

CHILDREN'S  
PARTICIPATION IN  
CHANGING  
SCHOOL GROUNDS  
AND  
PUBLIC PLAY AREAS  
IN SCOTLAND

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To Sarah

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## **Introduction to the Thesis**

### **Foreword (is Forearmed)**

I believe that to be conscious is to choose a language, a voice, a rhetoric, a medium for expression for the living of what we call a 'life'. A life is lived through the choosing of a medium for its expression, even if the choice is to be silent. For those on whom silence is forced, as with the incarcerated person in solitary confinement, expressions may amount to imagined events, scrapings on a cell wall or an autobiography written once released from prison. For the artist, creating sculpture may be central to the project of 'living'. For this research, 'lives' are only available to me as the researcher from within my own efforts at expression by my chosen (or imposed) medium, and, from the 'readings' we make of the expressions of living presented to us by others. Much has been said to bolster up the validity of certain methodologies for finding a fundamental truth in the researching of people's lives. Arguments have been placed alongside examples of anthropology or educational research to show how we can come closer to getting to the essences of lived lives. For some a grounded theoretical approach is necessary, for others long-term presence 'in the field' engenders a validity to research products. But this document purports to present no necessarily fundamental truth what follows. As such, it is central to any reading of this text that you, the reader, be aware of my temporary premises which colour the interactions that are to follow even if you disagree with them.

### **Caveats Before Reading This Text**

It seems to me that to aim for full consciousness is partially about trying to be aware of the influence this language, rhetoric, and other mediations on oneself and on others in our efforts at communication; to be free and fully conscious is something *we can aim for* though we may do so only without certainty because there is always the pervasive influence of discourse on the language we use (yet, this does not necessarily negate the value of one's efforts to be more free); to aspire to freedom or a better life for oneself or for others means that one tries to make conscious the forces of language, rhetoric, visual and other media, that bind or restrict what we perceive as the progress towards achieving those aspirations. This 'making conscious' must reflexively address the very discourse of freedom that inspires one's own hope for a better world. Because we have no choice but to relate to the world through metaphorical mediations like language, visual media, etc. which

is all pervaded by discourse, we are obliged to address what we 'say' and 'how we say it' in a critical way even if we fail. One objective for me, the author, is to create a document that might encourage you, the reader, to be reflexively aware of the influences of rhetoric and discourse that pervades this text.

**Some practical steps towards increasing reflexivity in reading:**

You might consider your 'position' you occupy in coming to the text. Ask yourself "Who am I as I set about reading?" Are you a student, a playground designer, a mother, or, even my external examiner! Can you imagine, as you read how these different people might engage with the text in different ways as you read it yourself? What position of power or powerlessness have in the context of this reading? Do you read by choice, through coercion? What choices are open to you once you have read what you have to read herein? What are my expectations of the text as a result of the title, abstract, contents page, size of print, a quick flick through the bibliography? What are the customary influences, the taken-for-granted in my worldview that will colour my reading as a result of the 'position' / 'positions' I hold, choose, or, were given? What (fractal or multiple) identities are available to me as reader? For example, is the position 'Advocate for Children' open as a choice to you, or, do you skim only for certain references to environmental psychology for an paper you must write. What skills are casually, strategically, available to you to help you read implicated meanings - the meanings between-the-lines? What ethic, if any, underpins your 'lifework' in relation to your expectations of what this text holds in store for you, and, how will this effect your reading? What opportunities are likely to present themselves to you that might allow you to transfer what you gain from your reading (if anything) into other areas of your life? Do you have difficulty accepting these questions as legitimate parts of this text called a PhD in education? Why?

As readers you have a choice. You may read this text as you would *The Beano* (and there may be no harm in that!) or you may adopt another strategy. Your choice does effect how you read are effected by the text. To my mind, you have no other recourse in your meeting with this text but to apply some technique, be it your own brand of reflexive deconstruction, or, a particular version of Marxist critique. In this

task, which I hope is your freely chosen *modus operandi*, I wish you well. In fact, I actively invite you to respond, if not in writing, then by some other means: through writing directly to me, the 'author', discussing things with a loved one, taking photographs in a new way, or restructuring even the tiniest minutiae of how you go about 'living your life'.

### **Setting out from home / Setting out the Question**

Having grown up in Ireland and studied to become a primary teacher there I did not expect that I would be writing a doctoral thesis in a Scottish university. However, the circumstances combined to make it just so. I secured a studentship from University of Stirling where there were people who felt they could adequately supervise my research efforts. I left a teaching job behind in Ireland where I had served in schools for ten years since graduating. There was, for me then, a sense of setting out from home to begin something new. I learned new aspects of cultural differences between Scotland and Ireland that undercut contemporary arguments about the connections between the two countries. Granted there are many thousands of Irish people over here and many thousands more who claim Irish descent but there are aspects of this cultural link that left me estranged beyond expectation. Firstly the Irish-Scottish connection is prevalent in certain districts of Scotland - Glasgow contains most of these strongly connected places. Secondly, as far as I can see, almost all of the connections between the two countries comes as a result of travel between the northern counties of Ireland and Scotland. I have only met and had lengthy chats with one other fellow Galway man since getting to the country. This experience of difference says a lot about the internal differences between the cultures of different provinces in Ireland as it does about differences between the supposedly common 'Celtic cultures' of the western fringe of Europe. I found that at times these cultural differences made life interesting for a researcher like me. I was advised to get started on my 'data collection' so I sought to make some efforts to visit some local schools. I had to have my criminal record checked. It was obvious that, in Scotland, since the incident involving the murder of children in a school by a local man, that there were increasing concerns about children's safety.

When I did decide to make an initial foray into 'the field' as it is called in research circles,

my attempt at 'finding out' was problematic from the beginning. Not only were there to be personal connections between me and the 'subjects' of my research but there was also a strong element of cultural 'interference' when trying to communicate.

Relations between me and at least one of the main players in the research would be far from objective and distanced. As it happened, I met a teacher in a pub. She was of Irish extraction (her grandmother came from Kildare) and she worked in a primary school locally. As part of the project, we arranged that I would visit her classroom to find out about the children's local environmental knowledge. This woman would later turn out to be a very close friend. By the spring of 1999 we were making the arrangements to be married. Questions of my 'personal engagement' in the research would have to be acknowledged and accounted for. Readers may like to know now, before getting fired up about the possibility of a narrative of a research 'soap opera' that I have not intention of telling them in any kind of detail about my relationship with Sarah. (So now I've just told you her name! I suppose now she is no longer an anonymous respondent or an object of the research anymore!)

#### Reflective Moment

In what way do you make distinctions (if any) between your personal life work life? In what way have these events been influential in the way you your work or related with your family or friends?

As regards cultural interference, a small anecdote may suffice to give a flavour of what I mean. Upon entering a classroom to ask children about this and their 'sense of place' I started by asking the wrong question: 'Where do you live?' This question is not the normal question that Scottish people ask when inquiring about where one abides. They say: 'Where do you stay?' which to me sounded like everyone was either in rented accommodation or was on holidays! But it was true - the Scots 'stay' where they live. In Ireland, the question 'Where are your people from?' is still often asked or at least implied. This refers to the Irishman's curiosity for the narration of a story of where one has lived over time. It refers to an interest in how family names have traditionally remained in distinct regions over many hundreds of years because the people have resided in the same place over many generations. So, there are always 'researcher effects'. I decided to work *with* these effects rather than try to exclude them from 'the field' that would be riven through with many diverse emotional, cultural, and political nuances from the outset.

#### Reflective Moment

What nationality are you? How has this aspect of your identity been part journey of your learning experiences? Where did you grow up? What are the lasting and vivid memories you have of your childhood?

### **The First Seminar Paper**

My first year of dabbling in efforts to write a doctorate was productive from a personal perspective. I could now have a chance to get my head around many of the authors that had eluded me as an undergraduate. I suspected that I had been exposed to a 'select' authorship as an undergraduate in the late eighties either because the lecturers felt that there were dangers attached to introducing students to poststructuralism or because they had not time for it or because they had never read the stuff themselves. In organising my first performance on an academic 'stage' as a PhD student, I gave lots of people a chance to read the paper beforehand. I received some support. One member of staff 'wished me well' but felt I was 'misguided'. This was my first inkling that I was at the margins of what might be acceptable as 'good' social science in education.

### **The PhD and Academic Enculturation**

Faced with the possibility of a sequence of formal meetings (and in an effort to surmount the feelings of estrangement from colleagues at work who were in paid employment) I and some other PhD students set about creating a space for informal support and discussion wherein everyone could voice their concerns about their research. This less rigid and informal culture was invigorated by the choice of a room that provided coffee and had a small number of soft furnishings. We decided that we could take some control over things if people would listen to our ideas. We set about taking on a participatory approach to our own destiny as students. I drew on theories of cooperative inquiry from the work of Reason (1994) to inspire the context for the group's work. My belief was that postgraduate students have lots to learn. But, they also have much to offer a faculty in developing and contributing to a healthy 'research culture'. A postgraduate research group would hope to adopt a cooperative inquiry approach that would hope to meet an array of needs of all members of the group while still meeting the more specific needs of postgraduates. The culture of the group could work best if it had both a collaborative and personal dimension. We could then draw on personal experience and critical reflection in a 'praxis' approach to developing a

‘peer learning community’.

In the main the postgraduate/research fellow group worked rather well. We met irregularly and it amounted to about seven or eight meetings an academic year. These were lively affairs where issues were thrown out. We had our own ‘group issues’ of course but that was part of the learning I felt. The group also took the opportunity to discuss the work of Peter Reason (1988, 1994) whose work fell within the tradition of participatory research. That we had to challenge and debunk his claims at such an early stage of my research process was a good thing because I now revisit these participatory research problems in a revised form.

### **Assumptions Pertaining to Knowledge Generation**

Some assumptions about knowledge are brought out into open discussion in Chapters 1 to 8. Put another way, the assumptions are the result of the dialogic debate I ‘parade’ as Chapters 1 to 8. These chapters take the place of the more usual process of doing a literature review. But in these chapters I try to actively write out my reactions to the reading I had done to theoretically ‘source’ the research and position myself within a body of writing that is already in common currency. These assumptions are listed towards the end of Section B.

### **Assumptions Pertaining to the Writing of a Doctoral text**

- ◇ *Writing a thesis is an activity rather than any reflection or objectification of culture. Language is always participatory within, and constructive of, culture itself.*
- ◇ *There are historical forces and contexts that will effect how this text is to be read and how meaning can be drawn from it.*
- ◇ *The narrative (discourses) that are found herein have begun a matrix of dialogical relation between a variety of contexts and with a variety of people. This ‘conversation’ is an ongoing one that gets reinterpreted with each reading.*
- ◇ *There are transactions occurring between a variety of selves (protagonists) in the text.*
- ◇ *There will be no final say to be found in the text because the reader always participates in emergent meaning generation with each successive reading. (See also chapter 7)*



## **The Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided up into five sections:

**SECTION A** *PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS* (chapters 1-8)

**SECTION B** *METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS* (chapters 9-11)

**SECTION C** *CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS* (chapters 12 and 13)

**SECTION D** *STUDIES IN CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION* (chapters 14-18)

**SECTION E** *FINAL CONSIDERATIONS* (chapters 19 and 20)

### **Section A**

Section A (chapters 1 to 8) provide the theoretical (and largely philosophical) groundwork necessary to 'position' the approaches taken to fieldwork, the substantive issues, and the type of textual production the doctorate becomes as it unfolds. The assumptions given in the *Introduction to the Thesis* are the synoptical result of the discourse given here.

### **Section B**

Section B, (Chapters 10, 11, and 12) gives the reader a way of thinking about methodology that can be acceptable within the assumptions of the thesis. In this section particular attention is paid to the differences between my version of participatory catalytic action research and other forms of research, the use of photographs as a tool within research methodology, the influence of a postmodern perspective on research practice, and the rationale of some specific metaphorical ways of understanding the role of the researcher (e.g. the flaneur or joker) who may use a variety of methods. Validity is discussed in the context of doing research in the postmodern.

### **Section C**

*A History of Children's Participation* is found in Appendix H. It gives a study of a certain kind of history: it is a slice through time searching out the spaces and places wherein children's participation in the social, cultural and spatial practices of neighbourhoods have been narrated. It gives weight to the argument that children are not a structural element in society with any essential characteristics. A temporal exposition of the socially constructed nature of 'children's participation' is the intention of this portion of the text. A summary of the Appendix is contained in the main body of the thesis in Section C, chapter 12.

## **Section D**

Chapters 14 to 18 provide a discussion of the study material looking at contemporary contexts of children's participation in changing their locales. Supporting material for these is found in Appendices A to G. Chapters 14 to 17 deal mainly with children's participation in changing school grounds, while chapter 18 gives a meta-analysis of the participatory research conducted with children with disabilities in changing some local play parks in the Stirlingshire area. The latter study is given a detailed treatment in Appendix G.

## **Section E**

Lastly, Section E (chapters 19 and 20) provide a reflective and reflexive attempt to draw the thesis' argument back into a whole, albeit an amorphous one; the final shaping of the thesis' argument is perhaps best left to readers themselves but i fail to resist the opportunity to be somewhat polemic in my discussions of adult-child encounters. These chapters are possibly best read in the light of having at least dipped into the other parts of the thesis.

SECTION A

***PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS***

## INTRODUCTION TO SECTION A

### **Positioning Oneself Philosophically**

Each chapter in this section builds an argument for a brand of pragmatic poststructuralism that inspires the research as a whole. They give an exposition of how I came up with the assumptions given in the *Introduction to the Thesis*. The concepts and writing from a number of authors are introduced as resources which give support to a flow of argument that documents my search for a workable epistemological and ontological position. As it turns out, the position I seek is far from easy to find; the academic home I seek is better understood as a mobile home rather than a distinct static place. Mobile homes need active 'positioning'. Positioning is the act of taking up a pragmatic attitude to epistemology and ontology at a particular time and place. It cannot be prescriptive for the poststructuralist who will be skeptical of all foundational argument: traditional objectivity encourages a 'god trick' - the point of view from a definitive place. Yet, pragmatic poststructuralism cannot be out rightly relativistic which is a form of 'point of viewism' itself: the view from nowhere. The upshot is that the only place left for the advocative academic who wishes to make a difference is an 'in-between-place' - a place between critical theory and undisciplined ambivalence. Only with healthy amounts of reflexive ambiguity can a useful positioned and partial study be conducted. To describe this 'in-between-place' I use a textual device that brings the reader into a metronomic flow to and from the polar opposites of realism and relativism<sup>1</sup>, certainty and uncertainty, disciplined and undisciplined, the static and the active.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rorty (1991).

# Chapter 1.

## NOT JUST REALISM BUT RELATIVISM

### **Postmodernity**

Unlike those who find postmodernist theory problematic<sup>2</sup>, I find many useful insights can be gleaned from current thinking in postmodernism<sup>3</sup>. In agreement with Bauman (1993), I believe that ‘whatever is to be done about the afflictions of the present-day society, [we] must take the postmodern reality as its starting point’ (Bauman, 1997, p134).

We are not short of ethics made to the measure of our times but we are short of institutions capable of making the ethical world flesh. (Bauman, 1997, p136)

I will argue that as a counter-point to the drive for an ethical approach, there is an attendant need for a morally indifferent aesthetic which is also a necessary starting point for a thesis that accepts Bauman’s postmodern problematic as a starting point. I claim herein that it is from within forms of post-structuralist discourse<sup>4</sup> that a healthy acceptance of relativism can expose the ironies of situations facing us today in many realms of life. Yet a total ‘embrace’ of postmodernism’s valorisation of all things relative will lead to other difficulties. Postmodernism’s efforts at deconstruction (Derrida, 1978) have left us with a world where all reality is text and all communication occurs intertextually.

Reality .. can be nothing other than a text, a symbolic construction that is itself related to other texts - not to history or social structure in arbitrary ways. Indeed, texts cannot be themselves accepted as representations, even of arbitrarily signified referents. Composed not just of presences but of absences, texts do not exist as complete wholes. (Alexander, 1992, p337, speaking of Derrida)

This means that we should not see postmodernism as a paradigm of thought but rather as an

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<sup>2</sup> See Eagleton (1993, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Aside from Bauman’s work on postmodernism (1992; 1993) (which gives a strong case for new ethical possibilities in postmodernity), there are many other commentaries worth considering including discussions on postmodernism and education by Usher and Edwards (1994) and Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, (1997). Smart (1993), Seidman (1992, 1994) give more general introductions to the understanding of postmodernism I am thinking of. Finally, Stronach and MacLure’s (1997, p20) deconstruction of the term ‘postmodernism’ itself is an accepted positional statement on the ‘non-presence’ of postmodernity.

<sup>4</sup> See Lash, (1991) and Sarup (1993) for introductions here.

activity of analysis of modernity by looking at its cultural expression in its texts (e.g. films, books, music, spoken word, architecture) because this is all we can access. Denzin (1991) reminds us that the subject is 'more than can be contained in a text' (Denzin, 1991, p68) and that texts only leave us with traces of other things like life experience; there is no such thing as 'naturally occurring data' (see Miller and Glassner, 1997, p111). So, the interpretation of these texts is not so much about seeking to 'understand what is being said' but rather to reveal the 'absences' in the text. What is 'not said' is where the interactive reader of text most profitably looks first. For some readers there only remains the possibility to analyse these 'texts' through other texts which are no longer seen as the logical systems they once appeared to be (Green, 1988). As a result, taking on board what Lyotard (1984), Baudrillard (1988), Derrida (1978), Foucault (1978) had to say led Maclure to ask us to 'think of post-modernism as a kind of undoing of all the habits of mind of so called Western thought that have prevailed over the last two centuries - the decidability of truth, the inevitability of progress, the triumph of reason, the possibility of a universal moral code, the objectivity of science, the forward march of history, the existence of the singular, autonomous self' (1994a, p106). Put succinctly, it would appear that by looking into textual conventions and social practices we can see a rhetorical process of construction that comes undone once exposed. If words continually refer to other words and are constructed out of 'difference' there is never the possibility of 'grounding' ones ideas on a foundational reality. Once the linguistic process is uncovered, the claims to having access to a singular reality are revealed as mere beliefs, desires, or fictions represented metaphorically or narratively in language. All of this talk and about rhetoric, and the exposition of rhetoric on talk renders the situation difficult for the maintenance of any socially critical theory. It is the search for theoretical resources for finding a way of keeping socially critical faculties alive in the space between 'found reality' and 'deconstructive nihilistic relativity' that is one thrust of this section of the thesis.

### **Sources of Relativism**

Smith (1997) takes on board the general points offered to us by a post-structural reading when he says that:

- there is no possibility for theory-free observation and theory-free knowledge
- the duality of subject and object is untenable
- and there can be no external extra-linguistic referent to which we can turn to

adjudicate knowledge claims (p.5)

In particular, the rationally-scientific realists who aim at achieving 'the truth' through observation are attempting to work with an unfounded project given that theory is inescapably implicated in observation (Hindness, 1977, p186). Naturally, these propositions lead us right down the road to epistemological relativism of one form or another.

### **Taking Relativism on Board**

These insights have serious implications for those seeking to construct an alternative account of what counts as 'knowledge' (and, by implication, 'learning') in a community<sup>5</sup>.

We can usefully allow these assertions (from what we may call a broadly post-structuralist position or a non-foundational position) to interrogate some of the presuppositions behind discourses about 'children'<sup>6</sup>, 'childhood'<sup>7</sup> and 'participation'<sup>8</sup> in this text. In that we try

to maintain an ideological motivation in doing this, we can also hope to maintain a socially

<sup>5</sup> Mouffe (1998) defines community rather precariously along Foucauldian lines explaining that we are not really ever one community but 'we are in fact always multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities (as many really as the social relations in which we participate and the subject-positions they define) constructed by a variety of discourses and precariously and temporarily sutured at the intersection of those positions' (Mouffe, 1998, p44). It is this with this definition of community that I am working with throughout the text although I also include the interpretation of community as 'neo-tribe' (Maffesoli, 1988), or 'communitas' (Schmalenbach, 1961) or 'bund' (see Hetherington, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> 'Children' in this text generally means children of primary school-going age (ages 5-12). Many other images of the child will be presented that support a more fluid boundary between the categories of adult and child and that will challenge the adult-child dualism that pervades this text and common discourse. I follow a recent tradition in the sociology of children's lives (begun in the 1970s; see James and Prout, 1990) that finds children to be active agents or social actors though I hope to expose the limitations on children's agency as experienced in the 'moments' narrated as experiences of fieldwork.

<sup>7</sup> 'Childhood' refers to the meta-discourse of younger people having a period of their lives that is distinct from adulthood often based on some set of biologically essential premises. But childhood is also seen as culturally specific or socially constructed (James, 1995). Qvortrup et al. (1994) sees childhood as a permanent structural feature of society. Hardman (1973) sees childhood as a subculture while Jenks (1982) and Corsaro (1997) see it as a context for social and cultural reproduction. My appraisal of Maffesoli's neo-tribe (1988) finds that children and adults' cultures hold much in common and that transgenerational neo-tribe is also a possible social group.

<sup>8</sup> So popular is the view that we know what we mean by participation that Hart (1997) has no entry for it in the index to his book *Children's Participation*. The contributions from a number of sources make my working definition a very pervasive aspect of living a life which necessitates that it is not necessarily a good thing in all contexts. Participation in language is Wittgenstein's (1953) contribution; Skolimowski (1992) provides a discussion of the universe as participatory; Wenger sees participation as a personal and social thing involving the whole person in 'living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and active involvement in social enterprises' (1998, p55); Winter (1997) focuses on participation in active citizenship; Boyden and Ennew (1997) take 'empowerment' to mean meaningful participation; Hasler (1995) includes belonging and becoming in a locale as essential components. Mostly I work with Wenger's view (1998) because it takes into account the pervasiveness of power in participating in relationships and communities.

critical faculty in the way the text might ‘work’ for me and you the reader. My success in this will have to be judged; perhaps the ‘jury is still out’ by the time you have finished reading. One thing is sure, this text will be incomplete.

### **Non-Foundationalism and Its Implications for the University**

Non-foundational relativists can only imagine followers of theory as ‘believers’ (in certain texts, images or phrases) in that there is no access to a foundational reality to support their claims for validity. We will, therefore, give a caricature of some of the traditional tenets of the university as ‘Belief Structures’. Similarly, the disciplines of science, arts, and the human sciences may be viewed as competing sects within this ecclesiastically metaphorical reading:

The student in ‘The Traditional University’ believes in ‘Objectivity, Rational Thinking & The Disciplines’ as the only options for research practices. The student researcher will need to be a member of an academic ‘sect’ which practices a particular ‘religion’ be it History, Sociology, or Law.

Once statements, about objectivity and the like, are seen as beliefs (which they have to be once no extra-linguistic referent is available) we must question how these beliefs can be construed as ‘valid’. Validity, in a relative world, will only lead you towards using other benchmarks that are themselves relative and linguistically construed. It is not essential that we have to do away with the beliefs that are presented here but more that we could do well to listen for ‘voices’ that challenge them in an effort to ‘uncouple’ our practices<sup>9</sup> from constraining beliefs. This process of encouraging a critique of foundationalism would be a never ending process for the ‘wide-awake’ post-structuralist.

Now, to see what we understood to be ‘true’ as merely a form of ‘credo’ does not

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<sup>9</sup> At this point in the text it is best to come clean on some of the influences I have found to be useful in defining the term practice (by which I mean the types of activities that are possible ways of participating). Later chapters will pick up on the theoretical foundations and arguments pertaining to the following authors’ interpretations: the psychology of Lev Vygotsky (1978) for his theory of learning through engaging in social activity; Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953) for his theory of language gaming as a way of life; Wenger (1998) for a detailed analysis of practice as community and as learning; Foucault (1974) for the practice of counter-memory; Bakhtin (see Holquist, 1990) for the practice of dialogism; Derrida (1974, 1978) for the practice of deconstruction; Massey (1992) for the practice of the spatial negotiation of meaning.



necessarily mean that we must do away with beliefs simply because they are lacking definitive validity in any foundational reality; we all believe things that we know may not be so. But there are consequences that relativism brings that are not being taken on board by many. Centrally, we must acknowledge that there is now an ever increasing agreement that *there is no gap between what counts for 'valid science' and what is better described as ideologically inspired inquiry*. Objectivity and bias have become indistinguishable from one another in the discourses that parade themselves as coherent realms of thought in further and higher education, community development, and in the parlance of feminist movements and non-governmental organisations as well.

A more worthwhile analysis would be to see knowledge as inspired by regimes of power and territory wherein the differing presuppositions refer, not to some extra-linguistic 'reality', but simply to other constructs, themselves rooted in yet more language and text. The voices of post-structuralism that underscore this point of view have brought us to a place of uncertainty in defining the role of a fully-functioning university. Elsewhere, I have used some ironic stories to try and expose this narratively (Mannion et al., 1998). I address the dualism of certainty-uncertainty in the next chapter.

