COMMENTARY

WHEN IS A CHILD A 'CHILD'?
ALTERNATIVE SYSTEMS OF CLASSIFICATION

During the past decade it has become fashionable in social anthropology
to treat certain sectors of society as 'muted groups'. This trend has
found its principal focus in studies of women, the 'human group that forms
about half of any population';[1] but there is a parallel, if as yet less
widespread, interest in half of the population of society divided accord-
ing to a different criterion: in this case the line is drawn between
'children' and 'adults'. The ensuing discussion is by way of a commentary
on this latter focus of attention, referring in particular to articles
published in this journal and elsewhere by Charlotte Hardman and Allison
James.[2] These two anthropologists have pursued the study of that sector
of British society which we designate as 'children'; my own interest ex-
tends to children in other cultures also, in particular, in Africa.

It has been suggested that most African women enjoy relative economic,
political and sexual freedom, and that 'in Africa, south of the Sahara ...
the "position of women" has a good deal to be said in its favour'.[3] I wish
to show that the position of children in this cultural region is likewise
relatively favourable, and that the conclusions drawn by Charlotte Hardman
and Allison James must be modified if they are to be applied to African
data. Like Wendy James in her essay on African women,[4] I take as my start-
ing point 'intuition and generalised personal feeling' in my approach to
children outside the British context, but this intuition is derived from
discussions of the topic with African friends in Oxford[5] and I believe
that it can be substantiated by ethnographic data from many parts of Africa.
I have yet to conduct my own field research; in any case I do not think
that British and American anthropologists collecting field material on
African children have realized the limitations of our own conceptual classi-
fications of children. Certainly their theoretical interpretations do not
always seem to be justified by the data they present.

In the recent works on children to which I have referred above child-
ren are treated as a 'muted group'; in fact it was Charlotte Hardman who
coined the term.[6] This approach can be traced back to Edwin Ardener's
paper 'Belief and the Problem of Women', where he advocates that not only
women but other categories of person, including children, should be studied,
to counteract their present lack of articulateness.[7] Children, like women,
are 'muted' in relation to the dominant group of society, defined as adults
or males respectively. Indeed, there are strong echoes of the Ardeners'
work on women in Allison James's study of children's nicknames; we might
compare:

> ... a society may be dominated or overdetermined by the model (or models) generated by one dominant group within the system. This dominant model may impede the free expression of alternative models of their world which subdominant groups may possess, and perhaps may even inhibit the very generation of such models. Groups dominated in this sense find it necessary to structure their world through the model (or models) of the dominant group, transforming their own models as best they can in terms of the received ones.[8]

as against:

> In a culture where the rules and regulations stem from the adult world children possess an alternative cultural perspective which, while, being uniquely their own, is expressive of the child's conception of himself and his place in relationship to the adult world. This perspective is indeed inaudible to adults. Children actively deflect adult culture in order to create their own order within the limits and boundaries given to them by adults.[9]

The difficulties of adopting such an approach are two-fold, though they are, paradoxically, entailed by the very point which both writers are making. First, how can members of a society imbued with the ideology of the dominant group in their own society perceive the alternative models of sub-dominant groups? Indeed, how can they even be sure that they exist? And second, how could such alternative models be expressed in a language which embodies the dominant ideology?

The studies of children undertaken by Hardman and James in the past decade aptly illustrate these problems: the dichotomy adult/child is derived from the adult system of classification, and it is only because the distinction exists within the terminology adopted by adults that the category 'child' can be set apart as a subject worthy of study; in so far as children themselves recognize the division and incorporate it into their own models, it is because they have received it from adults. Both Hardman and James claim to have adopted the child's perspective, but is it really possible for an adult to see the world through a child's eyes? Each of these writers is explicit about the difficulties of field-work where their very physical appearance and size marked them off from the subjects of their studies; the acceptance of an adult into the child's group could only be temporary and unstable. The anthropological undertaking itself precludes the possibility of total assimilation into the society under study; the anthropologist is required to return to the world of adult academics in order to render an account of his or her findings. The physical reminder of the anthropologist's identity as an outsider is no less obtrusive for a Western anthropologist working in Africa, where a white skin is a marker of externality; but though many anthropologists might claim to have tried to understand, interpret, translate another culture, I wonder how many could honestly claim to have 'adopted the perspective' of that culture. To illustrate the difficulty, I would point to Hardman's article on children's games; the product of her avowed preference for considering children's games in terms of their own classification is noticeably sparse, amounting to no more than a single paragraph which even approximates to the putting into practice of such an ideal.[10]

