that ‘real’ friends can also exist online, or gives them the message that their toys are their ‘friends’ as they are online too, much like a social networking website. Moreover, these toys are constructed to blur the boundaries between the material and the virtual, private and public space.



Figure 29

At Zuleika's eighth birthday party, she was most excited about the two 'Webkinz' that she was given. 'My first ever Webkinz, thank you so much!' Zuleika said excitedly on unwrapping the first one (Figure 29). The relief of the child whose is chosen first is palpable. Zuleika knows that it is protocol to name the Webkinz as you would a child on receiving it, and calls the yellow dog 'Fluffy', and the second toy, a lion, 'Dad'. While Zuleika is not allowed much computer time, she does get involved quite quickly in the online world of 'Webkinz'. When one first registers for an account, either to 'borrow' a pet, for limited access, or to start playing properly, an animated character, 'Mother Goose', guides the player through 'adoption' process, where the name of the pet the child has chosen is registered. On the site the player is then encouraged to use construction tools to build a house for their pet, feed the pet, and earn money to improve the standards of living for the pet, buying furniture and more rooms for the house. Money can be earned through winning small arcade games, through finding your pet a 'job' (such as in a 'call centre', where they/the player completes tasks for money) or through 'adopting' (buying in the real world) more pets. Regularly returning to the site, daily for example, also gives rewards such as clothing and food for your pet. Brianna has a similar toy, more mass-marketed, called 'Littlest Pet Shop' which also has an online world that can be

accessed by owners of ‘Pets’, or one can ‘borrow’ a pet to gain temporary access. Brianna logs into her account on ‘The Littlest Pet Shop’ website whenever she is allowed ‘computer time’, she spends time dressing her pets up in different ways to the clothes she has for them at home, producing little interactions with them, as well as playing games with them. Some of the other activities include print-out pages for colouring in, which can extend Brianna’s time in the virtual world in the real world. Similarly to Webkinz, the website is designed that the more characters you buy in real life the more characters you can ‘own’ on the website and the more you can do. Even though, between them, Brianna and Zach have about four or five of these characters as stuffed toys and another five as little figurines, Brianna’s access is only about half of what the site offers.

Other parts of these websites direct the children to other linked sites, such as the ‘Littlest Pet Shop Petsitters’ Club’, which is managed directly through the Hasbro toys website. This website has free downloads of videos and songs, as well as links to an online store. To access ‘special’ sections, the user needs to register as a member. Like the Webkinz and main Littlest Pet Shop online worlds, this site is registered with the Trust-E foundation, adheres to child safety guidelines and so does not ask for an email address or any user information to register. Once on the site, one can link up with friend’s profiles or view strangers’ profiles however, these are anonymized as the ‘user picture’ is that of your virtual pet, and the ‘user name’ is similarly a descriptor using a colour, animal name and number such as, ‘LimeRaccoon1158’. In many ways these embryonic forays into social networking

familiarise the young user and their 'imaginary' friends with the world of the Internet. The boundaries between the real, spatially limited space of the home, and the freedoms of virtual space encourage blurring of the boundaries between production and consumption also. The 'audience' for these virtual world productions is often unclear. In most cases, common sense suggests that the audience is limited, however part of the 'fun' must surely be that there is one, and that there are other children (or adults) who use and interact with these worlds. This is suggested by the fact that so many children's television shows and toys have websites with interactive components or 'creative' components like craft suggestions or colouring-in pages, yet the ones the children choose to spend their 'computer time' on are the ones where online production and networking is also a part of the narrative. Thus, the appeal of this type of play is linked to how these websites and creative technology projects allow the child to 'produce' and present themselves to an audience, either of their friends or an unseen network of other children. Furthermore, it allows the audience to interact and comment on this representation of the self, thus conveying their impressions of the individual back to them.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that while the act of consumption is often conflated with negative consumerism in the case of children, it can operate as part of a positive dynamic where mass consumer objects are socialised into the child's life-world in an

emotional and interactive way. My participant children's play with these objects and technologies demonstrates that acts of consumption and production can be creative and can evolve beyond being simply derivative of their commercial media starting points.

In the first case I discuss how consumer products, such as Pokémon cards and television, when creatively modified into collections and drawings are, as Belk (1988) states, acts of 'self-legitimization'. Moreover, I argue that these acts of creativity show how the children construct how they see themselves. While card-collecting extends the self and challenges spatial restrictions in the home which can constrain the children's social position in the family, drawings in many ways are a type of imaginative play that has much in common with 'pretend' play. In particular, this is demonstrated through the movement of the children from a reliance on pre-set 'guides' of how-to-draw, to freehand and modified creative explorations. This demonstrates how the children integrate their own play, surrounding their sense of self, into the social knowledge that others share through the group play based on these narratives that I have discussed previously.

James (1995) argues that developing a relative sense of self is how children create themselves as individuals and as part of the category of child. Through the processes of developing self-consciousness, that is awareness of conformity and lack thereof, particularly as regard to social status, she argues children's self-consciousness emerges

from ‘the gap between sameness and difference, conformity and individuality’ (74). Acts of self-legitimation such as collection and drawing and acts of self-presentation such as video creation and online play, seem to mirror the distinctions James draws. In the first instance, drawing and collecting produce conformity initially, and self-reflection later, such as with the spatial manipulation of the collection and drawing that reflects what Machliodi (1998) sees as individual expressions of creativity. The second case of production for others’ consumption particularly seems to draw on the flexible and often amorphous presentations of self that are offered by the new media. This allows space to experiment with how the self is seen by others. The children’s creative output, particularly within the small-scale social networking offered through toys like Webkinz and Littlest Pet Shop, can focus more consciously on how they wish others to see them without committing firmly to an image that relates to the real world.

Presentations of video however, for example on YouTube, expose the real self to potential embarrassment[36] or ridicule in comments from others, as well as to potential social dangers in this ‘public’ sphere (Taylor 1985). Nevertheless, it is clear that as so many urban children are spatially confined through concerns with ‘stranger danger’ risks, they have reached out into freer virtual worlds, with socially-networked components. From a risk standpoint this is concerning, however it demonstrates that children’s play within their homes is not necessarily ‘bourgeois’ and ‘solitarized’ by modernity, as Sutton-Smith (1976) has argued. Rather, private play can increasingly be

[36] See also ‘cooties’ and embarrassment in Chapter 2.1

a preparation for social interaction with peers. In this regard my participant children's online presentations of their public personas are less structured, and far more cautious than those of teenagers, like Horst's (2009) participants. Andrew Cohen (1994) argues that this derives from awareness that the public persona is only a part of the self, not the whole 'me' of the person. Moreover, this 'authorial', active self means that individuals are more than simply their relation to social groups. In essence Cohen argues that self-conscious identity production only incorporates how others see the individual rather than shaping it. However, the elements of how an individual constructs their self in order to relate to their groups are part of the creative dynamics of play that my participants demonstrate. The more overtly conscious constructions of the self, through new media particularly, are far less important for these young children than they are for teenagers and adults.

Nevertheless, research looking specifically at the media and new media use of young children is sparse, The 'Young Canadians in a Wired World' (ERIN research Inc. 2005) survey is one such example, yet, for example, does not mention the ubiquitous video sharing site YouTube, something that my participants across field-sites often mention. A large cross-cultural study 'Children and their Changing Media Environment: A European Comparative Study' (Livingstone and Bovill 2001), is perhaps one of the more thorough examples of research interrogating what children use media for, what types of media they use and for how long. However, the emerging themes of who are the new media users, what is changing in the media environment for children are prohibited from reaching any meaningful conclusion by the seeming superficiality of

the cross-country comparisons. While a large prevalence of bedroom culture and media consumption is documented in the study, following the North American model, it is not universally true for Finnish teenagers or Dutch boys, and thus the research holds back from sharing what sort of media exactly and websites the children are interested in. Rather it simply mentions 'games consoles' in general or 'social networking websites'. This limits the drawing of any detailed generalisations about what social purposes the media have for children, or even what its effect might be on their creation of social worlds.

Media-based toys, like Pokémon, offer children particular skill and knowledge which contributes to how they are seen by other children. Thus, in the following chapter I will explore how children form social contracts through material exchange. Children's expertise in social media is a vital part of how others see them, and whether their exchanges will be successful. These exchanges can be competitive or symbolic in nature. However, I shall demonstrate that the way in which children trade or gift with each other reveals their negotiations surrounding their social hierarchy, which influences how and with whom they make friends.

2.4) CHILDREN'S EXCHANGE: NEGOTIATING, TRADING AND SHARING

INTRODUCTION

We have then, on the one hand, major theorists and field-defining work and statements about consumer culture where children are hardly acknowledged as having a social existence. On the other hand, there exists a good deal of work on children and consumption which, with few exceptions, does not try to integrate insights about children's lives and worlds with the larger concerns about the nature, boundaries and exigencies of those multitudinous practices often gathered under the rubric of "consumption".

The Missing Child in Consumption Theory (Cook 2008: 221)

Children's social play is not an area of study that has received a great deal of attention in the discipline of anthropology, with children often treated as 'works in progress' with nothing to contribute to our knowledge of how societies work. Moreover, because anthropologists, have in the past, been so focused on non-urban, small-scale societies, particularly those with non-market forms of exchange, there are prominent gaps in knowledge about types of exchange in communities outside of these settings, or communities that use multiple exchange systems. Children's trade in urban North American settings is an area of study that can challenge the dominance of non-western models of exchange. Even more significantly, the ways and things children trade, when analysed anthropologically, can move beyond assumptions promoted through the popular media that children are voracious consumers to their detriment. Greater consideration of the connections between toys, food, collection, play and exchange can act as a lens to understanding sociality in the child's world more widely, and help

to further position the role of consumer goods such as television-based toys and games within the overarching lives of children.

In this chapter I will argue, like Appadurai (1986) and Inge Daniels (2009), that market exchange, the creation of wealth through the transfer of goods and commodities, is not mutually exclusive with that of gift exchange. This chapter will discuss where these two forms intersect and occur side-by-side in children's lives. Ultimately, the argument I will make is that both of these forms exchange create meaning and value in the lives of my participants, and that sociality through gift-giving is as complex and relevant to children's lives as it is to adults. Market capitalism, which is often assumed to impoverish social relations surrounding the gift, as it is seen to distance the person from the object, is shown to be an important part of the exchange process for children. Having independent access to commercially-consumed items is a luxury for children who do not have their own sources of income. Their purchases are generally vetted or made by their parents. However, even those without an allowance or endorsement from their parents find ways to get access to commodities and then turn these 'trade goods' into sociality through exchange on the playground. Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe (2003) argue, for example, that goods participate in cycles and spaces of exchange that last well beyond their first life and have value that may become more apparent over time, such as with collectible goods. This is an aspect of childhood which I have discussed in the previous chapter. Exchange within the home and at sites like school yards or garage sales challenges the dominance of the shopping mall as the primary site of first-hand consumption. These types of studies of the intersections

between the social and the material, of which arguably mine is one, question discourses of 'pure' market exchange, where value is supposedly produced solely through monetary value, and where goods are divorced from the individual doing the buying and selling. Parents' empowerment and facilitation of children's consumption is the first part of a longer process of exchange which enables children to create and maintain a range of social networks through gifting and trading.

Roger Caillois (1958 (2001)), a student of Marcel Mauss, argues that exchange is fundamental to play, in that it functions as a circulation of value. Particularly, games of chance, he argues, fit this criterion as they do not produce wealth, but result in transference of property. However, Caillois argues that at the end of the game the playing field is once again level, as nothing has been accrued. By contrast, Huizinga (1938 (1964)) holds that play has no material interest, that is, there is no element of exchange fundamental to play. However, it is it my argument that play does have intersections with the material, beyond the superficial presence of toys, that are vital to the production of children's sociality. Furthermore, I shall demonstrate that children exchange as a large part of their play lives. Play itself, with its reciprocal, backwards-and-forwards nature, encompasses some of the same qualities of invitation, offer and acceptance that are found in the contractual nature of trade. It is my argument, however, that 'economic' contracts produced through playful trade, are valid as social contracts in the child's peer world, and both contribute towards the creation of social hierarchies on the playground and influence the creation and maintenance of friendship groups. Play embodies a fundamental, sacred seriousness, and those who

refuse to play, or play 'properly', violate principles of reciprocity and are accused of being a 'bad sport'. Through playful exchanges, children create and maintain social networks. James (1979) argues that children's cultures contain elements of the adult world, but challenge their meanings through playful re-ordering of values to stand apart from adult cultures. Play, including exchange, is a part of building the children's peer sociality and hierarchy through shared camaraderie and testing of physical prowess. However, I will argue that children do not engage in exchange in isolation, and their ability to access the means to participate in trade networks to increase status amongst their peers, is an important part of their relationship with adults.

My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate how children use exchange as part of their play and social lives. Firstly, I will draw on my data from the toy store site to explore how children shop, and what their parents' role is in managing or challenging this process. Secondly I will discuss what children do with the purchased goods through data collected on the playground. Essentially, by turning commodities into gifts they create friendships and establish hierarchies. The complex, hierarchical peer-group relations that children demonstrate through their social lives at school is an example of what James (1979) calls their irreverent adoption and sometime inversion of the adult world. In her ethnography of children in a northern British town, she argues that 'ket' or junk sweets like flying saucers, sherbet dips and so on are appealing to children precisely because of their dissimilarity to healthy food. Their time of consumption, their capacity to 'spoil' an appetite, their unnatural colouring and so on all add to their appeal as something that challenges the adult conventions and rules surrounding

eating. Food is an important area of exchange that is separate from toy trading for two reasons. Firstly, parents play a key role in determining the types of foods a child's lunch-box contains however, adult ideas about food and nutrition clash with children's 'use-value' on the playground. Secondly, because food has an ephemeral quality, it can be used up through sharing with others. In other words, by ingesting a 'gift' of food a specific kind of reciprocity is created that requires on-going maintenance through follow-up gifts. This is in contrast to the sort of 'trading up' that occurs in the world of toys, and the deliberately competitive, potlatch-like nature of the gifting, that encourages and cements hierarchies of popularity amongst the children. Thus, my ethnography demonstrates the nature of children as active traders and consumers with their own complex schemas of value. Their selective, socially-driven decision making surrounding commercial food, toys and games questions what adults perceive to be an unthinking rapacious consumption fuelled by media and peer-marketing.

FEEDING CHILDREN: PARENTS' ROLE IN CHILDREN'S CONSUMPTION OF TREATS

'Sugarcoated Junk: Should SpongeBob be feeding your kids?'

The Orlando Sentinel (Gerencher 2005)

'A Diet of Cartoons, Junk Food?'

The Sacramento Bee (Staff Reporter 1991)

'Campaign to wean children off TV diet of cheap cartoons'

The Times (Sherwin 2007)

Media arguments surrounding children's engagement with commodities often seem to ask society a question along the lines of 'What are we doing to our children?' This position implies that there is a fault in society and in parenting and that children are being 'poisoned' by being allowed to access mass consumer products, as is seen for example in the parenting advice of Palmer's (2006) book 'Toxic Childhood'. This somehow assumes that access to mass entertainment, news and technology is beneficial for adults; yet detrimental to children and that they are a passive audience with no powers of discernment (see Chapter 2.2). The anthropologist Korbin (1998) sees the type of fictional ideal of 'good mothering', that is, the mother that controls and eliminates risk from children's lives, as the paragon parents are held to by these assumptions. It is the negotiation and friction surrounding the imposition of these limits from the child's point of view that causes the most tension surrounding consumption in families. Because of its connection to nurture, the metaphor of food to also stand for parents' role in children's access to toys, and the media suggests that adult society alone is responsible for determining whether children incorporate commercial products into their minds or bodies. This seemingly excuses the child from responsibility and casts them as passive, incapable of resistance or discernment to what is 'fed'.

Yet, what, for children, is forced upon them, 'fed', presumably polluting their 'innocent' bodies, and where is the scope for the child's 'treat'? Toys, sweets, days out and access to television as a reward may all fall into this category. However, what makes something a treat often means that it is not 'good for you'. For

example, children's sweets are often unnaturally coloured, high in sugar[37] and have the capacity to 'spoil' an appetite and so present challenges to the adult order surrounding the time and quantity of their consumption (James 1979). The social importance of giving children access to 'treats', has seldom been analysed from the child's perspective. Marie Gillette's (2005) work on the place of mass-produced sweets for Hui Chinese children, who eat a strictly *qingzhen,* that is *halal*, Islamic diet, and generally excluded any food not made by the Hui themselves in Hui homes and restaurants, shows that these types of foods occupy a liminal position. They are given to children as rewards and do not occupy a category of 'real' food, subject to restriction. In the same way children's consumer products seem to occupy a position of liminality for parents. Parents are often told that these products are not 'good' for children through the mass media, or even accused of their over-provision, yet for many children commercial products are still allowed under certain circumstances. James's and Gillette's work on unnatural food 'treats' suggests that parents and children recognise their value as non-foods. According to James, for the children, this is part of a challenge to adult society, and for the parents, part of giving the reward is recognising the fulfilment of a social contract. Kline observes, 'the subtle skills of negotiation and guilt, of love and its withdrawal, lay at the roots of bourgeois family practice, which was embodied in the "treat"' (1993: 163). Of course treats have limits, or they would lose their special nature, and this is

[37] The importance of sugar as an object of value to society has been charted by James (1990) and Beardsworth and Keil (1997). Children as precious, perhaps even 'sacred' beings to use Nippert-Eng's (1995) term, are of course historically most often linked with sugar consumption. That is to say the younger the child, the more closely they are associated with divinity and the more likely sugar consumption, as a 'gift to the gods' is seen as their right.

indicative of the responsibility of the controlling hand of the parent behind children's purchases (see Chapter 2.2).