### **Summary**

In this chapter we have exposed the first assumption that premises this work: that there is no gap between what counts for 'valid science' and what is better described as ideologically inspired inquiry. All of our observations will be imbued with cultural, moral and ethical influences, some of which may be beyond our awareness.

What we have also discovered in our brush with poststructuralism is that we need to look again at the *usefulness* of the disciplines and their regimes of power. We need to question their ability to answer the pragmatic questions posed by life's problems. In accepting that there are unheard voices in the system as a result of the regimes of power over knowledge brought about by rigid constructions of knowledge, we must then make an effort to work across the disciplines and between them to make these voices heard. This is our first argument for working across and between the disciplines.



## Chapter 2.

### NOT JUST CERTAINTY BUT UNCERTAINTY

#### Uncertainty is Alive and Well

Once we start taking Smith's points seriously, i.e. that there is no possibility for theory-free observation and theory-free knowledge, the duality of subject and object is untenable, and there can be no external extra-linguistic referent to which we can turn to adjudicate knowledge claims (Smith, 1997, p.5), we find the ivory tower of the university begins to lean with uncertainty (see Mannion et al., 1998). Like the tower in Pisa, however, it has not fallen and while neither upright nor ivory any more, it still draws a large crowd. Many students intuitively know that the university's illusory promise of certainty is dead. They do not come to learn a body of knowledge, or to learn the practice of a science that will bring about through prediction a better future. More importantly, students are not encouraged, as an issue central to coursework, to inquire into the reasons for the remarkable lean the tower has adopted! There is, instead, an increasing lack of conviction among the populous about the certainties science can offer. There is a growing realisation that many scientists have always accepted the fact that science can never give a final answer. It has long been that misinterpretations of science's findings often pretended to give definitive solutions to problems. The promise of a better future, the sustainability of natural processes, the belief in the safety of the foods we consume, are now all contested and uncertain. Beck (1996) tells us that we live in a 'risk society'. His story goes that we now know that we really do not know and cannot predict a healthy way forward for the planet. As O'Riordan put it:

The usual scientific approaches, dependent upon observation, verification, falsification and replication coupled to prediction by reference to statistical inference, hypothesis testing and modelling may not be sufficient to instil confidence.

(O'Riordan, 1994, pp14-5)

With a possible demise of scientific certainty on the cards one might think that the door would open to allow other ways of knowing into the regime of the university. But, ironically, the uncertainty that undercuts science also undercuts the critical arguments of emancipatory inspired groupings as well which also lose their foundations under relativism's

influence. Wilson (1996) when talking about environmental sustainability, remarked that

In the sense that we are talking about a politics or a praxis<sup>10</sup> of resistance, there is little difficulty - we are against famine and starvation, against degradation (whether of humans or of the environment), against discrimination and inequality, against, against, against ... But what are we FOR? I really do not think we know .... On the one hand there is an evident need to DO something; on the other our ignorance vastly exceeds our knowledge. How best to proceed? Obviously improve our knowledge. And in the meantime treat with caution all conclusions as to how best to act (Wilson, 1996, p16).

So, my work seems, initially at any rate, to be destined to fail under relativism's influence. I will acknowledge that the thesis I am writing is not just about trying to point the way 'forward' towards a greater and more healthy future. I cannot easily describe a recipe for success. Yet, these hopes are the 'bread and butter' of many projects that are being tried, tested, and retried by us all in our day-to-day lives. For others among you (perhaps from a feminist or environmentalist perspective) access to the construction (or reconstruction) of school curricula may be what you are after. For still others the goal may be for greater participation of marginalised groups in new forms of democracy. But the title of this thesis is *not* 'Towards Improved Participation by Children in Environmental Change and Local Community Action'. Instead, I would do better to question popular thinking about participation, children and local environmental change while *at the same time* trying to make it 'better'. The result is an embrace with the ironies of activism and advocacy 'for' something that is unfounded and relative. This requires that I sit on the edge of critical theory on the one hand and ambivalent relativity on the other: this is the 'double-edged-sword' that I wield as a research weapon. It strikes out into the world with a mission but reflexively cuts the hand that brandishes it. The next chapter indicates how critical theory needs a healthy amount of ambivalence and reflexivity to be effective.

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<sup>10</sup> Marx (1844) gives a first account of praxis within a materialist account of the making of history. Other accounts of praxis come under the terminology of 'practice' with the writings of Bourdieu (1972, 1993; see Bassett, 1996) and Certeau's account of the practice of everyday resistance to hegemony of mass consumption and production (Certeau, 1984). Wittgenstein's work on the practices of language games of specific ways of life (Wittgenstein, 1953). Vygotsky's theory of activity in his 'zone of proximal development' (1978) also provide ways of looking at the theory of practice that are used both implicitly and explicitly in the research (however, I do sense that a better frame for analysis is practice rather than activity). Later accounts of praxis come from Lather (1986) and Bauman (1999).

## Chapter 3.

### NOT JUST EMANCIPATION BUT REFLEXIVE ADVOCACY

In this chapter we look at work of one author, Habermas (1987), who is given credibility for providing a foundation for critical theory. Barnett (1990) usefully shows his struggle to come to terms with an emancipatory approach to university practice in Habermasian terms. The argument concludes with apparent need for university practice to become more reflexively aware of the forces of ideology. For my work as a student writing a thesis, it further contextualises my 'in-between-place' as the site of struggle within disciplines and between them in an Institute of Education.

#### Emancipation In Question

Critical theory is usually the theoretical resource that backs up different forms of activism towards 'emancipation'. Much of the criticisms of critical theory note that it can be incoherent to try have it both ways: to be ideology-ridden and at the same time emancipatory; all '-isms' are reductionist essentialist fictions. Emancipation then becomes a programmatic approach to emancipation for *someone's* ends - in other words some form of indoctrination is at work. Whatever the aim of the activism is, there are easily found arguments for finding the foundational metaphors beneath to be lacking.<sup>11</sup>

To achieve emancipation most critical theorists draw on Habermas to provide a framework. Connelly (1996, p250) rightly points out how Habermas' ideas of collaborative discourse have underpinned a lot of the thinking in adult education (e.g. Mezirow et al., 1990). It is under the guidance of Habermas that Barnett (1990) also runs into difficulty once it was placed alongside the arguments post-structuralists make. Succinctly, the arguments are that consensus is difficult. Modernity's penchant for striving towards some form of consensus are undercut by post-modernity's celebration of difference. Barnett, writing in 1997, continues to counterpoise these alternative emphases:

We do not have to follow Habermas in believing that the critical dialogue is oriented towards a consensus. On the contrary, conversation can become heated argument. But there has to be some meeting of minds for even heated argument to

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<sup>11</sup> For example, 'Sustainable Development' is faulted for its anthropocentric prescriptive approach to human-environment relations.

take place, for even polarised positions to assert themselves. (p17)

Habermas' idea of collaborative discourse (1987) is founded on a few claims that are not necessarily conducive to our needs as educators. [We paraphrase his work in inverted commas below in order to express the common currency of his ideas, i.e. the rhetoric that gives his ideas currency among adult education practitioners. See also Mezirow and Associates (1990).]

Here then is a summary with a bracketed commentary ...

1. 'We would really love to have an ideal speech situation'. (There is a possibility of a kind of community of inquirers that would be totally free from the hegemony of constraining ideologies with freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception).

2. 'We really think we can know and articulate what is worth working for in terms of emancipation'. (Full and accurate information is available and there is such a conscious state worth working towards that will facilitate objective assessment )

3 'We can attain rational consensus (albeit contingent) through participation in some form of communicative rationality'. (This is where Habermas' claim for validity comes in: things are 'true', 'meaningful' and 'justified' because of the consensus or hope of consensus.)

4. 'We believe it is possible and viable that we can be 'sincere' when we speak.' (It is unclear here what kind of honesty this sincerity is. Does sincerity allow for the possibility of speaking out of strategic posturing for example? In fact his whole theory rests on the assumption that sincerity is possible in most situations.)

5. 'We suppose that there is a rational subject available to us that can participate in these communicative actions.' (There is the possibility that we can critically reflect on the presuppositions and consequences of our ideas and actions. In this case we also suppose that everyone here can critically reflect on the presuppositions Habermas makes.)

Firstly, Habermas himself agrees that ideal speech situations do not exist. This being the

case, we are set with an unsurmountable obstacle. We will never know if critical theory can give validity to itself. By accepting that ideal speech situations do not exist because of coercion, oppression and ideological distortions, we are faced with the possibility that even working *towards* ideal speech situations will operate to be directly exclusive of some voices and privileging of others? Secondly, and this follows from the first point, we cannot know *if we know* what is worth fighting for in any definite sense without reference to a reality that we can be sure about. This reality is not available to us any longer outside of our language if we take what post-structuralists have to say seriously. As Barnett himself says:

Situations and problems, in any case, are not given *in any sense*.

(Barnett, 1997, p40, his italics)

This kind of thinking, in my view, reduces Habermas' critical theory to a language game with rules that may function to delude us. Thirdly, we can look at the possibility of *consensus* for a better society only with large and healthy amounts of skepticism. It is as possible that there is increasing divergence of opinion or is there a 'consensus story' that goes something like this: 'Societal amelioration will occur if there is greater participation by marginalised groups and greater democratisation of cultures; while we may not have all the finer details worked out yet but we can get there if we keep at it.' Many would claim that despite greater participation / partnership and democratisation there are still grave injustices and continued environmental destruction.

What then of the sincere rational subject (points 4 and 5 above)? Much effort has been put into the deconstruction of the rational subject (and with it the deconstruction of modern sincerity) in post-modern circles. With Benhabib (1992), I don't advocate that we completely lose a thinking, feeling, empathising subject in our brush with a post-modern description of the subject. We need not take on a full blown postmodern view of the 'self' who loses all agency and autonomy. Instead, if we are to allow a post-structural interrogation / deconstruction to occur, we will have to *at least* accept that *the self is constituted by discourse if not necessarily determined by it*. We may live, as Ballard (1974) put it, 'inside an enormous novel' and for some a Joycean version is the best, but there are yet other genres to pick from to expose alternative realities! Moreover, if our place as a 'self within discourses' is nothing more than 'a place in language' we need not necessarily worry unduly. We may still have 'voice' even if it is not the voice of the 'modern rational

Western self-we-once-knew'. The question is how will the university accept these competing voices for validity. More to the point, perhaps, will the university encourage an exposition of the competition for voice in a reflexive way. How can this research work reflexively to address its emancipatory aims while accepting the relativism of its own arguments that deconstruct them?

As a general comment we must note that critical theory is mainly criticised for its privileging of rationality (Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997, p190). The 'irrational', the poetic, the intuitive, the affective all beg for a hearing in the halls of academia or celebrate their uses performative in the concert hall. The central value of emancipation in critical theory has already been shown to be an uncertain construct. Emancipation FROM implies freedom<sup>12</sup> FOR and we cannot say with certainty much about either. Let us do away with an essentialist view of emancipation which is really a contested idea. Like candy from the pick 'n' mix, education for emancipation is practised in many flavours: feminism, environmentalism, etc, and provides advocacy for the inclusion of those seen to be discriminated against along lines of disability, age, race, or geographical location. Sometimes these discourses may compete for available resources. Take, for example, women's participation in higher education: while women are still unevenly distributed across subject areas, the picture of women in higher education is largely one of successful access over all with men from socio-economic groups 4 and 5 being a more significantly under represented group (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). The irony here is that the university is needing to face up to the difficulty of being ideologically riven rather than ideologically free. Other ironies present themselves in late-capitalism: many issues like 'sense of place' or 'global warming' need addressing in an interdisciplinary way if societies are to respond in active ways; universities are slow to allow any cross-fertilisation between the disciplines; local activism is slow to incorporate responses to problems that may be removed from the locale by varying amounts of time and space; critical theory will find it increasingly more difficult to maintain a grip on emancipation because it will accept that a deconstructive reflexivity of their 'campaign issue' is necessary. In this light emancipation is in need of reappraisal. What we need is new forms of research and community activism formulated out of reflexive advocacy.

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<sup>12</sup> To be free, for Sartre (1943), is always about 'going beyond' current situations toward a future that a person cannot fully control or determine. Freedom is a transcendent category.



Being ideologically driven is inexorable. Traditional objectivity is unavailable to us.

Disciplines of knowledge provide bounded narratives that tell only one side to the story.

## Chapter 4.

### NOT JUST EPISTEMOLOGY BUT ACTIVE PERFORMANCES

In this chapter I contextualise the work of Newman and Holzman (1997) and others who argue for a strong constructionism. In doing so they claim that epistemologising is a disease that can be overcome with performative approaches to knowledge. They suggest that I should give up searching for 'The Method' to make my study work effectively because of some very simple realisations.

#### The End of Epistemology?

We can sum up Newman and Holzman's work (1997) by saying that they revitalise a Marxist radical historical materialism. To unpack this statement we can trace the origins of their work. By drawing on Lev Vygotsky and Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953) they pull together a few concepts into a synthesis to show how there is need for an end to epistemologising. They effectively critique the scientific approach as lacking due to its cognitive and epistemic posture. We need *not* interpret everything with Geertzian zeal; culture is not alive in the interpretation of it alone. I think this argument proposes a need to unite theory and practice, interpretation and action. In a text, like this one, I hope to be provocative and performative in line with their move from the cognitive to the active<sup>13</sup>. I will move from trying to give clear vocalisation to the participants in the research to being advocative for their needs as I see them. I find myself situated<sup>14</sup>. I am partial to others' needs and my own need to work with and against my own biases. I need not try to expunge all my biases from my work because I claim I cannot, so I may as well 'play'<sup>15</sup> with their effects, sometimes in an open manner, sometimes in an obfuscated way. No hope for sustained objectivity is available herein: just advocacy for some 'Others' and the

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<sup>13</sup> yet this text, so far, reads in a very dense theoretical way that privileges certain forms of knowledge over others and certain kinds of reader over others!

<sup>14</sup> Aside from the theoretical resources I use to explore situatedness in this text there are many other valuable sources of thought on the matter. Schon (1983) sees problem solving as conversation within a situation. Dewey (1922) looks at learning as engaged action. Most recently, Wenger (1998) has brought us farthest with a situated understanding of learning through her concept of 'communities of practice'. Symbolic interactionism is the sociological counterpart of situated experience, while in philosophy, Heidegger (1927) is the best known for giving rise to the phenomenological tradition. these 'resources' are background readings that have brought me to the place I now inhabit in terms of my understanding of situatedness.

<sup>15</sup> See Stronach & MacLure (1997) for a discussion of work and play.

performance of a text that may succeed in being evocative. This is the in-between-place of critical theory and reflexive advocacy.

Our concern is to practice method<sup>16</sup>, to create new forms of life, to build environments that are at once the context for revolutionary activity and the revolutionary activity itself (Newman and Holzman, 1997, p21).

### **Roots, Routes and Sources**

Vygotsky's contribution to Newman and Holzman's work comes from his discovery of the zone of proximal development (zpd). His understanding of language is similar to Wittgenstein in that he sees the spoken word as the completion of an unfolding thought. The unfolding of thought is always a movement from and towards someone (even oneself). Such an understanding challenges an epistemologically dualist-scientific view of the world (including dualisms like thought-action, theory-practice, insider-outsider). It is actually anti-epistemological in that we do not divide knowledge from knowers at any time: there is no 'out there' separate from an 'in here'. Understanding is always an unfolding action that unites thinking, feeling, speaking and acting at a time and in a place. So can we get beyond knowing? What resources are there to enable us to articulate beyond our rationality? The whole modernist baggage of describing, interpreting things by individual minds through their cognitions is attractive and habitual - we are enculturated to know or to at least think that we know. Even social constructionism (like Gergen, 1994) is not a revolt against knowing as Newman and Holzman would have it. Gergen's social constructionism sees knowing as linguistic. He sees our commitment to speech genres as the commitment to know (construct) the world. He is anti-cognitive but not anti-epistemological.

'... it is *description* not *cognition* that constructs the factual world.' (Gergen, 1994, p37).

In contrast, the modern 'disease' of epistemology is up for an onslaught of critique from a

<sup>16</sup> Some of the sources of the term 'practice' that recurs throughout this text are worth listing together for readers at this point. Authors that have contributed to my use of the word practice include (alphabetically): Bakhtin's practice of dialogism (1986), Bauman's ethical practice(1997), Derrida's deconstructive practice (in Critchley, 1992), Certeau's everyday practice (1984), Deleuze and Guattari's practice of territorialisation and reterritorialisation (1987), Elliot's action research practice (1993), Frisby's practice of the flaneur (1994), Foucault's practice of counter memory (1977), Heshusius participatory consciousness (1994), Hetherington's spatial practice (1998), Lather's research as praxis (1986), Maffesoli's neo-tribal practice (1988), Hevey's photographic practice (1992, 1997), Schon's reflective practice (1983), Sutton-Smith's rhetorical practice (1997), Wenger's community of practice (1998).

few sources (Newman and Holzman, 1997, p34). Postmodernism, they claim, can give a way out of modernist knowing and can act as a cure for the disease. But, postmodernists are criticised for not going all the way, not getting beyond knowing because they slip on the final steps. Sometimes, they fall prey to the critics of postmodernism and respond with a rational defence. What is needed is a new stage for a different kind of performance - an off-stage, back-beat, less scripted version.

The role of postmodern theoreticians ... is to give up *point of viewism* (including especially their own) altogether in favour of a new activity which is not to be known but to be engaged in. The postmodern revolution will not be known at all; indeed it will be unknowable (neither true nor false); it will, instead, be *performed* (p34).

As we will see, feminism has much to offer those wishing to do away with the structures of rationalism. Their starting point is gendered. Haraway (1991) suggests that knowledge can be partial, critical and embodied. Her work seems like an epistemology. Yet there is no objective *point of view* here. In her new objectivity, knowledge is carried into the emergent world of embodied presence. It is active *and* located. Again we find the academic project has two counterpoised needs: need for being 'at home' with some form of epistemology or activism, yet 'homeless' because of some form of relativism. This is the common ground between Haraway and Newman and Holzman.

Haraway's cyborg is useful here. She argues for a 'mobile positioning' but warns against the relativism of positionality. She expresses the problem for feminism that wishes to accept radical constructionism because it is virtually necessary for the feminist project but need to be ethical and political in a non-relativist way. The problem is not just a feminist's problem; it is shared by all those committed to change for a better world, be they human rights activists, anti-racists or advocates for children's participation.

So, I think my problem and 'our' problem is how to have simultaneously and account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognising our own semiotic technologies' for making meanings, *and* a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world, one that can be partially shared and friendly to earth-wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering, and limited

happiness (Haraway, 1991, p187).

But what of Haraway's solution? Again, I quote at some length.

The alternative to relativism is 'partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology. Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally. The 'equality' of positioning is a denial of responsibility and critical inquiry. Relativity is the perfect mirror twin of totalisation in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well. Relativism and totalisation are both 'god tricks' promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully, common myths in rhetorics involving Science. But it is precisely in the politics and epistemology of partial perspectives that the possibility of sustained, rational, objective enquiry rests (p191).

The need for normative claims is the key to active political action. For Haraway, it is a political, (partial, embodied) action of trying to lay claim to a new 'doctrine and practice of objectivity' (Haraway, 1991, p191). To achieve this you need your (positioned) cake *and* you need to eat it (your position) too in order to move on, accept your partiality and the previously unheard voices in the conversation. The routeway to reconstruction (of a new doctrine) is through 'deconstruction, passionate construction' and the seeking of a 'perspective from those points of view, which can never be known in advance' (Haraway, 1991, p192). The paradoxical resolution of the problem is through ambiguity itself which is not the same as passionate commitment: 'the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in the particular' (p196). The world of *things* is replaced with *active entities* that have agency. Knowledge is also active, tricky, elusive, witty by this understanding. Munt (1998, p179) also advises us to move, to touch. When it comes to Munt's identity politics, *how* we move is far more consequential than *where* we stand.

### **Ambiguity and Ambivalence**

Haraway's ambiguity about positioning and position is close to ambivalence but she dare not speak its name. Ambivalence is spoken of only by those who (dangerously?) read Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari, and centrally, Nietzsche. Yet a close look at ambivalence

can show how its force of Nihilism and the relativity eschewed by Haraway is perhaps more useful than she would like to admit.

What Nietzschean philosophy viewed from Deleuze's chair (see Allison, 1985) tells us is that the will to power we might associate with conventional scientific practice (where the world is objectified) is always tempered with a quality that is its own: the will to nothingness, which Deleuze calls 'becoming reactive'. On 'our' terms (for the purposes of the narrative I pursue) it serves to be an explication of the rise in the need for reflexivity or the feminist need to reconstitute knowledge as partial and active. Re-evaluating Nietzsche's Nihilism, Deleuze recovers its negative connotations and serves it back to us in reconstituted form, all the while staying 'true' to the Nietzschean perspective. He finds 'value' in nihilism. It is the source of new perspectives through the bringing on of the state of 'becoming reactive'. I like to think of knowledge as catalytic or active like a virus (see Allison, 1985) or sickness that disrupts and infects but can bring on even greater immunity in the host once the sickness is overcome.

The ambivalence and non-normative approach to one's perspective (Haraway's position) is central to Nietzsche. Ambivalence is central to the project of separating us from *our own power*. Feminists may not agree. In Nietzschean terms, any desire to become affirmatively active, there is a closely attending need to become reactive which is negating and nihilistic. Now, if ambivalence is 'the co-existence in one person of opposing emotional attitudes towards the same object' (Chambers dictionary, 1985), then we run up against the need for judgments to be made. Nietzsche opts for not making judgments - an option available for those who can follow his doctrine of the Eternal Return: the being of becoming where values are always transmuted. But I think not everyone is capable of this. It is only for strong spirits and wills who do not find it possible to stop with the negative of 'judgment'. Neither does Nietzsche give us a method for how to get out of the paradox. The result is we are less sure than before of where we stand. Shrewder advocates of radical democracy will evoke this ambivalence in the face of paradox to potentially exciting ends. The attacks on relativism and nihilism are sometimes inspired by the need for an answer to human suffering or the infliction of suffering by one on another as in the holocaust. Not to give the 'right answer' by giving judgment about the atrocities is perhaps less problematic than one might expect. An ambivalent paradoxical 'becoming active' gives us few answers - but

compassion may be one of them. A compassion which includes compassion for the 'perpetrators' rather than the selection of an 'unmoved'-unmovable position *against* Nazis, Patriarchy, Racism etc., all of which will undoubtedly be unpalatable to activists who are not prepared to accept the tricky consequences of Haraway's partial, positional, ambiguous theory to any dangerous conclusion. Yes, a partial, positional, located approach to knowledge generation *is* a privilege. It allows Haraway to be judgmental in that it drives out relativism because relativism leads to a 'god-trick'. And yet, while Haraway is right insofar as the place of the 'god trick' is the only place that calls for epic judgments to be made, she may not see other consequences for feminism in general. Surely 'god trickery' would have to include any judgment about what counts as 'White Capitalist Patriarchy' as well (Haraway, 1991, p197)? Show me an activist that will admit that their views need realignment in order to hear the voices their judgment excludes. A better informed discussion could easily show how feminist theory had been aligned to struggles that go way beyond narrow definitions of women's issues: gay rights, queer theory, black movement, third world issues, environmental issues and so on. Who will say that we will need to embrace the ambiguous (ambivalent) nature of much feminist language? Probably (hopefully) most feminists. By accepting that feminism attempts to include more than 'white western woman', emancipatory claims stretch outwards. In the meanwhile, in the absence of any better offers, and because I am not Nietzsche's 'strong willed' person, I accept that this thesis will run for the (partial) cover of the partial, positioned and embodied version of knowledge generation about agents (rather than objects).

## **Chapter 5.**

### **NOT JUST DISCIPLINED BUT AMBIVALENTLY TRANSDISCIPLINARY**

*Ambivalence*, the co-existence in one person of opposing emotional attitudes towards the same object' (Chambers dictionary, 1985).

In forty years of pursuing the meaning of play, it has become apparent to me that an understanding of play's ambiguity requires the help of multiple disciplines. (Sutton-Smith, 1997, Introduction)

Previous chapters have outlined the reasons for the need to work both within disciplines and between (or across) them. In this chapter I outline the different angles taken by some authors on academic work beyond disciplines.