In the same connection, Allison James suggests that adults or academics who do not acknowledge the child's perspective may make 'ethnocentric judgements' about children, 'precisely because they endeavour to understand one culture in terms of another'.[11]   But her own work, though clearly acknowledging and recognizing what she calls the child's perspective, is no less free from ethnocentric judgements than approaches adopted by other adults and academics, because the very categories with which she works are the products of an adult (including academic) classificatory system. Whether or not it is possible to understand one culture in terms of another, I very much doubt whether it is feasible for a member of the dominant group within a society (in this case, adults) to understand a sub-dominant group within the same society (in this case, children) in the latter's *own* terms; and the undertaking is all the more fraught with danger when the 'muted group' is a sector of society which one has oneself emerged from and left behind. I doubt whether the intent to understand another group in its own idiom can ever issue in more than a perception and re-phrasing of that idiom in terms of, or at least intelligible to, one's own. The impossibility of shaking off completely our received cultural categories is nicely illustrated by the case of *Portnoy's Complaint*.[12]

If it is granted that the concept of childhood, as defined by the binary division of human beings in society into adults and children, is a product of adult classifications, the implications of this for the study of children in anthropology must be considered. To begin with, in the English language there are many, sometimes overlapping, sub-divisions of the single category 'child'. Allison James herself lists baby, mite, kid, toddler, juvenile, girl, teenager, minor, adolescent.[13] I would suggest that other sub-divisions might also be considered: children in rural or urban areas, children of upper-class, middle-class or working-class parents, for example. If the list of terms based on a rough criterion of age were to be extended, it would include young people, the middle-aged, the elderly, old people. Each term might be regarded as classifying a sub-group of society, with its own modes of thought and action. The application of any one label to an individual, and therefore the group to which an individual belongs, varies according to context; it is because individuals can belong to several groups at different times, or even at once, that the groups subsumed under such terms cannot be treated as static or rigidly bounded. To treat children as a single category, by virtue of their being non-adults, obscures the different groups to which children belong and the distinctions which they themselves recognize (e.g. juniors and seniors, or big and little children, within a school).

So at the very least, it must be said that the dichotomy (which is fundamental to the recent anthropological work on children which I am here discussing) is rather limiting. This point leads me to draw a contrast between attitudes towards children in British and African society. Although one must be wary of generalizations about Africa as a cultural area in view of the vast diversity embraced by the continent, I think it is safe to say that there is a more positive evaluation of children in Africa than in Britain. Similarly, at the other end of the age spectrum, African elders are widely respected and esteemed, whereas in Britain an old person may be said to be passing through a second childhood; the old age of others is often a matter of jest or scorn, one's own old age is a source of fear.

Secondly, the validity of separating off children as a distinct group is to be questioned. One important objection to this approach is that it ignores the developmental aspect. All children become adults, but Hardman and James treat them as a static group, with no indication of how a child

becomes a member of his peer group and its culture, nor of how he grows
out of it. In the work of these writers, as in the important books on
school-children by the Opies to whom they owe so much, children are re-
presented as manipulating the received system of adult categories. How-
ever there are two difficulties implied here. First, that children already
know the system — but how are they supposed to have learnt it? And second,
that they do not accept it — perhaps this is true, but what is it then that
induces children to adopt such classifications as they grow and become
adult? Both Hardman and James make a sweeping rejection of the study of
'socialization', caricaturing it as the view that children are the blank
face onto which the image of society is stamped. Portrayed in such crude
terms, the socialization approach is, to be sure, unacceptable, although
I suspect that a more subtle reading of some studies within the tradition
might yield something of value. But the preoccupation which underlies the
study of socialization is in fact the same as that on which the studies of
children as a separate category are based: it is the anthropologist's con-
cern with the *social*. Anthropological studies of 'socialization' imply a
view of society, or more precisely adult society, as a static entity into
which children must be incorporated; the Opies, Hardman and James all
proceed on the assumption that children have their own society with its
own system of order and classification. It is perhaps because it would
necessitate too great an interest in the individual that any idea of de-
velopment or of progression across conceptual boundaries is omitted. In
this connection, I would note that the above-mentioned anthropologists
have treated children as forming a sub-culture, contained literally and
intellectually within the adult world; psychology has treated the indi-
vidual child as the father of the man, and psychoanalysis traces adult
problems back to the experiences of childhood.