However, children are also painted by the media as insatiable 'over' consumers, who force their parents to give them too many treats through 'pester power' and maintain a stranglehold grip over the family income. This type of 'selfish' behaviour is seen as at odds with the altruistic spirit of family life, and a source of friction between parents and children. Becker, the Nobel Prize-winning economist argues in his 'Rotten Kid Theorem' (1981 (1991)), that selfish behaviour in families is self-limiting, as damaging the welfare of parents ultimately damages the welfare of the child. Furthermore, from a socio-biological perspective, it has been argued that altruism is in fact selfishness in disguise (Wilson 1975 (2000)), or indeed that selfish ideals are promoted through 'reciprocal altruism' (Erickson and Murphy 2008: 155). However, for social anthropology, even within seemingly altruistic exchanges there are often implicit reciprocities. For example, parents' care for children often requires that children will care for their aged parents in the future. Moreover, the reciprocal requirements on children for gaining access to toys through their parents' altruism are sometimes very unequal in nature. This is what George Simmel refers to as a 'causally connected repetition' of loss (1971: 46), and what Caillois (1958 (2001)) refers to as agonistic, that is exchange with potentially a 'winner' and a 'loser', exchange where one party comes off better out of the 'deal' than the other. This is primarily because the parents often stand as the ultimate gatekeepers, as I have argued in a previous chapter, of what children can and cannot have, and these

logics are not always compatible with the child's priorities. For example, the following typical scene unfolded in the Kid's Market as a child of about eight-years-old was whining at his parents, stamping his feet and saying to them:

> 'You don't understand how much I need this, it's really important!'
>
> 'Well you can't have it', replies the father. The mother looks exasperated and confused.
>
> 'You already have thirteen marbles!' she says, turning to the father:
>
> 'He already has thirteen marbles'. The father gives the boy a withering stare and they leave with the child dragging his heels.

Taken on face value it might seem simply an issue of parental discipline to disallow this minor purchase, yet this can also serve as an example of how children's peer group values can clash with those of the adult world. I can well imagine a child bargaining for social capital on the playground, promising a gift of a special marble on Monday in return for a favour. The hidden 'childish' qualities of this world, to the parents and adults more generally, where playground promises and deals seem inconsequential, indicates that many adults see that children's social contracts should be subordinate to those between adults, such as parents, and children. Cook (2001), underlines this in his discussion of trading cards where he gives an example of a child who inadvertently trades away a valuable card with a professional adult card-trader only to be told 'a trade is a trade' by his parents. The same child, having 'learnt his lesson' well, hoodwinked another unsuspecting child in the same way, only to have his trade reversed by his parents after the injured child's mother complained.

In this vein, some parents will actively assist their child in obtaining toys with playground social currency as part of their own 'deals' with their children. In the following example, a young, South Asian mother and her shy son, Sajit (10), who I recognise from John Smith Elementary, comes into the shop and directly approaches the counter for the following exchange:

> 'We're looking for Chaotic cards, the deck,' she says.
>
> Jennifer, the clerk, shows her the two types we stock.
>
> 'No it's a new one a silver one in a tin, it came out about a month ago with a card reader you swipe.'
>
> The store does not seem to stock that, so they look at the booster packages of cards which we sell on the counter. These are, similar to most children's collecting card games, in opaque foil packaging, so that it is a gamble which cards are in each pack.
>
> 'How new are these?' the mother asks.
>
> 'Pretty new I think,' Jennifer says.
>
> 'We're looking for the older packs. Do these packs have the Ultra cards in them? Some of the new ones don't have them.' We both start looking at the back of the packages.
>
> I say,
> 'See there it says 1:24 chance of the Ultra cards in these packs.'
>
> The mother looks at Sajit who is finally consulted.
>
> 'Do you want to get them?' she asks.
>
> 'Are you feeling lucky?' I joke.
>
> The mother looks at her son again,
>
> 'Are you lucky today?' she asks.
>
> Sajit shakes his head.
>
> 'Ah, you're a bit pessimistic today then?' I say trying to engage him directly, but he does not recognise me from school or respond.
>
> 'Sometimes he is.' the mother says, and they leave.

This incident shows the implicit nature of the contract between parents and children when it comes to buying things. Here the mother acts as spokesperson and negotiator, asking for information from her child but 'controlling' the dissemination in the transaction. The final decision rests with Sajit, it would seem, but he is reluctant to continue or commit. It is likely this purchase is the fulfilment of some sort of deal between the two of them, such as a reward for good school work that he wishes to prolong. Zuleika's mother, Amira, would often make these sorts of deals to coerce her into performance of specific tasks she thought were important, such as the repetitive maths drilling system Kumon. For example, on one occasion, if Zuleika agreed to double the amount of Kumon exercises she performed every day for a month, Amira agreed to take them on a short break to Mexico in the school holidays. Zuleika so enjoyed the vacation that she in fact tripled the amount of Kumon exercises she did, leading Amira to feel she had to get Zuleika another gift to reward her for going over and above the agreement.

Melissa Tyler in her study of workers in childhood-consumption industries argues that the role of the sales-service worker, such as in a toy store, is to mediate the contradiction between the 'enchanting myth of consumer sovereignty' of the child set against the financial control of the parent. She argues:

> 'When customers are children, this process of enchantment is particularly poignant and precarious; precarious because of the dual status of child consumers as simultaneously endangered and empowered, vulnerable and agential. (Tyler 2009: 72)

Tyler's argument draws attention to the tension between the two discourses about children's consumption. Firstly, the 'pester power' argument, which shifts the empowerment to consume from the adult to the child, and secondly in the case of the 'vulnerable and endangered' child, the offspring 'fed' by parents from the smorgasbord of the commercial world. In a sense both aspects have validity: children are most certainly consumers, but with a private secondary agendas for exchange with other children that goes on with and without parents' overt knowledge. Secondly they are involved in 'deals' with their parents as toys become 'treats' or rewards for good behaviour. Sociological research, such as that by Dobson *et al.* (1994) in the North of England with working-class families, has shown that these rewards are vital to the relationship between parents and children. Even in very low-income families, mothers will budget to make sure children can participate in the bringing of branded sweets and chocolate to school. Thus, in some cases parents feed children directly, using treats as tools to teach children how to behave by socialising children into the values of their parent(s) through social bargaining.

A further illustration of this dynamic is in the case of children's birthday parties, where the type of gifts which are given strongly depends on the relationship of individual children to their parents, mediated by the social dynamics of the parents to each other. At Zuleika's eighth birthday party the gifts she received were an eclectic mix, ranging from a Hannah Montana board game from her brother to a kite from Toby and a hummingbird feeder from Peter who, embarrassed, said his

‘Mom chose it’. A final odd gift, by all accounts, was given by Clare of a large shiny green bag filled with yellow tissue paper and containing a watermelon, some bananas, a dragonfruit and a star fruit. The mother who had made the choice on behalf of her daughter explained she ‘was sick of plastic stuff from China’. The children were totally confused by the fruit, and ignored it until the watermelon rolled off the table and cracked a bit on the floor, causing slight consternation. Amira reprimanded Zuleika in Persian, then Mehdi, her brother, defended her in English saying that ‘she didn’t see it’. The social anxiety and pressure on a mother for a children’s birthday party is explored by Alison Clarke, (2007) working with middle-class parents in North London. She argues:

> The birthday party is an opportunity to publicly display notions of ‘good’ or ‘appropriate’ mothering, and the appeal to children to show graciousness in opening presents, and restraint in eating chocolate cake is as much directed towards the ‘other mothers’ as it is to the child itself (271).

Furthermore, Clarke argues, it is through the selective appropriation and tolerance of mass consumption items that the mothers negotiate a ‘sameness’ for their children’s parties. Furthermore, this ‘sameness’ where gifting does not become an ‘escalating potlatch’ but rather a subtle positioning of children in relation to their social group through either standardised financial value presents, or individual presents chosen with the children’s help.

The rebellion of the Clare’s mother against the danger or destructive power of ‘plastic stuff from China’ is somewhat unusual considering the fruit she chose was

equally as exotic and 'un-natural' (in western Canada) and is worth examining further. Clarke argues that in her study, the rejection of mass consumer goods in favour of anti-commercialism was the 'highest form of ostentation and a betrayal of normative notions of contemporary motherhood' (2007:269). As such, I suspect the stony silence of the other mothers at the party in reaction to this gift, reflected what Clarke calls the tension between consumptive ideal and reality. That is to say that those parents who step outside understood norms of monetary or social value face unspoken disapproval from those who feel that this implies an obligation of equal reciprocity.

The eating of junk-food, like pizza and artificially-coloured cakes, the use of commercial printed napkins and paper plates, themed with popular children's television shows, is tolerated selectively in the organisation of the children's party. While most middle-class mothers, certainly Zuleika's, do not endorse the regular consumption of unhealthy foods like pizza (day-to-day Amira cooks Persian dishes) neither do they encourage their children towards television branded clothing, stationery and so on. Yet in the case of the birthday party, the difficulties of organisation and the expense, creates a temporary truce between the commercial world and the mothers. By verbally scorning the mass consumption items of toys the other parents' chose, and particularly by the choice of 'healthy' fruit in the blind spot of mass consumption that the birthday party embodies, the reaction of the other parents seemed to sense the betrayal of the mother in question to their quiet acceptance of the commercial world on occasions like the children's birthday.

Thus, not only do parents bargain with their children about what types of mass consumer goods they are allowed to have, they also carefully mediate consumption of the commercial world in the overt exchange setting of the birthday party. However, once the children ultimately have custody of their treats, be they toys, food or larger items from birthday parties, there are a number of forms of exchange that they conduct between each other, to either challenge or cement their position in playground social hierarchies.

POKÉMON AS A FORM OF AGONISTIC EXCHANGE

Several children collect trading cards (see Chapter 2.3), particularly Pokémon, which is highly popular in Vancouver, to trade for food on the school playground. One way that they access the market for these trading cards is to use parents' treats and rewards as a source of wealth. However, more ephemeral lunchbox treats, such as food, may also be used in this way, for example trading three Pringles chips (crisps) and two Starburst sweets for a low-value 'common' card. This can be seen as a type of 'salt money' (Godelier 1977) transaction that does not reflect the market, but rather use-value of these items for further exchanges. While working in the Stay Tooned toy store I observed that even the younger children, of ages five to seven approximately, were interested in the trading power of the Pokémon cards and of what they might be able to gain through possessing them. This is clearly demonstrated by the following example of the use of a parentally-controlled 'allowance' by two younger children who came into the store and immediately gravitated toward the sealed foil packages that

contain the cards in a ‘blind’ wrapping (so that the children do not know what cards are in a package). The boys picked up the latest Pokémon cards and inspected them from all angles, holding them up to the light.

> ‘How much is that?’ the younger boy asks his brother.
>
> Immediately the mother accompanying them interjects,
>
> ‘Try to read the numbers.’
>
> The older boy takes the package and says,
>
> ‘$5.88’.
>
> ‘How much do you have?’ she asks the two boys.
>
> ‘Four’ replies the younger.
>
> ‘Two’ the older says slightly disappointed.
>
> He then turns his attention to some dusty, out-of-fashion, but cheap, trading card packages below the desk.
>
> ‘What’s Mission Control?’ he asks us.
>
> The sales clerk inspects the package, saying ‘I don’t know’. The boys lose interest and leave convinced there would not be any trade potential in those cards.
>
> ‘Thank you for your patience.’ Says the mother and they leave.



Figure 30



Figure 31

A few minutes later the mother returned and asked for change for $2 for the vending machines that sell Pokémon capsule toys outside the shop (Figures 30-31). Clearly this was an acceptable compromise. The capsule toys are fairly small, about one to two centimetres in height and are within, in most cases, a plastic 'egg' that is half coloured and half clear. This differentiates the toys from the more expensive capsules one can buy in the toy shop, that are in the shape of Pokéballs, which the human characters use in the show to 'store' their Pokémon in preparation for fighting. The Pokéball toys also contain a small figurine of the Pokémon. These sorts of capsule toys are collected sporadically by the children and occasionally traded if someone is unlucky to get two of one item. This type of toy vending machine is widely available in Vancouver, but originated in Japan where they are called *gashapon*, an onomatopoeic word from the sound the machines make when dispensing the toys. Many ranges of television toys, not exclusively Japanese, as Disney too is very popular, are stocked in the machines, but at this toy store the most popular is Pokémon.

Once the children possess some cards or access them through a small low-value trade with food or smaller toys, they use the cards to access more and higher value cards. Some cards are produced less commonly and have more powerful abilities, allowing their owner to win more games. However, because of the competitive spirit of both the play and the type of exchange involved in getting the cards, for many children the

main material focus of Pokémon is amassing of a collection of cards (see Figure 32), which are both 'souvenirs' of successful exchanges and gateways to acquiring more.



Figure 32

The children also study and research the inner strengths and personality of these characters aiming to achieve social status through demonstrating their mastery of the 'authentic'. Common break-time conversations are often on various aspects of the games or the children sometimes squabble to get each other to accept the superiority of their conquest in winning Pokémon and demonstrate the playfully competitive spirit of the game. One child might comment to another that, 'I'm getting Legends on the weekend', as a boast or conquest or 'I'll trade my Pikachu but not my Charizard', as an offer of exchange. As there are literally hundreds of characters, each with different names, it is something of a skill to be able to 'recite the ancestors' and evoke all of the different names and stages of evolution. Many of the children study to be able to do so, to have access to an authority on Pokémon that enables them a social superiority through knowledge. This phenomenon has been noted across many North American playgrounds. Christine Yano, in her article considering negative reactions to the Pokémon product states:

> One principal of an elementary school talks as if Pokémon were some kind of exotic ritual: "many kids don't actually play with the cards anyway – they just line them up and stare. They just kind of sit there and look at them, and talk about their various characteristics." Such obsessive, ritualized behavior – at least from an adult's perspective – warrants concern, alarm, and ultimately panic. (Yano 2004: 114)

Yet for children, my research suggests, the learning of the various Pokémon's names and abilities, as well as the ability to draw them, practiced in the home, are also a part of the fundamental playful social process involved in this media (See Chapter 2.3). This is particularly true at John Smith as bringing 'toys' and specifically trading cards to school is not allowed[38], although there is not an active confiscation by the volunteer supervision aids, if the rule is breached. The reason for the discouragement of bringing toys to school at John Smith, like many schools, seems mainly to be because of the potential for problems that would result for the school should they taken away, or traded away, with other children. This would cause questions at home, particularly with larger-ticket items that are likely to have been gifts from parents or relatives. However, because the children are proud of their possessions, particularly collections of valuable and symbolically powerful Pokémon cards, they can sometimes circumvent these restrictions by bringing something in for 'show and tell'. The younger children, particularly the Kindergarten class and 1st Grade (six to seven-year-olds), often attempt to use this method to bring in toys as they do this activity more often than older year-groups.

Older children seemed less interested in actively collecting and playing with their Pokémon cards, but were proud of having them, as they represented a substantial achievement of status and 'work' in their collection. For example, Annika and Grant, both nine-years-old, boasted that they had 'loads' of Pokémon cards, but did not actively trade them anymore. However, in contrast, Zuleika (8), only has one or two

[38] The popularity of trading Pokémon cards at school resulted in a lawsuit brought against Nintendo America for 'illegal gambling' (Allison 2006: 260).

cards that she has in her bedroom drawers (see Figure 33) of small trinkets and objects. These objects, like her prized High School Musical mirror compact (see Figure 34), are most certainly traded items, as her mother does not buy her commercial toys, and would be slightly horrified to learn of their presence. Exchanging and playing Pokémon, as a competitive game and through competitions on knowledge becomes a hierarchy-producing type of exchange, similar in anthropological terms to the potlatch. In considering the Kwakiutl potlatch, Helen Codere (1956) demonstrates through ethnographic data that these exchanges, while ruthlessly hierarchy-producing and reinforcing, are also playful. Her data shows that jokes and small 'skits' are often inserted into proceedings and indeed playful parallel potlatches occur with other groups, such as children and women where they semi-seriously imitate the men's jostling for status.



Figure 33



Figure 34

While games such as Pokémon show an occasionally competitive spirit in children's exchange, they are only one aspect of the type of exchanges that children participate

in, and one within somewhat of a pre-fabricated framework. This framework equally rewards those with greater access to their parents' money to buy more cards, as those with skill in trading and playing to access the cards. This limits its social significance, despite being an extremely far-reaching 'brand', a fact children seem to recognise. Thus, I shall discuss two other aspects of children's exchange that are socially more meaningful: continually renewed symbolic exchanges of food, and cross-category exchanges with the aim of producing social debts and increasing social status.