#### **Interdisciplinarity - Indisciplinarity**

There are some good arguments for realising the benefits of interdisciplinarity. In summary I can recommend interdisciplinarity because of

- the need to get away from restricted 'points of view' about children or 'the disabled'
- the attacks on restricted forms of objectivity form unheard voices (women, children)
- the need to be practical, problem-focussed and solution-focussed in research the desire to be vocal oneself and advocative for others in doing research
- the acceptance of ambivalent relativism that works reflexively within disciplines and across disciplines. (We accept that our problems and solutions may need ongoing alteration and reiteration.)
- the tradition of using multiple disciplines to inform educational practice (sociology, philosophy, psychology etc)
- the notion that lives are lived at an interdisciplinary level

We are living at a time when there are increasing opportunities for interdisciplinarity to be an option. Breaks within traditionally coherent disciplines and bridges between traditionally distinct disciplines occur like eruptions of lava under the sea or fumaroles in a volcanic



landscape. Postmodernism is credited with the presence of some of these volcanic activities, but there are simpler reasons for studying the 'unsolidified' in an interdisciplinary way. Firstly, many will argue that our daily lives are experienced at an interdisciplinary level - no one discipline can enable us to drive a car or bring up a child. We have well-learned skills of crossing the conflicting and multiple fault lines of epistemology. Secondly, there is a tide of interest in the mongrel, the 'in-between', the 'creole', and the 'hybrid' among many authors that accept that there is something to be gained from 'border crossing' especially in the voicing of the 'other' or the 'subaltern'. This interest creates alliances between feminism, anti-racial activists, ecologists and sustainable developmentalists, and those inscribed as 'disabled'. For my purposes in this text, these reasons all converge to give an impetus for working across and between the disciplines. Further evidence of my need to work across the disciplines is given in this passage from my diary:

Through the course of my journey through the three years as a PhD student I found the need to cross many academic boundaries. I knew my way around the library in the various sections on film and media, sociology, education, anthropology, psychology, politics, and so on. The breath of reading presented in the bibliography is present as a witness to this. I was also supervised by two people from two different departments: Education and Educational Policy and Development as it was initially called (later it became the Division of Academic Innovation and Continuing Education, henceforth DAICE). As I crossed over and back between these different buildings I also crossed over from different emphases and attitudes to knowledge. Each had a lot to offer. I was the migrant. And depending on how well relations were between these two departments, I got on well as a result of the diverse range of people I met. Over time many of the members of DAICE moved into Education. I could say I was the metaphorical 'hot potato' at times but that would be overstating the situation. Mostly I felt simply 'between places': attempting to be both places at once and failing to anywhere all the time. One reason for my hybridity was the close affinity between environmental education and the focus of my research. David Orr (1992) reminds us that all education is environmental education. While adult education was later taken from DAICE and embraced into the main reformulated Institute of Education, all environmental education remained in DAICE implying its status

was laudably (or merely?) an ‘innovation’ or recognising, perhaps usefully, that environmental education was to be found both within mainstream approaches to the discipline of education and all forms of education throughout the university. These events spoke to me of the ‘discipline of the disciplines’ more than anything. I was a hybrid. My niche was ill-defined. I read ‘widely and wildly’ across disciplines probably making me ‘hard to supervise’ or label, though I would find many others that had gone the same (but logically different) kind of academic path. Because I was choosing to look at children’s participation in environmental change, I was interested in childhood as much as those in Social Science. I shared many interests with environmental psychologists in the perception and cognition of ‘sense of place’. I shared the geographer’s concerns for the importance of space. I shared the politician’s concern for the social power relations within these spaces. I shared the educator’s concern for the development of good active and knowledgeable citizens. Most dominant of all was my concern that the children would be participants in changing their locales as a result of the catalytic action research initiatives I undertook; all of the writing and struggles for telling stories within the disciplines gets recovered as politically motivated activism by this participatory aim. (Mannion, 1998, Diary Entry)<sup>17</sup> .

Beer (1996) warns against some of the vices of ‘forging the missing link’: it can produce a superiority complex as one glosses across other people’s controversies in distant disciplines. In a positive note, Beer advises us that interdisciplinary studies do not produce closure.

Their stories emphasise not simply the circulation of intact ideas across a large community but transformation: the transformations undergone when ideas enter other genres or different reading groups, the destabilising of knowledge once it escapes from the initial group of co-workers, its tendency to mean more and other than could have been foreseen. (Beer, 1996, p115)

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<sup>17</sup> Cowen (1997) discusses the tradition of the freedom of the doctoral research student to learn and wander as against the incoming culture where doctoral students are increasingly more spatially and temporally organised (due to the pressures of performativity in departments) inside their institutions with larger taught elements, sequential learning tasks to be performed, and shorter dissertations.

## Undisciplined Anti-science

Genosko (1998) offers some ideas on theory between the disciplines as ‘a kind of fault line, a dislocated place in the formerly continuous disciplinary strata of which faculties, and universities are made’ (p1). He sees how interdisciplinarity gets stabilised and recovered by the disciplines at times in a process of orthodoxisation. His query about the necessary ‘homeless’ nature of the interdisciplinary theorist-practitioner recalls the Deleuzoguattarian deterritorialisation-territorialisation paradox:

What if one really can never go home to the disciplined academy again even though one may be, in a sense, already there, in the between? (Genosko, 1998, p3).

He recognises also that the instability of theory is reflected in the instable lives of younger practitioners. Genosko valorises undisciplined theory using the theoretical resources of Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari, and McLuhan. The upside is the advancement of connectivity and creativity; the downside, to which he seems unsurprisingly ambivalent is the onset of instability *and ambivalence*. He puts forward the ‘acceptable face of ambivalence’. It is the expression of ambiguity that undisciplined theory brings. Genosko (1998) ‘warns’:

Theory spreads instability through ambivalence, with and against disciplines, and the lip-service currently paid to interdisciplinarity. Baudrillardian ambivalence is dangerous (Genosko, 1998, p5).

Similarly Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomic dance of theory will spread instability across a system too. Guattari’s own activism as an intellectual did not result in much change in university cultures. Genosko moves quickly from interdisciplinarity (which is a mere dilution of unstable theory production) to undisciplined theory, the subject of his book. Any advice to those wishing to follow a path of undisciplined theory are far from cogent, as one might expect. One certainly cannot copy or imitate according to someone’s formula. Signposts for those finding themselves ‘in-between’ are hard to read. There is some hope for undisciplined practice if one can use concepts in a new connotative way, or for those that use other’s concepts as tools to be used in new and different, unexpected arenas. The undisciplined theorist is left to furrow his/her own path cultivating subtlety, laughter, and the unexpected. After Baudrillard, ambivalence is the order of the day against the specialism of the academy.

In sociological terms, ambivalence is not a pathological phenomenon but a normal response to everyday life requiring creative solutions [...] ambivalence is an antidote to the structural revolution of value [and in a different way] The use of ambivalence [...] might be thought of as an extreme response to the distress of contemporary life shaped by dilemmas, contradictions, and confusions (Genosko, 1998, pp184-185).

Undisciplined theory *ignores* class, race, and gender and is not a palatable formulation for many. Vulnerability and weakness can be affirmed but at the loss of any position. The result is the need to continually moult and be hard to trace as an activist for those who are marginalised. Perhaps ambivalence is necessary for justice to flourish; it needs to be unbounded by these categories. Essentialism won't do.

When it comes to teaching in the academic world, some advice on how to subvert the pervasiveness of disciplined discourse comes from Kramer-Dahl (1995). Teaching can be about enabling students to use the language of the disciplines and thereby access knowledge that had been denied them. But also, teaching can be about 'enabling students to challenge the immutability of current orders of discourse, as they will unsettle current framing and classification processes which limit or deny such opportunities' (p24). She encourages the teaching for an ability in the student to *speak back* to theory and *interrogate it* with respect to the ideologies it transmits. By encouraging this locatedness of knowledge which is to be found in the experiences of learners, we can challenge the hegemonic practices of closed disciplines in the university. In working across disciplines in this text we seek out some new spaces that allow for an engagement of knowledge (discourse) from different sources with each other and, at the same time, with my life and the lives of participants in the research. In working against all disciplines I seek to practice a kind of 'Double Science (Brantlinger and Ulin, 1993, Lather, 1996) where genealogies and taxonomies are present in the text but are also challenged and deconstructed by counter readings. This 'both science and not-science' approach evades any easy innocent reading of 'Reality'.

As readers you have already been invited to engage in a similar fashion. In this text you will find different epistemologies: psychology, sociology, empirical data, and so on

reconfigured in a partial located advocative text 'for' something. I hope to interrogate these knowledges, and to talk back to them. Where there are absences in this, I invite you to fill them.

## Chapter 6.

### NOT JUST FOUCAULT, NOT JUST DERRIDA

In the continued quest for providing an expression of my working position-ing, I look to the works of Foucault and Derrida.

#### **On Including the ‘Other’**

I wondered whether it would be pragmatic to attempt ‘a different kind of text’ in the production of a thesis. Quite early on I wished to include photographs as part of the performance of advocative knowledge because I felt they might include a different sort of knowing that would try to get beyond the disease of epistemologising. I could see the potential for the use of photographs as catalysers in the work I wished the text to do. I asked myself: Can we allow helpful degrees of madness in by the inclusion of colourful images reminiscent of the ‘extravagance of painters’ (Foucault, 1979, p17)? Along with many feminists I seek to reconstitute what we mean by the ‘rational’. We need transdisciplinary activated forms of knowing that engage with the lives of people. Some forms of knowing, having been deemed irrational, may provide us with new ways of producing valid knowledge. The validity of this knowing will be found in its usefulness in being advocative of a better life.

Foucault (1979) sets us up to see anything outside of reason as mad. So by doubting reason itself in this text we end up trying to include madness and attempt to explore its powers of revelation. But madness, if it is what cannot be ‘said’, will be absent from this work in the same way as it was absent from Foucault’s. The story of madness is presented by Foucault in his archaeology of silence. Foucault’s commitment to an enterprise of an alternative form of reason that might include madness inspires many to seek out alternatives to oppression, marginalisation, poverty and other social problems. But these efforts are hopeless if Derrida was right in his underlining of the incoherence in Foucault’s project (and Foucault seems to admit he was in some respect). In Derrida’s reading of Foucault’s *Histoire de la Folie*, the main strategy is to show how madness is *not excluded* from Cartesian Reason and to show that Foucault’s reading of Descartes was wrong. Reason, it can then be argued, will never be capable of critiquing the exclusion of madness from anywhere but the very locus of reason

itself which consumes madness and silences it (and makes it absent). Derrida also claims that Reason (I think, therefore I am) itself is stated by Descartes from a position of having embraced a hypothesis of madness and therefore defeats madness by *including* it. (see Boyne, 1990, p70). Foucault later admits that all his archaeologies were really ‘histories-within-reason’ that attempted to critique reason and were hence somewhat hypocritical. Madness was consumed and organised within reason and could not be transcendental. Silence is Derrida’s only response to the transcendental; there is nothing outside of the text<sup>18</sup>. Foucault, on the other hand, retained a socio-historical context for his textual offerings. According to Boyne (1990), he continued with a project of attempting to narrate history using archaeology; he writes out of a hope for a politics albeit without an absolute solution. Foucault’s work is a historical (archaeological) sociology of power, Derrida’s opus is a philosophical critique through deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence.

There may be a choice between Derrida and Foucault that is worth considering. Do we maintain the hope for a better form of reason that might enfold madness back into discursive practices or do we disengage from (or dissolve) the discursive practices of reason in favour of acknowledging that there is no reality behind the concepts we use because meanings are forever deferred? Is this a choice we *must* make? I don’t think so. In fact it is the space between Derrida and Foucault that is worth attending to.

### **Choices We Need to Make / Not Make**

For this text, one way of looking at the question pertains to a choice between Foucault and Derrida that we need not make. The choice is *not* whether I will use Foucault’s sociological historical analysis of social exclusion *or* Derridean deconstruction of binary pairs (and the attendant hierarchies) to meet the needs of the research question. It seems two politically powerful options present themselves: a Foucauldian use of a ‘box of tricks’ (Allen, 1996) giving expression to a neo-rational social history as an archivist of the issues might be in order or, alternatively, a Derridean employment of deconstruction of the appropriate binary pairings might be more pragmatic. I find that both options have something to offer. I wish, like Foucault, to be committed to a political action in the writing of this text; like Derrida, I invite in a reflexivity that deconstructs my own arguments. Can I find this middle ground

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<sup>18</sup> Derrida’s view of what counts as texts includes far more than books on bookshelves (Derrida, 1990, p79, cited in Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p136)

wherein Derridean deconstruction is present and never neutral and Foucault's engagement in politics is always visible? To be 'true' to either Foucault or Derrida *on their terms* may mean dealing openly with the arguments between Derrida and Foucault. The differences between the two culminated in Foucault's *My Body, This Paper, This Fire* (Foucault, 1979).

To take on Derrida would seem to throw out Foucault in that any use of deconstructive strategies cannot be selective. To do a historical genealogy would be to Foucault while pretending to agree with Derrida. The path of deconstruction must be a totally engrossing activity that is relentless and attempts no reconstruction. Will I submit to purposefully deconstructing my own work and others' to show how meanings are merely traces that refer to no reality? Alternatively, we might allow for a reality of power that is extra-textual, to be found in social and historical forces that may well be virtually unnameable outside of texts. This assertion would encourage the search for new textual forms that subvert the tyrannical imposition of the rational author and that might signpost a long sought after truth: a claim that human subjects are alive and in the world and have concerns worth upholding or even fighting for. Such a text, within sociology or research into education would surely have to address some cultural taboos within research cultures.

Madness, however, is the contemporary Western taboo that we do not even know how to disobey. As the possibility of communicating across the divide between reason and madness receded further and further away from us, we are less likely to find an understanding of our culture. ... Who is to know, asks Foucault, what transformations are being undergone within this other dimension that we deny, and at what point there will be a devastating irruption into our sanitised and scientised world? (Boyne, 1990, pp77-8).

We can look into the conundrum that Reason, in so far as we know it, has always been based on the opposition of subject and object, same and other. This structure may now be breaking down being replaced by a post-subjective, post-existential self (Boyne, 1990, p84). Giving up the distinction will have consequences across the board for validity, methodological considerations and interpretation. We can argue that interpretation has historically been the appropriation of rules that were put in place to appropriate certain



kinds of reality for the reader. These rules have no essential meaning in a poststructural reading. For Foucault, humanity's history has been characterised by the succession of sets of rules. It has been a series of interpretations. Foucault: writes (attempted to write) a history of morals, ideals, and metaphysical concepts. They were events on a stage (Foucault, 1977, pp151-2).

Running in tandem with Foucault, we can acknowledge the work of Derrida by using deconstruction to expose the multiplicity of truth claims available to us. This was achieved by showing initially that signs have a plural significance. Phenomenologists<sup>19</sup>, like Husserl, would search (in vain Derrida would say) for the intended meaning behind signs. Phenomenology helps us (they claim) find the true intention in people's expressions. But is it not Derrida's assertion that expression cannot be found outside of signification? Husserl's claim is that internal voice (when we speak to ourselves) involves no need for a mediated language; it is just experience. But Derrida shows that this essential moment cannot be represented and therefore is postponed, deferred, and perpetually delayed (Boyne, 1990, p94). So my inclusion of live speech and photographic 'evidence' in this research are not attempts to seek out the *original experience* of a present moment as if understood from the phenomenological tradition. From a Derridean perspective they are marks or traces in need of active deconstruction to show how they are currently (for you the reader) presenting a false certitude of presence<sup>20</sup>. A Foucaultian sequencing of text and image would attempt to describe how the power of subtle surveillance of the body served to discipline people as objects and agents who are controlled to fit into a particular social order by managing their minds and bodies. In contrast to Derrida, presence is not unavailable to us but is in need of exposure as the physical, pre-textual, enactment of power relations: the social reality that precludes the presence Derrida strategically deconstructs. Foucault claims a consequential critique of society beyond Derrida's metaphysical critique of false presence that, for Foucault, is inconsequential by comparison. I will hope to explore the less than clear dividing line between Derrida and Foucault in my presentations of false reality

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<sup>19</sup> Phenomenology is a philosophy of experience. It attempts to show how our lived experience (consciousness) of the world is the foundation of meaning. See Sartre, (1943, 1966), Heidegger, (1927, translated 1962), Husserl, (1929, 1960), Gadamer, (1975).

<sup>20</sup> The 'gaze' I employ is likely to constitute 'Others' as objects subordinated by my white, male, adult gaze. See also Bhabha's discussion of the 'scopic drive' (cited in Stronach & MacLure, 1997, p63) and Hughes (1999) discussion of the ocularcentric aspects of modernity wherein non-disabled perceptions cannot see the limitations of its way of seeing.

in the texts that follow. Partly the deconstruction work to be done on my claims to truth 'behind' come from a 'historically previous' - an 'original'. These manoeuvres in the text are open for deconstruction, if not by me, then by you, the reader.

A key foothold in the study is a move to advocate for children's participation. This belies an unchallenged assumption about democracy (as we know it). Democracy and democratisation pose problems; there is no easily nameable source of power and the individuals we 'elect' to represent us. Mostly, the masses are divided and watched over by committees who make decisions. Part of the problem is that no one is then blamable; there is no centre of power; its in the walls, the space, in discourse. According to Foucault, society has been progressively transformed into a carceral culture. Norms are continually established. People are 'documented' and 'placed' on files and in spaces which can be used as weapons of control and punishment - we are all imprisoned to some extent. What we need to articulate is some form of new politics that is more participative.

### **Post Hierarchical Politics**

I argue that in line with the need to reconstitute rationality, we also need to redefine politics with a more radical form of democracy (see Mouffe, 1998). Is there, then, any possibility of naming a post-hierarchical politics? Can we do without traditional notions of order, efficiency, predictability, goal achievement? Are hierarchies really necessary? Do we always need to neutralise and incorporate difference? Is the only other option to exclude it?

Causes other than those I advocate (children's participation, children's access to public play spaces) have been advanced by philanthropic types in the past . Poverty, gender and racial inequality - these are all causes advanced using deconstructive strategies. To redefine those at the margins as important requires a redefinition of the centre too. Deconstruction can be employed to do this because of its ability in confusing the polarities that privilege some and exclude the secondary, the supplement, the low side (Boyne, 1990, pp125-7). But confusing the poles is not about reversing them. Boyne's critique demands that we need to move away from dialectics of reason to critique reason and achieve anything. Derrida is anti-dialectic in his theoretical productions. But the result of dialectics can be to dissolve difference in sameness. Derrida holds out no hope of a society without power and difference (p128). Neither do I.

[W]hat Foucault and Derrida have done is to show how myths of origin and essence are a part of the basic social mechanism for the elimination of the threat (or promise) of difference (p130).

Here we have no bright hope for the future. There are no easy tricks for generating the possibility of thought beyond the edge or even *on the edge* where class, society, etc are all signifiers of essences that don't exist. We may use them but only strategically (reflexively deconstructively) with a healthy suspicion of the metanarrative. For me, knowing is a local practice embedded in active responses to locally distinct places and situations (see Clifford and King, 1993). The intellectual's role in this is firstly to agitate for voices to be heard in fora wherein they have been absent and if possible to create a forum for a multiplicity of voices<sup>21</sup> (see Appendix G, where there are details of my attempts at convening a workshop where planners, designers, children with disabilities and their carers were all present in a participative setting). If Boyne has a meta-narrative, it is that hierarchies (traditionally providing security, stability, and predictability) may become dysfunctional because of their inflexibility in our times of postmodernity, post-industrialisation, and information technology.

Let us face some consequences of our meetings with Foucault and Derrida. Faced with the arguments around the death of the author, as discussed by Foucault and others, we are left to ponder that power is all embracing. There can be no redemption. But I (you?) and even Foucault need a normative system: criteria for making judgments (see Fraser, 1981, p286). But we cannot name such a system because of the prevalence of power, so, he is reduced to a policy of resistance *without principle* (Boyne, 1990, p140). Enter ambivalence. All we can do is go about looking for the folds, creases, seams - an outside that might not be outside (See Stronach, 1997). We can *not* do nothing however. So I write on.

Yet we need to warn off readers from dangerous acceptance of anything but ambivalence and ambiguity. Do not read me: my language inseminates, says Foucault. Protect yourself

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<sup>21</sup> Some readers will notice how my own text lacks 'voices' in the usual transcribed format for a large part of this section of the thesis. Since the distinction of primary data, and secondary data breaks down for me within a textual view of discourse, I find this to be a quirk of the way the thesis gets written rather than any serious omission. Similarly, voices can be present in a text from a multiple of textual devices, like the use of footnotes!

from my writings as reflexivity cannot get us out of the trap. The problem here is best explained by Derrida. We are caught in the human desires for life of the other and death of the other. Derrida shows us both sides, Foucault only one (Derrida, 1987).

### **Compassionate Positioning**

A key question then remains: Are there political resources in the self or the group that have remained untapped as Foucault suggests in *The Uses of Pleasure?* (Foucault, 1987). Can we change the 'necessary limitations' into 'possible transgressions' (Rainbow, 1986, p45)? Is there a possible ethical practice - an ethics as a way of being that is not prescriptive? I am left with only one response: compassion in the face of difference when our desire to control, judge tempts. Are we heading for a realisation of a vision that draws on Foucault and Derrida, a vision of an 'aesthetics of existence oriented by a careful destabilisation of hierarchical determinations of otherness' (Boyne, 1990, p170)? How can we employ these questions to the intricacies of children's culture and its interpretation? A certain historical angle will be necessary: 'Genealogy's task', Foucault proclaims, 'is to expose the body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body' (Foucault, 1984, p63). So we can try an archaeology of the discourses of children's participation: a new history of children's participation (see chapter 12 and Appendix H). But this is not to be successful if we *just* use Foucault. We need Derrida too. But maybe not *just* these two either.

### **Summary of Chapter**

This chapter continues with the articulation of the action of positioning within the research I conduct. It has been performative in the way it outlines a confusing possibility of a space between Foucault and Derrida. I have drawn on Foucault and Derrida to give further complexity to pragmatic poststructuralism. When deconstruction is useful in the exposition of previously hidden differences, it can be characterised as Foucaultian; when it is ambivalent it is Derridean. We need them both. This chapter has brought us to a point - perhaps the point of my double edged sword: the critical edge that is a move to empower and the ambivalent edge that cuts reflexively into one's own arguments. The double edged sword is brandished as a weapon in the project to revise Reason, to challenge disempowering hierarchies, to develop new forms of democracy, to refute fundamental realities that restrict, and to valorise the local compassionate knower-activist. One further

character in the plot is required: the self who has agency. We need someone to brandish the sword - we need a subject prepared to fight for others and for 'himself'.

## **Chapter 7.**

### **NOT JUST A COHERENT SUBJECT BUT ONGOING IDENTIFICATION**

#### **Cultural Studies and Children's Identifications**

##### *Cultural Theory*

In its original form, cultural theory was used to bridge a gap between history and the social sciences and to provide a critique of cultural production. In this way cultural theorists sought to enable greater participation in democracy (see Phillips, 1997) or to show how acts of resistance by some groups could be highly significant forms of identification (Willis, 1997; Hebdidge, 1979). From Hoggart's (1961) work on sub-cultures through Hall et al. (1980) to its present formations in what some call a postmodernist complex (see During, 1993), cultural studies and cultural geography has been preoccupied with how the process of identification takes place (Hall, 1996, p2).

[T]he discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed - always 'in process'. (p2) process of being articulated 'grounded in fantasy, projection and idealisation (Hall, 1996, p3).

Like feminism, cultural studies argues for a non-essentialist but strategic and positional concept of identity. Like all 'signifying process it is subject to the 'play' of difference. Hall's writings (1996) accepts 'that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions' (p4). Like Hall, a look at children's process of identification will not be a return to our roots but coming to terms with our 'routes' (p4).

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies (Hall, 1996, p4).

I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand

the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities which can be ‘spoken’.’ (pp5-6)

### *Bhabha*

A more fruitful elaboration of Hall’s ideas comes to us in Bhabha’s work. Bhabha draws on Bakhtin’s concept of the ‘dialogic’ and its potential in making voice hybrid. Working against any totalising culture the ‘dialogic’ can be employed to find a space ‘in-between’, a new speech act. By refusing binary antagonisms of different positions, a hybrid strategy opens up ‘a space of negotiation’ (Bhabha, 1996, p58) where supremacy of one over the other is not required. It can involve resignification: the rewriting of history and the negotiation of a narrative that includes the minority in a new way. The minority can be the aged, the disabled, or the young.

## **Literary Criticism and Dialogism**

### *Bakhtin*

A closer look at Bakhtin reveals other useful commentary. Phillips (1997, p87) has traced the influence of Bakhtin (1986, 1984) on other thinkers in a variety of disciplines. One of the key concepts Bakhtin has given us to work with is that of *socially active language* or ‘dialogism’ as Holquist (1990) calls it. Language can be analysed under the competing forces which are centripetal and centrifugal. Language is other-centred and self-centred at the same time. It is in this tension and contradiction that language acts are performed and enculturation takes place anew with each speech act.