On the other hand, although the category of child is treated as a
bounded entity, the precise age-group concerned tends to be loosely de-
fined and fluid. The Opies make it clear in the titles of their books[14]
that their subject-matter is school-children, but they range between primary
and early secondary school, sometimes referring to 'younger' and 'older'
children, and occasionally specifying ages. Hardman states that the source-
material of her work was derived from the Opies' books and from observations
made in the playground of a primary school in Oxford, where the age-range
was 5 - 11 years old.[15] Allison James includes babies and toddlers in her
theoretical discussion but the subjects of her examination of children's
nicknames are aged between 10 and 17.[16] Unfortunately, none of these
authors pauses to consider the biases which might creep into their inter-
pretations of the classification 'child' as a result of drawing the data
from school-children alone. Nor does any of them incorporate material on
pre-school children, although Hardman and James both generalize from their
own data to the whole category of 'children', which, being defined in their
terms as non-adults, should embrace younger children. There are, of course,
two problems for the anthropologist who wishes to study children: first,
in the British case, from which all these authors argue, almost without
exception children between the ages of 5 and 16 are at school — school-age
children are school-children. Second, pre-school-age children are not so
amenable to study because they are dispersed in their homes, shielded by
their nuclear families, and because they do not in themselves before going
to school constitute a group, a society such as anthropologists love to
study; rather, one would have to study the whole complex of intra-familial
relations.

However, I would suggest that data drawn from school-children alone will yield misleading results it it is used as the basis of generalizations on the entire category of children, and that rather different conclusions might be drawn from information on children collected in areas where universal education remains at best an ideal, and where for those who are able to go to school, such education is regarded even by the children themselves as a privilege rather than an imposition. In a sense, the institution of the school provides somewhat artificial conditions by separating off children from the wider society for a considerable portion of their time. The age-gap between the oldest pupil and the youngest teacher is sufficient to emphasize the criterion of age as constituting the dividing-line between the categories child and adult; indeed, these two categories (child/pupil and adult/teacher) are effectively the only two classes of person relevant in the context of the school, and the whole concept of education rests on a relationship of domination between the teacher who imparts knowledge and the child who absorbs it. By contrast, in the wider society, or even in the family context, the child is (potentially, at least) in contact with people of all ages, from baby to old person. In a school there is a specially designated play area and play time, play in other spaces and at other times being frowned upon; in play, the child is conceptually outside the authority of adults and so the opportunities for it must be restricted within the school. For the child who is not attending school, whether in Africa or elsewhere, play is an integral part of life and occurs in the home, the cattle camp, or wherever the child happens to be, not in an adult-designated and bounded area. It is interesting that among the school-children studied by the Opies, among whom academic competition was presumably intense, competitive games were unpopular when the children were left to their own devices.[17] In contrast, games among Dinka children for example are predominantly competitive. If games in the British school playground become really rough, the teacher 'on duty' will intervene, whether of his own accord or at the request of the weaker child; the weak child is never forced to stand up for himself and so the relationship of dependence on adults is perpetuated. An African child however is encouraged to become independent at a much earlier age and this independence is fostered and enforced by letting a child do even difficult things on his own. To a British parent it would seem shocking that a seven-year-old child might walk 100 miles to boarding-school, as in one case I know of. The school system in Britain, then, provides institutional reinforcement for the separation of the conceptual categories 'adult' and 'child', the former being the dominant group and the latter being *ipso facto* muted.