FOOD AND SYMBOLIC EXCHANGE

Because trading toys is not really allowed at John Smith, or in schools in general, food becomes the main item of trade.[39] It is a site both of conflict and advancement in social relations. Similar to what anthropologist Misako Nukaga (2008) observes in a San Francisco elementary school, the main forms surrounding the exchange of food at John Smith are gifting in the form of sharing and trading, that is, bartering for other goods or services of low-value, and occasionally conquest, that is theft or trickery. Marshall Sahlins (1972) defines these types of symbolic exchange as containing within them differing social contracts of reciprocity. Firstly, what he calls 'generalized reciprocity', which is amiable and altruistic sharing that produces goodwill between close kin, or friends. Secondly, what he calls 'negative reciprocity', that is the type of behaviour between distant social groups that tries to get something for nothing. For example, on one occasion, two fourth-grade girls,

[39] Food would naturally also be a site of trading without the presence of toys, but its importance is emphasised because of the restrictions.

Amy and Caryn walked together towards the basketball court where two boys, Matthew and Sajit, from their grade are playing. Amy had a small bag of 'chips' (crisps) open but folded over and held at her side.

> 'Hey can I have some?' Says the tallest boy, Matthew, clearly looking at the chips. The girls veer off behind the net trying to avoid them.
>
> 'No' says Amy firmly.
>
> The boys now both go over off the edge of the court to the girl, leaving their game, and Sajit, the second boy, also starts asking for some, holding his hands together to make a beggar's bowl shape. Amy gives in and reluctantly gives some to Matthew holding the bag half way up to section off what he can have from what he cannot, with both girls standing very close to the boys to make sure more people cannot see and also request some. Matthew subtly uses his body to ensure that Sajit is stuck on the edge of the little group and cannot get any chips before Amy has time to close the bag and walk off again while Matthew continues to bodily block Sajit. He is bulkier and easily accomplishes this task, demonstrably able to get something the other cannot.

While some might dismiss this sort of negative reciprocity as bullying, in many respects the incident has two components, one the social standing between the boys, and the other, the implications of the boy being able to take food from the girl. Thorne, (1993) noted child sociologist working in working-class elementary schools in the United States calls this an 'invasion', used to explore and test social boundaries surrounding gender. However Sahlins (1972) argues that there is not only a dimension between generalised and negative reciprocity that highlights the social closeness of the individuals involved, but secondly a vertical axis of hierarchy, where rank complicates the sentiment of these transactions. Because food, particularly snack food like chips and cookies are both valued and a low ranking trade item, this type of 'theft' through coercion is seen as a reasonable part of school yard activity by the children, rather than as unusual, because what Matthew takes is fair. This seems to be indicated by Amy's sectioning off of the packet by

squeezing some chips up to the top with her hands, while blocking his access to the bulk of them lower down in the bag. Insistent, deliberately annoying, or physical begging particularly accompanied by promises such as 'I'll be your slave forever', often will make a child give in to this sort of negative reciprocity. Often if the child begging is higher ranking than the other, the promise of 'servitude' is just ignored. However with a lower-ranking child some sort reciprocity might be observed playfully for a few days, usually the 'slave' will be required to provide special food from home in return or perhaps be sent on make-work 'fetch and carry' types of tasks.

In the Israeli anthropologist Tamar Katriel's (1987) study of children's food-sharing routine, '*xibùdim*,' she analyses what is considered a fair 'bite', which she states gives everyone a share leaving half for the giver. Katriel argues that the 'food economy' amongst children shapes the children's social relations through 'equality and generalized reciprocity' (318), that is through creating friendships. However Thorne (2005) and Nukaga (2008) both argue that food is often a site of conflict and also an arena where kids subtly mark class differences and develop a sense of their position in the class hierarchy. For Nukaga's study participants, she showed how the trading of ethnic food items, like dry seaweed, as opposed to mass-produced children's food like string cheese, was only likely amongst children of the same ethnic group as they were considered likely to appreciate its 'value'. Furthermore food was separated into 'dry' and 'wet' food categories, sharing dry food in general was most common, as it can be separated physically from the main body of food

without touching it, however wet food can only be shared amongst the closest of friends or siblings since the likelihood for bodily contamination and touching is so high, and in many schools this would be a covert practis

e for hygiene reasons, often also requiring shared utensils. In this way, Nukaga, argues, the sharing of Korean 'wet' food from home with other close Korean friends, cemented the boundaries of ethnic distinction in the school.

Although John Smith was a highly mixed ethnic environment, I only ever observed food sharing with commercial mass-produced 'dry' items, as there are both school and children's own taboos against sharing 'wet' food for bodily contamination reasons. In Zuleika's case, her mother would give her a small plastic box with cut up fruit inside it for recess time. In my observations with the family I noted that Zuleika's mother, Amira, had very set ideas about what foods it was appropriate to give children at what time of day. In Amira's day-care work this became obvious through her influence over what was given to her day-care children out of the lunch boxes their parents sent, what was shared and what was sent home. Amira would specifically look through the children's lunch boxes for an item or two of fruit for the first break of the children, similarly to what she sent for Zuleika. She would then cut and share out what fruit was brought between the children, especially what she considered 'nice' fruit like strawberries. If a child did not have any fruit, she would give them some from her own supply.

Even though Amira thought that fruit especially was to be shared, and she gave Zuleika pre-cut fruit on most days, this was a 'wet' item she was not able to trade or share. This tended to mean Zuleika would nag her mother for 'Goldfish Crackers' or some commercial food for recess, so that she could trade it. Yet, Amira was reluctant to provide such because they are a 'dry' snack, with limited nutritional value, that she believed would not adequately quench her daughter's thirst after she had been playing. This is another example, of the competing values of parent and child, stressing the dichotomy between the public and private distinction of school and home for the child. Still, Zuleika manages to accomplish access to the playground economy through trade, which ensures her place in the social hierarchies in play. She eventually convinces her mother to augment her fruit with Goldfish Crackers, using the argument that she does not have time to play if she has to eat fruit, because she needs to use utensils and it's 'messy'. However, she reveals to me that that her campaign to get Goldfish Crackers has been long fought. I notice after collecting her from school for a few days running that she hasn't eaten her cut fruit at all, even though it has strawberries in it which she usually loves. I ask her if this is about getting Goldfish Crackers and she silently affirms my suggestion with a sly, cheeky grin. After getting her way, she manages to trade the crackers successfully. The evidence is hidden in her bedroom of small toys and Pokémon cards that her mother would certainly scorn for their overtly commercial and 'cheap' nature.

At John Smith the boys tend to practise the more overt trading on the playground. Most recess times some boys will claim the literal high ground, standing on the top of a fire escape stair in a small, tight group, looking furtively around while eating their lunch and then occasionally trading sweets from their coat pockets. Their body language is almost comical as they remind me of a small mafia of drug-dealers, trying to hide their deal in the middle of the high street. The girls more often gift food, neither a bullying or secretive exchange, but rather by inviting one another to share in a snack. 'Please have another one, have another one,' a rather overweight girl would insist on offering some Pringles chips in a small plastic container. Her friends would accept and then she would make a reluctant acceptance of a tiny Honey Graham Animal Cracker, a type of children's cookie, in return, in a clear display of sociality rather than a desire for the food. Nukaga's (2008) ethnography shows that 'commercial brand-name food' (359) has become 'the lingua franca of the twenty-first century' (Thorne 2005). Nukaga argues that 'dry' foods are seen as less polluted than 'wet' ones:

> Kids often showed disgust for food that another person had touched with his or her hands. Because a physical substance of a giver is attached, the exchange of these foods seemed to engender the notion of pollution in kids' minds, and threaten bodily and self-integrity (2008: 360).

Furthermore, due to the desirability of food more widely, as seen by the type of invasion I discuss from my data above, Nukaga argues that 'gift giving often became a private, secret ritual among a small number of best friends, which further emphasised their intimate relationships' (2008: 364). Another way that the children

in my study do this is to blur the boundary between play and food. Perhaps by sending messages by moving the food around their plate into shapes, or in a more obvious sense, to playfully get rid of food they do not like, albeit covertly, as 'wasting' food is certainly chastised by the supervision aids.

For example, on one occasion, two fourth grade boys, Mehdi and Will picked through Will's lunch, which was jumbled together in a large Zip-loc bag. They took all the pieces of lettuce and watercress out of the salad and Mehdi put all of the pieces into a ball about the size of a softball, which he cupped in his hands, one above and one underneath, holding the ball away from his body as if it were a time-bomb. They both rushed towards the basement gym of the school, hiding in a disabled fire-refuge space under the stairs giggling manically. After the bell rung and they left, mysteriously the space is totally empty, with not even a dropped leaf left behind. While what, precisely, the boys did with the lettuce is impossible to guess, one can certainly argue that this type of interaction in general is a playful, social experience for children that reinforces their friendships, not only through the generalised reciprocity of sharing foods, but also through secrets and play. The consumption and exchange of food is thus a symbolic and important part of maintaining good social and friendship relationships in the peer group. This is, moreover, reinforced through the very materiality of food itself, that is that it is ephemeral and meant to be used up. Both in Andean (Colloredo-Mansfield 2003) and Japanese (Daniels 2009) case-studies of symbolic food exchange, this has been demonstrated not to be associated with the negative qualities of loss, but a spirit of

enthusiasm for renewal. In the children's case their forms of symbolic exchange require constant renewal, both in a material and in a reciprocal sense. This could be evidenced through return gifting, return invitations to play and the regular, small food-sharing rituals that would occur between the same groups of friends on a daily basis.

CROSS-CATEGORY EXCHANGE

As I have shown in the case of trading Pokémon, exchange is exceptionally important for the children in building social acceptance, and influencing one's position in the popularity hierarchy of the playground, which are essentially informal status rankings. Trades or gifts with higher-value items than food or Pokémon cards are often attempted but very seldom completed successfully, despite the best efforts of those attempting the trade to secure the indebtedness of another, often more popular child, at any cost. This is because there are conflicting meanings between two schemes of value in operation. Firstly, that of 'adult' market-value, where, because parents are gatekeepers to children's consumption and would be annoyed if they traded a high-value toy, children self-limit these sorts of exchanges because of the damage to the system of hierarchy should they be reversed by adults. Secondly, because of the implicit type of 'salt money' trading system of the playground, where market-value and exchange value are only loosely related, it is difficult to establish a fair 'price' for such items because of the onerous degree of reciprocity implicit in such a valuable object.

The following, by example, is a typical incident where trades are attempted across categories between three boys in the fourth grade: Cane, Finn and Luke.

> Cane and Finn are half-heartedly swinging on the swings near the front of the school with Luke standing alongside seemingly trying to ingratiate himself to them. Luke twice offers to 'trade' his PS (P) (Playstation Portable Games console) and his white DS' (Nintendo DS, a competing games system), which he says is for 'girls', but his 'black DS' he has to keep. After a couple of attempts at suggesting this deal and being ignored by the more dominant boys, Finn shouts,
>
> 'I said no, you nimrod, I don't want to trade'.
>
> A few moments pass in silence, then Finn, who shouted, gets off the swing and runs across to the red jungle gym, running quickly up the slide and standing at the top platform surveying the playground, and then coming back to the swing.
>
> Luke has gotten on to the swing he has left, but has barely pushed off when Finn sees him, runs off the red jungle gym and says,
>
> 'Get off now!'
>
> Luke complies and goes back to standing alongside where Cane is swinging, while Finn resumes swinging like the king on his throne.
>
> After another few seconds a mild-mannered girl approaches the Finn and asks to swing. Clearly, he is relieved to give up his swing to her as obviously he does not want to swing anymore, but he more wants to prevent Luke from gaining any territory. Finally, all three boys move towards the red jungle gym, the swings being quickly taken over by the two girls.

The hostility of these incidents shows what is at stake in these cross-category trades. Furthermore, it shows that physical occupation and territoriality[40] is an integral part of the maintenance and creation of the social hierarchies.

In another such example of high-value, cross-category trades, a young kindergartener, Ralph, tries an interesting tactic to ingratiate himself with a more

[40] For more on territory gestures see Chapter 2.1.

popular boy, Max, as he approaches Rona, the supervision aid, and me, who are passing pleasantries in front of the entrance to the kindergarten class.

> 'Excuse me, can you help me?' Ralph says, and proffers Rona a green watch-type toy with a band clasp and a toxic waste symbol instead of the face, which what the hero wears in the cartoon 'Ben 10: Alien Force', opening and closing the band.
>
> 'I want you to put this on Max'.
>
> Rona asks whether it belongs to Max.
>
> 'No', says Ralph, 'it's mine, I want to give it to him.'
>
> Rona looks puzzled and asks:
>
> 'Do your parents know that?'
>
> Ralph shakes his head and Rona presses him, asking whether his parents will allow him to give his toys away.
>
> 'Yes' he says, it's OK, Can you put it on him?'
>
> Rona goes over with Ralph to where the other boys are playing and talks to Max.
>
> 'No, I don't want it' I hear one of them say.

Ralph walks off rejected, his head hanging, but later I see him having lunch with Max who has obviously taken some pity on his failed overture. Children trying to use higher value items seem to be rejected at least in some form, potentially due to the 'trouble' and potential reversal of the transaction that would occur when this was made known to the parents. This child also tries to invest his gift with the authority of the supervision aid as a spur to its success, but without luck. Accepting a high-value item would place Max in an almost untenable place of social indebtedness, which in the fluid friendships of the playground would be a difficult social position for him. In being seen to eat lunch with Ralph would indicate that even in rejection of the item itself, there is a small inference of reciprocity in the exchange.

In the school environment, children create and maintain relationships of obligation through gifting and trading. This has much in common with parents' practices as they give small toys, or food items as a reward for good behaviour, or hinge receiving an allowance on good behaviour. While my data shows that conditions of reciprocity occur in the children' s playground trading and that trading is key to position and advancement in social hierarchy, there are certain exceptions to the traditional Maussian framework of reciprocity. Mauss argues that gifts enable sociality because the gift is linked with the personality of the giver, and in as sense contains an 'inalienability' that separates it from ordinary commodity (Weiner 1985; 1992). Thus, it is through the prestige of the connection of an object with a specific individual that the gift gains it power as a social tool. While this may partly be true, in the case of the children, the ingestion of gifts and trades of food perhaps functioning to incorporate part of the giver into the receivers, there are a number of adult constraints on children's exchange that arise primarily from a sense of monetary value attached to certain toys and games. In the child's world, so controlled by the fluid social exchange of the playground and the monitoring of adults, often the only true gifts they can give, gifts of 'Agapic love' in Russell Belk and Gregory Coon's (1993) term, are the small, recycled, non-valuable (to their parents) gifts like old toys, rocks and natural objects, drawings, or even on an occasion I was gifted a dried-out marker pen. These gifts, whose use-value and often market-value are low or non-existent, seem to require no reciprocity. Yet, for the child, one wonders whether these gestures are one of a search for even the

smallest step onto the ladder of exchange, in the hopes of further opportunities for trade, or an expression of what could be seen as a basic form of social interaction between those with differing positions in the social hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that children do not only use play as a form of social interaction, but also exchange. Through this, children build and maintain hierarchies that influence their social standing and reinforce their friendships and alliances. The forms of exchange this can take are either competitive, symbolic exchange or cross-category. However, much of this exchange is predicated on access to commodities like toys and commercial foods through children's parents' consumption, which is then recycled by children into systems of non-market exchange. Parents enable children's exchange with 'treats' and small allowances. These rewards given to children act as social contracts for good behaviour and allow children to consume food and buy toys which fall outside the boundaries of 'good nutrition' or even 'quality toys'. However, I have argued that adults are not simply 'pestered' for these things, but that they act as gatekeepers. This occurs both through making 'deals' or social contracts with their children and through negotiated consumption in contexts like birthday parties.

However, the children's values are often at odds with those of their parents, especially regarding the monetary value versus the use-value of an object. This I have particularly demonstrated through the example of Pokémon cards, which children will spend vast amounts of pocket money on and make many trades to collect. The competitive nature of the game echoes the potlatch-like type of trading that children conduct with the cards, where successful exchanges and demonstrations of 'authentic' knowledge about the characters results in prestige and social standing to the children. However, a similarly competitive drive is also at the base of some reciprocal exchanges across categories such as when children (attempt) to trade high-value toys like games consoles.

Reciprocity is also shown in the symbolic exchanges that children make, particularly through food. These small exchanges are often a part of the maintenance of social standings, as food is ephemeral and these kinds of gifts require continual renewal in order to remain effective (Colloredo-Mansfield 2003). Children's ability to successfully conduct these exchanges, often with commercial brand-name foods, is generally at odds with their parents' values surrounding nutrition. Their access to them can require subtle and continual negotiation and is subject to parents' peer group pressures and norms surrounding 'good' parenting. In other words, much of the parents' motivation comes from the desire to be seen to 'do the right thing', by other parents, which often means the same thing as the other parents. Amira, Zuleika's mother, would for example, collect Zuleika from her classroom after school, despite the house being right next door to the school and this, despite

Zuleika's insistence it was not necessary. This was primarily so as not to be the only parent not seen to be there at the end of the school day.

Thus, while exchange within children's peer groups is a key part of their ability to influence their social standings, along with factors like being a good 'knowledgeable' player, or showing physical prowess in games, parents' consumption of commodities that are subsequently gifted to children is also a factor in children's social success. In this way it can be argued that the negotiation between parent and child surrounding the consumption of commodities is not simply a case of 'feeding' or 'pestering', rather it is a nuanced balance of social pressures and desires at the points of intersection of the life-worlds of parents and children.