Yet another contribution of Bakhtin is his attack on monologue. He asks us to accept the interdependence of author and reader and the other voices that find their way into a text. We are advised that we must engage talking ‘with’ others and not objectify them in our writing. Todorov (1984) has rightly shown the strong affinity of Bakhtin’s ideas with Buber’s I-thou concept wherein people constitute themselves in and through (cultural) conversation with others. Using Phillips’ (1997) conclusions about how teaching can be seen as cultural activity along Bakhtinian lines, I might freely draw conclusions about this text as well:

- ◇ *Writing a thesis is an activity rather than any reflection or objectification of culture. Language is always participatory within, and constructive of, culture itself.*
- ◇ *There are historical forces and contexts that will effect how this text is to be read and how meaning can be drawn from it.*
- ◇ *The narrative (discourses) that are found herein have begun a matrix of dialogical relation between a variety of contexts and with a variety of people. This 'conversation' is an ongoing one that gets reinterpreted with each reading.*
- ◇ *There are transactions occurring between a variety of selves (protagonists) in the text.*
- ◇ *There will be no final say to be found in the text because the reader always participates in emergent meaning generation with each successive reading. (See also p6, Chapter 7, and p110).*

### **What of the Subject and Agency?**

Laclau recalls the binary pairing of man-woman that could easily be adult-child for our purposes: 'Derrida has shown how an identity's constitution is always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between the two resultant poles - man/woman etc.' (Laclau, 1990, p33). Woman is marked, man is unmarked. For our purposes we can look at the marking of the adult and the labelling of the child as 'not-yet-adult'. Foucault's shows that while the 'Other' (we may read 'the child') appears as a docile body, agency is never given up completely. We can find innumerable laws that discipline and punish, but there is always the opportunity for a response on the part of the subject. People are led to practice a hermeneutics of desire (Foucault, 1987, p5). Children's modes of conduct can be constructed as performative acts of self regulation. The complex moments when legislative 'text' meets with active performance are the space-time happenings that reveal how people are constituted. Like Benhabib (1992), I argue that we are completely constituted by discourse but not necessarily determined by it.<sup>22</sup> We can move beyond the dislocated 'cogito' of metaphysics to embrace a postmetaphysical relatedness that is captured by Benhabib's 'interactive universalism' (Benhabib, 1992, p6).

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<sup>22</sup> The structure-agency debate has had a long history. Those emphasising structure (or historical forces as Foucault does) end up questioning the relevance of the individual's agency while those emphasising agency end up looking at locally specific forms of resistance or cultural production or postmodern parochialism. Giddens (1984) uses 'structuration theory' to get out of this problem. I prefer the *direction* of Benhabib's argument that accepts the fate of the decentred self after postmodernism's critique though I'm not as convinced as I would like to be by her 'interactive universalism' as a solution to the local global debate that mirrors the structure-agency argument.



We may legislate for morality but we will always narrate our moral positioning by active engagement in *a* world at *a* time. By accepting a contingent and embedded self as part and parcel of the moral self, Benhabib shows how we also need to move beyond Kantian notions of the rational autonomous self as the only model of the subject (Benhabib, 1992, pp50-1). We need new 'generalised others' to get beyond the limiting rationalism of Kantian ethics. We need to define ourselves as dependent of the ends we wish to accomplish and of the attachments we make in achieving them. In Benhabib's model of discourse ethics we are all in some form of dialogue that moves into places beyond the particular viewed from the perspective of the universal principle. She argues for a public life wherein one's opinions and actions are guaranteed some scope. An enlarged thought includes the voices of previously unheard others (p140) that would address issues like peace, ecology and solidarity. Only in a multiple and diverse culture where voice is encouraged will moral actions be available to moral actors. We need to be embodied in a civic public culture. Benhabib's commitment to an ongoing moral conversation of the embodied narrative self is not premised on a fusion of horizons and the need for even temporary agreement along the way. Justice and autonomy are contrasted with solidarity and care. Their successful integration will lead to a 'coherent self' for Benhabib (1992, p198). Unlike 'strong' postmodernists, Benhabib is overtly utopian. She asks for the maintenance of hope in an uncertain utopia. She cleverly shows how academic discussions on the 'Death of the Subject', the 'Death of Metaphysics' and the 'Death of History' open up options for feminists rather than reduce them. History is never dead completely. There will still be new stories of the struggles of groups of victims sought emancipation. By supporting the claim to a revision of history we can be encouraged to write new Foucaultian historiographies of how victims were victimised by other readings of history.

How shall we do this? We need to look at the possibility of using a hermeneutic approach to analysing the person-place problematic. Hermeneutics is a practice of discovery involving dialogue with different constructions of reality (Gadamer, 1975, p315). But an open ended hermeneutics would look not for a convergence of horizons, however, though this may happen at times. Nor do we restrict ourselves to a narrow view of 'text'. Places, can also be 'read' as texts. Place is inscribed with meaning; places only exist in the readings of the inscriptions of meaning or in the 'reinscription of new meaning'. In this ever-emerging

meaning making process, fictions about places get constructed and reconstructed<sup>23</sup> .

Sometimes places get inscribed with powers of agency as well. In a hermeneutics of person-place we would not just appropriate the world (places as their mythologies) as is the modernist coloniser's penchant; nor will the environment completely determine our actions as has been the favoured fiction of some behavioural psychologists (Skinner, 1974). In the discourse of a hermeneutics of person-place, the 'world' is participative in appropriate us (through the symbolic actions of reified discourses of regulations while at the same time subjects can participate in re-writing new stories about our place-in-the-world. Agency is more dissipated in the system. Here we face the structuration-agency debate head on but dissolve it by doing away with the dichotomy. In an open-ended hermeneutics of person-place, we are structured (inscribed by discourse) by the fictions we accept about what 'ought' to happen in a place but we have agency in shaping 'ourselves-in-our-places' (through the redistribution of power and the reordering of power relations.

In the living of a life using hermeneutics, judgments will continue to have to be made in 'time-places'. It is now the case that the choices must be made from *somewhere*. But the choices are less easily made. This is my formulation of Benhabib's 'situated criticism'. No coherent subject is available because all identities (identifications) are flawed. They articulate an exclusion of some 'Other'. Instead of identities, then, we need to discuss the subjects affinities or identification. Identifications are fictional alignments. They keep us loyal to a cause. Other parts of our ongoing identifications may run at cross purposes to any one cause. No fixed 'I' is ever settled. We are always being reconstituted by discourses in a dialogue. Bakhtin's work (1981, 1984) provides a useful commentary on the potential of his brand of dialogism (and heteroglossia and carnival) for getting beyond theories of a coherent nameable subject .

Discourse can, like a representation of space, constitute and regulate the person and the place. The dream or phantasm is alive and well in all of the structures we are influenced by or which we voluntarily ingest. But the story is always an unfolding one; process is favoured instead of essences and we can indeed live inside the novel/'novel'. Clifford and Marcus (1986) have also shown how culture is best understood as contested and emergent.

<sup>23</sup> Soja (1989) has sought to reassert that a spatial dimension is found in every shared condition of possibility of meaning. See also Strohmayr (1998) for a discussion of the links between phenomenology and space as an event.

To navigate a life in time and space is to engage in story making (which allows for the possibility of constituting oneself or being constituted). The availability of different positional stories can allow for new positions to be taken up. We position each other and we may reflexively reposition oneself. We are always positional, inscribed by our own devourings of the 'food' of discourse, or the involuntary acceptance of their offerings through the invisible 'drip-feeder' of culture. My metaphors are indicative of a less strict notion of the essence<sup>24</sup> of the individual which has until recently predominated Western thought. I suggest that the self is physically distinct *and* indistinct from the cultural places they inhabit. Places do not exist outside of someone's experience of them (i.e. culture); people do not exist outside of the places they inhabit. The phenomenological tradition has attempted to name the 'lifeworld' often ignoring the significance of 'place' in their work. They have attempted to do away with the influence of the observer on the observed as if their frames of reference were insignificant. But the formulation of problems point out possible solutions. We need to bring our own 'effects' into conscious reflexive 'play' in our fieldwork. Our data is best read as the social construction of other social constructions (Geertz, 1973, p9). But even a hermeneutics of person-place will run into difficulty when one considers that people have few stories (fictions) by which to understand of the influences of place on person and place on person<sup>25</sup>. Shields (1991, pp23-26) has found

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<sup>24</sup> Sayer (1997) gives a challenging account of why he feels a moderate essentialism is a prerequisite for a critical and emancipatory social science. However, his 'essentials' turn out to be only 'relational essences' or essences that are generative' with 'causal powers' all of which sound very non-essential to me. My non-essentialism retains an emancipatory aim of always being strategic in an emergent, contingent way within time-space and power relations as *I judge them*.

<sup>25</sup> Notwithstanding the difficulties presented here by a non-essentialist perspective on place as emergent property rather than a 'noun', environmental psychology attempts to name transcendent cognitive structures that would exhibit a pattern of place experience across time, culture and place. This is an attempt to name a collective experience of place. Their work, then, must be analysed for validity by the correlation between the stories they tell about 'clusters of cognitive structures' (Proshansky et al., 1995, 92-93) and our own individual experiences of places which may or may not, of course, be individual or collective in the end of the day. There is a great difficulty in verification here even if we accept any form of fundamental heterogeneity of experience. Grounds for validity of the idea that there are transcendent and shared aspects of human spatial experience rest on the possibility of the definition of a 'shared biology' or, in psycho-social terms, a 'shared identity'. What researchers in these aforementioned disciplines (geography, psychology, architecture, etc) are seeking to find are thematic traces of any sharing of biological or cultural experience of place. For some, evidence is acceptable in terms of transpersonal attributes of cognitive structures. They will claim commonalities can be found in themes of territoriality, privacy, and personal space (Proshansky et al., 1995, p94). 'Sense of place' in particular is a favoured term especially among geographers with a humanistic stance (Tuan, 1977, 1980; Relph, 1976; Buttimer and Seamon, 1980). Architectural approaches have been criticised for their overly 'technological fix solutions' where the eventual users of a place are by-passed in the design process. Hay (1998) discusses a less fixed concept of 'sense of place'; Maori sense of place is seen as being based on a narrative cosmology and culture which roots them to their tribal territory spiritually and emotionally.

similar arguments to throw out hermeneutics as an option for discussing the importance of place in sociology. He argues for an 'interpretive analytics' to escape the problems of 'observer effects' where the researcher is 'the bearer of myths and images' that confuse the images and myths being investigated. After doing her own blend of border crossing between and among the disciplines, Massey (1992) finds that 'places' lose their essential realities and are always mediated. Massey (1992) reminds us that the meanings of places are continually negotiated and always the subject of power and politics. Massey goes one step further: It is not that the inter-relations between objects occur in space and time; it is these relationships themselves which produce space and time (Massey, 1992, p79) neither can be conceptualised in the absence of the other; space is not static (Massey, 1992, p81). it seems we are back to another emergent property. This time-place is the noun that moves to the verb: place as process - another non-essential and hence slippery construct that is coupled with the interpenetrative constructs of personal identity, political identity, and community.

### **Summary**

This chapter has looked at the concept of the individual and agency in the postmodern. I have drawn on the theoretical resources of Benhabib's ethics of the self, cultural theory's contribution of the concept of 'identification', and literary theory's contribution of 'dialogism' to give a view of the self in process in a place. This view of the self implies a sequence of other choices that have been made about the construction of identity, place, power and politics. Further choices will have to be made about the appropriate methodology for studying these interpenetrative constructs, and about the way this text is presented / performed<sup>26</sup> .

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<sup>26</sup> But a harmony of theory and practice may not be necessary or a good thing in the light of Bakhtin's dialogism or reflexive deconstructionism; dissonance can be part of the text's rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) anti-structure. The next chapter extrapolates.

## Chapter 8.

### NOT JUST EMPIRICAL BUT TRANSCENDENTAL

#### **Deleuze-the-ambiguous: transcendental empiricist<sup>27</sup>**

Massumi (1996) challenges (dares) us to 'become Deleuzian'. By this he means to change from working with closed systematic ways of writing to open ones. This is Deleuzian poststructural pragmatism: to engage the reader in working out what s/he will *do with the concepts portrayed* after/during the reading. Deleuze's writing is antimethodological, zig-zag, but highly systematic (Massumi, 1996, p401). Massumi advocates the creation of concepts that, like a good wine, 'travel well' (my word), or that can 'migrate' (Massumi's word) off the page into the life of the reader as catalyst in a new situation. Truth in a text is found in the reader's useful interpretation. The text is real only in the possibility that it become's someone else's. Not that becoming Deleuzian is without its dangers or problems: blockages will be present imposing some into a minor 'key', others into major ones. But there is no synthesis (p405). There are only ever-emergent properties in the Deleuzian text. The ongoing combat between energies that is *not* dialectics. The ethical writer (and reader), can only *perform* the content of a Deleuzian text by surrendering to (battling with) the paradoxical in the story. The reader, the 'other', the 'self' are brought to one place in such a text where ethics, ontology and politics are rolled into each other. The Deleuzian *event* is about thought and feeling together at their peak of expression: where they are blocked. Thus, Massumi describes how Deleuzians can be transcendental and empirical at once. Thoughts and feelings are in each other, infolded into one immanent happening. For our purposes the immanent one is, perhaps, the child within, who continually invites a 'becoming-child, and the presence of the 'child without' in 'real life', who in turn actualises a 'becoming-adult'. These eruptions happen in specific places and at specific times which refer and implode onto other times and places.

The terrain of such a text is a scrumpled space. Deleuze and Guattari have placed before us a geography that is deconstructed. By seeing a multiplicity of possibilities in the word 'dwell' (which can mean to pause when we think of 'dwelling on'), space, place, and

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<sup>27</sup> Deleuze's emphasis on the 'ideal' as a generative force that is always beyond the container of experience while being felt within experience gives rise to Massumi's 'transcendental empiricist' label for Deleuze (Massumi, 1999, p395, et passim).

dwelling therefore 'comprise pointless points - or rather something other than points' (p423). Deleuze, after Foucault, calls any position of disjuncture (this dwelling) a 'fold'. For Doel (1996), the word 'and' functions in the same way. It is an in-between place. We are to call a geography of such places a 'scrumpled geography' of the folds, conjunctions and the like. Haraway regards life in the same way: 'We are always in the middle of things' (Haraway, 1991, p304). For Deleuzoguattarians, reality is always changing. The conjunction 'And' deconstructs what seems constant and distinct (Doel, 1996, pp426-7). We are thus nomads in an ever-changing world. We are incessantly dislocated as self, other, space, place, society, all move on with us in continual process. This is the life trajectory of the lifelong learner, the becoming-child adult and the becoming-adult child. We can align these emergent properties of reality with the other deconstructed 'nouns' after postmodernity has had its way. The once stable self of humanism becomes an emerging subjectivity (Hall, 1996, see chapter 7), place becomes a product of locally distinct power relations at a particular time (Massey, 1992, see chapter 7), readers participate in defining the emerging text, research is seen as practice or praxis (see chapters 1 & 2).

Scrumpled geography invites a different kind of question - we can usefully ask: 'How does [something, someplace, some social arrangement of people, place and time] work for you or against you (in a given time and place)?'. Here, the 'object-person-place-time' construction is given the life of causation it deserves, for objects are better understood as producers of process - people are intricately linked to places in the process of becoming anyone/thing. This will be my most useful question when discussing playground equipment with children with disabilities. If something 'doesn't work' then we search and move on to find something that does. Poststructurally - pragmatically, we search for the 'useful'. This is my political project as well. Evaluations and judgments cannot be set aside, yet we are driven to deconstruct popular categories that simply do not work in all cases (like medicalised thinking about disabled bodies) by attending to the equivalence of the questions: 'What is the structure of the category?' and 'What can the structured category *do* or *not do*?' and 'What is the archaeology (Foucault, 1977) of this category?' We look to work with 'an ethics of the event' instead of a structured code of morality that sets up premises out of time and place. Along with Spinoza, Deleuzoguattarians say that we *are* worthy of what happens to us in the event. The event is the cleavage between past and future, a fold in the garment of time.

The Deleuzoguattarian activity of a participatory text should be two sided: rhizomatic and arborescent. Deleuzoguattarians look to the rhizome as a way of balancing out the proliferation of the image of the tree. Some trees could do with a healthy strangling; some stranglers could do with the support of a healthy tree. While rhizomes epitomise the fractality of difference and its production, trees fix points Rhizomes advocate connections and disconnections. But arborescent thought needs rhizomatic thought as a counterpoint. In forwarding clear coherent shoots of growth in the minds of readers (particularly in the naive use of categories and constructs in the Appendices) I also advocate a healthy rupturing of linear growth in favour of a happy confusion and profusion of points of view - textual production becomes a horticulture of Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) (found more obviously in this main text). Deleuze claims that 'Representation no longer exists; there's only action' (1977, pp206-7). The implications for textual production uphold my thesis for this thesis: it is an event, not a representation of a reality. Mirrors will not do anymore.

Also there is no distinction between inside and outside. The outer is an unfolding of the inner individualisation. They are inseparable. The Deleuzoguattarian flat surface is paradoxically holed and folded. Infolded surfaces are flat *and* labyrinthian. Selves are incorporated into texts and *vice versa*. Places are incorporated into selves (and into texts) and so on. Images are in(corp)orated into written words and *vice versa*. This corpus is a multiple place of image, word, self, and knowledge: a messy embodied text. I'm here and so are you. Hello - have you met an author like this before<sup>28</sup> ? Probably, but most likely in a work of fiction. In this world of fiction there people are present to be met, places are represented, interview transcripts are interpreted but only mistakenly so if in the definitive. I invite the cooperative act of calling forth of the presences in this text by you and me. The camera has helped, framed and excluded. So do words. We must cooperate to try to complete the text. But we both know it will be an unfinished labour. The philosophical position I am outlining requires Deleuze's transcendental empiricism (this chapter); it requires the reformulation of the self as constituted by discourse but not totally determined

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<sup>28</sup> Like Stronach & MacLure's conversational selves (1997, p142), I am probably made up of some of the same set of possible selves: *the frustrated (modernist) sociologist* who must use the traditional categories of modernity to communicate with others in action research attempts to 'let politics back in'; the *Geertzian Ethnographer* trying to let others voices be heard in the text; the *good postmodernist* trying to make things better; the *deconstructionist* ambivalently working against my own work for coherence; the *responsible anarchist* trying to wield the double edged sword of critical theory and ambivalence.

by it (chapter 7); it requires Foucault's strategic rewriting of history as genealogy and Derrida's ambivalent deconstructionism (chapter 6); it requires a poststructural nomadism across the disciplinary boundaries to (re)source their strategic effects (chapter 5); it requires the active performance of Haraway's cyborg (chapter 4); it requires a reflexive advocacy beyond positivism (chapter 3); it requires sitting on the edge between the compassionate activism of critical theory and the ironic ambivalence of nihilistic relativism (chapter 3 and 2 and 1).

*'How do you successfully 'represent' a notion of representation that asserts the inevitability of its failure as a condition of its success?'* (Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p143)

#### Reflexive Comment

As pointed out, the text, like all texts, has attempted to perform some act of purpose. My purpose is still relatively absent from the volume so far. My address of any substantive issue is still fairly unvoiced. So far I have set about my tone has been reverential to the great authors. In writing in this way I have fallen into a trap, perhaps. I have left my embodied self outwith the text in the main

But what are the moves the text has sought to make? They are mostly more moves from the noun to the verb, discussed particularly in chapter 7, and by the way of the coherent subject to a process-of-becoming: identification. At this stage our reasons for our argumentation are straightforward: we needed to set up a (epistemology of active knowledge generation by selves that not closed or rigidly structured. To achieve this we have called upon different theorists to provide Postmodernism's relativism, O'Riordan's (1994) uncertainty of rational science (1996) reflexivity, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, Beer's (1996) interdisciplinarity, Foucault's (1980) archaeology, Derrida's deconstruction, Benhabib's (1992) situated critical self (constituted by discourse but not determined by it). We even presented other actors on the stage of active text production: Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

But ironically, my own process of identification as a researcher and those engaged in research practice are still largely left largely, off-screen. Perhaps I have become even more Deleuzian. In a way the whole of the thesis becomes a self-defeating dirge of theoretical resourcing that cannot do what it suggests it can do because to write about them as I have done, is to stay with the noun. Perhaps the impacts of my activism get felt in the lives of those engaged in catalytic action research.

In section B that follows, I set out the tools for the job of engaging in catalytic action



research (c.f. p57): the methods and continue to elaborate on the theoretical resources for this methodology resulting in a certain melding of philosophy and methodology (which can hardly be distinguished in the formulation of research as practice) especially when it comes to an understanding of the place of photography in the research (chapter 10).

SECTION B

***METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS***

## INTRODUCTION TO SECTION B

### **Narrating with Intent**

Along with Seidman (1994, pp119-139), I would like not to be accused of doing sociological theory but rather, to stand convicted of having engaged in a social praxis of research in the participatory mode that includes theorising with a moral implication: which I call catalytic participatory research. I'd like to stay contextually embedded and not attempt to derive any universal principles for children's participation but my claims will come across as universal from *a perspective*. It seems at first that I can only offer local, moral, and political reasons for my culturally located actions for choice of research focus, methodology, modes of interpretation and style of presentation of text. In this way a researcher like me can become an advocate for catalysis of debate about the nature of childhood<sup>29</sup>, and the political and cultural milieu in which adults and children find themselves.

I am a 'self' with multiple identities in this process; I took the engagement with participants in the research to an extreme by *literally* becoming engaged to a local teacher! I also have group affiliations and personal attachments to others in the research. I am increasingly more entangled in the heterogeneous struggles for empowerment that I encountered. I am left to 'write up' but to try not to give the last word. I can narrate my participation in the research as reminiscence with a further agenda. I will never (because I believe I can never) leave behind my partisanship or my activism in relation to the social concerns I write about. I will move in and out of the roles of 'advocate for others, for debate, and for change', 'catalyst

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<sup>29</sup> The works of Jenks (1982), Ennew (1994), James and Prout (1990), Cox (1996), Corsaro (1997), James (1998), James, Jenks, & Prout (1998) give an impression of the plethora of work that this field has produced in the last ten years.

for active readership of this text', and 'interpretive ethnographer'<sup>30 31</sup>.

### Refining Methods and their 'Ologies'

It would be remiss of me if I did not juxtapose different methods in the research:

- **historical archaeology** (Foucault, 1980)
- **interpretive ethnography of standpoint epistemology** (Denzin, 1989, chapter 3)
- **focus group interview,**
- **individual interview,**
- **photography by myself,**
- **auto-photography by the children and their carers,**
- **diary writing** (Lukinsky, 1990)
- **this performance text itself** (Denzin 1989, pp90-123)
- **and other empirically based methods**

All of these methods talk to each other in the text and are all included in the studies that follow. This eclecticism is in line with my desire for a multiperspectival text. The results and interpretation of data will not converge into a new synthesis, though some readers will synthesise for themselves. Neither is the inclusion of different methods any effort to

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<sup>30</sup> Greg, Enjoyed our session last week. Suggest you think seriously about what the real focus is. Children' voices? The sense of territory/space? Playgrounds? Adults' interpretations of children?  
(My supervisor).

<sup>31</sup> Dear [supervisor], [It seems] we share the [same] problems writing ethnography faces us with... In the end you (seem to) have a realist lurking in the wardrobe ... and the effort to hold a 'valid' mirror up to the 'realities' that are 'out there' somewhere waiting to be documented through some form of linguistic transcription of their commentaries. Like photos, transcriptions are glimpses of the past reflecting the teller's view of things In my view YOU ARE IMPLICATED .. and no method can get us 'closer' in the way you hope! BUT I respect your right to try - all our meanings are second-hand

Using transcriptions and photos we can remain modernist and try to mimic reality OR we can try to write a different kind of text .. a more interpretive one (Denzin) ... using more than one kind of 'gaze' and more than one kind of sense [...] So the new reader of the new text is implicated in the storytelling too .. that means you as a supervisor .. I will be asking you to engage with my writing in a new way ... I will be working outwards from my own biography: 'mystory' becoming a dialogical text a parralax of discordant voices. (I can live with dissonance!) So as an ethnographer I can only retell My versions of what I have experienced but I will be careful not to be narcissistic .. There is an important ethical element to all this (more later) My 'standpoint' is not clear however, I cannot sustain a single, unitary, white male self with agency in my work ... I have been dialogical, collaborative and confused in my own sense of self in my work I will attempt to include these refractions of identity in the text. Here, also, is where self (multiple and evolving) and place get happily confused ... Greg

triangulate findings to come up with an opinion that is unquestionable. Rather the evocation of dissonant ideas and images in the reader is the motive of my presentation of ‘findings’ drawn from a collection of methods used in ‘data collection’. These different methods are explained in more detail in the studies in which they were used. But the methodologies behind them is my concern in this chapter. This chapter is not included to discuss the nuts and bolts of methods. It is a chapter about methodology - the logic (or otherwise) of using methods in research. I give a discussion of where I find methodologies that I can accept in my work as researcher and where I find my methodology is different from what I feel I am at home with. I discuss ethnography, grounded theory, action research and participatory research in my discussion of my own generation of a catalytic participatory research methodology. I give a detailed discussion on photography as one of the innovative tools<sup>32</sup> I use in the studies which fits in with this chosen methodology. Another methodological attitude I give space to is that of ‘flaneur’ or ‘joker’ (see chapter 11). The question of validity in doing research in the postmodern catalytic active-participatory mode is given special attention.

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<sup>32</sup> To distinguish between what is a tool and what is a symbol would be ridiculous in the context of using images as tools in catalytic participatory texts.