Following on from this, I would postulate that the attitude towards children in a society is derived from the power structure of that society. I am not suggesting that children are not treated as children in, for example, African societies; rather that the attitudes and ideas attaching to the category 'child', and the delimitation of its boundaries, are different, and that this results from the different nature of the distribution of power and authority and the relative values placed on other categories of person.[18]

To stay, for the time being, with the British school and the nuclear family, the authority of the teacher derives from the delegation of authority from the parent (we speak of the teacher being *in loco parentis*); the school system depends on the teacher retaining authority — without it, the educational process could not be sustained — but the teacher depends on the school to provide institutional backing for his authority. In such

a self-implicating system, the teacher's authority is rather precarious; in case of confrontation, the teacher must use power to maintain authority, and his only sanction is the use of force (though not necessarily physical force). The authority of the parent is less subject to the wielding of power, by virtue of the child's physical dependence on his parents and also, in most cases, by virtue of the relationship of affection which prevails. It is not until the child goes to school that the dichotomy adult/child is brought to the fore, with the accompanying implications of power as well as authority; before that time, the prominent relationship is parent/child in which *inter*action inheres, and the relation of dependence is not so much one of domination. This point shows again why a consideration of pre-school-age children would not fit neatly into the framework of analysis employed by Hardman and James.[19]

Not, however, that the relationship between parents and children in British society is not also partly responsible for the concepts adhering to the adult/child dichotomy. The child is constantly protected and shielded from the outside world, being told that he is 'too young' to play outside after dark, travel alone on a bus, read adult books, etc. He is provided with books, toys, TV and radio programmes etc. which have been specially designed by adults to comply with their conceptions of what a child ought (or is expected) to be interested in.[20] If a girl helps her mother with the housework or a boy helps his father with handiwork, it is as *helper* and the help tends to be spasmodically accepted; the child is rarely entrusted with any responsibility. If a child ventures into the adult world of work to any considerable degree it is regarded as exploitation,[21] and the parents of such a child would be considered opportunistic or negligent. Many parents are openly reluctant to let their children leave home; I wonder whether the expression 'to be tied to the mother's apron strings' would be intelligible in an African context?

To a large extent, I think, the power structure of our society is inter-connected with the economic structure. Just as many men feel threatened when their wives go out to work because their authority over women is no longer backed by recourse to the sanction of withdrawing material support, so children who are economically independent undermine the authority of their parents, particularly their fathers, in so far as this authority is based on their position as providers for the children's material needs. Similarly, the achievement of independence by children hastens the time when the parents will be, in their old age, economically dependent on their children with the concomitant reversal of the relationship of authority.

I want to elaborate on this point by adopting an approach which has been gaining currency in anthropology, that is, of considering any one conceptual category in the light of all other similar categories.[22] By this I mean that I find the approach to children which is based on the bare dichotomy adult/child unsatisfactory; even if all the sub-divisions of these broad categories are to be ignored, I think we must consider a third category, that of old people. An examination of the relationship between members of the categories 'middle-aged' and 'elderly' people (or 'adults' and 'old people') may shed some light on the interaction between adults and children.

Just as children are sent off to school, so old people in Britain are frequently grouped together in nursing homes or old people's homes; conceptual separation is reinforced by spatial separation. Although we have an awed admiration for those who reach the advanced age of 100 (or even 90), the 'collective representation' of old people in British society is

of people infirm in body and mind, a burden on their offspring and/or the
State, and certainly not of much use in the administration of our affairs.
In many African societies, even if it is the middle-aged who hold the power,
the elders command respect and authority. To quote one example (which
concerns the people I am studying, the Abaluyia of Kenya): 'A man's
assumption of grandparenthood coincides with that time in his life when he
is expected to take an active part in the judicial affairs of the clan and
community and also to assume an increasingly important part in the ritual
aspects of clan and community life.'[23] Although the elders may require
material support, they are otherwise indispensable: 'members of the grand-
parental generation ... are growing more and more dependent economically
upon their middle-aged sons. The sons, however, are dependent upon their
ageing fathers for leadership in the ritual sphere.'[24] This situation con-
trasts with the state of affairs in British society where loss of material
independence entails loss of authority also.

     I want to suggest that the categorization 'child' embraces two differ-
ent concepts: non-adult and offspring of parent; and that it is the rela-
tive emphasis placed on each of these which explains the different attitudes
to children in Britain (and perhaps one might generalize to 'the West') and
Africa. In order to attempt to understand the contrast, it is necessary
to consider the sources of power and authority in inter-personal relations,
which in turn colour the perceptions of person-categories. A fuller under-
standing would require the examination of other aspects of society; I have
chosen here to confine myself to kinship structure and its relationship to
economic structure, but I believe that data on religious and political for-
mations, for example, would yield similar results.