Karl Polyani (1944) has argued that there is a fundamental divide between monetary exchange and other forms of exchange, and Mauss (1954) has argued that essentially when money enters the picture, reciprocity and social contracts are destroyed, because it does not contain the proximate relationship of the gift. This emerges from the Aristotlean view that profit-oriented exchange is 'unnatural' and destroys bonds between households. The material production resulting from the labourer's sweat is seen as the source of value, and when value derives from other sources it challenges this fundamental order. Marx (1885 (2008)) saw money as a 'common measure of values' (97) because it quantified labour through the

commodity. However, once there is a surplus produced through market exchange, these values begin to shift. Some commodities are worth more than simply their equivalent in labour, and thus they have been argued to break down the dependence between members of a community on reciprocal exchange, as when a surplus is produced commodities can re-enter a community through trade. Thus Marx saw money, that to paraphrase, only breeds more money, as a force for individualisation and one that destroys the reciprocity of community and other forms of exchange in the drive for personal gain.

By contrast, my data shows that within children's playground social relations forms of consumption and non-market exchange do not only interact and exist alongside each other, they are in fact, dependent on one another. William Mazzarella (2003), in his study of advertising agencies in India, has argued that the concept that money is abstracting and removed from the social is an illusion, and that there are always material connections that cling to objects that are fundamentally social. This derives from the earlier work of Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch (1989) who argue that we need to distinguish between two 'transactional orders'. One, short-term, transient, cycle of exchange is concerned with creating wealth through profit, another longer-term cycle results in the reproduction of the social order. Both cycles are closely linked. The long term social order is not disrupted by the introduction of money into an economy, but it may be threatened by the expansion of exchange systems.

Parry and Bloch demonstrate that when two groups with different exchange systems meet, both parties will try to socialise new forms of monetary exchange within their own moral economies. For example, the Malay fishermen of Langkwai will exchange fish for money with strangers, a short term, transient exchange, but not with kin, who are linked with long-term symbolic exchange, as money is seen as immoral. However, the women, who do not conduct the initial monetary exchanges, will then use that money resource to buy food and household goods, which is then transforms the exchange from the transient into the transcendental level, that is back into the morally acceptable (Parry and Bloch 1989). It seems that it is a false assumption that within capitalist exchange there is homogeneity in the transactional order, that is to say that there is a single (adult) meaning for monetary exchange. Parry and Bloch argue that we tend in the west to see the short and long term cycles of exchange as completely separate. In contrast, as my data shows, children's priorities around what is consumed and gifted by their parents and their subsequent forms of exchange are quite different from the monetary values embedded in the goods themselves, which is assumed to be representative of the capitalist order. In fact, the children not only compete through agonistic exchange, or negative reciprocity with relative strangers for short-term profit and wealth, they also exchange symbolically which influences their long-term social positioning and (re)produce the moral order of their community. In the final chapter of the thesis, I will discuss how these exchanges relate to the children's concept of friendship. I argue that because children's relationships are so intertwined with the hierarchical and transactional, it is important to consider that this may deviate from an adult, western reading of the term. Thus, I intend to demonstrate with ethnographic case-

studies how my participants' friendships are formed and maintained. This reflects on how children's social relations are positioned and understood within adult society and how categories of social relationships are understood and negotiated by children.

2.5) Friendship and the Peer Group

The development of an anthropology of friendship is overdue on a number of counts. Anthropologists are focusing the ethnographic gaze on Western societies more than ever before and are forced to confront contexts where unstable networks of intimacy, frequently unrelated to kinship ties, constitute key arenas of social interaction and identity formation.

The Anthropology of Friendship (Bell and Coleman 1999: 5)

Introduction

Rapport (1999) in his work on friendship through game-playing with adults argues that friendships are made 'via proximate objects and actions' (114). This comes to mean, for his adult participants, that over the common ground of a football match or a recipe swap, the field for friendship is formed, and without such objects or actions it is impossible to form friendship. In the case of adults, this may seem a controversial statement, but for children, it is precisely and obviously because of their shared action in playing 'pretend' games together, exchanging food and toys, building forts and so on, that their friendship forms. However, as I have discussed in

the previous chapter, it is clear that children's friendships often form out of a context of a hierarchy of playground popularity, cemented through material and social contracts. In this chapter, I shall reflect on what the effect of this social context on concepts of what friendship is and means, by way of two ethnographic case-studies. Rapport argues that 'friendship comes essentialistically to embody the non or anti-institutional' (115). Rapport and his friend/participant Arthur's deep bond over dominos games, their emotional connection, in adult eyes, has little in common with the easy come-and-go friendships of the playground, or the casual friendships of after-school activities. However, children spend much of their life in institutional settings, particularly their school where their school grade divides the children into age-sets. I intend to discuss whether friendship, in the form Rapport idealises, can occur in these sorts of settings, or whether children's friendships have a more complex relationship with formal social structures than popular discourse envisions.

Ethnographically, age-set and age-grade relations are not an unusual or as artificial a phenomenon as school year-classes may suggest. Take, for example, the use of generational sets in the case of the Karimojong as described by Neville Dyson-Hudson (1966). These form the basis of a societal hierarchy that allows for the succession of power by relinquishing the authority of elders when enough junior members accumulate in the group, handing over governance to those in their middle-years. School age-'grades', in Canada, like in other western societies are both a marker of age and social development, as well as a certification of a

performance of an educational standard. However, the type of structural framework for education the school presents seems indivisible from the structures seen in playground social relationships, where friendships between children in different grades are extremely uncommon. Furthermore, many adults in Vancouver retain the age-set groups of their childhood into adulthood. Amira, Zuleika's mother commented on one occasion for example: 'It's so hard to meet people here. I've been here twenty years; I still don't have many friends. They are all just friends with people they know from school.'

Age-set grouping is not a formal institution, like in the case of the Karimojong, after adolescence. However, it may, for some people, remain an informal one which influences how individuals define their friendship groups throughout their life. Erikson (1968(1994)), a leading figure in child development, calls the stage of preadolescence the time when the child must learn, through socialisation processes in the home and at school, the 'technological ethos' of his 'culture' (128). This is where the child's natural inclination to interact with objects, technology and games gives him a mastery of the mechanical of the age, which may further serve to differentiate his age-set from that of his elders. Erikson, would no doubt see as a perfect example of this ability and marker of youth, the clichéd image of the eight-year-old child teaching his or her parents to program the VCR, or in today's terms, the digital set-top recorder, another technological object which will, no doubt, soon seem obsolete.

These types of differentiations of age, through technological knowledge or preferences for what sort of 'proximate objects' may set the stage for friendship to occur, also socially construct age-groups as 'child', 'youth', 'old-aged' and so on. These categories, in many ways, disempower those who are caught in them: when differences in how social relations are made are perceived, they are often dismissed as invalid as these periods are transitional. Furthermore, these phases are considered less significant than the main period of 'adulthood'. It is important not to take these labels on face value however, and assume that the way that children enact social categories is a direct mimetic sub-set of adult culture. This is particularly so when it comes to friendship, which for children is far more confined by institutionalism than it is for adults.

In their most basic form, children's relationships with others produce two categories of relationship, those linked to the child through kinship and those through friendship. Like all structural categories this is problematic for the child in practice. For example; determining that one's mother's-second-cousin's-daughter is kin but that one's mother's- best-friend's-daughter is a friend, may prove a difficult task for the child. This is because often these categories are complicated by the degree of closeness each of these people represents. However, through the use of these labels children learn that there is an importance in separating kinship connections from those of friendship. How this concept enacted is that it said that one 'makes' friends, which implies that a choice is made as to who will be a friend

and who will not be. This is different to the dutiful character of kinship relationships that seem to simply exist.

Yet, on what grounds does the child 'make' friendship, and what is the nature of that relationship? Surely, it is grounded against the child's relationship with those they consider peers, which emerges out of their school age-grade. When the children in my social services group met each other for the first time, their initial questions to each other would be: 'What's your name? How old are you? What grade are you in? What school do you go to?' Adler and Adler (1998) argue, that in children's social relationships, particularly in schools, there is a rigid hierarchical structure of cliquing and 'class', that defines children on a spectrum of 'popular' to 'loser' kids. However, through exchange, as I demonstrate in the previous chapter, this hierarchy can be manipulated which increases one's chances of making friends. Yet, this by itself does not address the specific nature of the child's friendship and by corollary the child's peer social relations. Much literature[41] on children's 'culture', that is in most senses defined as the social milieu of playground and inter-peer group relations, explores the creation of (social) boundaries between children. Children's friendships that emerge from playground relations are shown to often be susceptible to being unbalanced by the gossip, squabbles and enmity also produced from the school environment. Rapport's emotional connection through 'proximate objects and actions' producing friendship, thus seem less stable than on first glance in the child's peer environment, where toys and play can take on a volatile role.

[41] Ebbeck (1973); Foot *et al.* (1980 (1995)); Connolly *et al.* (1988); Corsaro (1993; 2003); McRobbie and Garber (2006 (1976)); boyd (2008)

Children's friendships, seemingly driven by the twists and turns of playground politics, turn on a dime from animosity to the inseparable 'best friend'. As an anecdotal example, Zach, mentioned nonchalantly one evening that his 'friends club' had 'a meeting to decide not to be friends' (with each other). Corsaro similarly, points out in the title of his study of young, pre-school children 'We're Friends Right?'(2003) that children's friendships are often a negotiated or constructed social connection. This is the crux of the similarity, for children, between kinship and friendship, essentially what Meyer Fortes (1969) calls 'amity', the quality of relations between kin, rather than friends. Fortes argues that 'amity means consensus in accepting the value of mutual support' (110). By this he means that harmonious social relationships between members of a group best facilitate the individual's attainment of their 'interests', particularly surrounding exchange. Julian Pitt-Rivers, in his article, 'The Kith and the Kin', argues that Fortes's choice of word is an odd one for a kinship term. Not only does the term 'amity', derive from the French for friendship, it is not a word that contains more meaning than its English counterpart. Kinship itself as a social category is often and commonly, in anthropological understanding, seen as a challenge for friendship, and vice versa. Fortes's work, as well as Jack Goody's (1973) seminal volume on kinship, defines multiple instances of contrasting terms falling under either kinship or friendship (for example amongst the Tallensi, Ashanti and Trobriands). Furthermore, Pitt-Rivers argues, 'Non- kin amity loves to masquerade as kinship' (1973: 90). By this he means that various types of ritualised friendship, such as blood-brotherhood or

spiritual kinship are often difficult for ethnographers to identify, and are often closer bonds than actual kinship bonds. This bias in the ethnographic record seems to have produced an eccentricity in the study of kinship and friendship towards kin and distant, formal relations at the expense of informal, intimate relations like friendship. This is particularly seen, for example in the anthropology of China which often emphasises the formal over the informal to the point of creating stereotypes (Yan 1996).

Fortes's exact position on kinship versus friendship, particularly in tightening the definition of what can be considered 'amity' remains, according to Pitt-Rivers, a former student, implicit rather than explicit. Nonetheless, it is clear that for Fortes, amiable relations whether between kin or friends create a moral obligation to ensure altruistic behaviour in order to maintain the relationship. This is a phenomenon lauded economist Grant Becker (1981 (1991)), emphasises in his work on the family, particularly in terms of the relationship between parents and children. In his 'Rotten Kid Theorem' he argues that there is no such thing as a 'selfish' child, in that such behaviour would so limit the feeling of generosity and reciprocity between parents and child that the child's very desire for gain from the parents would be curtailed by their behaviour. Pitt-Rivers argues that the same kinship/friendship logic of amity, rather than reciprocity, produces the result that, 'children are everywhere thought to be of the same substance as their parents because they are produced by them; "like breeds like" in every system of thought."(1973: 92) Yet, in North American societies it is uncommon for kin-like

ritualised friendship to be prevalent among adults rather, the idea of 'blood-brothership' is usually identified with children. For example, the image of the secret mixing of blood from a cut palm, as recorded by the Opies (1967) in their extensive folklore collection on school playground culture. It is clear that childhood friendships are certainly not of 'one substance' with those of parents. Particularly, in adult friendships, Pitt-Rivers argues, there must be 'reciprocity of sentiment'. However, a number of sources on children's friendships (for example Adler and Adler (1998), Goodwin (1990) and Cusik (1973)) argue that they are more commonly based on a clique system, which contains within it a hierarchy of social standing. James (1996), from her extensive experience of ethnography with British schoolchildren, argues that it is the position within the playground hierarchy that determines the ability of children to name friends or 'best friends'. That is to say, those who are very low ranking may simply name those they played with that morning as their friends when questioned, as it is only those with a higher social rank that will be able to sustain on-going relationships.

Carrier's (1999) article, 'People who Can be Friends', reminds us that the cultural categories for friendship are not always defined by the Euro-American sense. 'It may be unwise to see friendship as a human universal', Carrier concludes (34). Power structures and alliances can often take the places of or behave like this conception of friendship. Carrier, like Sennett (1977), argues that in 17th and 18th century industrialising society, a person's position in the social 'frame' was of utmost importance. Not concealing that position, and being 'sincere', allowed one

to circulate socially with those of varying social standings according to strict mores. In many senses the quick changes of children's friendships and the age cliquing based on school classes means that children's friendships have less in common with Carrier's 'unconstrained' modern Western friendships than adult ones do, and more in common with Victorian social hierarchies. Psychologist Zick Rubin, argues that this type of friendship is the friendship of the 'encounter', where an on-going relationship past a fight or disagreement is not certain. He goes on to argue that 'young children's friendships are so different from the conceptions held by older children, adolescents and adults that it is misleading to consider them as variations on the same concept' (Rubin 1980: 37). Thus, it is clear that both anthropologically and psychologically the operation of friendship is different for the young child than it is for the adult. Furthermore, due to its underexplored nature in anthropology compared to kinship, friendship itself should not be constrained by Western, modern notions of its occurrence. Moreover, just as in traditional societies spiritual and ritualised friendships take on a role akin to kinship, we should be prepared to open debate on the exact nature of children's friendships and not assume that they conform to the model of adult ones, just because children happen to be the products of parents who make friends in a certain way.

Yet equally, before examining playground structures of friendship, or to borrow a term, the playground's 'social frame', in detail, it is important to fully examine wider social bonds for children, and the case for a blurring of kinship structure and friendship structure more generally in relation to the notion of hierarchy. Graham

Allan, in ‘A Sociology of Kinship and Friendship’, (1979) criticises anthropological discussions on friendship as tending toward tribal-bond friendships only. This considers friends and kin distinct grounds, whereas sociology has considered that friends can become kin and kin can be included as friends. An example of this could be Diana Barker’s (1972) work looking at adult child-parent relationships and inter-sibling friendships in children who have left home. Barker argues that the naming of a sibling or a parent as a ‘best friend’ happens frequently in adulthood with children that have left home. This happens through a movement of the relationship from a reliance on the parent’s ability to solve problems, to mutual activities, sharing of troubles and so on. Yet, despite the change in the nature of the relationship to mimic friendship, the ‘spoiling’ of adult children, that is continuing the altruistic gifting of the parent-child relationship with children that no longer require financial support from their parents, maintains the ‘closeness’ of the relationship. Allan argues, ‘for locating people in the social structure, the term friend also implies something about the relationship between those so labelled. Thus it is a relational label rather than a categorical one’ (Allan 1979: 34). As a corollary, those that are related to you are subject to the maxim, ‘you can’t choose family.’ Yet, Barker’s work shows that one can choose if your parents or children are to become your friends in later life. Even so, in sociological practice, Allan claims, it is common to place higher value on the appearance of closer friendships than others and thus participants are often asked to name, ‘best friends’, or ‘very close’ friends in studies, rather than examining the boundaries between friends and acquaintances (or family versus family and friend). This factor can also be particularly problematic when considering young children’s relationships, where children may be

embarrassed to admit not having a best friend, one separate from kin, or nervous to name one specific person over another for risk of offence (James 1996).

A key conceptual difference between kinship and friendship in the adult, sociological sense is that friends are individual and non-substitutable people. For adults, Allan argues, 'relationships which arise from people's formal role positions are unlikely to be thought of as friendships if those concerned see their interaction as being consequent more on their formal role position than on the exercise of free choice' (1979: 40). This is particularly because of the value placed on what is perceived to be genuine, emotional connection and reciprocity of feeling between friends in creating friendships amongst adults. This is opposed to simply friendliness, that is a show of obligatory warmth, which might be perceived as a component of some sort of emotional labour, or the dutiful performance of a kinship role (Hochschild 1983). Jennifer Mason and Becky Tipper (2008) argue that for children real, lived kinship is not only about what the children consider 'proper' relatives, people who can be named in kinship terms. In their study aiming to find out how children define kinship, sixty-five percent of children mentioned a relationship with someone who 'seemed like family', but was not a member of their kin, perhaps, for example, a boyfriend of an aunt, or a close family friend. They argue that children claimed 'them to be like family and this practice was always used by children to signify good or close relationships' (2008: 45). This, in the case of children, was not the claiming of kin as friends as in 'my sister is also my best friend', but rather to allow children to express a close relationship with someone

that they, usually for generational reasons, would not describe as a friend. Adler and Adler, in their study 'Peer Power', create a number of structural categories for children's peer friendships, and in this their work is very useful. However, it is prudent to heed Thorne's (1993) warning that social relationality amongst children (Thorne would argue for gender, I would argue for a broader consideration) engages through and is manifested in crossing and challenging categories. In the following case-studies, my data shows that children blur types of friendships, crossing multiple of the Adlers' categories. Furthermore, my data shows that children's friendships change erratically over time, even from enmity to amity, depending on the movements in the social hierarchy of the children, grounded against the social field of the school playground.