## Chapter 9.

### REFINING METHODS AND THEIR 'OLOGIES'

#### Grounded Theory

I distinguish my methodology from Glaser and Strauss' *Grounded Theory* for a couple of reasons. Firstly, I have done a lot of theorising prior to doing fieldwork which I believe colours one's point of view beyond what would be acceptable within their methodological framework. Indeed, I refute the claim that *Grounded Theory* is possible at all; we must work from within some mindset / worldview. Glaser and Strauss (1971) stress that prior theorising prohibits the natural exploration of research. While we can attempt to expose our hidden suppositions as a basis for theory-development, we will fail to fully make conscious our inhibiting worldviews; data is always fitted to someone's worldview rather than being generated through 'grounded data'.

#### Ethnography<sup>33</sup>

Similarly in ethnographic studies, one would expect that accounts of research cannot fail to reveal the researcher as part of the process of 'telling the truth' about being both in the workplace and in the text: 'the researcher-as-subject is always there, even if it is only as a silent, hopefully unobtrusive, but nevertheless significant and looming presence' (Hobbs & May, 1993, viii). Geertz (1988) has looked at length at how writing of ethnography involves storytelling, picture making, and the manipulation of symbols and tropes. We

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<sup>33</sup> Greg,

Yes, you're right about the wardrobe. There is a realist lurking there. I think I share the same position as Hammersley on this, as I read him anyway.

The realist background was always a 'soft' realism of course, assuming that there was no such thing as social reality. So all that mattered was presenting a relativist version of reality to the research community. So it was assumed by some that at a micro level there were individual or maybe even group realities to be presented. So you presented individual accounts and sometimes groups. But it was always recognised that any assumption of a reality beyond the individual (of a collective kind) was problematic.

The only issue then was accuracy - telling it how it was for each individual or collections of individuals. And validity - representing it in a way which corresponded closely to the 'reality' as it was constructed or experienced by the subject. For phenomenology this latter was crucial. So telling it in the subjects' words was essential and taking the trouble to check out repeatedly that you'd given them an opportunity to give their words, their constructs, their version of their world, the only imperative for researchers. [...]

[my supervisor, from an email conversation]

cannot eschew our 'subjectivity' in these acts. Some ethnographers work from a realist perspective. Van Maanen (1988) refers to 'realist' ethnographers' tales, either told in the third person or semi-anonymously with the involved detachment to which ethnographers aspire but I do not. Van Maanen's 'confessional' tales' type of ethnography will often include something of a 'they-made-me-do-it' character (p.78) and reveal something of the researcher's personality and problems in the field and I will do some of this, but his 'impressionist' tales are the type that are most indicative of the kind of story I tell. I am happy to reflect the performative style often used in the presentation of conference papers or in the casual discussion of fieldwork with friends. But some of the ethnographic tradition fails to be critically involved in the lives of the participants in research. Critical ethnography will seek to investigate injustices with passion to create 'new ways of thinking' (Thomas, 1993, p44-45). Critical ethnographers discuss the problems of 'becoming one of them' (the informants) and argue for role distance or the retention of sympathy for those studied but not to write about the most sensitive issues and choose instead to be more abstract (Thomas, 1993, p47). Peshkin (1988) discusses how we should 'tame our subjectivity' and maintains the subjectivity-objectivity divide that permeates this debate. But thankfully, Heshusius (1994) brings us beyond this debate to look at a participatory consciousness approach to inquiry. It is difficult (perhaps impossible) to forget oneself in the presence of another, especially one who is different<sup>34</sup>. But participatory consciousness is what

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<sup>34</sup> 'Mystory' (see Denzin, 1989, pp90-91; Ulmer, 1989, p209) begins in Ireland when as a primary school teacher I tried to install a pond in the primary school grounds with a bunch of children. Once I left this school the head teacher filled in the hole we had dug for the pond and the pond liner went missing - in a way, my efforts at involving children in a participative projects gets buried in this hole and the doctoral thesis is the exhumation of this aspect of my 'life'.. This is the dramatic moment that I begin with .. it was a sort of turning point .. a place to begin looking at children's participation in planning and design [and local change]. I don't want to sensationalise children's cultures as exposed by narratives of these processes; I don't want to trivialise them either. I don't want to denigrate them; I don't want to stay aloof from them. I will draw my sources of narrative from a population of stories (e.g. certain schools in a certain geographical area over a certain period of time); the texts (including photos etc) are not to be read as exotic documents ... we need readers who are active and ethically inspired to re-read the situations I select as editions of reality .. glimpses of culture in practice (see Bauman, 1999) ... I will use narrative (multi)methods to connect fictions of structure and discourse that defined moments WHICH I will try to interrogate using voices from wherever history, theory, method, voice meet ... not stories told - stories analysed / interpreted - There are no authentic stories - they are all edited. So, I will not be [naively] objective and get the story 'right'; I can only engage morally from the diversity of perspectives available to me (multiple selves) - there is no value-free sociology. My private and public selves are intermingled - there are expert and local knowledges available to me; judgements always have to be made [so for strategic reasons] I'd like to set some options in discourse for readers about children, childhood, citizenship and the young [as well as the more local details about some particular children and adults in particular places]. Questioning who stands to benefit from what I say is important to me. ( from an email conversation with my supervisor)

Heshusius and I strive for in research. We need to be fully present and alive to our 'informants' who we need to recognise ethically as kin. Validity in the participatory mode of consciousness is brought about by asking ethical questions: What sort of world am I co-constructing? rather than questions of accuracy like: Are my findings accurate? (Heshusius, 1994). This participatory mode is far from clearly worked out but it does bring the researcher away from the subjectivity-objectivity problem into a different domain - that of the ethical practitioner. I distinguish my methodology from traditional ethnographers because I was not just concerned to get the fullest 'true' picture about the group. Similarly, I distinguish my methodology from critical ethnography because I used a diversity of methods (some of them empirical, some qualitative) that go beyond the *use of* informants to tell a critically reflective story. My methods were more similar to action research methodology which are were aimed at making a real difference to participants in research and were aimed at uniting education, action, and knowledge generation into one.

We will all be changed as a direct result of the research process. I wished to get beyond the 'creation of picture' to the active political business of making a difference to those whose lives I was researching. This requires a closer look at reflexive approaches for it is with reflexivity that validity can be found. It requires that readers need to be aware and attentive to the question of whose 'truth' is being foregrounded and offered as 'best' and it requires that I look in more detail at the authorship on activism for intellectuals within postmodernism.

### **Activism in the University**

Basset (1996, p513) traces how postmodernism has swept up Marxism along with foundational Modernist thought in universities leading to a crisis of the intellectual though this attack on Modernity may be more palpable in the developed world outside the UK. The politically conscious working class are no longer with us and the New Left have lost confidence. He discusses the different nuances of Foucault's 'universal intellectual' (Foucault, 1980), Gramsci's 'organic intellectual' (Gramsci, 1971), and Bauman's 'intellectual as interpreter' between finite provinces or communities of meaning (Bauman, 1987), and Said's lonely exile (Said, 1994) in a struggle to find a cause for the academic



intellectual after postmodernism<sup>35</sup> .

For Said, the true intellectual adopts a critical stance rather than serving the status quo. He or she always moves to the margin, to think as an immigrant or a traveller, to embrace the provisional or the risky, the innovative and the experimental. As a result the critical intellectual is something of an exile even within his own society. (Bassett, 1996, p518, discussing Said, 1994).

But these images of the intellectual bring us back to the problem of finding a viable way through the polar opposites of relativism and utopianism associated with postmodernism's play of meanings and emancipatory aims, what Bassett calls the specific-universal divide. Bassett finds similar problems to my own with Habermas' theoretical structures (Habermas, 1987; see Mannion, 1998; Hoy and McCarthy, 1994; Outhwaite, 1994). Instead he turns to Bourdieu's 'collective intellectual' (see Bassett, 1996), a role which requires a blend of independence and engagement within a culture of strong group reflexivity. Bourdieu's reflexivity will work like a Trojan Horse within disciplines to deconstruct science and make it more emancipatory.

### **Reflexivity**

For me, a continuous attention to our presuppositions is needed to increase reflexivity in the research process *while at the same time* maintaining a participatory mode of consciousness and an attention to the kinship aspects of my relations with those involved in the research. After postmodernism, the embrace with plural and multiple forms of accountability in my methods will take me beyond earlier forms of emancipatory research within Habermasian versions of critical theory. A postmodern approach to research (Usher et al., 1997, p203) will be suspicious of all totalising discourses whether they are deemed emancipatory or not. Reflexivity is the escape route out of this dead-ended suspicion and back into it again. Causes and the aims are no longer clear cut. Usher et al. (1997) show another take on

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<sup>35</sup> So now what's new? The same concern for allowing the subjects' accounts to come through. Their version of reality. Or is it? My interpretation is that it is. But this may be where I disagree with some of the postmodernist tendency. I assume that the individual subject has to be allowed to give their version of reality. Their reality. (As a kind of truth imperative). The view from their self is what reality is for them! But the postmodernist tendency seems more definitely political in the sense that it isn't a truth imperative (allowing individuals to give their version of reality) but a democratic right to exercise their voice. The issue then is the right to be heard rather than the right to let researchers know how they (or their category/group collectivity) construes reality. (From an email from my supervisor)

research in the postmodern which seems evasive of practical problems in the 'real' world:

To do research in a postmodernist way is to take a critical stance towards the practice of sense-making and sense-taking which we call research. What it focuses on, however, is not the *world* which is constructed and investigated by research but the way in which that world is written in the research *text* (Usher et al., 1997, pp210-211, italics in original).

The danger with this 'texts all the way down' approach is that we may lose sight of the 'real' (even if it is a disputed and continually co-constructed and inscribed) world; we may end up in the university unconnected with and disengaged from 'Others' out there because we spend so long reflexively concerned with why we are doing research and who is it silent about. These are worthy questions but if they are asked *alone*, by researchers in ivory towers (Mannion, 1998), we may have missed the mark.

But in the action research mode, practical outcomes are important as they always have been in the critical tradition, so too are issues of emancipation and advocacy. Maybe texts are the only available tools we can 'grasp' at in the struggle for the construction of pseudo-realities. Hopefully, this research text can point to the lived experience of others with whom we have engaged in the research process without naming it in an essential way.

### **Action Research**

Action researchers are concerned with change through the research process. Some action researchers are not concerned with bottom-up approaches to change but look at top-down approaches as best. Some have shown a preoccupation with institutional change and the role of organisational change in making a difference (see Chiswell 1995, Donald, et al. 1995 and Somekh 1995). In line with Horelli's work (1997) in trying to implement design projects with high levels of child-participation, I too was especially interested to discover the potential of actively working with some institutions who sought to implement change through a form of action research.

[C]hildren's participation profits from the use of combinatory theories of substance and process, and or action-research design of implementation of projects. (Horelli, 1997)

I worked actively with Stirling Council towards changing their institutional policies and practices to address the need for special support for children with disabilities in their public play and with children and teachers in their efforts to initiate and manage the changing of their school grounds. Action researchers attempt to implement change directly *through* the research process. So was I engaged in action research? While a top-down approach was encouraged, there were other facets of the research that make it less distinctively so. Habermasian concepts such as ‘the ideal speech situation’ are traditionally seen as prerequisites for action research. But my own postmodernist reading of Habermas (see chapter 3) has attacked this (albeit revised) Enlightenment view of emancipation. Carr (1995) has attempted to show how postmodern insights can reinterpret the Enlightenment project and keep the hope for emancipation alive. He keeps a theory-practice dualism alive which muddies the water too much for my version of action research.

What intellectual resources can we find, then, to get some critical purchase on the common sense ideas people have about problems? In my reworking of the action mode of research we will need to be strategically provocative in both ambivalent and emancipatory ways to get new perspectives going before problem solving can begin for individuals and for groups or collectives. The debates within action research about the distinctions between theory and practice made this tradition less attractive to my needs. A more holistic methodology would combine these in a less distinguished way. While my methodological position is close to action research (and I refer to it in the cyclical nature of some of the research practices I document) there are distinctions still to be made. I next wish to refer to a body of methodology called ‘participatory research’ which will come closer to revealing my own methodological position. The position I am edging towards will then be termed *Catalytic Participatory Research*. This position will have more in common with the participatory research tradition than the ‘action research’ tradition found in the UK within education and teacher education circles. The production of open-ended texts that require the reader’s participation in the co-construction of meaning (Iser, 1978) also lies within the participatory mode of action research (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1993).

### **Participatory Research**

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is described as a ‘family of approaches, methods and behaviours that enable people to express and analyse the realities of their lives and

conditions, to plan themselves what action to take, and to monitor and evaluate the results' (Institute). These methods have evolved from Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) which concentrated on simply gathering information whereas PRA seeks to empower participants in the research. These methods have been first used mainly in developing countries with poor adults, non-governmental organisations, and government advisors. Now their use has spread to the developed world and are being applied to both urban and rural contexts and to inquire into issues in forestry, community regeneration, fisheries, health, tourism, and planning (see Inglis, 1998). More recently the practices of PRA have been adapted for use with children (Boyden & Ennew, 1997). It claims to be inclusive and democratic, relevant to specific achievable objectives, flexible, rapid and low-cost, and empowering for social change and sustainable development (Inglis, 1998).

Participatory Appraisal (PA) aims to encourage a local engagement in problem solving, leadership, knowledge generation, and decision making about the use and ownership of local resources through creating pathways for communication across sectors between locals and decision makers, bringing out local potential, and providing structures for local democracy through a diverse range of quite specific but adaptable methods (like mapping, groupwork exercises, creating diagrams and drawings). The methods I used were almost all generated from the popular methods used in PA and PRA. I adapted them for use with children and for use with children and adults together. I was keen to get participation from those who 'don't normally have the opportunity to be heard or are not inclined to speak in public': children. Many of these aims and tools fitted into the aims of my research which was about children's participation. Using participatory forms of research methods to inquire into participation seemed a likely choice. But I was also interested in the reflexive need to inquire into the participatory methods themselves: the culture of participation, the appraisal of Participatory Appraisal when it was being used, and the appraisal of my own methods and other people's methods for enhancing participation which brings back in the need for some form of insider-outsider dichotomy that is an inescapable conundrum for participatory forms of research (see Ashmore, 1989). My aims in this study become necessarily confused with the onset of reflexivity. The previous discussion about the double edge of ambivalence and the desire to be emancipatory requires a choice of methods both from within the participatory tradition (because my aims were in agreement with theirs), along with methods necessary to interrogate and reflexively appraise participatory research itself - a

deconstructive reading and writing strategy that creates layers of meta-meta-analysis. These methods will be of use to perform a catalytic performance of the research. To adequately do justice to the issues I interrogate I will require a process of research that amounts to a participatory inquiry into participatory research 'with' children. Participatory research with children requires that children set the research agenda, that the place in which the research takes place is important from the perspective of adult power, that results and analysis are discussed with the children, that there is some transfer of skills and knowledge as necessary in order for the participation to occur (Boyden & Ennew, 1997). I hope I fit into the categorisation of research with children along these lines but there are other sides to the story.

Firstly, I am presenting this research for a doctorate: my audience also includes internal and external examiners who expect a text of a certain kind and genre<sup>36</sup>. So for a participatory piece of research on children's participation there will be extra ingredients necessary for validity. Lather's research as praxis (1986) will be useful here in accounting for a new forms of validity that anticipates a politics that desires both justice and the unknown, seeks out the oppositional, unsettles from within (discussed later). Not only will it be necessary me to evidence how I energised participants towards knowing reality in order to transform it, but, I will have to enact a text as praxis that is valid only if that it energises the reader to do the same. Participatory research cannot be bounded to a certain sector of those we see as marginalised. Reflexively, this text will also have to evidence my own process of getting to know the world in order that I change it as well.

Participatory research (Hall, et al., 1982) draws on the work of Paulo Freire's theory of emancipation (Freire, 1972) and Habermas' theories of knowledge and communication (Habermas, 1987). It claims to combine research, education and action (Park et al., 1993). In participatory research, the researcher acts as a catalyst or facilitator in enabling people themselves to become researchers in search of answers to their daily problems (Tandon, 1988; Park et al., 1993). In that I used many participatory methods from the broad family of participatory methods used in that tradition, I was in line with the bottom-up approach they advocate. The rhetoric of participatory research include much free ranging reference to

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<sup>36</sup> At least, I can only surmise about this in the light of not having met the external examiner and only having discussed the genre of doctoral theses in general with my internal examiner.

the poor, the oppressed, the development of consciousness and ‘radical social change’ (Maguire, 1987, p29). In this kind of research we will need a clearly defined oppressed group, a way of defining what the ‘struggle’ is and a way of knowing what emancipated individuals/society will look like. Feminists too have taken on their own brand of participatory research (Maguire, 1987). But reflexivity’s role will be in breaking open the boundaries of what counts as pre-inscribed ‘marginalised’ to show how the margins can move. In this thesis I show how the researcher can be marginal to the oppressed group’s culture (Appendix G; chapter 3). We can no longer hold that white males Westerners are ‘the centre’ and that women, children, and disabled children are the only ones at the margins. So, while I too am concerned with addressing the need for the liberation and empowerment of those marginalised, I do so with all of the misgivings about critical theory and emancipation discussed in Section A. A healthy dose of ambivalence and open-mindedness is necessary. To assess the validity of a doctoral thesis on children’s participation will require that I and readers address the questions:

What right have I (and readers) to undertake this work like this with children, their carers, teachers?

What responsibilities and privileges have I (and readers) with regard to the work now?

How can I (and readers) use the knowledge and skills presented herein to challenge oppression?

Does the thesis serve to reproduce a system of domination or challenge that system?

(Adapted from Barton, 1996, p4)

#### Reflexive Comment

Methodologico-ethically, I assert that all research is a political act: an act of change (or active conservatism in blocking change). My view is that all this way regardless of our efforts to do away with researcher effects and I recourse is to embrace the need to sympathise with someone in our research and at the same time reflexively challenge these assumptions as individuals, groups or collective inquirers. The danger has been that I separate my practice into different volumes (as I seem to do herein). Hopefully, a happy philosophy, methodology, and practice is attainable yet.

But it may require more than answering these questions too. I will expand on the kinds of questions to which readers might give attention in chapter 11.

Plates 1, 2, 3, & 4. (below) These photographs were taken to show samples of the range of participatory methods available for involving children in decision making. Mapping, matrices, venn diagrams can all be used in conjunction with more ordinary groupwork procedures to engage children in participative ways. Further examples of participatory procedures with groups of children that have been used in the research have been documented in Appendices A and C. These methods are mainly derived from participatory rural appraisal techniques (PRA).

plate 1  
plate 2



plate 3  
plate 4

## Chapter 10.

### BEING FRAMED - THE IMAGE-BASED TEXT

#### Picture Theory

To introduce my use of photographs as integral to this text and to explain the potentialities for readers interpretations of them I will scan the literature in the theory of pictures for fruitful resources. Mitchell (1994) explains three uses of photographs once included in a written text. The photograph can be used as a slave of the written word, as a site of resistance, or as collaborative with text. He draws our attention to the pictorial turn in modern thought (Mitchell, 1994, p9- 14) and to how visual paradigms and cultural studies have changed the map of the representation of 'things'. We can no longer expect texts to simply have images added on. There is a new young genre emerging in the search for a combinatory aesthetic and the ethical practice. What we are after is not naive mimesis but a challenging exchange between spectator and the reader. The processes of presentation and reading are both problematic, however. We have only begun to explore the ways in which the human subject is constituted by language and imaging combined (Mitchell, 1994, p24).

The roots for the emergence of the genre are found in photojournalism and in the practices of those who write and use images in newspapers and magazines. Another tradition where photographs are given prominence is found in the writing of the photographic essay. Much attention is given to Barthes' *Camera Ludica* (1981) in this genre. His use of the photograph as a 'punctum' that wounds the text and subverts it (Mitchell, 1994, p303) is specifically given prominence because it subverts the bland notion that photographs are supplementary to the written word and are subservient to it. In contrast, Said's *After the Last Sky* (1986) is often cited as an example of when the photo can be employed to enact a collaborative and dialogical role with the written aspects of the text giving the words mutual support (Mitchell, 1994, pp312-319). Other possibilities for the photograph's place in the text include the roles of spy and counterspy, voyeur and exorcist, memory, magic, own experience, independent or coequal agent. But while these roles for the image are possible usages for the social scientist, they remain largely unused by traditional approaches to sociology. There is much yet uncharted territory and unanswered questions pertaining to

the use of photographs not only about the division of labour in a text between words and images but about validity and transdisciplinarity. The ‘gaps’ in our structures for understanding and producing open-ended texts are seen as essential for ‘writerly texts’ (Sumara and Luce-Kapler, 1993; Iser, 1978) where the reader brings experience to fill in the meaning.

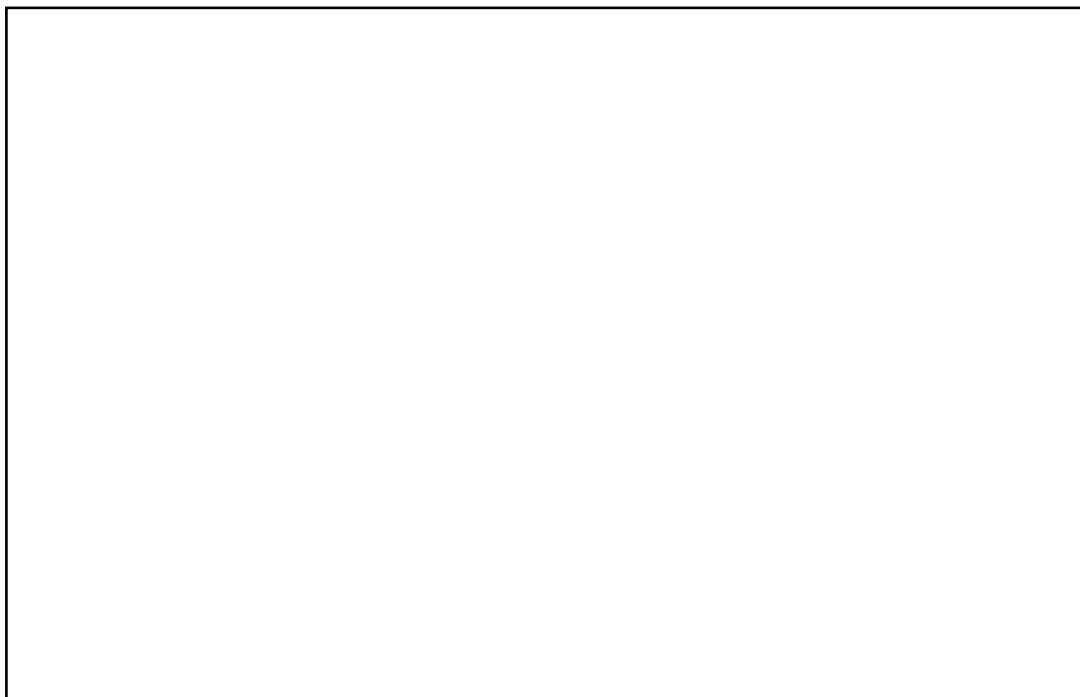


Plate 5. Photographs can divide the labour in a text. How does it work? As spy, memory, magic, own experience?

In this text I would like to try to use photographs to explore how an image/text or phototext might answer Foucault's question of 'How' things can come to be the way they are rather than answer the traditional question of 'What' is out there (see Hoy, 1986). I am more interested in 'How' is power enacted in space and time than answering 'What' is power. The use of an image/text can help us use verbs rather than nouns in the generation of local active knowledge. The image/text can be a place where a revised history might 'split through the cracks' as in Derrida's *differance*. It can be a site of dialectical tension, slippage, and transformation (Mitchell, 1994, p83-107). The image/text or phototext can provide a strategic genre to inquire into the act of surveillance or spectacle while usefully being part of the enactment or spectacle itself. Like all texts, I view this one as a performance - an act to create a world. It is a fabrication, a narrative of enjoyment and suffering within power relations achieved through the suturing of text and images. By this understanding, representation becomes a heterogeneous, contested terrain. It is about improvisation. I want to point to something beyond that grows out of my sense of responsibility for those things within my realm of influence.

The idea of a real world perceived by any optical lens has been undermined by post-photographic technologies (digital imaging, virtual reality). Robbins (1996) discusses the death of the photograph (as we knew it). He too mentions Roland Barthes' encounter with the photographic image describing it as a move from seeing and feeling, through attention and observation, to thought and elucidation into the creation of an 'open sensibility' (Robbins, 1996, p164). This requires us to relearn to look at the world. We need to ask ourselves 'What's our disposition?' Can you hear / feel / be moved to action with your eyes? We need to accept that the world is described through competing language games and that everyone has a limited position. This can allow us to begin to do photoanalysis which is then the conjuncture between competing narratives about the world<sup>37</sup>. For our purposes it is about what meanings photographs carry for people in the way they mediate between the false divisions between our inner and outer worlds: the self and the place. We can creatively live with 'the death of the photograph'. Henceforth, we do not record with photographs, we simulate some other message unknown to the observer until it is observed. We engage them with our subjectivity in a full way in the taking of photographs and the viewing of

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<sup>37</sup> At times I suggest a starting point for photoanalysis in the notes underneath photographs; at other times I leave the reader to make their own mind up without written crutches.

them. The accidental, the cultural, the untrustworthy, the mad are allowed in, but not the pursuit of a *singular* truth valorised by reason. John Berger (1972) wants to enable a more inclusive ways of seeing that go beyond the rational.<sup>38</sup> Berger emphasises the use of the imagination by the reader and asks for more than an attempt to see purely rationally (pp159-160). Images are concerned with the transitional. The relational between inner and the outer. Put naively, they may enable us to identify with other experiences not normally associated with the use of our rationality. We need to query whether a non-rationalist, postmodern approach to the use of images can expose the ambiguity of image and texts. Yet we must accept the modern quest for full and absolute knowledge is incomplete. Postmodernity is just a recent cultural phenomenon rooted in modernity that accepts that modernity's objectives are flawed; there are cracks to be seen. The romantic in me seeks to sell the idea that we are culturally and historically incarnate. An Enlightenment view of things asks us to leave it behind. For me being rational in any non-subjective way is pseudo-rational. We might say the same of the objective: 'New language is required'. Perhaps we need to get beyond language - or at least words alone in educational sociology.