     In Britain, where recognized kinship extends only to a very limited
circle and the nuclear family is the predominant unit of kinship, the
emphasis in conceptions of children is on the child as the non-adult. The
birth of children is not always welcomed, as is clear from the prevalence
of abortion, and it is accepted that some married couples may decide not
to have children. The not-yet-fully-socialized behaviour of children once
born renders them a nuisance: 'children should be seen and not heard'.
By contrast, in a society where kinship is an important principle of social
organization, the birth of a child ensures the continuity of the lineage;
the evaluation of the child in this context is not negative (*non*-adult)
but positive: as the offspring of its parents a child is an indispensable
link in the succession of members in the lineage or clan.

     The British 'grown-up' has the status, and consequently the power and
authority, of adulthood by the mere fact of age. In societies in Africa
where age-sets rank people into groups according to age, with culturally-
defined relations between each, there is a *series* of such groups and this
precludes the *binary* division between adults and children. Even in those
African societies which have ceremonies of initiation in which the indivi-
dual is said to pass from childhood to adulthood and which might therefore
be thought to exemplify the stark dichotomy between adult and child, mar-
riage and the bearing of children are linked with the attaining of *full*
adult status. Among the Abaluyia, for instance, though the examples could
be multiplied, 'The matrimonial relationship becomes fully established
only after the birth of one or several children .... From now on the pair
are regarded as "really" husband and wife, and no longer as "boy" and "girl".[25]

     The average family in Britain comprises two or three children, but a
family of this size would be regarded in many parts of Africa as small.
'A numerous offspring is desired by both parents. A prolific wife will
command more respect from her husband and his kinsmen than a wife who is
barren.'[26] Without positing a *causal* connection (in either direction),

I would suggest that the importance of children is certainly *linked* with the positive evaluation of women in Africa: 'In a varied range of African societies ... we can discern a common cluster of ideas about the wider importance of women's child-bearing capacity, their creative role in bringing up a new generation.'[27]

At least two reasons for the desire for many children may be postulated: one is that a man with a large family commands greater respect in the eyes of society; another is that a family frequently constitutes an economic unit. The latter point shows why the idea is precluded that African children should be excluded from economic activity. Again we find in the ethnographic material on the Abaluyia that the family is economically self-sufficient and 'the individual family constitutes the basic social group that co-operates most widely and intensely in the activities of everyday life.'[28]

The authority of the father and mother over the child is undisputed, but the possible conflict of wills is mitigated by the fact that children have a role to play in the life of the society and, further, that from the beginning the upbringing of the child is the responsibility of a wider kin-group. In this context the type of possessive emotional involvement of parent with child which underlies the saying 'to be tied to the mother's apron strings' is pre-empted. This helps us to understand statements such as the following: 'A father's authority over his children ... is considerable, even though many fathers make little practical use of their rights .... Theoretically, however, a father has almost absolute rights over his children ....'[29]

In a society where kinship is lineage-based, the principles of continuity and seniority are inherent. There is no loss of authority with the approach of old age or the maturation of children: 'the ties between parents and children tend to be strong, and parental authority as well as filial obedience and devotion continue far beyond the time of the children's physical maturity.'[30] If elders retain authority and respect, adults do not need to cling to their privileged position through fear of losing it, nor attempt to fend off old age; and if their children can attain authority (over their own offspring) without challenging their parents' authority over themselves, then there is no necessity for a denial of parental authority in order to gain adult status.

It is possible, however, that in the face of the rapid economic and material change which is taking place in Africa at present, the attitudes I have discussed no longer hold true. The works from which I have quoted on the Abaluyia are based on field-work conducted in the 1930s (Günter Wagner) and the 1950s (Walter Sangree). Already in the 'thirties circumstances were changing for the Abaluyia: Wagner comments that a large number of children was no longer an unqualified benefit, for both economic and kinship reasons; the cost of upbringing, especially education, was high and it was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain a large family in view of the scarcity of land and the insecurity of tenure; the clan was declining in political and ritual importance, with the functions of government taken over by the British, and Christianity spreading at the expense of the traditional religion. And yet, we read, there was not at that time any widespread desire to restrict the size of families. 'It appears ... that the valuation of children and accordingly the size of families is one of those factors which do not readily adjust themselves to new conditions ....'[31] Conditions have certainly changed a great deal since then, but David Parkin's recent work on the neighbouring Luo[32] provides a good illustration of the way in which traditional values can

be retained, albeit expressed in different forms, in altered circumstances. 'Changing historical circumstances may affect the socio-economic features of a people's existence .... But it is not so easy for the fundamental elements of a people's moral culture to disappear or to be turned upside down.'[33]