ANNIKA, BRENDON AND GRANT: A CASE STUDY

This case study examines the changing relationship between three children, Annika (9), Grant (9), and Brendon (10), see Chapter 2.1, who go to the same elementary school and are in the same grade. Not originally friends at school they find themselves in a group of ten children of mixed ages, whose parents are involved in group counselling with a large social service organisation in East Vancouver. The 'friendship' of these three children, interacting with each other outside of school time is a fruitful ground to consider their challenges to the adult injunction to the children to 'play nicely with others'.

The creation of new spaces through play, like forts, and the instinctive and unquestioning reconfiguration of objects into new play things was most obvious in this context above the other field sites. There are often (adult) limits on children's rearrangement of furniture but more so at other sites. In school, creative play is limited by the fixity of playground equipment, health and safety regulations and so forth. At home, the restrictions of parents, not wanting children to make a mess or to turn their living-room furniture into a play-fort, also restricts this type of play. However, in this sort of 'after-school care' context, within the playroom, the children were free to do as they pleased, as long as they would contribute to restoring all items to their exact places afterwards. The older children using the 'playroom' never complained of the space or toys being too 'babyish', as one would expect, as they always found a way to play with them differently to their intended use.

Brendon was the loudest, most dominant of the children and the most aggressively competitive with the others. If they played together to build a tower of blocks Brendon would not let Annika help, so she started on a matching piece that could be added in later in order to avoid a squabble. He was very concerned that 'she build it right' and often spoke about doing things right and wrong with the others. He often expressed that he was 'better' and that his building was better because 'I (he) am a genius', a common phrase of his. The tower successfully built, it would be spectacularly drop-kicked by Brendon into a huge pile, which he would proceed to

photograph on his iPhone. This was of much interest to the other children, as he is certainly the only one with such a high-end phone in this group, and indeed among my participants as a whole.[42] Brendon was very insistent that nobody touch any of the pieces until he had taken photos of it from several angles, and was cross with Joey (5) who moved some pieces and seemed interested in the jagged bits, turning them over and staring at them from all sides.

In another corner of the room, Grant had spent a long time playing dedicatedly at a large imaginary construction built of many toys stacked together and placed relationally around the area he was playing in. Brendon, assuming Grant was not playing with a large plastic ship anymore, despite it being part of the extended play landscape, mischievously pulled it down the small children's slide that was also part of this play construction causing it to crash down and into another group's game. Grant started to lose his temper in reaction to this violation of his territory, his power and privacy. Like the cartoon character The Incredible Hulk, he started hyperventilating, eyes squinting, fists clenched at his sides and red in the face. Su-Lin, a family worker, playing with the peripheral group that had their game interrupted by the crash of the pirate ship, raised her voice at Brendon, and prompted him to storm into the other part of the room, where he began to throw things, turn over the shelves and pull a poster off the wall. Annika, delightedly

[42] Annika has a simple phone she borrows from her father for emergencies if she is at an activity on her own. Sometimes, her dancing practice will be at an inconvenient time, in which case her father arranges a taxi to fetch her and bring her home, as she is not allowed to use the bus. In these circumstances she has access to a mobile phone.

shocked, seemed to run along with Brendon for the spectacle and both she and Brendon seemed amused by Grant's angry reaction Brendon calling him 'a stupid bitch' and a 'freak who plays with Barbie dolls', later singing 'Grant's a stupid bitch' to the tune of 'Barbie Girl' by Aqua.

Brendon's bad language, in this example and in many in passing comments was never censored by myself or the family workers. Lanclos (2003), like La Fontaine (1998) has argued that there is a culture of 'institutional innocence' surrounding children, marking any behaviour outside of this out as pathological. In the case of Brendon, on the basis of this display, he is labelled by the social workers, who continually debate his future and outcomes, as 'maladjusted', 'hyperagressive' and so on. However, his use of bad language and his attention-seeking references to gore and violence, such as comments to family workers about whether they minded the sight of blood, diminish as the weeks pass by, without any special intervention along so-called 'therapeutic' lines. This particular incident however shows the clear response between the children to the territory violation, or 'invasion' to use Thorne's (1993) terminology. That is a performance of anger, with an almost bodily transformation to marking that boundary from Grant's perspective. Yet, similarly, there is a clear judgement of Grant's play on Brendon's part as to be in violation of expected peer conduct. There was a sense that Brendon, calling Grant a 'freak', felt that for Grant to play 'pretend' in such an involved way in a public setting was not permissible. Grant's violation of these boundaries laid him open to ridicule, but also to deliberate provocation by Brendon. Thorne argues that these sorts of regulations

are how children test the margins and limits of their position in the peer group. She argues that there is a gendered component to these invasions, and that they take 'take asymmetric form; boys invade girls' groups and activities much more often than the reverse' (1993: 76). In the school setting, I often observed this to hold true, particularly when a group of girls had a 'pretend' game, perhaps secluded away from the main playground, indicating a spatial coherence to these borders. In the case of Brendon and Grant, however, there is a clear inter-personal dimension that overrides the gender component that is so emphasised in school-group material. It is clear, however, that by any framework, this type of interaction would not be seen as friendship. The 'proximate objects and actions' to use Rapport's (1999) phrase again, are a field for division rather than consensus.

Because Brendon finds it difficult to play with the others without conflict that will lead to his censure by the family workers, he often elects to play on his own, or gets me to play with him in another room. One game he invents uses a construction toy to move water from the sink in the bathroom into the toilet, and he enlists my assistance in making the system work, despite me declaring the game 'totally lame', and rather disgusting. Brendon as he works on his system mentions he enjoys the controversial videogame GTA (Grand Theft Auto) which is often vilified in the press as 'dangerous'.[43] Brendon opened the topic and commented that Grant plays 'too many violent videogames', and then proudly mentioned:

[43] Jack Thompson, anti-violence in gaming campaigner, famously called this game 'a murder stimulator', on the respected US news show 60 Minutes (Hachman 2010).

> ‘I have seen GTA, some guy in Japan, after playing it got a truck and ran over a whole bunch of people’.

I replied that I thought that that guy was sick, and his actions were not to do with the videogame, that he would have done something else anyway. Brendon seemed relieved by my comments, perhaps he was slightly worried that he had ‘seen it’ and what might then happen. He then said:

> ‘Did you know you can go to a strip club in the game, and that to do one of the missions you have to sell these drugs?’

I said I did not and seemed surprised there would be that sort of content. However, in reality I often have observed young children playing 18-rated video games on their hand-held consoles, particularly in public such as on the bus or even waiting for a parent receiving counselling at social services.

Annika spent most of many evenings interested in physical activities, continually jumping about, doing the splits or cartwheels about the room. Naturally competitive with Brendon, she often asked to have a smaller room to herself to ‘practise’ in, as she wishes to gain some territory like Brendon seems to be ‘specially’ awarded. With so many children in a reasonably small room, it was clear that they needed to mark their physical boundaries. Often they would do spinning kicks or throw their arms around in a circle to demarcate areas into which the other kids could not come without running into a spinning leg or fist. This made me reinterpret Annika’s continual gymnastics as a defensive gesture in part in order to preserve her physical autonomy in the light of the fact that she was an adjunct to

the pairing of Grant and Brendon with their sometimes violent bickering, by virtue of her age and association with them from school. Grant would often get completely absorbed in complicated 'pretend' games, building up a massive and unstable 'fort' construction of the couch, mats, cushions and play equipment to create a new and exciting space, in the smaller room off to the side of the play room. This attracted many of the younger children to his game, which he accepted in good humour. He led an easy to follow game of 'knights and castle' which he began by announcing while holding up a large rolled-up newspaper:

'I have called the best blacksmiths in the world to forge this weapon!'

As the game continued stranger references crept in, at one point he exclaimed the rather unlikely 'holy Jesus, zombies!' complete with walking around in a zombie like fashion, stiffly with legs and arms out straight, then transforming, back to normal to chase Susie. After he brought her into the 'fort', under 'cannonball' fire from Joey (5), she then declared, 'I'm on your team now' and ran around back to the main playroom to get 'supplies' (toy food in shopping basket).

It is a common feature of this sort of group play, in my observation, that it can switch quickly, transforming between structured and 'pretend' games. For example, a game of football at a John Smith school recess suddenly changed into a game of tag as one boy shouted, 'You're the eagle!' This resulted in two boys screaming and shrieking with excitement putting their arms out like wings and running away with a third chasing them. The transformation was totally impromptu, one game melding into the next with no pre-discussion of a 'code' or such like that would indicate the

change. This is distinct from, for example, when I play a 'pretend' game of 'High School Musical' with Zuleika at her home, where she will often 'cue' me in and out of 'pretending' by saying 'cut', telling me it's 'like in movies', presumably to make up for my deficits as a playmate.

In a more material example of transformation, Joey and her sister Sally (6), after seeing Brendon and Annika play fight with rolled-up newspaper 'swords', asked to make some themselves. After being shown how to roll and tape the newspaper they quickly complete them, but after a few taps silently put them down on the table again and begin to decorate them with stickers, feathers, pipe cleaners and glitter, then playing a game of 'magic wands' quite happily. Jones (2003), states that the magic wand of a child's imagination, and the gun, or in this case the sword, enact the similar function of transformation, allowing for a child to control his social world as they explore fearful issues. James (1993) further argues that the more effective a transformation, the more social standing 'accrues' to the transformer. She argues, similarly to Cullingford (1992), that it is this type of play that 'effect(s) symbolic changes on the world around them which permit them (children) to exercise a degree of both autonomy and control in a seemingly capricious and adult-centred social world' (173).

After seven weeks pass, with an uncomfortable relationship between Grant, Annika and Brendon, sometimes Annika playing with Brendon, sometimes Brendon

deliberately fighting with Grant or destroying other children's games, Brendon extends an olive branch to the other two by showing them how to make guns out of paper that he 'saw on YouTube'. Another adult volunteer, helping for the first time, commented to this that 'I'm never letting my children on the Internet', but nonetheless, the children were at least occupied constructively for some time with Brendon in the lead showing them how to do it. The object itself was not a very realistic gun, to use Almqvist's (1994) terms of classification, with red and green barrels and a handle that 'shot', rather half-heartedly, rolled-up paper darts. It took Brendon about an hour to make them a gun each with Annika and Grant both assisting. They started playing at 'shooting' darts at each other, making noises that ranged from explosions to movie style 'laser' sounds. This started to upset Su-Lin, the family worker, especially what she called the evidence of actual 'projectiles' and so it was suggested that if they got too rowdy she should ask them to play in 'slow motion'. This they overheard, and immediately picked up on slowing down and exaggerating their movements. Somehow playing 'slow-motion', blurring the world of reality and 'pretend', avoids any real hitting or violence, and keeps adults happy, as it is an obvious exaggeration, and can therefore be classified a harmless 'game'.

The second game they decided to play as budding friends was to build a 'cave' out of soft mats and some chairs to play their Nintendo DS video games in. Grant has a black Nintendo DS, with a small action figure charm and a Pokémon capsule toy with the Pokémon still in it hanging off the DS and Annika has a pink one, with a small wooden cat on daisy shaped wooden beads hanging from it. Clearly since

none of the children other than Brendon have their own mobile phones, this is an extrapolation of the 'phone-charm' trend. Usually this is the hanging of small 'cute' toy charms from a mobile phone; however, Grant's way of using the capsule toy is quite original as it would obviously be too large for a mobile phone, but fits onto the DS player. As they were constructing the cave Annika would crawl in and check, from time to time that it was 'dark' enough for the screens to shine really brightly, calling out to the boys to add more mats to the tops and sides. Smith and Barker (2000), in their study of out-of-school clubs in England and Wales, saw the building of forts in this type of context as a way for 'increasing[ly] institutionalised' children to escape the adult gaze, judgement in effect, surrounding their activities. While the three children were free to play their video games as much as they liked, they did make the space rather too small to see what they were actually doing inside.

After these two sessions of co-operative play between the three children, the following week Grant has a new backpack from the movie 'Chicken Little', rather than his old, 'Thomas the Tank Engine' one that used to attract teasing from the others. In another few weeks his backpack changes again to a plain navy backpack like Annika has. Relations between the three seem to suddenly become very friendly and Annika abruptly announced:

> 'We decided at school to be friends, so you don't have to worry.'

Despite deep suspicion from the adults that such enmity could turn to 'friendship' in what seemed such a short space of time, they now presented a united front for all their play and often wanted to play together in secret. They would now go into the

small section of the play room and close the partition door, saying they were going to build a huge fort to play their videogames in and did not want anyone to see it until it was complete. When the fort was done I was called over by Annika and told to 'call the Aunty (Su-Lin, the family worker) to come and take a photo now', as she was documenting some of the children's activities informally. As I was looking into the room to receive this message, I saw that they were constructing a small ramp with a large wedge of foam block running up to a 'jump' of the sleeping mats on the other side. Aware that the family worker would soon see their construction, I cautioned them that no-one better slip and hit their head on the door knob which seemed precariously close to the other side of the jump. Annika said:

> 'You think that is dangerous but it just looks like fun to us.'
>
> 'Yeah fun!' Brendon said.
>
> Grant said excitedly:
>
> 'Let me go first, I'm not important, but Sheepy (his stuffed toy) is so he can't come.'

Showing his own trepidation, he carefully took the toy out from where it was tucked in the collar of his t-shirt and put it inside the main 'fort'. He took a run up the ramp and a cautious jump which does not clear the hurdle. The others boo and laugh at him, not nastily, but in a taunting fashion, not even commenting on 'Sheepy' and his playing with 'dolls'. Brendon rejoins, 'Do it properly Grant, like this' and clears the jump neatly. Interestingly, Brendon is still interacting in a way in which he judges the others' success and failures quite critically, but now he meets less opposition from them to those sorts of comments. I leave to go get Su-Lin to take a photo of their fort, and eventually they let her in with a 'password' as they hurry to

reorganise things in a way that does not seem like they've been doing anything dangerous. They pop out to ask for some paper for an 'art room' they have built on the side of their fort later in the evening. Brendon came to pick out what paper they wanted from the general 'playroom' supplies, but when he got back Grant had other squares of paper that they said they were going to 'use for our origami'. There was one gold foil sheet in the pack. Grant said to me quietly:

> 'I need you to take this and put it away, no one can touch it, and don't bend it or fold it or anything, this is my most valued possession.'

Annika at the end of the session asked for it back for him and I hesitated to give it to her, still distrustful of this alliance, but it was clearly returned safely to its owner, not used as an opportunity to tease or taunt Grant as previously would have been the case.

Adler and Adler's (1998) research is perhaps the benchmark study for those working on children's friendship, purely because of its depth and lengthy treatment of the subject. Brian Sutton Smith (1982) argues, 'peer interaction is not a preparation for life. It is life itself' (75). This is the approach the Adlers took as they used their own children and their children's school and friends to study a group ranging in age from eight to twelve-years-old over an eight-year-period. While acknowledging their limitations as adult/parent researchers they tried to consider subjects from the children's view point. In particular, the topics they consider are friends and friendships, social popularity, use of leisure time, structures and activities and the relationships between boys and girls, specifically romantic associations as the

children got older. Interestingly however, while the Adlers reference Corsaro's concept (1985) that children appropriate adult culture and transform it to become part of their own, they never mention specific instances of television watching, or playing with brand-name toys in the book. Thus, their children have a timeless quality, which seems to associate their problems and concerns as the products of a sheltered, possibly middle-class background.

The Adlers, as parent-researchers, cannot be immune to the pressures of parenting practice and wanting to be seen themselves as 'good parents'. However, they argue that as parents they have a 'naturally occurring membership role', with their children and their children's friends, which may suffer from fewer ethical contradictions than 'counselor-reseacher' or 'teacher-researcher'. For the Adlers the type of parent they wanted to become was the 'cool parent', so as to be trusted by their own children and their children's friends. This they accomplished by a policy, similar to Corsaro's approach, and my own, of limited intervention if behaviours were within the 'normal deviance' as they saw it of child behaviour, including things like physical fighting. The Adlers, like other researchers such as John Glidewell (1966) , Phillip Cusik (1973) and Maureen Hallinan (1979), who all conducted research in North American schools, identify children's friendships as primarily formed through cliquing, a term usually applied to children between the age of eight and twelve (Foot, Chapman and Smith 1980 (1995)).

> Cliques are, at their base, friendship circles, whose members tend to identify each other as mutually connected. Yet they are more than that; cliques have a

> hierarchical structure, being dominated by leaders, and are exclusive in nature, so that not all individuals who desire membership are accepted. (Adler and Adler 1998: 56)

Within the clique a popular leader emerges who influences the membership and social stratification within the group, who the Adlers argue are ranked hierarchically and need to 'stay abreast of the leader's shifting tastes and whims' (1998: 62). It is in this manner that information about popular culture is disseminated through the group. Fine, (1980 (1995)) a childhood anthropologist, primarily working with boys playing organised sports, does not use the term clique and has a less structural interpretation of friendship groups.