Antonin Artaud realised that words cannot say everything we want them to say (see Birch, 1991, p83). He wanted to use a language that was more physical than words which would address the senses first rather than the mind. In giving the actor and the director the opportunity to give meanings to words that were sometimes completely absent from his texts, Artaud attempted to subvert the 'dictatorship of words'. I encourage an unscripted interpretation. Performances are thus enabled by the inclusion of colour images. The characters in my plots are mostly children but a strong off-stage adult presence is felt throughout. The images will appeal sometimes to the mind, sometimes to the senses in my theatrical practice.

### **Barthes' Ethical Aestheticism**

Barthes, having left his earlier attempts at semiology<sup>39</sup> (and the hope of finding a structured, systematic base of interpretation), is said to have moved on with *Camera Ludica*

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<sup>38</sup> This is Foucault's work too although we need to be wary of Derrida's critique of this.

<sup>39</sup> In his later work, Barthes moved from semiology to 'semioclasm' for the tactical reason of challenging all forms of totalising theories of structuration. He uses semioclasm in order to question oppositions such as those of science and an existential search, objectivity and subjectivity, the cognitive and the affective.

where, through photographs and text, he attempted to signify literature, the world, in terms of 'possibilities' *outside of his control*. At the same time he does try to create boundaries around photographs and their meanings by attaching specific characteristics to them. This relationship between Barthes and the photograph is openly contingent, however. His interpretation of the photograph of his mother would have been vastly different should she have been still alive. Barthes' concentration on death accentuates the importance of absence and loss in communication and discourse generation using photographs. We are encouraged to look at the 'punctum' of photographs that engage us in a subjective realm of memory and connotation. The stage of the presentation of the photograph is reset again and again for different performances for different viewers. What is most interesting from the point of view of methodology is that the aesthetic and the ethical can be brought together in the use of photographs as in *Camera Ludica*. For some, the children I photograph (as characters in the plot) will be noticeable; for others the props will provide more to dwell on in the production of discourse about childhood generally; for yet others, the places (the 'sets') are crucial to the generation of new meanings about children as citizens. Discourse is produced in and around different framings (performances) of the photograph. The site of this production is potentially on the seemingly immovable, rigid print of the photograph or of the word but texts are far from dead or static. Barthes suggests that a text's *jouissance* (badly translated as 'bliss' from the French) is the active component in a text that can unsettle the reader from comfortable assumptions and unquestioned values (see *The Pleasure of the Text*, 1975).

Language becomes performative and in doing so, he makes the purely cognitive subject who forms closed denotational propositions about the world very problematic (Clark, 1983, p100). Language becomes more than the instrument of the cognitive subject. Sentences are never closed. Enunciation is ongoing an infinite through these performative texts.

Barthes' use of the photograph is tactical<sup>40</sup> in that it aimed to move us beyond values 'towards an *atopia*, an infinitely fragmented realm in which difference would no longer be constructed as conflict. The medium which most anticipates this society is no longer linguistic, but is that of the photograph.' (Clark, 1983, p103). His tactic will pay off if the

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<sup>40</sup> I find that while Barthes argues for tactics without strategies, I find that I can't help myself from using photographs as rhetorical components in the text.

reader can realise that the body is an *irreducible* 'no longer to be thought of under any category of exemplarity, typicality or equality, being intractable to the opposition of the 'particular' and the 'universal', the 'concrete' and the 'abstract'. (Clark, 1983, p103). The photograph succeeds when it is read as a ludic and impertinent signifier that is intractable.

Here appears the particular status of the photographic image: it *is a message without a code*; a proposition from which we must immediately extract an important corollary: the photographic message is a continuous message. (Barthes, 1985, p5)

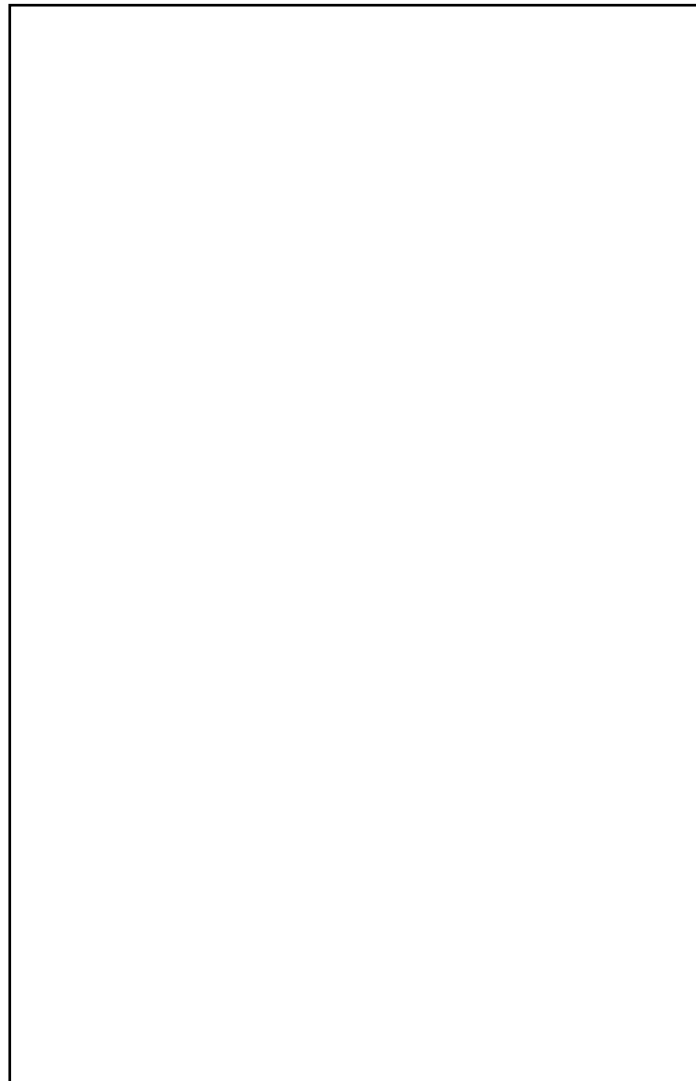


Plate 6.

The still image is not a mere denotation of a real world but a multiple wild and recalcitrant singularity that attests to a 'science of differences'. By claiming a singularity of each image, Barthes claims an individuality of difference for himself (and others) that displaces a the classical phenomenological subject (Barthes, 1982, pp6-8). For him, the photograph is a 'studium', a story to be read or a punctum that pricks and wounds the observer. The originality of the particular event, the singularity that the photograph is, is also lost and alive at once.

The photograph also allows us to bring aspects of spatiality and historicity together in a text:

The photograph institutes, in fact, not a consciousness of the thing's *being there* (which any copy might provoke), but a consciousness of the thing's *having been there*. Hence, we are concerned with a new category of space-time: immediately spatial and anteriorly temporal; in the photograph an illogical conjunction between the *here* and the *then*. (Barthes, 1985, p33)

Can we extend our models of rationality by the inclusion of colourful images reminiscent of the 'extravagance of painters' (Foucault, 1979, p17)? I doubt it.. However, photographs will be a useful way to involve readers in the folds of the text (see Stronach and MacLure, 1997, p29). They can take us to another place outside of the written words. The break with academic language is more obvious and the issues of validity are more apparent because the genre is dissimilar: if any strategy is apparent in the rhetoric of the use of photographs it is this one.



## Seeing and Feeling

What I find exciting about images is the sense of excess I get from my experience of them - the feeling we are dealing with an almost endless poesis, an eruption of meanings upon which we have to exercise restraint, into which we have to project structure and generate discourse, but from which much more is drawn and created than is “present” [...] Seeing ... is part play, part work [...] Human beings are at one and the same time many bodies and many eyes. (Burnett, 1995, p10)

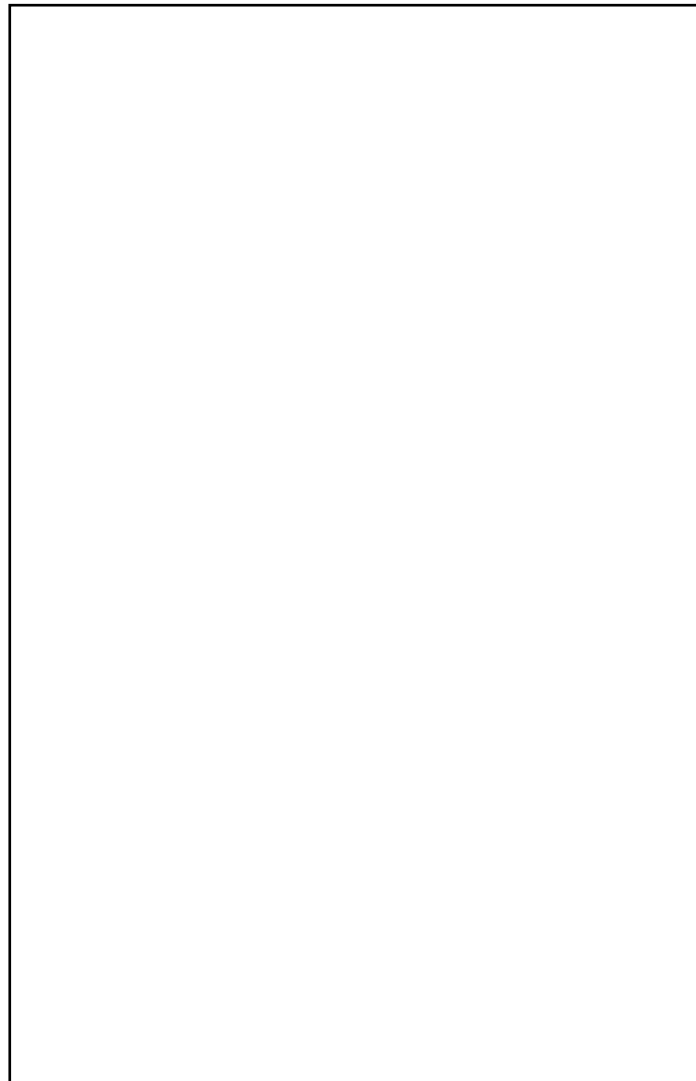


Plate 7.

Burnett agrees with Rorty's assertion that there is no objective moment available to the observer. Norms, conventions, desires, feelings, expectations cut across our seeing. He finds all boundaries between seeing and feeling, thinking and seeing, remembering and

being present as vague. Historicity is also present in the moment. Because of this, our own childhoods are likely to be present in the viewing of another's childhood. Our forgotten feelings can surface 'inside' an image that is evocative for us.

### **Evoking the Sensate Body**

Evocation is fast becoming an apt word for communication in this text which may be worrying for some. Degrees of optical illusion are unavoidable and largely unpredictable for all imagined contexts. In this respect the photographer has a choice: to follow a Cartesian imperative and try to represent reality without illusion (by perhaps refusing to use digital enhancing or filters) or to accept that the embodied viewer will interact with the image in some unforeseen ways at different times and places. The former position asserts an equality between camera and the eye, the latter opens out possibilities for meaning in an undetermined way. I accept the latter position as worthy of investigation for I feel it offers more scope for the exploration of the relationships between human bodies, the world, and the images / languages we use to describe it. We personally, socially and culturally produce what we see in photographs; we project meanings rather than see static images. This projection also challenges out notions of history. Photographs 'come from the past and must be converted into the present' (Burnett, 1995, p23). Our memories come into play all the time, as do our hopes, fears, remembrances of smell, sound, touch etc. The sensate body recreates what it sees: the object and the object perceived are different things. The perception of an object is an ever-emerging entity that is not located outside the body but may be, to some degree, a shared thing between a group of people. It has been pointed out that the brain communicates more with itself than with anything else (Edleman, 1992, pp18-19) but culturally/socially these internal synaptical connectivities can also link up with the perceptual productions of others. If we accept that we exist in an unavoidable state of some degree of subjectivity that allows for co-subjectivity, we can also accept that only partial understandings are available (and indeed this partiality of position is the very unstable ground that allows another's shared or diverse understanding to be an acceptable part of the conversation). The implications for the use of photography in sociology can be drawn out from Haraway's comment:

The topography of subjectivity is multi-dimensional; so, therefore is vision. The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original.; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore*

*able to join with another* , to see together without claiming to be another (Haraway, 1991, p33).

If our context for what counts as an image has changed, then so too must our strategies for interpretation. We can certainly accept that the multiplicity of partial accounts of how things are for us leads us down the path to a Bakhtinian dialogism or polyphony (Bakhtin, 1986). The polyphony of various voices - some of them children's - in this text are performed for you the reader. Like the word 'evocation', Burnett's polyphony is centrally captured by the word *projection* (Burnett, 1995, pp135-198).

Writing out a projection thus involves a writing out of the experience of it, which is also a rewriting of the relationship between identification and knowledge. (Burnett, 1995, p154).

We can use photographs to create a playful space that allows in the interpretation of the body of images. The active agent I invite into this text is an embodied one - the fully sensate body. Readers bodies can interact with the images I have chosen to be projected onto the page. They provide catalytic interventions in the text at times. At other times the 'script' that enacts some partial readings of the photographs are the catalysts. Still other discursive choices, made by the reader/viewer will be the springboard for further interpretations.

### **Hevey's Theory of the Subject**

Hevey (1992) brings Barthesian realisations into the political field of rights for the disabled. Barthes had moved on from the structuration of signs and the search for foundational meanings to tactics without strategies; Hevey returns the text with images to tactics with very specific strategies. Hevey (1992) is best known for his photographic work with people with disabilities in *The Creatures Time Forgot. Photography and Disability Imagery* (1992) where he uses Barthes' tactics to politically strategic effect. He brings together in one text his photographs for a series of posters that provoked a rethink of the disability rights movement and his understanding of the nature of the subject, the uses of photography and rights for the disabled. He draws on Burgin (1982,1986), Dennett et al. (1979), Sekula (1984), Spence (1986), and Williamson (1978) to show how a revised view of the photograph and the self signalled the breakdown of the modernist view of the epistemological self-referential sovereignty of meaning. Burgin's work allows us to see that

we now locate meaning in the *context* not the surface of the image i.e. the discourse in which it is located sign, signifier and signified have no meaning universally. But signification is not a bottomless pit of endless playful meanings; there is a political context based on any number of discourses for the non-foundational understanding of signification:

What prevents the image from descending into a cacophony of meaninglessness is the presence of positions of consciousness of the signs, signifiers, and the signified *within the reader (that is, the viewer)*. (Hevey, 1992, p95, his italics)

Images are invaded by meanings; they are a 'complex of texts'. Burgin gives us his word for the combinatory effects of word and image. His 'scripto-visual meanings' are generated in a plastic environment that has some 'effect' on the discourses that surround it. Baudrillardian nihilism only arrives when no meanings are found. So the grand narratives have been interrupted by postmodernism but to what end?<sup>41</sup> Eagleton (1993) may have good reason for looking at the disintegration of the social fabric, but I disagree that it is solely the result of consumerism and capitalism. Eagleton challenges academia to become relevant to the difficult material circumstances of those living in poverty, facing unemployment or homelessness. He challenges 'postmodern tendencies' in theory to 'get real'. Hevey reminds us that we need a political or ideological anchor. For Hevey it is the inclusion of the author in the text or the photographer in the process of taking photographs and writing about them that can bring relevance and context to a work. There can be no value in doing photographic theory for the development of a radical disability photographic

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<sup>41</sup> But we should remember that some theorists that are labelled as postmodernists (for example Baudrillard, 1983) reject postmodernism and its vices but give us an understanding of a postmodern disenchanted world wherein the postmodern moment is characterised by the degeneration of foundations, the rise of the artificial, and the eclectic. Baudrillard (1983) epitomises the failure of some theorists of / within postmodernity to keep acceptable forms of human agency alive within the forces of capitalism and the influences of the media and so on. Instead, Baudrillard accepts that people are irrevocably seduced by them and therefore, there is no place from which one might have a position (see Burnett, 1995, p326-330). Like Baudrillard, I take on board that representation of a *reality* may be an impossible project, but unlike his acceptance of the all-pervasive influences of technology, I find that technology *can* be manipulated to give a useful and synthetic performance of critical knowledge generation. The collapse of the staged and simulated into the mythically 'real' is only a reinstatement of ways of looking at the world that have been emerging and submerging over time and place. The invitation to construct one's own 'knowledge-story', so commonly the accepted norm in the arts, has been supplanted by the proffering of closed forms of knowledge in academic writing such that the reintegration of art and academic writing may lead to conflict and struggle. New forms of interpretation will require new interpreters of new forms of text. The act of completing a doctoral thesis which 'generates a new contribution' may not be framed in ways that are normatively acceptable by the academic system that invites it, especially if the new contribution to the body of knowledge is a commitment to the idea that knowledge is to be performed and experienced between the subjective and the objective in an active manner by the reader.

practice unless the author inhabits the theory and the practice of taking the photographs<sup>42</sup>. Hence the importance of the inclusion of the body and the self in the writing and imagery. In this text you will find the presence of the author, the bodies of children, children with disabilities, and the all-important places - the contexts for the research practice in which I engaged and the heterotopic sites of identification for the participants in the research.

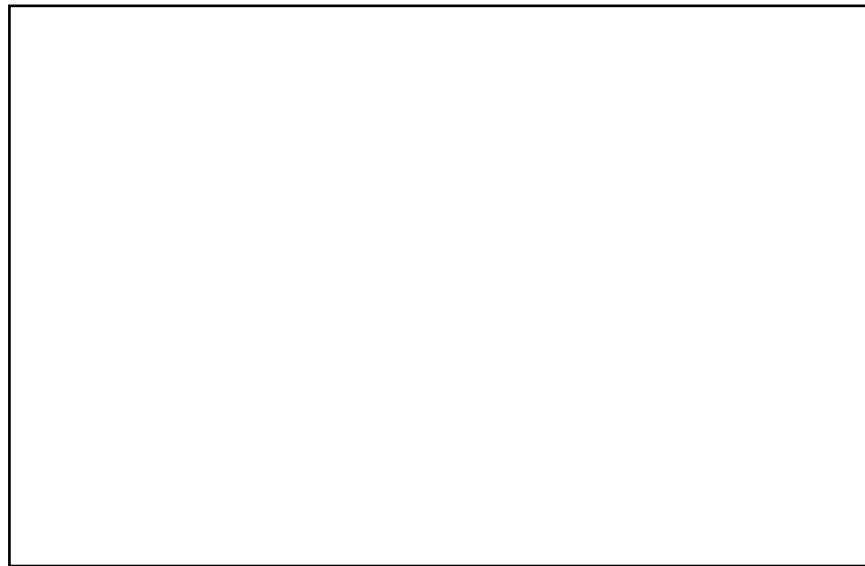


Plate 8.

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<sup>42</sup> Readers will possibly remark at the author's absence from the content of the photographs too. But 'inhabiting' a photograph can mean having a presence in other ways as photographer. While I did encourage autophotography (photographs to be taken by the participants in the research), I found that the quality of the images (from disposable cameras) was not great. New strategies for getting myself 'in the picture' and getting children more involved in the 'framing of data' are still worthy of investigation. West (1999) discusses young people's possible role as researchers; Aitken & Wingate (1993) have had children with cerebral palsy take photographs of their environments as part of a study of children's geography.

## **Photography and Disability**

When it came to children with disabilities (Appendix G), I was inspired to take photographs of aspects of the environment that I felt showed how a place imposed an unnecessary constraint in the options for identification for the children that inhabited them. The political aim was to discover how these constraints might be reconfigured using the information gathered from the children and their families and using the children as key informants in the cycles of action research towards making changes in the practices of the local council in planning, designing, and maintaining these outdoor play areas. I did wish to include photographs that de-biologised them and de-medicalised the children. I wanted to show them as ‘other-than-problems’, as other than ‘children who need caring for’, or ‘children with (God bless them!) disabilities’. I wished to include photographs that took impairment away as the only focus of identification for children with disabilities and take delusions about children’s abilities for participation away too. To effectively do this I needed to firmly subjectify my work within the context of my own practice as a researcher, an able-bodied adult, an ex-teacher etc. Hevey’s practice (1992) is a disability photographic one; mine is a practice that advocates greater children’s participation. In attempting to include children’s own photographs, and photographs taken by their carers, I set about discovering how the observed in research might go about doing their own observing. Jo Spence (1986) inhabits her own representations. In some photographs so do I. But my presence is more offstage than Spence’s - an indication of my sense of being marginal to the children’s worlds into which I looked but in which I participated in as an adult: that was my positional approach. I acknowledge that I am not disabled or a child - a response to the threat of accusations of imperialism levelled at non-disabled photographers and researchers by those that see themselves as better placed to do this kind of work. I sought to avoid any oppressive representation of ‘smiling disabled people that we can help’ or children that are society’s problems. The children I met were not impaired bodily or by their age from participation but they did need special support to meet their ordinary needs for play, for having a say, for voicing an opinion. A more embellished discussion on the arguments for and against the impairment model of disability and the socially disabled model is available in Appendix G.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Yet Appendix G is susceptible to the critique that it is exclusionist in its approach to disability: it places the children in a separate appendix, and is open to the criticism that it promotes a distinctly modernist ocularism (see Hughes, 1999, for a discussion of the oppression of the gaze).

Photography can work to 'visualise the politics, celebration and empowerment' (Hevey, 1992, p82) of disabled people and children generally. I try not to show victims. I use colour. Through photography and the combinations of many other methods I sought to bring some children to an awareness of the barriers and potentialities for their own agency. I sought to track their assessment of their own participation and their sense of helplessness or sense of purpose. Some of the photographs show children doing things that exposes questions about what we think children are capable of and what we think they 'should' or 'shouldn't' be doing. The photograph and the text combined can show up the differences between what we expect children to be capable of and what they are allowed to be capable of. We can use photography and other research methods to 'expand people' (Hevey, 1992, p93)

### **Sociology and Image-Based Texts**

Like Prosser and Schwartz (1998), I do not feel it incumbent upon me to guarantee photographs that are uncontaminated by reactivity between researcher and subject, unbiased by cultural expectations, or unmediated by the characteristics of the technology. Far from it. Instead, I would wish to embrace these 'problems' as unavoidable and enriching aspects of the research process. I will include historical, cultural, political, and social information to contextualise photographs. At other times the inclusion of certain shots is purposefully to elicit reaction. Prosser and Schwartz call this 'photo-elicitation' (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998, p124). Yet another form of the validity that allows for the inclusion of images in sociology is as a self-reflexive visual diary (p125). We can all accept that cameras do not take photographs, people do (Byers, 1966). Therefore, I will include the micro and macro contexts for interpretation as an invitation to the reader to converse with the text through the melding of evocation, projection, and through interaction with a visual diary. While it has been argued that image-based research has a limited status (Prosser, 1998) and is largely absent from the literature on methodological considerations, there are many good reasons why its status is disproportionately low. Visual images have 'worked on' our sensibilities to engender a sense that things are not always what they seem. Instead of seeing the visual image as the prophet that heralds in the lack of correspondence between reality and text, and applying the similar argument for written texts, researchers run for the cover of the ethnographic document and the triangulation of methods to appease the realist lurking in their back cupboards. Prosser could not find a coherent voice among adherents of image-

based research and found the field to be fragmented (Prosser, 1998, p109). Each practitioner follows their own disciplinary, epistemological, or philosophical tradition. The only unifying feature he could find was the desire among practitioners that research should be 'more visual'(Prosser, 1998, p109). We should accept that images (*and words* ) are ambiguous. This *is* the point. The *response* a photograph generates is the important thing. Becker (reprinted 1998) has pointed out the contextual nature of how photographs have been read at different times and within different genres better than I can or need to do here.