It is perhaps because attitudes to children constitute one of the fundamental elements of moral culture that an ethnocentric approach to children appears to have such a strong foothold in even the most recent of anthropological studies on this topic. To be sure, neither Hardman nor James have attempted to apply their analytical framework to data from outside Britain, but on the other hand the idea that anthropology is a comparative discipline has perhaps an even stronger foothold in anthropological circles. I hope to have shown that if nicknames are a test case for a mode of thought[34] the application of that mode of thought is restricted to the context from which the data underlying the argument are drawn, and that there do exist alternative modes of thought. It is ironical that in a society which is reputed to embody the principle of individualism, the attitude towards children appears to allow them relatively little scope for acting or thinking as individuals; they are herded together in the school, classified by adults as a group and treated by anthropologists as a society with its own sub-culture; they are for a long time denied the responsibility and independence which is granted to many an African child.

Malcolm Crick has commented above in this issue of *J.A.S.O.* that anthropologists have the ability to make the strange very familiar; I wonder whether, particularly now that anthropologists are no longer immune from having their works read by the subjects of their studies, anthropologists do not also have a capacity for making the familiar very strange?

ELIZABETH MUNDAY

NOTES

1. Edwin Ardener, 'Belief and the Problem of Women', in Shirley Ardener (ed.), *Perceiving Women,* London: J.M. Dent & Sons [1975] 1977, pp. 1-18; at p. 1.

2. Charlotte Hardman, 'Can There be an Anthropology of Children?', *J.A.S.O.* IV, 1973, pp. 85-99; 'Fact and Fantasy in the Playground', *New Society* XXIX, no. 625, September 19, 1974, pp. 801-3; 'Children in the Playground', *J.A.S.O.* V, 1974, pp. 173-88; *The Study of Children in Social Anthropology,* B. Litt. thesis, Oxford University 1974.

Allison James, 'When is a Child not a Child? Nicknames: A Test Case for a Mode of Thought', *Durham University Working Papers* no. 3, February 1979, pp. 1-66; 'Confections, Concoctions and Conceptions', *J.A.S.O.* X, 1979, pp. 83-95.

3.   Wendy James, 'Matrifocus on African Women', in Shirley Ardener (ed.), *Defining Females: The Nature of Women in Society*, London: Croom Helm 1978, pp. 140-62; at p. 140.

4.   Ibid.

5.   I would like to thank in particular: Francis Binayo (Kenya), Joseph Kamugisha (Tanzania), Mohamed Mahmoud (Sudan), Bona Malwal (Sudan) and Martin Uhomoibhi (Nigeria).

6.   See Edwin Ardener, 'The "Problem" Revisited', in Ardener (ed.), *Perceiving Women*, pp. 19-27; at p. 22.

7.   Ibid.

8.   Shirley Ardener, 'Introduction', in Ardener (ed.), *Perceiving Women*, pp. vii-xxiii; at p. xii.

9.   James, 'When is a Child not a Child?', p. 4. Cf. also Iona and Peter Opie, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1959, p. 320: 'By using slang, local dialect, a multiplicity of technical terms, word-twistings, codes and sign language, children communicate with each other in ways which outsiders are unable to understand, and thus satisfy an impulse common to all underdogs.'

10. Hardman, 'Children in the Playground', p. 186.

11. James, 'When is a Child not a Child?', p. 62.

12. See A. Segal, 'Breach of One Rule Breaches the System of Rules' [1971], in Mary Douglas (ed.), *Rules and Meanings: The Anthropology of Everyday Knowledge*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books 1973, pp. 257-65; esp. p. 264.

13. James, 'When is a Child not a Child?', p. 5.

14. Thus Opie, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, op. cit., and also their *Children's Games in Street and Playground*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1969.

15. See for example Hardman, 'Can There be an Anthropology of Children?', p. 95.

16. James, 'When is a Child not a Child?', pp. 5 & 23.

17. The Opies state that children prefer games with a considerable element of luck, so that individual abilities are not directly compared (*Children's Games*, p. 2). Cf. ibid, p. 185: 'it is our impression that children do not really enjoy competitive athletics .... The races they have when they are on their own are noticeably ones in which their respective running abilities are not too finely matched.'