> The private friendship culture that any one boy participates in with a friend will be duplicated with his other friends during this period. While each friendship is unique, it also conforms to a general pattern of friendship. The individual friendship interlocks with other friendships through boys who are members of several friendships and who have the influence and/or leadership to transfer information between groups or to get the groups to interact with each other. (Fine 1980 (1995): 308)

Yet, it seems to me that through the case of Brendon, Grant and Annika, we can see both of these models operating at once. Fine's definition seems more appropriate to the early courtship of the friendship with its small games together and combative 'borderwork' qualities. As his research was, also in an after-school environment, that of 'Little League' Baseball, it seems to correlate that similar circumstances would have been in place for the meeting and making of friends as with my participants. The use of the term 'clique', also seems appropriate, after the

children's decision at school to be friends. The model then shifts to the social hierarchies of the playground, and the three children exclude the other children, who are out of the clique, from their play altogether.

The Adlers differentiate the types of friendships children engage in outside of their school clique as follows: firstly, 'individual' friendships where children meet through parents, or make friends sequentially through others. Secondly, they identify 'casual' friendships as occasional friends who maintain on-going friendly relationships; particularly this is applied to friendships between boys and girls. Lastly, the Adlers argue children can form 'compartmentalised' friendships, where friendships of varying degrees of closeness are made and seen outside of the school environment, for example in after-school care (Adler and Adler 1998). This type of schema, while identifying a number of trends in children's friendships does not adequately explain the possibilities of movement and interaction from one sphere to another in the same sense that Fine's theory of 'interlocked' individual friendships does. Fine contends that for friendship to occur and be successful three constraints must be met on an on-going basis. Firstly, the children must have contact through geographical proximity, activity-sharing and the co-operation of adults for play-dates and so on. Secondly, the individuals must have the propensity to be friends and have common ground on the areas of class, abilities, family background and so on. Lastly, the interaction between the friends must produce results; they must play together or share other common interests (Fine 1980 (1995)).

The Adlers' and Fine's work both seem to consider the questions of why children become friends and what sort of friends they make in detail. However, neither seem to address the question of how children become friends, and what the social nature of that friendship really is. The Adlers argue for children's friendships to be seen as part of a contested playground hierarchy of cliques with dominant leaders, followers and 'wannabes', that make up the entourage. This is certainly obvious in the creation of Annika, Brendon and Grant's friendship. However, Fine's 'interlocking' is also demonstrable with the on-going meeting of the children both in and outside of school, their commonalities in family background and the results of the friendship demonstrated through eventual their co-operative play. Neither Fine's work nor that of the Adlers presents a rationale for children's friendships that includes an emotional connection, or the duty to altruism that Pitt-Rivers (1973) and Rapport (1999) argue is characteristic of adult friendships. The case of Annika, Brendon and Grant demonstrates clearly that children's friendships can emerge out of difficult and negative emotional circumstances, enmity rather than amity. Thus it can be argued that their friendship in its final form, has less in common with Carrier (1999) or Rapport's adult free, unconstrained emotional connection, and more in common with structural social 'frames' or Fortes (1969) systems of consensus for maintenance of social 'interests'. This implies that children's individual social relations can be cross-cut by and shaped by institutional systems, like the age-set group, outside of the school environment. Furthermore, the emotional qualities seen as necessary for adult friendships may be overshadowed by this structure,

enabling the friendship to form. By corollary, the rank of the individual in the social 'frame' presented by peer group relations, determines their ability to influence this process. Annika telling me, 'we like Brendon now'. This demonstrates that children do not necessarily form friendships in the same way as adults, even if later in their life their 'school friends' do take on those qualities through the 'proximate actions' related to a shared childhood.

ZULEIKA AND PETER: A CASE STUDY

As Fine (1980 (1995)) argues, it is clear that there are certain optimum conditions that must be met if children are to become friends: those of time, space and common interest. This is something I have argued in previous chapters that is increasingly informed by common social knowledge of media. By Fine's equation, if some of these factors fall by the wayside the chance of continuing the friendship is slim. In this second case study I will discuss the case of life-long friends Zuleika (8) and Peter (8 ½ but in a grade above) and the difficulties of maintaining their friendship as they move apart geographically and socially.

Zuleika's mother, Amira, as a single parent, decided to start and run a small day-care business of five babies and toddlers in the basement of her home when Zuleika was a small child. This was so that she could both be at home to look after her and provide financially for the family. Peter was a child that came every day to the day-

care from the age of one until four, and because he was closest in age to Zuleika, they formed a friendship. As they have both gotten older and gone to different schools, Amira has allowed Peter to keep coming to the house after school on Fridays from about 2pm, where he plays in Zuleika's room or with the children in day-care until Zuleika gets home from school at 3.30pm. Then he and Zuleika play together, usually in the garden if the weather is dry, or in Zuleika's room, or sometimes with the day-care children in the basement. Amira is increasingly disgruntled about having Peter over so regularly as his parents drop him at the end of the street and collect him very quickly. They do not stay to chat as other parents do, or thank Amira, for what amounts to, in her eyes, free child care. She was most affronted about the situation of Zuleika's eighth birthday party, which was held at a riding school and stables. Zuleika felt she had to invite Peter because of the offence it would cause to not do so in the light of their long-standing relationship. However, Peter's parents were reluctant to let him ride ponies because they felt it was dangerous. Amira took this to mean that although they were happy to accept free child-care from her, they did not trust her judgment about the safety of the stables party.

It is also Amira's viewpoint that Zuleika and Peter are 'best friends', and so she keeps on with the Friday afternoon arrangement. Amira does not like Peter, who is an unruly child who leaves his possessions strewn behind him, tracks mud into the house and so on. Neatness and cleanliness are very important to Amira, who is very aware of an image of order and calm that she feels should be presented to the day-

care parents. On Fridays, her clients begin to collect their children from about three-thirty pm until five pm when Peter's presence together with Zuleika is creating the most disorder. The irony of Zuleika and Peter's relationship is that Zuleika increasingly dislikes Peter and resents his regular visits. Peter takes his presence in her home as for granted, and often messes about in her bedroom unaccompanied, before she gets home from school, which she is becoming uncomfortable with. Once Zuleika arrives home from her school activities in the afternoon, she immediately moves Peter to either the day-care room or the garden, which she feels are more 'public' spaces, as both are used for the day-care children also. Their play proceeds with difficulty, as the following incident demonstrates when Zuleika and Peter are playing in the garden on a nice sunny day. Both of the children are wearing shorts and t-shirts and are barefoot. They are having a detailed game of 'pretend' having climbed up a small tree that they use as their lair to discuss it. Usually they spend most of their time in the garden in this tree, but they also like to swing from a suspiciously wobbly awning frame. Up the tree, Zuleika is detailing a long and involved story to Peter saying:

> 'Our mother has died, and we live on a farm with an old woman who looks after us. OK?'

After some time discussing the rubric of the game, Zuleika is down on the ground play acting like an old lady with a hunched over back and pronounced shake, leaning on an imaginary walking stick. She comes out of character and says with delight to me:

> 'I'm pretending to be an old lady, but in the game I'm pretending I'm pretending'.

Clearly the pretence of the game is that this old lady that looks after them is a fiction and that in fact they live on their own, but despite the long negotiations Peter does not agree to come down and play it. Soon after this Zuleika disappears nimbly up the tree again, where her and Peter's words are muffled, but Peter is having a turn detailing a game. After about five minutes of talking, Peter starts to jump out of the tree saying:

'And then the bad guys come to get us!'

Peter then sings the Star Wars 'Imperial March' tune saying:

'That's for the bad guys!'

He then sings the Star Wars theme song:

'That's for the good guys!' he announces.

Zuleika is trying to stop him from getting the whole tune out, interrupting angrily:

'You always get to sing it! Why can't I sing it this time?'

But she does not try to join in with him and he completes the song. Clearly this has been the culmination of the game as Zuleika climbs down the tree. Peter continues humming the 'Imperial March' to himself, picks up a Badminton racquet that's lying on the grass, and holds it in his hand up against his shoulder as if it were a rifle and proceeds to march the goosestep across the lawn. He drops the racquet looking around distractedly; clearly the game is over now for him and his partner is definitely not playing. Zuleika suggests:

'How about we play High School Musical?'

'No, no way, not going to happen.' Peter replies.

Zuleika protests:

We always play what you want!' and then gives up.

Clearly, despite being very mild-mannered to the point of being 'wimpy' with adults, Peter is the strong personality in their relationship, perhaps due to being almost a year older. Zuleika, in comparison with her bossiness with her peers at school, gives in to this 'best friend' over and over. In this case over the Star Wars singing issue she has lost ground and her request for her game is refused, although on occasion Peter will concede to play Zuleika's games. If he has no real reason to refuse, other than for the sake of it, he will sometimes claim, 'I'm the guest and so we have to do what I want.' For these 'pretend' games, concession and negotiation form a core part of the play, with the 'acting' section coming after a consensus is reached. This is the main difficulty between Zuleika and Peter who increasingly fight over whose turn it was to 'make up' the game, as if the games are completely biased to the initiator and not at all fun for the others. However, in the examples of 'pretend' play I give in Chapter 2.2, there is usually an unspoken agreement that the other players will cooperate to create your game if you participate in theirs, more so if the creator is a popular child. With Zuleika and Peter this end of the bargain is often left undone by Peter, which breeds great resentment in Zuleika over Peter's lack of basic social skill. When I ask Zuleika why she is friends with Peter when he does not play nicely with her, she answers, 'Because my mom thinks I should be.'

If we should reconsider Fine's (1980 (1995)) criteria for children's friendship to occur[44], we find that for Zuleika and Peter the schema begins to unravel. Zuleika will casually in conversation call Peter her 'best friend', yet privately expresses doubts about their relationship. The tensions in the 'results' of the friendship, are clear; their play is difficult and fraught with complex confrontations and negotiations, compounded by Peter's lack of participation in the reciprocity of game playing. For Zuleika and Peter, particularly if one considers the length of their relationship, that is from toddler-hood to school-going ages, it could be argued that their relationship has become 'like kin', that is a dutiful, habitual and contractual relationship. When Amira is asked why she continues to promote the relationship, by facilitating the regular play-dates, she answers she 'must for Zuleika'. Zuleika expresses the same sense of obligation to her mother, who she feels believes she and Peter must continue their friendship. While Mason and Tipper (2008) argue that, for children, relationships with close adults that are not relatives can have the same qualities of kinship, they do not extend the argument to relationships with other children. Fine too, working in the semi-institutional context of out of school sports, does not encounter a sense of dutiful friendship or friendships that have the qualities of 'amity' (Fortes 1969). This reinforces the importance of considering children's sociality across a wide series of spatialities and institutions, and indeed problematises the common practice in childhood studies of considering children only within the school context. In particular, this may lead to only considering that children 'make' and maintain friends in one way, the same way that their parents

[44] Contact through geographical proximity; activity sharing and adult cooperation; common ground in terms of class background (or peer group) and that the friendship produces results (good play together or common interests).

do. This does not leave space to consider that the social, rather than emotional conditions that 'make' a friend, may themselves be different in each circumstance.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has argued that, while age-set relationships are a natural part of many societies, the types of social connections a child labels as 'friendship' may differ from the adult meanings of the term. Because the social milieu of the playground seems to operate as a hierarchical social frame, reinforced through play and exchange (see Chapter 2.4), some children's friendships can be seen as a constructed, negotiated social connections. Sociological research has shown that the social categories of friend versus kin are often less distinct that anthropologists have argued, especially in Euro-American contexts. This is because social structure is often perceived to be based on emotional choice. This means that the structural categories of kinship and friendship are often complicated for children to distinguish because of the degrees of closeness non-kin members occupy. Because of this complication, children will often use kinship terms to describe closeness in inter-generational friendships or may use kinship terms as honorifics.

However, kinship and friendship categories, in general, have been difficult for anthropologists to distinguish. This is highlighted by the debate that surrounds the social context Fortes (1969) calls 'amity'. This is because it is associated both with mutual exchange and altruism, said to be the hallmark of kinship relations, and the

positive emotional context associated mainly with friendships. Maurice Bloch (1971) has argued that 'all category terms should be defined as moral terms' (85). By this he means that the designations that kinship terms infer should be seen as indications of moral obligations rather than labels. This allows the researcher to peel back the usage of the term and to separate out the concept behind. This Bloch differentiates as the moral meaning of a term versus its tactical meaning - that is how it is deployed in a social situation. While often it seems as if children's tactical use of terminology is confused, especially in regards to differentiating kin from non-kin, I would argue that when it comes to the term of friend, children are very clear about the moral obligations of their relationships to each other, and to other members of their social group, such as their parents. The children's emphasis on formal and informal 'pretend' play and their use of exchange as a differentiating tool in the social hierarchy can be seen as an overt manifestation and manipulation of these obligations.

The children's friendships in the case-studies I have presented seem to question the canon of accepted anthropological wisdom in both the areas of kinship and friendship. In the first instance, as Peter and Zuleika's relationship shows, the concept that moral obligation is confined to kinship and formal relations and has no bearing on friendship is challenged. While it is clear that Zuleika and her mother have a stronger sense of obligation to each other than to the friend, Peter, the relationship is maintained beyond the breakdown of amiable relations and common interests between the pair. Annika, Brendon and Grant's relationship also

challenges the understanding of the emotional requirements of friendships, as do playground clique relations more generally. For children, unlike adults, objects and common activities such as toys and play do not necessarily produces friendships, as Rapport (1999) argues, but can also provide grounds for enmity. I would argue that, the position of the individual in the 'social frame' of the playground, what the Adlers (1998) and James (1993) describe as the hierarchy of social standing, is often a catalyst for relations to become friendly between children from previously neutral or negative relations.

None of the structural schemas outlining how, where and when children's friendships occur emphasise emotional connections between children, that they are there may simply be an assumption. However, I would argue that the nature of those connections themselves deserve recognition as a different 'sort' of friendship from that of adults. I am not suggesting that the children themselves have no agency in how these connections are formed. Rather, that they actively manipulate their position in the social orders of their peer group, and negotiate their position in the moral order of their kinship group. Cold as it may seem to from an adult perspective, the children's friendships that I have observed, bearing in mind the age of the children, do not have the emotional content of connection and bond, that for example Rapport (1999) describes with his adult participants. Thus for anthropology, it is perhaps valid to ask whether the term friendship has been adequately defined as a social category and moral concept, and whether the

definition of its common practice among Euro-American adults should simply be accepted its de-facto definition (Carrier 1999).

For children, friendships of course change their nature as they grow older, and it is not to say they cannot or will not develop emotional connections. Rather, the process of their institutionalisation into rigid age-set groups, and their increasing maintenance of these groups outside school in structured 'after school' activities means that it is less likely they will have the opportunity for them until they reach middle school. Children's production of sociality on the playground, through shared knowledge of television and media, through exchange and through the social alliances of 'friendship', gives evidence for their success at the creation of their own culture. Hirschfeld (2002) argues that a child's goal is to be a successful child and no more wishes to be adult (or mimic adults) than a prisoner wishes to be a successful guard. For the anthropology of childhood however, it is not enough simply to note and describe the existence of differences between children's worlds and those of adults. Rather, how children, as social actors, create cultural logics surrounding the processes of sociality like friendship, exchange and play is key to legitimating the presence of the group as interdependent with, not derivative of adult society.

3.1) CONCLUSION

SUMMARY OF ARGUMENTS

In anthropology children have largely been marginalised. They are generally seen as anecdotal to adult society and those researching children tend to cast them as an historically 'muted' group (Hardman 1973). Furthermore, children have often only been awarded a passive role in research: they are either seen as silent objects to be studied, without their own voices being presented; or their voices are presented in an un-critical fashion (James 2007). Adult conceptions surrounding children that they are only 'in process' human beings and not those with 'full' status as a person in society, have disregarded children's own decision-making processes, considering them inferior to those of adults. Thus, the role that peer-group sociality plays in shaping children's actions have been solely-framed as the negative 'peer pressure'.

My research sets out to challenge adult society's conception that children make their social groups and their relationships with each other in the same way that adults do, simply because children are assumed to be social offspring of their parents just as they are physically. Rather, I demonstrate that my participant children's social relations rely far more heavily than adult society does on the ways of producing and reinforcing social structure anthropologists have observed in other groups, in particular, groups that emphasise non-market exchange and hierarchy, such as in China (Yan 1996) , and Japan (Befu 1977; Daniels 2009). My data shows where my participants' social groups differ from those of adults and where they interact. In particular, I have discussed how

adult influences surrounding notions of risk and danger mould their experience of childhood. I have argued that this primarily confines the children's spatial experiences, particularly what they are allowed to experience on their own. I have further demonstrated how the children use material and visual culture to develop their sense of independent self, control how others see them and influence their social status within these constraints. This, I have argued, demonstrates how children's social relations can be interdependent yet distinct from those of adults. The negotiation over this interdependence reveals that children are active social actors, worthy of their own anthropology. In this light, the conclusion will summarise the findings of each data-analysis chapter and discuss their significance for the main anthropological issues of the thesis.