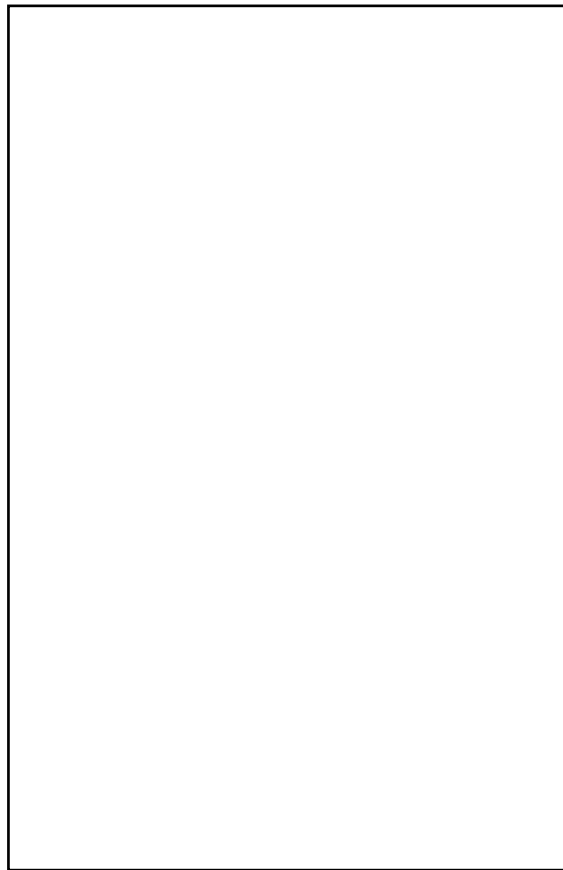


Plate 9.



## Chapter 11

### RESEARCH IN THE POSTMODERN

This last chapter of Section B, continues with the stage-management of the co-joining of philosophy and methodology in postrealist research. To get all of the props in place I will get further methodological symbolic resources from flaneurie. I will search for the validity of research in the postmodern with an ethical bias *for* the margins. Validity in enacting a performative text to accomplish this is given attention. Lastly, some other metaphors from theatre studies gives us a way of opening the curtain and wearing new masks.

#### **Reading, Writing, Photographing, and Flaneurie**

First, I introduce the methodological consideration of using 'Flaneurie' in research. I allude to 'the Flaneur' in the tradition of arch-flaneurs like Baudelaire, Oscar Wilde and others as a possible 'method'. In one sense the flaneur is essentially the male observer, but, as Munt (1998) suggests, I am more interested in the observer as metaphor. All methods are metaphorical - they connote other meanings. The flaneur is at once 'a hero and anti-hero, a borderline personality in a parable of urban uncertainty, of angst and anomie. Within the labyrinth of the city (and the school grounds and the public play park), the process of making up meaning in movement becomes the point, and perversely too the pleasure, as we become lost among the flowing images (Munt, 1998, p35-36). To employ the image of the flaneur is to attend to one's gaze. Someone's gaze: yours, mine. It is to openly admit that we construct a reality by it. As readers, writers, photographers we frame people and places. The flaneur is a stranger who has great cultural mobility: the researcher (and reader) can go into places otherwise inaccessible to others. But we are simultaneously present and excluded by the discourses that pervade that person-place complex. Down behind outdoor classrooms I find new worlds forbidden by teachers, unknown by parents, created by children.

Pedestrian life has a singularity which escapes the cartological discipline of the architects plans. (Munt, 1998, p49).

Children's identities are played out in such spaces as these<sup>44</sup>. They are spaces that may have varying amounts of imposed cartography and imported or 'found' loose objects: the toys produced by a multinational in America, the laying of bare asphalt in playgrounds designed by the architects many years ago, the seasonal 'affordances' (see Gibson, 1979) of leaves or snow, the rules and regulations conferred on children by the school authority, the rules generated by the children themselves (see Appendices A, B, E). Day to day, minute by minute, places are continually lived linguistically, physically and temporally by the bodies that contain their ever-emerging identities (Appendix B, pp21-24). Location is always subjective. The researcher must enter this flow: one mask for doing this is as flaneur. Rituals flow in and out of the play and the seriousness of playground life. 'Communitas' (see Hetherington, 1998) is found in song singing, inversions of law and order in the mimicry of a pop song or disliked teacher.

The other spaces selected for our purposes is the public play area. It is more of a public space than the school grounds. The subjectivities I sought to become involved with in these spaces were children with disabilities. Their experiences expose how places are only ever places-that-are-experienced-by-someone. Their sense of difference brings us to a perspective of public play that is inclusive of different uses of the site. I could take liberties with those I met. I could take their photograph, I could chat to them, I could wander on to another place. This was a method involving participation in the flow of the cultures I inhabited albeit as a stranger, an adult, able-bodied, male. The attitude of the flaneur is a paradoxical combination of ambivalence and care; I needed to be ambivalent about the essential and foundational aspects of my worldview while needing to care for those with whom I was involved in an active political way. This posturing as a flaneur was the method I employed in getting to know the people and the places I visited in the course of the

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<sup>44</sup> I see place as a fruitful place to start! I figure there is a story worth telling (for ethical reasons) about how our constructions of space enact power over / in identity formation .. so we need verbs not nouns for self-becoming, self-unfolding-in-places etc not self and place as separate nouns. I will try to enact (perform) a text that involves the reader in connecting with the story (though I-coherent may be an elusive shadow in the plot). In this textual world the terms subjectivity and objectivity disappear (I hope). I want to evoke experience ... provide an experience ... not tell the reader of an experience as it 'was'. I want to bring the ambiguity, the contradiction of culture (as I see it) alive in a performative text. Reality (if it exists behind / underneath text) is not my concern. We ALL edit reality. I will include the emotional and the participatory .. children's parts in the performance are central but perhaps elusive .. It's worth seeking them out but I can tell how they eluded me too - 'mystory': an embodied reflexive praxis. But be warned I will not try to be naturalistic; no hope here for an authoritative, authentic tale .. remember presentational [performative], not representational . The readers will be coperformers (From an email conversation with my supervisor)

research. It provided me with a way of being in playgrounds, public play areas especially which allowed children to approach me as much as I could approach them. I could occupy an ‘in-between role’: I was not a parent, or a teacher but I was interested in the spaces and the changes (potential or current) that were being made to their places of play, work, and social life. Children could appropriate me as researcher to narrate stories about their playground lives; they took opportunities to invite me into their illicit places and to set up activities for me so that I could take photographs of them so that others could record it. I would tell children that I was interested in ‘collecting stories about play areas’ or in some schools and play parks ‘that I was interested in thinking about how we could make them different’. In the framing of photographs, some children would wish to show me what they do and enact this for the camera although I was wary that some children may wish to perform simply to have their photograph taken. At other times I would just take photographs of the children in action often without them knowing.<sup>45</sup>

### **Minors’ Theory Revisited through Post-realist Research**

Next, through an evaluation of the usefulness of feminist and anti-racist theories, I begin to build other concepts, tools-for-incision, into the epistemologies that define children in ways that need re-imagining. In the Appendices, I narrate the ways in which I brandished these tools in the heterotopic spaces in which we find children and adults engaged in utopic practices. I use these concepts (of utopics, heterotopia, critical spatial practice - see chapters 16-20) to interrogate and ‘talk back’ to the discourses where children’s identities are spatially inscribed. The result is the performance a praxis of research: an activity of tool brandishing in specific sites and places, (re)rehearsed offstage for you in this chapter.

All knowledge reflects the interests of its creators. From a racial perspective, it has often been noted that white Western thinkers have influenced our thinking to the exclusion of

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<sup>45</sup> I did negotiate permission from the school authorities, the teachers, and the parents to do this. I also would ask permission from the children before taking photographs or I would discuss the possible use of a photograph I had taken afterwards with children. I could still be accused of abusing my adult, make, able-bodied status in the taking of the photographs as Hevey (1997) does of the work of Arbus, Mohr, and others. I perhaps have just perpetuated the sense that children are a category unto themselves: a ‘Them’ unlike ‘Us’ or that I have further ‘enfreaked’ children and children with disabilities. ‘The segregated are not integrated, they are broken into!’ (Hevey, 1997, p346). I hope that I may have found some spaces in the text that challenge the ‘no-win victim position’ for children generally and especially for children with disabilities. I hope that the returned ‘faze’ and embodied ‘performances’ of the children I photographed creates a space for continued agency for the children as on-going participants in the text.

other possible forms of knowledge. So positivism, postpositivism, realism, neo-realism, interpretivism, constructivism, postmodernism, poststructuralism all have an epistemologically racial bias that distort the lives of racially different others (see Anderson and Stanfield, in Stanfield and Dennis, 1993). We can only name things from the position of our own social background which means that there is a possibility that there will be negative consequences for the 'others' about whom we seek to speak. Even a reliance on the critical tradition of anti-racism can be problematic for the minority. New research epistemologies are emerging from the social histories of people of colour (e.g. black feminism). This brings me back to the difficulties of achieving emancipatory aims for others discussed in chapter 3. The differences between the social worlds of adults and children (itself a binarism) creates its own problems. Perhaps we cannot easily, as adults, ascribe our adultist rational logics of inquiry to children's cultures successfully. We can only see what we are socially enabled to see.<sup>46</sup> From where can we develop an epistemology that would emerge from the social world of the child (or even the child with disability)? The coding of transcripts, the systematic analysis of 'data', and many other alternative methodologies that claim to be qualitative in nature, may still uphold a three-legged stool of realism. The three supporting buttresses are: the conviction that the centred subject that can speak and is an autonomous subject); the conviction that there is a viable methodological practice of (unquestioned) reason; and the conviction that it is possible to make valid and trustworthy interpretations of the 'real' world. These three convictions are rarely undermined *at the same time* in educational research (Scheurich, 1997, pp15-162) but he argues that they need to be. They conspire to name a solely Western view of what is really 'out there'.

In response to the need to challenge these three convictions of Western approaches to research, Scheurich plans out loosely his derivation of a Foucauldian Archaeology of culture. For culture he reads the complex of society, civilisation *and* other interpretations of culture all of which is constituted by discourse. Culture is made up of non-foundational concepts like child, reality, place, etc which he calls categories. Some of these categories are more primary than others. Usually, categories are the stuff of realism; the very things that a deconstructionist would destabilise through the inherent contradictions in the

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<sup>46</sup> Hevey (1997) suggests that able-bodied people are more likely to take photographs of disabled people to fulfil a role for themselves rather than for those being photographed. This has implications for approaches to the emancipation of children if that is what we are after.

definitions of it. Yet, for Scheurich, they are the indispensable interlinked arrays that exhibit varying 'degrees of foundationality'. So, 'subjects' get substituted with a category of 'subjectivities' which are constituted out of multiple sets of 'formations' of cultures. Scheurich's problem comes with his valuations about which formations are primary and which farther down in the array. Scheurich wants a three-dimensional array but is also superimposing *his* hierarchy on it (presumably from his own socially constructed point of view). It seems an interpretation has to be made. That Anglo culture is dominant in American culture and dominates cultures of other races is Scheurich's judgment. There are problems with Scheurich analysis of culture which I would like to draw attention to.

### **Philosophy and Research in the 'Postmodern'**

In postrealist research we need to be wary of the 'categories' we create, deconstruct, or call a formation of culture. They are never stable 'real' entities. Is it a postmodernist essential that we need to work towards less bounded notions of the self: an interpenetrated version which is less structured by the traditional physical body? Is it always the case that the experience of what is habitually called the minority see themselves that way? If it is paternalistic to call for emancipation of others, then is it just as paternalistic to name them as a less dominant formation?

While the problems persist we can invite Scheurich less difficult expressions of an archaeology of culture. He provides a useful analysis of how different formations are in play at the same time (though some may be more active). Also we can find strength in the idea that the individual is an archaeological event. The individual is an enactment of a set of multiformal array. Race, gender, class, etc are all formations that we in the West have become accustomed to using but may be largely useless in enacting a different version of the self or interpreting a different cultural formation. Yet again, they may be useful for adults but not children in *all* circumstances. We may better ask which cultural formations have culturally dominated the intersectional node in the multiformal array we usually ascribe to children? Or which multiple formations in an array are in play at any one time and place - whether interviewing, photographing an event, reading a text, viewing a photograph. As a researcher, I can use Scheurich's approach to show how my subjectivity loses its autonomy and becomes a nodal site where cultural formations are in play. My subjectivity and my practice of my research become the same thing by this understanding. I

am an aspect of an ecology, a refraction of other refracted images that are in play in subjectivities. We play at the game of being less *determined by discourse's effects*. Scheurich's baseline is that a romantic individualism and an equitable society are inherently contradictory. So, archaeology is the necessary but perhaps useless tool to work towards a decentred, interdependent, communal subjectivity (p175). I like Scheurich's struggle to weave Foucault and Derrida because it has also been my journey in the earlier chapters. Like me, he tries to remain historical while keeping allegiance to strong deconstruction as a method, though he does not use Derrida's language exclusively either. He accepts that while certain formations of feminism, and anti-racial debates, along with other anti-realist attacks are to be applauded, the replacement of modernist realism with a multiplicity of paths may also disappear once its 'critical purchase' becomes redundant. His historical basis for research of a time and of a place is contingent with my own desires for choosing the right epistemological, ontological, tools for the job.

To do this requires adaptable methods not any definitive methodology disciplined by unchangeable structures. This study requires constructivism within poststructuralism wherein modernity gets transformed. We can't get away from categories, constructs by calling them cultural formations but their *effect* may be drastically different. By placing categories like 'the child' or 'social problems' in instable undefined status we can make a new analysis or new narration of what counts as a problem and how our present understandings of what we consider a problem might be flawed. We can ask - what has made the emergence of such a problem or category possible?; what could conceivably be a heretofore invisible problem?; what has made the problems we have now the ones that are most visible?; what previously ignored documents or pictures can be recovered into the argument to give a different slant on things?. Similarly, we can look to social regularities that remain unconscious by prevalent and directing that are reminiscent of Bourdieu's 'habitus' while not the same (see Bassett, 1996). The regularities we can find are contingent on time and place, so we can look to other sites or special sites to expose this perhaps previously unseen 'difference'. Social regularities, Foucault's (1972) 'discourse', shape our epistemology and our ontology (Scheurich, 1997, p105). Most critically, we need to attend to what discourse is prevalent in a society in terms of what count as problems: in my studies it is the categories of the public play park, the child, and the disabled that are in question. It is in the places (events, narratives, texts,) that posit particular groups, subgroups, or activities

as ‘problems’ that we can fruitfully look to see how such problems are socially constructed by their essential undercurrents. To the common list of gender, class, race, governmentality and professionalism, we can add *age* as a trace that defines the main problematics for the child participant. I shall argue that children are traditionally viewed as problematic by the use of many of these perspectives: poorer children are deemed more problematic than middle class, boys more problematic than girls and so on.

But the combination of the views of professionals within education, the policy statements and directives from government agencies, are more effective in naming children as a group as problematic. The main discourses here come under the guises of anti-bullying campaigns, curricular reform, and the implementation of curfews for teenagers. The messages about the social regularities of children’s lives is that the need teaching because they are ‘stupid’ or ‘innocent’ of the world, that they are capable of serious cruelty to each other, and that they need to be kept off the streets because they are not competent citizens. The ages limit for the right to vote also posits children and teenagers at the bottom of the ladder of active citizenship potential<sup>47</sup>. Without a post-realist deconstructive approach to research, we may never question the cultural formations such as these that give rise to the exclusion of children from opportunities to engage in active citizenship. An archaeology of the discourse of childhood and including the images that portray children is the required task to subvert these common sense notions of the categories of ‘children’ and ‘childhood’. The scope of this research is to explore this discourse within specific sites, in particular the territory we call school grounds and the territory we call the public play park.

A historical component will be useful for a ‘good archaeology’ which is neither just a history nor just a presence; they are performative tasks of doing an ‘as if’ history (Appendix H) or an ‘as if’ sociology of children’s participation in the public play park or the school grounds countered *from within* by the text’s own reflexivity, the deconstructive reading strategies of the reader, and the dialogue between different parts of the thesis.

I will use pictorial representations to demonstrate (perform now) the aspects of difference that specific sites being used at specific times and places for the reader. A Deleuzoguattarian view of the present moment of becoming also demonstrates a way of suturing past and

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<sup>47</sup> O’Neill (1997) argues that the child has no ‘theoretical home’ in liberal political anthropology.

future in an ever escaping moment of the 'now' - the now of your reading of this text. The blend of history (done as archaeology) and written and pictorial testaments form places that are mostly hidden from view to most is the combined strategy I will use to unfold a few narratives like *The emergence of the problematic, uneducated, child in need of institutionalisation and protection*. This is one narrative within others. Still other stories of particular time and place can act as (sometimes subversive) subplots which can carve out a space in opposition to a parallax of narratives. No one coherent story is necessary for validity to be discovered by readers. Within these boundaries I can give this title to the research: *Children's Participation in Changing Scottish School Grounds and Public Play Parks*. A closer look at the title words will need to unpack the direction and tasks to be performed by the text for you, the reader.

### **Validity in Post-realist Research Methods**

This text has foregrounded Foucauldian ideas that a full and truthful account of the world is unavailable to us outside of an account of the relations of power in the context of the discourse. It has also taken on board Derrida's concept of DifferAnce (1978) to demonstrate that meanings will be absent and present in the traces of the text. In doing so, I expect that some readers will also take on a deconstructive reading of the text in their efforts to extract new deferred meanings from it. Others may enact a strong *misreading of things* in a subversion of any and all authority I may have attempted to inscribe in their readings. Yet other readers may supplement the central aspects of the text with *marginalia*, traces from their experience of marginalisation, thereby showing how what is marginal can be central. It will also be expected that many of the categories and concepts I employ in the text, like children, child, rationality, are, In Derrida's term, *sous rature* or under erasure. So while I may at times seem to accept these concepts at a metaphysical level, there are many places in the text where the concept itself may come under attack from a position that undermines their existence as a category. Other readers may read things from a position of advocacy for children and their terms of validity will be appropriately different; I suspect they will find something to agree with herein. Other readers will look for a realistic interpretation of the 'data' that is lurking behind the text. These readers may well find what they hope to see.

In a text that accepts its own inability to be fully coherent, and that the text may, at times, celebrate the fact that the effects of differAnce are always available to the reader, a struggle



for the naming of validity could begin with these questions:

- (a) Does the author give a variety of (sometimes conflicting) metaphorical understandings of the situation found in the narratives?
- (b) Does the author explain a diversity of positionings for addressing the 'data'?
- (c) Does the author erase some positions in a poststructural reading of his own story?
- (d) Is there reflexivity of purpose to be found in the texts strategies to subvert its own demonstrations of coherence and embodiment?
- (f) Are readers regularly reminded (using textual strategies) that the document gives only a partial account, acknowledging impartiality.
- (g) While the text has no interest in corresponding directly with reality, does the text engage readers in thinking about their own commonly held assumptions about their own constructions of reality in a way that provides a new account to be given?
- (h) Does the author *usefully* employ metaphors that dissolve underlying essences and replace them with differences and paradoxes?
- (i) Are semblances of an autonomous researcher and author suitably interrogated by devices within the text to reveal the dialogic, conversational aspects of knowledge generation by less bounded selves?
- (j) Are the narratives enacted in the text in a way that opens up the possibility of a fictive reading of events by readers?
- (k) Is the whole text narrated in a way that is ironically self-subversive and transient?
- (l) Does the criteria given for validity give rise to a plurality of judgmental styles by readers, relative to the particular context of that reading?
- (m) Does the text open up a cultural and rhetorical space that contrives a new style of values that might effect educational, human, and environmental flourishing of the participants of the research: the author, readers, adults, children, in the spaces and places of education, play, work etc? (Derived from my own reading of, among others, Stuart Parker's *Reflective Teaching in a Postmodern World*, 1997.)

Having written these challenging questions that will assert the validity of the text for individual readers, I fear I will fail in the task. Coherence will parade itself across the pages of many presentations of data and narrative in the records of my research. Deconstruction is invited in but perhaps is not acted-out sufficiently in this thesis.<sup>48</sup>

A further window on a similar version of criteria for validity would include a Foucauldian-Deleuzoguattarian interpretation. To enact this for us we could look for the transgressive validity of Patti Lather (1993). Her validity is *ironic, paralogical, rhizomatic, voluptuous* in character. She seeks out a validity that (ironically) exposes knowledge as a problem, acknowledges representation as difficult, (paralogically) fosters difference, anticipates a politics that desires both justice and the unknown, seeks out the oppositional, (rhizomatically) unsettles from within, generates new norms of understanding that are local (while working against some new regime), puts conventional discursive procedures under erasure, and (voluptuously) goes too far toward risky practice, embodies a situated, partial, positioned, explicit tentativeness, constructs authority via practices of engagement and self-reflexivity, creates a questioning text that is bounded and unbounded, closed and opened, and brings ethics and epistemology together.

Lather (1991) gives us some objectives we can no longer ignore in research since the postmodern encounter:

- (a) To make a space from which the voices of those not normally heard could be heard.
- (b) To move outside conventional research texts, outside the textual devices which are found in 'scientific' research.
- (c) To ask questions about the way the author constructs the research text and organises meaning - and in this way to highlight the performativity or constructive nature of language.
- (d) To challenge the myth of a found or already existing world in research and its communication outside the intrusion of language and an embodied researcher.
- (e) To explore a complex and heterogeneous reality which does not fit neatly into prescribed categories.

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<sup>48</sup> The irony of postmodern texts seems to be that the admission of failure is a prerequisite for 'success' in postrealist terms.

- (f) To be concerned with the politics of research - in particular to examine how any categorising is an act of power which always marginalises.
- (g) To put the researcher back into the picture. The researcher is a social subject in relation with others. The specificity of the researcher shapes the process and product of the inquiry. (See Lather, 1991)

I invite you as reader to evaluate this text along the lines of the tests for reflexivity and validity outlined above. Interestingly, I am largely absent from the pictures I include in the text - I struggle to include myself in the picture even in written format. I hide from your view. Largely, I am behind the camera but my view is never the view from nowhere; my subjectivity is entangled in the framing of the shot. I am an ex-teacher, a student researcher, someone who thinks that the categorising of children in contemporary ways are in need of reappraisal.

### **Validity in Interview Transcript Interpretation**

What we need are some new imaginaries of interviewing that open up multiple spaces in which interview interactions can be conducted and represented, ways that engage the indeterminate ambiguity of interviewing, practices that transgress and exceed a knowable order (Scheurich, 1997, p75).

Scheurich critiques the positivist approach to interviewing which is exemplified by such proponents of the purposeful conversation model of Lincoln and Guba (1985), the model that helps us access another's perspective (Patton, 1990). He succeeds, I feel, in doing this by exposing a postmodernist appraisal of the interview interaction. His arguments are multiple. He claims that there are many conscious and unconscious intentions present for the interviewer and interviewee which bring many elements of 'wildness' or chaos to the attempt to get some form of information out of another person. Expectedly, he uses the story of how language is 'slippery': there is no coherent connection between signifiers and referents that is free from ambiguity. Mishler (1986) has attempted to show how it is largely irrelevant where and when interviews are conducted; the transcripts are used to expose a truth that can be found in the text regardless, usually, of 'context-dependent local knowledge' type arguments. But my experience has been that it has been very relevant where interviews took place. Children who discussed the goings on in the playground while

standing under the stairs out of sight of their friends were more likely to discuss things of a personal nature.<sup>49</sup> Straus and Corbin (1990) also advise categorising discrete parts across time and place and interviews to generate truth. While some postpositivists like Mishler (1986) have criticised positivist methods of interview analysis, Scheurich (1997) correctly, in my view, criticises Mishler for continuing to attempt to devour and order all ambiguity using new structures. His notion that everything that goes on in an interview is brought about by an asymmetry of power is a totalisation. There are other things going on in interviews, as Scheurich points out. Beyond the dominance-resistance binarism, there are elements of chaos and freedom.<sup>50</sup>

Much of living, however, appears to go on outside the confines of the dominance-resistance binary. People work with horses, grow plants, invent or make or fix machines. They write poetry. They have intense, intimate one-to-one relationships. They not only pursue the wild profusion - they are the 'wild profusion'. Scheurich accepts that power relations may be present in all of these activities, but I too would like to claim that we can go beyond the binary description of dominance-resistance as well. Language, meaning, and communication deserve to be involved in a way that works against modernist intentions that block and control what is more diverse, fluid, and changing. Validity is a word that has changed in meaning over the years. Perhaps we need to move on with our interpretations of the word to open up new forms of what I like to call a knowledge-praxis that takes into account the idiosyncratic, location-specific, embodied, and ambiguous processual nature of interviewing specifically, and knowledge generation within the domination-resistance paradigm and within openings for 'wild profusion'.

In more general terms, validity can be understood as the key in systematic social science to enacting the Nietzschean/Foucauldian 'will to power' that results in dominance over the 'Other'. The Western knowledge project is understood by many as the force that attempts to incorporate the different into the 'Same' (see Scheurich, 1977, pp85-88; Min-ha, 1989, p66). We can look profitably towards new forms of validity as the 'play of difference'

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<sup>49</sup> One girl in another interview proceeded to climb up the wall of the school (rock climber style) while discussing the changes to the school grounds.

<sup>50</sup> Yet I can only remind readers that this is not the position I have worked with up to this point in the text. Hegemony (the constraining effects of discourse) and resistance to it may be all there is within a 'texts all the way down universe'.

(Scheurich, 1997, p90).