18. Here, and later in my discussion, I use the terms 'power' and 'authority' with approximately the sense given to them by J.H.M. Beattie in his 'Checks on the Abuse of Political Power in Some African States: A Preliminary Framework for Analysis', *Sociologus* IX, 1959, pp. 97-114. Thus 'a man has power in so far as he can do what he wants to do, and he has social power where in any human relationship he can make others do as he wants them to do.' (p. 98) 'Social authority may ... be defined as the right, vested in a certain person or persons by the consensus of society, to make decisions, issue orders and apply sanctions in matters affecting other members of the society.' (p. 99)

19. A striking number of the children's games reported by the Opies in *Children's Games* involve experimentation with relations of authority. See for example 'Daddy Whacker' (p. 72); the game played with coke 'because it is against the rule of the school to throw coke about in the playground' (p. 74); dares (p. 263); acting games in which parental authority is flouted or 'when children get spanked (there is much glee in this)' (p. 304); 'Mothers and Fathers', reversing the roles of authoritarian parent and protesting offspring (p. 331); 'Cops and Robbers' (pp. 304-1); 'playing "Schools" is a way to turn the tables on real school: a child can become a teacher, pupils can be naughty, and fun can be made of punishments' (p. 333); etc. Cf. also Hardman, 'Fact and Fantasy in the Playground', p. 802: 'When a child was playing "teacher", the role was invariably seen as authoritarian, as a dispenser of discipline rather than learning.'

20. James, 'When is a Child not a Child?', p. 8, comments on the institutionalization of the 'myth of childhood', a term used by S. Firestone in *The Dialectics of Sex*, St. Albans: Paladin 1972.

21. A recent newspaper report quotes the organizer of an exhibition of tapestries made by Egyptian village children, reassuring any potential objectors: 'This isn't child exploitation. Most Egyptian country children don't go to school, and by learning weaving they get a skill and a living often better than a university graduate would get.' (Charlotte Simpson, *The Observer* (London), colour supplement, November 25, 1979, p. 21.)

22. See Malcolm Crick on witchcraft in this issue of *J.A.S.O.* and his citations of Lévi-Strauss on totemism and Rivière on marriage.

23. Walter H. Sangree, *Age, Prayer and Politics in Tiriki, Kenya*, London: Oxford University Press, for the East African Institute of Social Research 1966, p. 32.

24. Ibid, p. 46. Cf. Günter Wagner, *The Bantu of Western Kenya*, London: Oxford University Press, for the International African Institute [1949] 1970, p. 77: 'Generally speaking, it is always the oldest member of a group of kinsmen whose opinion carries the greatest weight in matters concerning that group.'

25. Ibid, p. 42.

26. Ibid, p. 43.

27. James, 'Matrifocus on African Women', p. 157.

28. Günter Wagner, 'The Changing Family among the Bantu Kavirondo', *Africa* XXII, supplement, p. 6. Cf. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer*, Oxford: Clarendon Press [1951] 1970, p. 130: 'A Nuer home is run by the combined efforts of all its members and the labour of running it is fairly distributed among them. One cannot but be struck by the camaraderie of the family as they assist one another in daily and seasonal tasks, either by direct aid or by co-ordination of activities. No work is considered degrading, no one is a drudge, all have leisure for rest and recreation, and all are content with their roles in the economy of the home. Indeed, the division of labour between sexes and ages accords with the social and personal freedom of women and children in Nuerland and with the recognition, so striking among the Nuer, of the independence and dignity of the individual.'

29. Wagner, *The Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 46. Cf. Evans-Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage*, pp. 135-6: '... it is, I think, important to recognize

that a Nuer child is not born into the family alone and then slowly extends his awareness to members of the household and kin, but is born into a wider circle than the family, in the sense that all those who share the homestead of the father and adjacent homesteads take an interest in the child from the time the mother leaves her hut after bearing him.'

30.   Wagner, *The Bantu of Western Kenya*, p. 48.

31.   Ibid, p. 48.

32.   David Parkin, *The Cultural Definition of Political Response: Lineal Destiny among the Luo*, London: Academic Press 1978.

33.   James, 'Matrifocus on African Women', p. 158.

34.   James, 'When is a Child not a Child? Nicknames: A Test Case for a Mode of Thought'.