In Chapter 2.1 I discussed children's spatial practises across three spatial categories; public, semi-public and private, concentrating on the notions of privacy, territoriality and spatial autonomy. These categories emerged from the work of Sennett (1977) that charted the withdrawal of children from the public realm at the time of the industrial revolution in Britain. They are also informed by the work of contemporary spatial theorists (Davis 1992; Ellin 1996; Ellin 1997) working in cities that parallel Vancouver in terms of their urban development. Examining children's lives in terms of spatial categories reveals how much they shape the quality and direction of children's play and sociality. Furthermore, by taking these sites in conjunction, I have demonstrated a more complete picture of the range of social-spatial activities in children's lives than a single-sited approach can. This is particularly relevant as children's spatial lives are

exceptionally constrained by the moral panic surrounding 'stranger danger', that is the perceived risk to children of stranger abductions in public space. Furedi (2008) has argued that parents have been cast in the role of 'monitor' of primarily physical risk, and it is this, I argue, that guides their decisions over children's encounters with space. While this constrains children who have to mediate their desire for autonomy as a peer group with their acceptance of adult boundaries, it seems to fuel their desire to experiment with the freedom offered by imaginative play. This can be seen in particular through children's active engagement with the social narratives shown in children's media, such as the 'high school' themes in High School Musical or Hannah Montana, or the 'capture, training and adventure' themes in Pokémon. However, unlike these media shows, in reality, none of the city-spaces children encounter are truly un-monitored, 'public' or free of limits (Hajer and Reijndorp 2001). Like the spatial typologies of the city, children's play typologies are socially constructed (Schwartzman 1978). However, I have argued that just as the children are able to manipulate spatial boundaries, they are also able to experiment with creative forms of play using media products.

Thus, each successive chapter in the thesis concentrates on how children use the media creatively to produce sociality. Chapter 2.2 focuses on what kind of television children consume and how they use television as a tool to play with. I critique discourses surrounding children's television consumption that frame them as a passive un-critical audience; and those that argue children are voracious consumers of toys in the same way. I have argued that children's consumption of television-based toys and

their creative adoption of television narratives in their play, demonstrates that they are active, dynamic social agents who can consume television independently from its material products. My data shows that children get access to commercial products under the tight control of social rules set by their parents, typified by the 'Christmas list'. However, they are free to share the knowledge of television narratives amongst their peer group. I have argued that this demonstrates that, while (adult) discourses focus on the negative and passive aspects of childhood consumption, children use consumption actively. Furthermore, the children's own emphasis is on the active play that derives from television, not on getting toys.

By detailing the types of 'pretend' play children create, and the position of the pre-set television narratives within that, I show how much emphasis children place on 'knowing' certain television shows. I suggest that theories surrounding television-based play that frames it as impoverished, repetitive and mimetic (Kline 1993) are flawed. This is because they do not account for children as active and inventive, modifying content and stories through their imagination, to explore social worlds beyond their own experiences. Social knowledge, particularly in the form of story-telling (Rapport and Overing 2002), is the backbone of cultural knowledge transmission and creation of cohesion in a group. However, this knowledge is only valuable when shared. Therefore, the social products of imaginative 'pretend' play modified from other 'stories' about the world, form a core of social knowledge that children use to create shared meaning with their peers. The shared narratives that they adopt and modify from the media, or integrate into their object-based play, demonstrate how

children are able to communicate complex role performances through their play. Common among these is envisioning oneself as paradoxically both the subject (I am this or that character) and the object of the play (how the players relate to each other, change and modify the narrative and so on) (Schwartzman 1973).

In this light, how my participants create their sense of self and how they present it to others through non-group play is investigated in Chapter 2.3. I have argued that children's relationship with the material and visual world is key in this regard, and can be seen through the dynamics of production and consumption. This is what, I argue, my participants call 'messing around'. Firstly, I have suggested that some play activities, like collecting and drawing from television, work along a dynamic of consumption to production. This is where what is done with the objects consumed legitimates a sense of self, through negotiating tensions between conformity and individuality. Belk (1988) argues that this is accomplished by the knowledge gained through such an activity, like collecting, but also through the spatial manipulation and presentation of the results. These activities seem to work to provide counter-narratives for the children's spatial marginalisation within the home. However, the children also re-present the visual iconography of television; modifying and developing the knowledge, in a way that has much in common with the subject/object manipulations of 'pretend' play. Thus, unlike Sutton-Smith (1976) who sees solitary play as isolating and 'bourgeois' I consider this type of play is an important part of creating and manipulating the types of knowledge that are social commodities in group situations, such as knowledge of Pokémon characters and cards.

Secondly, this chapter has argued that other forms of play, surrounding the new media primarily, are formative in how the individual is seen by the group. In this regard, the children's creative products like videos, or experimental presentations of self on (anonymous) socially-networked toy websites, demonstrate emerging self-consciousness. These emerge, in particular from the tensions surrounding socially acceptable presentation of the self (James 1995). These tensions are further reflected in the children's cautious engagement with un-moderated social media, like YouTube. This is shown by their flirtation with rules regarding Internet safety, and their production of 'fuzzy logic' filters in discriminating between what they should and should not expose themselves to online. Children are also encouraged by toy manufacturers to imagine their toys as inhabiting online 'places' where they can go to interact with them, as an extension of the material object in their homes. This extension of the social world into virtual arenas has the potential to offer the child another way to create a new self, as has been noted with teenagers' use of social networking websites (Horst 2009). As with any game, as Gadamer (1994) argues, the player achieves their own self-presentation through presenting the play of the game. Thus, by creating the world of the 'pet', the children are encouraged to present an aspect of themselves. This allows the child to see their 'pet' as having an extended socio-spatial existence outside of the home, which they can access through the gateway of the Internet. In essence, these sites offer group 'pretend' play activity that the child can join in with, despite physically being on their own.

The hierarchical nature of the playground casts further light on the children's play behaviour in the home. Part of their creative play can be argued to be preparation for their public 'front stage' life with their peers. In other words the children practice how they see themselves and how they present themselves to others through their play. Thus, in Chapter 2.4, I have considered how children's social hierarchies are reinforced through exchange. I have argued that because of its social nature, symbolic and competitive exchange is part of children's play lives. Furthermore, the successful completion of these types of exchanges directly influences the child's popularity; that is, social standing. In particular, I have shown how other anthropological forms of competitive exchange, such as the potlatch, directly compare with the type of agonistic exchange practised by children. Furthermore, following Sahlins (1972) work on reciprocity, I have also considered the role of symbolic exchanges with food. Because these exchanges are constantly renewed due to the ephemeral nature of the commodity, they contribute to what Parry and Bloch (1989) describe as the long term 'transactional order' of children's peer groups. These give stability to children's social relations even as membership of the group changes.

This shows that the commodity's value in the adult transactional order is different in the child's world. However, this is not because children are ignorant of 'the value of money'. Rather, this is because certain objects have what Godelier (1977) calls a 'salt money' quality in children's social relations; that is value that is not directly related to market exchange price. I have demonstrated that market and non-market exchange and systems of value co-exist in the child's world. This is because children must

negotiate with their parents for access to the playground economy. It is the parents' consumption and gifting to the child that partly facilitates the production of their social relationships. Thus, the children's sociality is interdependent with their relationship with adults. One of the child's most often expressed fears is to be 'left out' of their social group. Yet, as James (1996) argues, children who do not hold a high enough rank in the social hierarchy will be unable to form and maintain long-term friendships. Thus for the child, I argue, there is an obvious urgency in successfully utilising exchange and 'correct' knowledge about play to maintain and influence social standing. The on-going popularity of media products like Pokémon, which can be 'practiced' in the home, to later be used in playground exchanges of commodities and knowledge, is a testament to the on-going importance of media whose multiple forms cross spatial and social boundaries.

In Chapter 2.5, I explore the links between the more hierarchical relationships of playground peer groups and inter-personal friendships. I have argued that the importance of successful knowledge of commercial toys and exchange in peer relations reveals that the material also has a role to play in the creation of friendships (Rapport 1999). However, age-grade peer relations have shown themselves to be transactional and hierarchical in nature. This differentiates my participant children's relationships from other North American notions of friendship, where the primacy of individual emotional connection, rather than social standing, is emphasised as its ideal form. Through two case-studies and using the structural frameworks offered by Adler and Adler (1998) and Fine (1980 (1995)), I have demonstrated how my participants'

friendships outside of school are formed and maintained. This illustrates how the children perceive and negotiate their social obligations to their kin in relation to those of their friends. I show that these labels do not always neatly apply to the people in children's lives. Rather, I have argued that kinship and friendship categories overlap in the children's lives where they meet with the child's developing notion of duty, either to family in a moral sense, or to their peer group in a reciprocal sense. Thus, the thesis argues that, while children's social relations are linked to those of adults and draw on and modify the adult order, they also create their own social categories, orders and values. This demonstrates that children's social relations are not simply derivative of those of adults, but their own entity, under pressure to negotiate both the adult world and the child's to be socially successful.

Risk, Danger and the Socio-spatial Construction of Childhood

My research with children shows that they are experts at negotiating the boundaries between their role as subordinate members of adults' social groups and their desire for rank in their own peer group. This is especially so where their interaction with adult social relations constrains their spatial freedoms. Formative in children's constraint are adult derived and educated notions surrounding risk, especially in public space. Most prominent of these risks is the fear of child abduction and molestation surrounding the notion of 'stranger danger'. The social systems of modern, urban city Sites are characterised by multiple overlapping social classes and cultural groups competing for resources, jobs and space to raise their families. These systems can be argued to be ill-

articulated, where the power attributed to undefined forces is a way to assign blame to a deviant 'other' for perceived social disorder (Douglas 1966). Vancouver, as a gateway city with an incredibly high through-population, exemplifies these conditions. These conditions particularly breed distrust in those unseen forces of social disorder such as the 'stranger' or teenage gangs. This results in a growing urban culture of fear surrounding threats to children, seen as society's most vulnerable. In some senses, this is a moral panic, not borne out by Canadian statistics on child kidnapping, but it produces tangible results. Firstly, by withdrawing children from the public sphere, and presuming that the home is the safest environment for children, their experience of the world is constrained. However, this also makes public space even more dangerous for them, because of the expectation of their absence from it. Secondly, by assuming the home to be safe, and limiting the other types of space children are allowed to inhabit, society has effectively changed children's relationship to space, danger and how they construct risk.

Not only do children, in efforts to gain privacy or to construct a public of their own, find their social relations drawing away from that of adults; adults have been re-cast into a new primary role for children of 'risk manager'. This means that children's playful exploration of their boundaries effectively becomes a flirtatious experimentation with risk. This supports arguments that play with risk is the most 'natural' form of play, and the most useful preparation for life (Brown and Vaughan 2009). By casting public space as the most 'dangerous' of all spaces, and having taught children the language of 'dangerization', contemporary urban conditions encourage

children to experiment with space (Lianos and Douglas 2000). That is, to actively manipulate the spatial conditions for play and to rely on alternative spaces, such as the Internet, to fully express their play lives. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that because the separation between forms of space that children are exposed to are so distinct, as everything outside of pre-approved spaces is considered dangerous, their play and social lives take on highly distinct expressions and discourses that correspond with the nature of each space.

The distinct qualities of the data that I gathered in each of the sites and spatial typologies I worked with implies that research conducted in these types of urban conditions should take cognisance of the implications of gathering data in one type of space versus another. Particularly for ethnographic research conducted in schools, which are the most common sites for research conducted with children, there is a danger of generalising classroom behaviour as characteristic of children's behaviour in general. As an institution of socialisation, a school creates certain boundaries surrounding social behaviour that children are most adept at manipulating. In the classroom, with its expectations surrounding the outcomes for learning, this problem is particularly apparent. Children, in essence, are able to neatly tell the 'teacher' (Bell and Osborne 1981) what they think they want to hear or see; behaviour that my data acutely shows may not chime with their actions in other areas of their lives.

Danger is thrilling to children, as it represents states (and spaces) of transition. Children are experts at playing off adult constraints on their lives with their own priorities surrounding play and social interactions to seek out these states. Occasionally, children are so masterful at negotiating and subtly extending their boundaries that adults express confusion at the appeal of a certain game or toy. This seems particularly to be the case where these involve new media as an alternative form of gaining socio-spatial experience. Alternatively, adults perceive the threat of danger, whether real or simply playful, connected with manipulations of these media and seek control it. The social impacts on children of not accessing media in the same way as their peers can be difficult for the child, as it hinders their access to the cultural capital implicit in 'knowing' the common narratives used in play. However, used to limitations from the adult world children will often find a way around any such limit, it becoming another illicit danger with the power to thrill.

PLAY AND CHILDREN'S CULTURE

An important part of how children manipulate and use their social knowledge of the media is through play, particularly imaginative play. This fundamentally revolves around using the story of a popular television show, or the frameworks of a set of characters to experiment with social situations. Narrative, such as myths and legends, or arguably for children, the 'backstories' of television shows, is the fundamental form in which social knowledge is acquired, stored and transmitted and a framework for understanding the new. The flexibility of narrative forms for responding to immediate

events is an important part of the adjustment of the individual's identity against the more fixed structural identity-labels of a cultural group (Rapport and Overing 2002). Particularly for children, where the membership of their group is evolutionary and by nature in constant flux, until they eventually and inevitably leave the group, the emphasis on narrative is important evidence for why anthropologists should consider their independence from adult cultures seriously. Yet, as I have also argued, this independence from adults is not total; it is of course adults who generate the themes and plots of television shows that children later adopt. Jerome Bruner (1990) argues that 'to be in a viable culture is to be bound in a set of connecting stories' (96), and it is these threads of stories from adult to child that allows the media, as an adult institution, to play such a fundamental role in guiding children towards adulthood.

However, the data I present in my thesis has not focused on the adult mythos and forces of socialisation that are present in children's play; but rather, my aim has been to present the children's actions as part of a coherent social world. This is in order to demonstrate that media messages and adult directives are not simply regurgitated by children in their play in a mimetic fashion, but rather that there are social forces in childhood that modify these messages. I argue that my participant children actively and creatively frame the narratives they receive through their play. It is the flexible nature of play to which I wish to draw attention here. I have demonstrated that considering play as part of sociality can be seen as an integral tool for children in expressing their own independence from adult society. Play, in a 'childish' way, is something that is not, after all, characteristic of adulthood. I have shown that the role

of play, for my participants, is in creating and maintaining societal cohesion by delineating common knowledge or myths. Play also provides a social framework for the children to express their rank through proficiency of knowledge, or by testing their knowledge in competitive expressions of play. Anthropology then, through demonstrating how children's social relations work like those of any other group to create order and meaning, can offer a seldom-heard perspective on the interpretation of play. The study of the significance of play and children's cultures also has something to offer to anthropology, in that it should challenge our notions of the significance of children in societies, in that the category 'child' seems often to have more authority than the voice of the individual. Anthropologists have often cast children as objects, as inconsequential because of their eventual transition to adulthood. However, considering children's groups and the active nature of their engagement with their social world, acknowledges the potential to find new sites for anthropology within our societies. This type of approach to anthropology and ethnography acknowledges the need to seize the challenges presented to the discipline in terms of its history, and to revisit our assumptions about how our own society is constructed and reported (Clifford and Marcus 1986).

HIERARCHY, EXCHANGE AND CHILD SOCIALITY

I have argued that the analysis of how children see exchange and hierarchy sheds light on how their sociality is formed through playful exchanges. I have demonstrated a number of different exchange types that emerge from children's group interactions,

and how they prepare for these interactions in their homes. Furthermore, I have argued that the outcome of these actions directly influences a child's social position through the accumulation of prestige successful exchange brings. The child with the most prestige, as other ethnographies of childhood have shown, and my data supports, is the one most readily able to form interpersonal friendships. Friendship in early childhood clearly shows the inter-connections between friendship's emotional and instrumental natures. This is demonstrated through the emphasis placed by children's social groups on successful exchange as a barometer of social success.

In social anthropology, the analysis of exchange is one of the most widely examined topics that has allowed anthropologists to form a coherent description of a society's principles. However, there are far fewer studies about how exchange links the social to the material world. My data suggests that for my participants the spheres of social and market exchange are not always separate. What are ordinary trade goods, and items of consumption to the parents of my children, take on the value of a tool for social exchange on the playground. That is to say that ordinary commodities can take on the position of an item of non-market exchange, together with the obligations that surround them, when they are gifted from the adult economy to the child's one.

The types of exchange that children conduct, that are not gifts, are central to how children produce the short-term social order that results in their competitions for rank and prestige. As my data demonstrates, the children I worked with generate a

different valuation system to that of the adult monetary economy, which allows objects with monetary value to take on a barter value on the playground. The negotiation of such normative standards demonstrates the creation of cultural rules (Befu 1977). It is a general anthropological assumption that exchanged objects have the same value for all concerned. However, it is not surprising that although some of the children's values take no heed of monetary value, this generally only applies to low-value items. This could be said to be a demonstration of the interdependence and tension over value between adults and children. However, it is this interdependence that causes confusion over the motivations of exchange, as the distinction is not always made as to whether the transaction is an end in itself, or simply a means to an end. This is demonstrated by the childhood economy that sometimes relies on parents' transactional orders as a source, may have a number of motivations behind the transaction, or may simply be speculative.

Balanced exchange allows for consistent cultural construction of value, which naturally is necessary for a monetary economy to function. Children, however, blur these boundaries where commodities with monetary value enter their playground economy by negotiating alternative value schemes which incorporate elements of the economic positive sum game, where both parties feel themselves, 'winners' (Parkin 1976). This is shown in my data by the sharing of food as the top order of symbolic exchange, as well as in attempts to make high-value cross-category exchange work, somewhat desperately on occasion, in order to attempt to move up the social ranking. The children cement their relationship and membership of the group by gifting and

potentially renewing the gift to others. The relationship between exchange and hierarchy is direct, because the individuals become closer in friendship with more successful exchanges. This shows that the hierarchy is fundamentally egalitarian in nature, there is no single 'patron' who is so far above the rest that they cannot be affected by changes in the success of social interactions and exchanges. As children negotiate these complex systems that help or hinder their attempts for social success and integration they practise, prepare and demonstrate their competence as social actors. The highly socially successful child truly is a master of two worlds, infinitely adept at negotiating the pressures from each. Like any successful gamer or sportsperson, they make it look as simple as child's play.

Future Directions

If the past is characterised by the myth of the 'free-range' child, even in urban spaces (See Chapter 2.1), a consideration of the future is indivisible from a discussion about the future of risk in shaping childhood. Caplan's (2000) 'Risk Revisited' volume argues that risks are necessarily 'unseen'. For example, global warming, potentially caused by industrial expansion in the global North, has shaped the way that the global South has expanded its own industry, many would argue to the detriment of these countries' wealth. Similarly, children's spatial worlds and freedoms are shaped by the 'unseen' risk of the 'stranger'. However, like discourses of global warming, children are caught up in the power of these global conceptions of risk. Children do not actively resist their spatial limitations by breaking the boundaries that confine them, just like countries in

the global South, dependent on aid those of the North, must be seen to conform to the boundaries that affect their industry.

Thus, lived space becomes a type of rubric which children creatively manipulate, within the confines of its own boundaries, to challenge the dominance of adults' discourses on risk. As children's voices and standpoints, within the academy, are now being acknowledged as valid; their challenges to the adult acting primarily as risk manager, are being heard (Alanen 1992). However, as notions of risk shape socio-spatial relations globally, whether the child's voice is truly acknowledged in public discourse seems open to question (James 2007). Ultimately, it is likely that children's physical worlds will become even further confined, as virtual spaces become more ubiquitous. Particularly, advances in networked technologies, and the difficulty of monitoring their use, will undoubtedly be significant. The question that then arises is how risky is virtual space, and is virtual space subject to the same social forces as physical space? Future researchers must surely begin to answer these questions in collaboration with younger children in the same way as they have begun to with teenagers. Nevertheless, discourses about risk not only affect children, but affect the access the researcher has to them. This is especially so, for the study of children in the home. Children of this age can often seem inscrutable, and innovations in collaborative methods have not necessarily overcome the problem of how their cultural logics are represented. What is clear is that a socio-spatial approach to considering children's behaviour needs to become more nuanced and complex to represent and critique these evolving social worlds accurately. This will undoubtedly further entangle projects of this nature with

discourses surrounding cities and risk, which may mean these projects reflect on the nature of childhood, but not on children themselves.

This project has shown the potential for a spatial and material culture approach to reveal more about how children make their world coherent. This has demonstrated that children are complex social actors who make their own social world, not simply a naive version of adult society. However, I intend to further the research with a more fine-grained approach to how Vancouver's city context shapes socio-spatial relations. The Grounded Theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967), while revealing general patterns in how my participant children make their social worlds, can leave gaps in understanding. This is because it is impossible to predict in the field which details of a social setting or interaction will later be significant. Emerson *et al.* (1995), recommend that the write-up of the fieldwork into theoretical 'memos' occurs while the ethnographer is still in the field, in order to direct the fieldwork as it progresses. However, for an inexperienced ethnographer, who has no comparative material about general social relations with a particular group, this is a difficult task. In many ways the research presented in this thesis is the base-line for directing a more focused project, which will add intimate ethnography with more children to the existing data.

The project I propose to conduct next, emerging out of my research on playground food exchange in Chapter 2.4, is to consider the role of food as part of child socialisation, both into the peer group and the family. Ethnic food stores are abundant

in a city like Vancouver and are one site that represents the source of the unique flavours presented in home cooking that acculturate the child into the tastes of 'home'. However, they are also the source of 'treats', such as commercial foods, small toys and comic books that may be included in lunch boxes or given as a reward after school. Food, in a material sense, in its natural and artificial distinctions is a tradable item of huge importance to young children. This can be evidenced in other anthropological work that has begun to grapple with the topic of commercial snack food in religious environments and the movement of food from 'home' countries to countries of residence (Gillette 2005; Alexeyeff 2004; Thomas 2004). As of yet, however, studies have not prominently considered what the child's perspective may be on these processes. In developing this strand of research, I aim to contribute to the understandings of children's socialisation from not only the point of view of those providing the food, but also from the point of view of the children consuming it. This is particularly interesting in the light of how the role of food is moderated through the boundaries of normative North-American childhood. That is to say, as the young child negotiates and clarifies how Goldfish Crackers and Valentine's Day are supposed to interact with their development of an 'ethnicity'. In this regard, I propose to add newly collected fieldwork data using visual, online and ethnographic methods to my body of current material; documenting food from its consumption in food stores to its preparation and eating in the home.

I intend this follow-on project to be micro-ethnographic in nature. However, I aim that its conclusions will be a starting point to reflect on patterns of global consumption in a

critical light. Children's social actions have the potential to reveal new dimensions of the 'big questions' that frame how meaning is made in a modern and often urbanised world. In particular, the way that children socialise consumer objects into their social and play lives offers a critique for discourses of homogenization. This has the potential to demonstrate that 'playful' consumption is a creative process that invests something fundamentally local into the mass-produced and, global.

3.2) GLOSSARY OF COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS

Anakin (Skywalker)

Character from the Star Wars Universe, later becomes Darth Vader, father to Luke Skywalker.

Animal Cracker

A small children's cookie in animal shapes.

Anne of Green Gables

A book written by Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery in 1908. In the Stay Tooned shop it relates to the children's television series hugely popular in Japan '*Akage no An'*, set on Prince Edward Island in Canada. Original air date: 1979

Ash Ketchum

The main human character of Pokémon, a boy of about eleven- years-old.

Attack of the Clones

The second film of the newer prequel trilogy based in the Star Wars universe. Original air date:2002

Bakugan

A Japanese action adventure series about a team of 'brawlers' and their creatures called Bakugan that they use to fight with. Series of toy figurines and cards used to play a strategy board game, from Sega toys, called Bakugan Battle Brawlers. Original air date: 2007

Barbie

A type of doll made by Mattel, criticised as unnatural and hyperfeminine, yet very popular with young girls.

Batman

A 1939 action hero created for DC Comics later an animated television series and live action films. Original air date: 1943 (film), 1966, animation.

Ben 10: Alien Force

An animated television series: Original air date: 2005

Beverly Hills 90210

An American television drama series. Original air date: 1990

Britney Spears

American Pop singer who rose to fame at sixteen-years-old only to have a troubled early twenties marred by early pregnancy, divorce, drug use and eating disorders.

Celebi

A 'legendary' Pokémon, meaning unable to capture or train subject of the film Pokemon4eva

Chaotic

A popular trading-card game aimed at approx. ages nine to-eleven-years-old

Charizard

A fire-type Pokemon character that spits flames and melts boulders. Capable of starting a forest fire.

Chicken Little

A Disney animated film. Original air date: 2005

Dark Spiderman

See Spiderman. A corrupted, powerful form of Spiderman.

Darth Vader

The antagonist of the first three Star Wars films to air, father to Luke Skywalker.

Digimon

A later series akin to Pokémon with similar product range, however with a different back-story and more mature characters. Original Air Date: 1999

DS (Nintendo)

A small hand-held games console primarily aimed at children.

GTA (Grand Theft Auto)

A 18-rated video game notorious for its morally dubious plot.

Hannah Montana

A Disney live-action television series and film. Original air date: 2006

High School Musical

A series of Disney musical films revolving around the life of a class of High School students. Original air date: 2006

The Incredible Hulk

A Marvel Comic book character who is usually human, however turns into a large, green, raging monster when angry.

IPhone

A mobile telephone and MP3 player combined with other PDA functionality made by the Apple company.

IPod

A digital music player made by the Apple company.

Iron Man

A 1963 Marvel comic book hero later an animated television series and live action films. Original air date: 1966 (animation), 2008 (film)

Kung- Fu Panda

A Disney animated film. Original air date:2008

Lego

A Danish toy launched in 1932, made from interconnecting plastic blocks.

Littlest Pet Shop

A range of SD –style (*super deforme*, a Japanese term for large heads and eyes characteristic of Japanese animated media) stuffed toys and figurines made by the Hasbro company with an Internet website specifically designed to interact with the toys one owns.

Luke Skywalker

The protagonist of the first three Star Wars films to air.

Mamma Mia

A film incorporating the music of the Swedish pop group Abba. Original air date: 2008

Mario Kart

A Nintendo game of go-kart racing based around the Super Mario Bros. set of characters.

Meowth

The mascot of 'Team Rocket', a cream talking cat. One of the few Pokémon who talk, often to offer a moral commentary.

Mew Two

A 'legendary' Pokémon, meaning unable to capture or train, who is corrupted and cloned by Team Rocket and 'turned' evil.

My Little Pony

An animated television series, directed at young girls. Original air date:1983

My Neighbour Totoro

An influential and popular 1988 anime film directed by Hayao Miyazaki involving themes of nature and guardian spirits.

Ninja Turtle

An animated television series, film and popular toy. Original air date: 1984

Nintendo DS

A small hand-held games console aimed at children.

Padme

The mother of Luke Skywalker and antagonist of the prequel series of Star Wars films. Romantic interest to Anakin.

Pikachu

Ash, the male protagonist's first Pokémon, a small yellow rabbit-like creature with lightning-bolt shaped ears. Pikachu is likened to a lightning mouse. A rare Pokémon, Pikachu can zap its opponent with its electric power just by squeezing its cheeks.

Playmobil

A series of small people, furniture and objects with a common aesthetic from Germany, launched in 1975.

Playstation

A video game console made by the Sony company.

Pokéballs

Containers that can store Pokémon ready for battle

Pokémon

An originally Japanese, now globally popular children's franchise which counts television series, films, trading cards, video games and children's properties amongst its material culture. Original air date: 1998

Pringles

A mass-produced homogenous shaped snack food.

PSP (Playstation)

A small hand-held games console aimed at teenagers and adults.

R2D2

Robot character from the Star Wars Universe.

Sony PSP

A small hand-held games console aimed at teenagers and adults.

Star Wars

A series of films, books and animated series based around a science fiction universe. Original air date: 1977

Stick-Bricks

A type of construction toy where the blocks are made with 'combs' around their edges and fine grained 'brushes' on their surfaces so that they can be stuck to each other or on end.

The Suite Life of Zach and Cody

A Disney live-action television series

Spiderman

A 1962 Marvel comic book later an animated television series and live action films. Original air date: 1967 remade in 1981 in a new animated series

Team Rocket

A collective of 'evil' Pokémon trainers who are the antagonists of the Pokémon series.

Thomas the Tank Engine

A pre-school series of books and television shows about a steam train and his steam-train friends.

Transformers

An animated television series, film and popular toy. Original air date: 1984

Webkinz

A range of naturalistic stuffed toys made by the Galt company with an Internet website specifically designed to interact with the toys one owns.

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APPENDIX A

The following table reflects the children that formed my research sample, organised by age, excluding the children I observed in public at the Stay Tooned toy store. I have defined ethnicity by the parent's self-identification, for information only. The children themselves never spoke of ethnic identity, and all spoke English out of choice.

Children's Names	Age	Family Circumstance	Ethnicity	Site
Tarryn	11	Married Parents	Chinese (HK)	Social services (group)
Brendon	10	Widow	Chinese (HK)	Social services (group)
Grant	10	Married Parents	Chinese (HK)	Social services (group)
Annika	9/10	Married Parents	Chinese (HK)	Social services (group)
Amy	9/10	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Caryn	9/10	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Matthew	9/10	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Sajit	9/10	Unknown	South Asian	John Smith Elementary
Mehdi	9/10	Unknown	Iranian	John Smith

				Elementary
Will	9/10	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Cane	9/10	Unknown	Phillipino	John Smith Elementary
Finn	9/10	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Luke	9/10	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Susie	9	Unknown	Chinese (HK)	Social services (group)
Sam	9	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Jason	9	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Jenna	8/9	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Tory	8/9	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Robyn	8/9	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
James	8/9	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Darryl	8/9	Unknown	Mixed ethnicity	John Smith Elementary
Josh	8/9	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Toby	8	Married Parents	East Asian	John Smith Elementary
Zach	8	In foster	Caucasian	Home

		care with Aunt		
Zuleika	7/8	Divorced	Iranian	Home and John Smith
Brianna	7	In foster care with Aunt	Caucasian	Home
Ralph	6/7	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Max	6/7	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Mark	6/7	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Samantha	6/7	Unknown	Caucasian	John Smith Elementary
Sally	6	Unknown	Chinese (HK)	Social services (group)

The following table reflects other children who were present at my field sites, usually as siblings of my participants, but whose input is secondary in the research, or not present, primarily because of their age.

Children's Names	**Age**	**Family Circumstance**	**Ethnicity**	**Site**

Selena	11	Married Parents	Chinese (HK)	Social services (group)
May	6/7	Unknown	Chinese (HK)	Social services (group)
Joey	5	Single mother	Chinese (HK)	Social services (group)
Ella	3	Single mother	Caucasian	Social Services (group 2)
Zahara	3	Single mother	First Nations	Social Services (group 3)
Latisha	2/3	Married Parents	First Nations	Social Services (group 2/3)
John	2/3	Divorced	Chinese (HK)	Social Services (group 2)
Connie	2	In foster/Married parents	Vietnamese	Social Services (group 3)
Jack	1/2	Unknown	Chinese (HK)	Social Services (group)
Jane	1	In foster/Married parents	Vietnamese	Social Services (group 3)
Leoni	1	Single	First Nations	Social

		Mother		Services (group 3)
Mark	1	Single Mother	Mixed	Social Services (group 2)
Luke	1	In foster care	Mixed	Social Services (group 3)
Mary	1	Divorced	Chinese (HK)	Social Services (group 2)
Caroline	1	Unkown	Chinese (HK)	Social Services (group)
Skye	1	Single Mother	Caucasian	Social Services (group 3)
Abel	1	Single Father	Caucasian	Social Services (group 3)
Dakota	6 mo	Single Mother	Caucasian	Social Services (group 2)
Allrianna	2 mo	Married Parents	First Nations	Social Services (group 2)

APPENDIX B

Information regarding formal requirements of the Oxford University ethics review 'CUREC' and Vancouver School Board processes.

SAMPLE LETTER OF INFORMATION AND OPT IN FORM



Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology

51/53 Banbury Rd

Oxford

OX2 6PE

Institute for Asian Research

C.K. Choi Building

1855 West Mall

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

604 822 4688

In partnership with research jointly done at the University of Oxford and the University of British Columbia your child's school has agreed to take part in a study looking at the influence of children's television and television related toys on children's play behaviour. We very much hope you would like to take part, but before you decide, it is important that you understand why the study is being done and what it will involve.

What am I trying to find out?

I am particularly interested in how the popularity of children's television and related products are changing the ways in which children play, interact with each other, and learn cultural conventions. More information on this project is available by contacting me by email at abby.loebenberg@anthro.ox.ac.uk

What will happen if my child takes part?

I will be present in the playground observing the ways that the children refer to popular culture when they talk to their friends and 'play pretend'.

What happens to the results of the research?

Results for each child are kept strictly confidential. Children are identified by a code number only and all information and results are kept in a locked filing cabinet in the University. The research is firstly for my PhD but, I also aim to publish my findings in academic journals, but this may be two to three years from the end of the study, any information published will also be anonymous and the children will not be able to be identified.

Who is conducting this research?

I am a PhD student at the University of Oxford in the UK in the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology. My supervisor is Dr. Inge Daniels. I am also a Visiting Scholar at the University of British Columbia and can be contacted there at any time.

What should I do next?

Please fill in the enclosed form and return it to your child's class teacher if you would be happy for your child to take part in this study. If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact me.

Abby Loebenberg

SAMPLE LETTER OF INFORMATION AND OPT IN FORM

Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology

51/53 Banbury Rd

Oxford

OX2 6PE

Institute for Asian Research

C.K. Choi Building

1855 West Mall

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

604 822 4688

- Your child's school has agreed to take part in a study run by a PhD student at Oxford University looking at the influence of children's television and related toys on children's play behavior.

- If your child takes part, a researcher would come and observe them at school in the playground.

- **If you are happy for your child to take part, please fill in the form below and return it to your child's class teacher as soon as possible.**

- To find out more about the project, please read the attached information sheet.

You can also e-mail me at abby.loebenberg@anthro.ox.ac.uk

- -

Name of child:_____ Date of Birth:_____ Grade:____

I have read and understood the details of the above study, and have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study with others. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I and my child are free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my child's education being affected in any way.

I give permission for my child to take part in the above study.

Name of parent/guardian:_____

Signature: _____ date:_____

Letter of Approval from Vancouver School Board removed due to sensitive content.