### **Staging Performances of Image-Based Texts**

Goffman has highlighted for us the dramaturgical nature of life (see Charon, 1995). He saw the drama and the ritual as mutually complementary in the collaborative manufacture of selves. For symbolic interactionists, like Goffman, the self is central and important as an actor, a product of the drama that is life, and as a collaborator in other's manufacture. The differences for an analysis of life through discourse and power is that there is no available authentic 'backstage' in proceedings. Scripts are always in use. Symbolic interactionists<sup>51</sup> try to leave language behind on the stage of life by getting behind the scenes through personal accounts, participant observation (Spradley, 1980), and the long interview. These methods are usually used to attempt to get to a truth about the lifeworlds under observation. I can find some use for such a realist methodology in my work since the insights gained from it at times informs it (especially in the narrations of my research practice in the appendices). Crucially for this research, an omission is the importance I attach to the interaction between places and people, largely ignored by symbolic interaction's attention to person-person interactions. For this research I have, in part, opted for a way of using visual imagery and other data collection methods that draw on theory and practice from performance studies and research in the 'postmodern'. I believe new research styles can enable a catalytic, if ambiguous, narration or interpretation of life that can accept the unavailability of a shared truth while still address the desire for research to transform society by interpretation.

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<sup>51</sup> In my view, symbolic interactionism rightly acknowledges how a person's construction of the world creates dimensions of freedom or constraint but fails to see the symbolic actions of the paradigms at work in symbolic interactionism as themselves constraining of individual freedom. The legitimisation of the objective detached observer is preserved and the partial, positioned self is eschewed.

### *Theatre Studies*

Exploring theatre studies can help us find a way of transforming spectators into protagonists in the action so that by this transformation, society can be changed rather than being content with interpreting it (Boal, 1992, p224). Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) is given a practical form (in *Games for Actors and Non-actors*, 1991) through the many exercises he describes for participants in his work. My research practice can shown to be similar to Boal's use of the concepts *Image Theatre* and *Invisible Theatre*. I want to show how such a research practice can be recorded and rehearsed for the reader actively in a text. I wish to show (by my own performative text) that this kind of research can be a useful way of democratically involving children (often less verbally articulate) in, for example, sculpting images of their lives for us through their interactions with me as photographer and in other 'performances' I caught on film that I re-enact in a framed way herein. Also, I wish to show that the inclusion of images pushes the reader to balance out an overly rational approach to knowledge generation.

### *Image Theatre*



Plate 10.

Boal's 'Image Theatre' is designed to explore culture without resorting to the use of spoken language. Participants make still images with their bodies to demonstrate their lives,

feelings, experiences, oppressions. They literally sculpt an image using the 'clay' of their bodies. The image is brought from the static to the dynamic through the next process of his work to explore intent and direction arising from the image. His idea is to 'short-circuit' the route through the brain by the use of our hands. His body images (like pictures) can paint a thousand words to connect with the viewer's and 'actor's' feelings and even the subconscious. Also, sculpting oneself, rather than talking is seen as 'more democratic' because it allows those with less verbal skills to participate.

So, in line with Boal, I was involved in 'stage managing' photographs both through my own action as a photographer and through the interactions of those being 'framed' by the camera's lens. The 'stagedness' of the photographs may make the research necessarily invalid, pseudo, or unethical, for many readers; for others it is an acceptance that other research methods like interviewing are also staged. When I took photographs, the children were often leading me around and were involved in actively 'showing me' (with their bodies and their language) 'how things were for them'. Their story is partially in corporeal form which they enacted for the camera, and hence for you, the reader. The children were mostly aware of the disseminative aspect of the work insofar as I could make it clear to them: they were told that I was trying to find out what it was like for them at school in their playgrounds so that we could think about making changes or so that others could learn about playground life; the children with disabilities were aware that we were trying to make changes to the local play areas as well. I would tell children in school settings that I wanted 'to find out how the playground worked for them' or 'which places in the playground were important to them and why' or 'which places had they a part in making changes to' and so on. They knew that I was to write stories about school grounds changes or that the local council had asked me to find out how public playparks were working for them so that future designers and planners could make changes *in their interest*. At times I took photographs as I saw fit with a view to recording what may be important later. At other times the children staged the photographs themselves. All the time, it was important to me that they were appreciative of the possibility that 'another' would get to see it.<sup>52</sup> The exposure of the film

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<sup>52</sup> Of course, at times the distinction as to which part of the event is more concertedly 'staged' and which is just the 'normal going on' is indistinct. We belong to multiple worlds at the same time. Two concurrent parallel worlds brought out by the use of photographs in the research were 'real life' (which we have seen earlier to be itself fictive in nature - like living inside a novel) and 'fiction'. This is why we must leave behind any attempt to do a naturalistic phenomenology.

recording excerpts of the story framed by me and others, 'the action' presented by the children's bodily activities, and the 'take' of interpretation catalysed or 'dynamised' (Boal's word) by my 'joker's subtext' can support, interrogate, or supplant each other. As performance subjects we are constructed in and through texts that interpenetrate each other. We navigate along a web of stories. We are interpellated (Birch, 1991, p4).

### *Invisible Theatre*

Another type of theatre referred to by Boal (1992) is *Invisible Theatre*. This is a form of theatre with a script; the difference between traditional forms of theatre is that it is to be performed in a place that is *not a theatre* and for an audience that is not aware that it is an audience. The stages onto which I walked, with the script I wrote for myself as researcher, were not conventional theatres; they were school grounds, classrooms, and playgrounds. I did engage in *Invisible Theatre* to the extent that I tried to make catalytic interventions in the scene under varying amounts of cover especially in the negotiation of access to schools, I engaged in an action research mode of conduct that went beyond participant observation (which, for me always seemed unavoidably catalytic anyway). I found that action research allowed for the bridging of the gap between the socially acceptable role of those who teach and help teachers in schools with the less esteemed role of 'researcher/expert' who visits, criticises, collects data and departs, never to be heard of again. Pragmatically, a school would be happy to have 'another hand on deck' and allow me freedom to get around the playground, interview children, and attend meetings dedicated to planning and design of school grounds. In this way, the ethically inspired role of action researcher maintained its ethically sound foundation: doing research *with* rather than *on* people but also gave me the 'cover' I needed to do something more akin to Fine's (1988) participant observation. While in schools, I allowed my attitudes to discipline, control, and play to be taken up in different ways by those who met me depending on whether it was a child or a teacher, a caterer or a janitor. As far as teachers were concerned I was more or less still a teacher, now on career break, still with all the abilities to teach and control a class; for the children, it was important that they did not see me as a teacher but as someone who wanted to find out about child cultures especially outside the classroom and they needed to know I was not in a position to punish or tell their parents what I heard. The complexity of the situation was further problematised by the way in which my 'private life' had 'invaded' my 'research life'. One teacher, who had become a very close friend indeed, had just moved into the school from



another local primary school. (At the time of writing we are engaged to be married.) We had been seeing each other for some time now and our relationship had become quite serious. She had become a key player in the school's progress towards developing the school grounds. She had created a playground committee and engaged children across the school in the design of playground markings. How was I to 'play' this one? Was our relationship to be an obstacle in how the other teachers would view my / her work? Would they refrain from criticising her efforts once they would know of our connection? I found myself doing a certain amount of 'participant observation' in the various settings of classroom, playground, staffroom, and at home. The idea of 'doing participant observation' with one's girlfriend was hardly a simple option, yet Sarah was a 'key informant' who was 'in on the act'. Reflexivity, as I had always expected it to be, was a continual struggle for awareness. The private, personal, social, and professional aspects of my life were melding into one research act. One helpful colleague, in whom I confided about the situation commented jokingly: 'So, you're sleeping with the 'data' now are you?'

### *Forum Theatre*

In *Forum Theatre* needing to transform spectators into protagonists in the action is central. Boal encourages audiences to halt the action, intervene in the act, to negotiate different outcomes. Sometimes a solution is not obvious or is perhaps not even found. This approach to research demands a facilitative role from the researcher who challenges others to construct their view of things so that their narrative will impact on the situation at hand. In my efforts to use 'forum theatre', I conducted sessions with children in schools where we tried to develop ideas for the changes we were to make in the playground. I also created fora for children with disabilities to participate in finding solutions to their different needs for local play opportunities. In these actions I hoped to turn spectators into protagonists - melding reflexive research *about* participation by being a participant observer in the action of encouraging participation *by* the children. The facilitative role meant intervening and acting in ways that changed the practices of those with whom I worked. A first-level validity is found in the narratives in Appendices C and G where readers can judge whether I was successful in effecting change; a second-level validity is found in the reflexive task of reviewing my experience (this part of the thesis); a further level of validity is judged by whether readers are affected by the thesis' rhetoric according to their own positional reading (see the introduction to the thesis for suggestions on enacting a reflexive readership of the

thesis). Boal claims that perhaps ‘the forum’ provides a function in ‘previewing’ the problem for those intent on acting out solutions in ‘real life’ (Boal, 1992, p231). The facilitator of forum theatre intentionally presents doubt and not certainty in *Forum Theatre* workshops. In all cases the role of the joker is crucial. He defines these (adapted and explained) characteristics of the joker (p232-4) which I found to be operative in the role I took up with the children in the landscape interventions I made and the action research cycles of the research with children with disabilities (see Appendices C & G) and hopefully in aspects of the enactment of the text as a whole:

1. I relay back doubt and inquiry to the audience.
2. I try to avoid manipulating the audience by clearly stating the ‘rules of the game’ (though they can be changed if the needs of the group dictate).
3. The joker practices a *maieutics* (midwifery) - the joker is a midwife. I (and participant readers) must be prepared to give birth to new ideas using a maieutics of body and spirit and not just our cerebral function.
4. Physical positioning was important (e.g. it was important for me to meet with children on the doorstep, in the playground, in the back garden).
5. Jokers watch out for *magic* solutions that would be improbable. In my work I had to help children get away from the magical allure of swimming pools and Disney-type solutions to planning and design problems; I also have to be wary of my own recommendations which are also Disneyesque solutions. I have to make readers aware of the rhetorical force of the text and enable openings for new interpretations and deconstructions to occur.

### **Theatre and Its Uses**

There is no ‘god trick’ being performed by a ‘view from above’ in this (see Haraway, 1991). When an image of an image is used in one of Boal’s exercises (1992, p201), the mixture is a *metaxis* (which for Boal means the living of a life in two worlds, the world of fiction and the world of reality). But Boal holds no essentialist concept of what reality is and how we might interpret it. The oppressed creates a narrative or event made up of images from his/her life. This oppressive reality is shown in images. These images are images of the real and are real in themselves. It is images all the way down but the way people connote images as oppressive or not is what is important. People’s desires about the creation of an alternative imaginary are central: these are the utopics I discuss later in chapter 16 with

respect to school grounds changes. Boal is ever ready to use drama to dislocate oppressive experiences of the (imaged) real, encouraging 'new takes' and endings to be discovered by the 'performers' who deal with 'real' personal issues. Birch (1991, p4) also advocates a *drama praxis* that tries to overthrow disabling images and identities. Behind it all is a centrally theatrical understanding of human life, but it is not Goffman's. We observe (we spectate) and act (we are actors): we are 'spect-actors', acting spectators (readers) and spectating actors (participants in the research) and *vice versa*. The injection of the theatrical into the everyday is of course a theme this text that has already been noted - it reasserts the move from the noun to the verb (rehearsed in chapters 1-8) which necessarily impacts on the way a text like this gets validated. The move from the *What?* to the *How?* of knowledge and power asks us to focus on the processes and texts that inspire our 'doing' (or not doing) and 'acting'.<sup>53</sup>

So far we have looked at how this text can be understood theatrically or performatively. We have also looked into how life itself can be looked at as staged: we live in 'dramatic' times. If there is a tautology at work here it is that the distinction between reality and a performance of it is blurred. Performance studies have looked at many everyday events as performances: circuses, sports, politics, fashion trends, therapies, and even plays without plots, characters and scripts. Blau (1990, p265) admits the human sciences into the frame of performance too. The only universal element of performance is that it can be found universally. In the postmodern moment the playful elements are valorised.

The limen or threshold of van Gennep, adapted by Turner (1990) is now the place wherein the deconstructed self is permanently homeless. For Turner, the liminal was only part of a three-pronged redressive process of ritual that sought to solve social crises. The other forms of redress available to society aside from the ritual form were seen as the political,

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<sup>53</sup> A Bakhtinian analysis of culture can help us find the topsy turvey nature of subversive clown actions within prevalence of the carnivalesque in society. Perhaps, if, indeed, there has been a loss of the carnival, the festival, and the expressive 'joker-body' on the serious stage of public life since Mediaeval times, Boal is one of those that wishes to reinstate it and for strategic libertarian reasons. Artaud's famous efforts to include theatre in real life and real life in theatre is an indistinction that will also provide us with a way into thinking about the drama of life (Artaud, 1993). Like the child who interrupts the 'real/sham' to expose the 'Emperor's New Clothes', we can find useful ways of supplanting the pseudo-reality we are used of with a performative, witty, and explorative alternative counter(feit)-reality. As with any improvisation, the last thing we would like to happen is that things would turn out the same each time. So with the reading of this text. It can be seen as an improvisation or rehearsal for other events. It can be re-read differently each time by the same or different readers.

military and the legal-judicial in nature (Turner, 1990, p10). Turner sees some moves to recover the preindustrial ritual processes that included many kinds of song and chant, body painting, and drinking of potions. While the entertainment and consumer industry have laid claim to the reemergence of these forms, there is some recovery of the numinosity of these rituals. Group experience is replicated, dismembered, remembered, and refashioned in ritual. How better to describe texts that use photographs, interpretive ethnographic data, poems and diaries? The ritual aspects of academic disciplines and their rhetorical tools is increasingly exposed as fictive by many practitioners (see Sutton-Smith, 1997).<sup>54</sup>

Turner hoped for a transcultural synthesis through performance; Schechner (1991, pp41-45) tried to come up with schemata for different magnitudes of performance for all times and places; Eckman (discussed in Schechner, 1991) is honoured for giving credence to the idea that certain facial and bodily displays might be understood universally at a transculturally human level. I am less hopeful of transcultural semiology. The elements of such a transcultural language would seem to be elements that are usually common to most performances: the body, the place, light, sound, gesture, motion, dress, mimicry, skill (see Blau, 1990, p268). In photography, these elements are present or implied and only sometimes absent. My photographs of people in places may witness to the presence of a bond between people and place or to the estranged nature of the relationship. In this research we shall also attend to the adult-child relationships, the child-place relationships, the child-child relationships as 'staged' herein. We can look (perhaps only in vain) for 'evidence' of community building<sup>55</sup>, 'communitas' (Turner, 1969), transformation in the performers, and in the spectator-performers (i.e. the reader), but most of this evidence of validity seems to have happened off camera, off-stage from the point of view of this text. For those who will valorise new forms of democracy (and active citizenship for children) we will search for ways of acting (reading and writing) theatrically that can have a voice at a time when culture is flooded with visual images that motivate impotence or unthinking mimicry.

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<sup>54</sup> The expansion of what is seen as theatrical is reinforced by the expansion of the image into and through the everyday. A cursory glance at the television schedules will show how the lives of 'ordinary workers' in airports, cleaners of the streets at night, the apprenticeship of trainee nurses all become suitable ingredients for documentary-dramas on television. The (albeit carefully edited) 'real life' action of policemen and policewomen is celebrated. No one worries if we get the actor's name mixed up with the stage name of or soap-opera characters who enter our living rooms every day.; coping with life for a royal is about having a good background in PR so that one can double guess the press's tactics.

<sup>55</sup> As already noted, I prefer Mouffe's definition (1998); Hetherington prefers to use the word 'Bund' first used by Schmalenbach (1961). Maffesoli (1988) has neo-tribe as the nearest word for community.

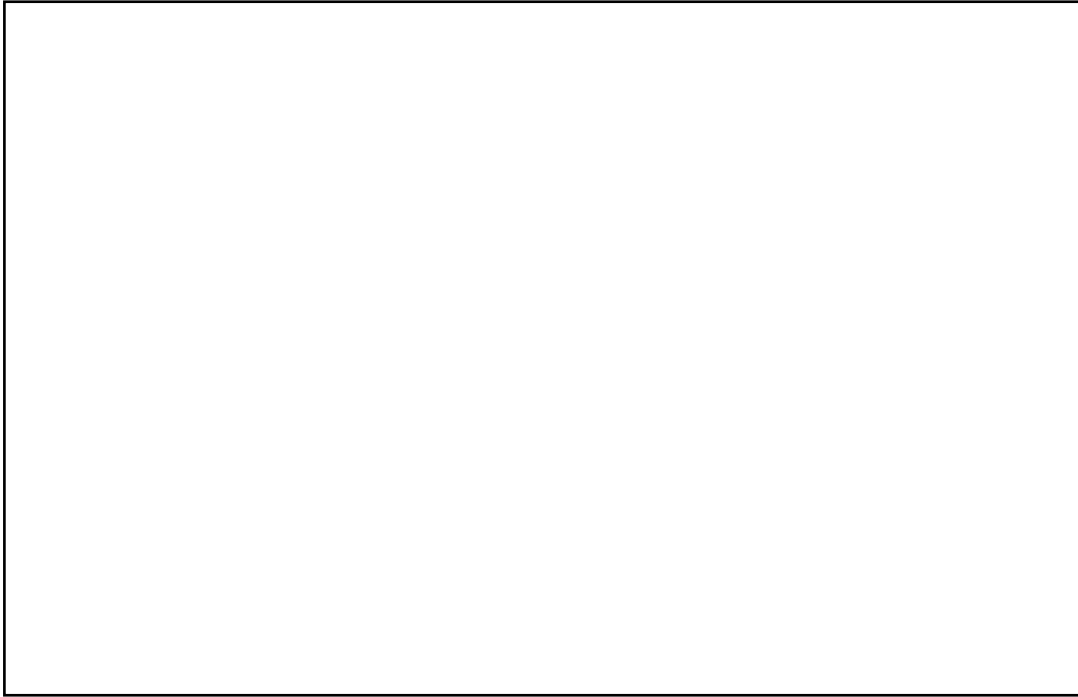


Plate 11.

To be effective in a more potent way, I invite the local, site-specific into the text. But, as we have been warned, we may never move outside the controlling power of speech. Derrida's critique of Foucault (referred to in chapter 6) has shown us that even the performance of madness will be encompassed by the forces of speech which prevents madness being realised. If this text valorises children, children's participation in new forms of democracy, adult play, new forms of rationality, it may only do so by their presence in the imaginary of the reader. Foregrounding the performative aspects of textual production and everyday life brings out the possibility of a consciousness of performance (Blau, 1990, p259).

Performances are there 'to be watched' and 'to be watched out for'. We are part of the panopticon and we have to work within it. Spectators are necessary for performances. Performers can be watchers and *vice versa*. There is no accessible 'original' to be found. We are left with the options of ironic, humorous, pragmatic, catalysis within discourse that allows for constitution by the gaze of others and opportunities for interdependent subjectifications that we can only struggle to reflexively know, manage, and transform.

We can usefully look at Turner's elucidation of the liminal, the liminoid, and theatre to explore the experiences of children in specific sites: the public playground, and the school

grounds. We can look to the dramatic sequences of separation, ludic recombinations, and reaggregations are potentially explanatory images for interpreting experience (Turner, 1990, p14). Finding validity in the process of drama and less in the written textual analysis of Geertz, we can follow Turner into the realm of the liminal-liminoid. Nowadays, it is easier to name the marginal than the central, the heterogeneous than the homogeneous, the dislocated than the located. It seems that nomads outnumber the residents; 'homelessness' of whatever form. Perhaps this is another way of reasserting our uniqueness. It is uniqueness that is the backbone of a shared humanity. Yet, it is some aspect of dislocatedness that is a given for the most of us in developed Western societies. Today, where thresholds and 'places-in-between' are more commonplace than 'real places' themselves, we can draw on Turner's theoretical tropes to discover if there is any validity to these assertions. Can a performative approach to research and social life be a worthy way of describing our subjectifications. This text, as a means of explanation, will not escape the critic's eye that sees knowledge as staged. A doctoral thesis will need to be 'acted out' as well - 'out' into a different time and place. Texts can produce changes. We can not get away from the realisation that cosmos is always produced through sequential/(cyclical?) destabilisations and restabilisations wherein the readings of text have a role. A cultural text is available to us in the rituals which need reading in an embodied participative way. Turner, speaking in 1980, points out the importance of entering reflexively into such ritualistic 'flow' experiences:

Cultures are most frequently expressed in and made of conscious of themselves in their ritual and theatrical performances

[ ... ]

A performance is a dialectic of 'flow', that is spontaneous movement in which action and awareness are one with 'reflexivity' in which the central meanings, values, and goals of a culture are seen 'in action', as they shape and explain behaviour. A performance is declarative of our shared humanity, yet it utters the same uniqueness of particular cultures. We will know one another better by entering into one another's performances and learning their vocabularies. (Turner, 1980, cited in Schechner's introduction, 1990, p1)

### **Researching Participation**

To do research on participation seems opportune for at least a few reasons. The most pressing is the observation that research on social phenomena has not led to sufficiently

transferable and useful knowledge to resolve collective problems such as pollution, conflict, misuse of power, or the participation of marginalised others in achieving desired forms of change. In this research the problems faced are many but are restricted to those found in the two arenas of my research: school grounds developments and the planning and design of public play parks. 'Proper' forms of participation may provide what is needed to get problem solving at a collective level off the ground. Children's participation is advocated and encouraged by the research methods and takes up an ethico-practical position in relation to data generation, my relationship with respondents and knowledge generation / findings. Methodologically, I have called my approach catalytic participatory research (see chapter 9) which is now resulting in a participatory approach to researching participation.<sup>56</sup>

Taking a lead from Smyth (1987, p158) and Jennings and Graham (1996, pp267-278), I made an early shot at writing some key catalytic intervention-type questions appropriate for his research which asks me as a researcher to look into the systems and cultures of which the researcher is a participant. Researchers (as readers) can all find fresh reasons why such questions are pertinent and necessary in educational inquiry generally because they participate in some ideological setting. For me asking these questions was particularly necessary as I was looking into how peoples 'sense of place' might get changed as a result of participating in trying to change it.

#### *Questions for Researchers*

- ◇ Where do our ideas about teaching, learning, and residing in a place come from biographically?
- ◇ How did I come to appropriate these ideas and what have they got to do with my 'sense of place'?
- ◇ What social and cultural conditions cause me to continue to endorse these ideas or change them?
- ◇ Whose interests do my ideas actually serve?
- ◇ What powers, interests, false utopias are expressed in my relations between myself, my 'home', and others as I teach, learn, reside, or engage in inquiry?

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<sup>56</sup> The need for participation to research participation brings on the same problems experienced by Ashmore who researched reflexivity (1989). Stronach and MacLure (1997) experience the a similar unfinished circuit of trying to unpack the issues with questions and deconstructive argument only to find the suitcase has no bottom.

- ◇ Don't some of my practices always accommodate to *some* dominant ideology that needs to be challenged and deconstructed?
- ◇ How can I pragmatically encourage the naming of and resistance to oppressive ideologies?
- ◇ In view of this are there not grounds for radically changing the way I teach children, the way I learn, the way I reside in my 'home', and the way I engage in inquiry?
- ◇ What are the dialogic and dynamic considerations we need to take into account in attempting to initiate change in social (intertextual) settings that are in process already?

### **Melding Philosophy and Methodology: A Summary of Sections A and B**

In the performance of this research for a doctorate we could read this text as a flat (dead?) script that supports the (live?) viva: the action *in vivo*. But, as I have argued, I'd rather see the text itself as a performative act: a practice. Within the frames of the chapters on philosophical and methodological considerations there have been subplots in a fringe theatre. In the foregone chapters I have given a narrative of how I arrived at the following presuppositions:

- There is no gap between what counts for 'valid science' and what is better described as ideologically inspired inquiry. Being ideologically driven is inexorable. Traditional objectivity is unavailable to us. (See Chapter 1).
- Because the disciplines of knowledge we are familiar with provide bounded narratives that tell only one side to the story, we may need to make an effort to work across the disciplines and between them to make some marginal voices heard. (See Chapters 1,2 & 5).
- We have no choice except to accept our positioned situation with regard to research: we are agents of change whether we like it or not. (See Chapters 4, 11, 18, & 19).
- We are always 'for something' (consciously or unconsciously) in the way we do research but what we advocate may not be the right thing: our emancipatory aims are ultimately relative and have no foundational support. (See Chapter 4).
- The 'self' is constituted by discourse (we live inside language) but this does not mean that we are necessarily determined by it. (See Chapter 7).
- Being pragmatic in a reflexive way demands that one is always prepared to make fresh judgments about the usefulness of the constructs of reality with which one is working. Being reflexively advocative will mean that the direction narratives about research take will change as one becomes aware of the need to ditch some presuppositions or emancipatory aims in favour of others. (See Chapters 11 & 8).



- Texts (for which we may read ‘culture’, narratives, places) are never static objects; they exist as active discursal effects in the lives of those who hear them, read them, believe them, narrate them in their lives. Text are always experienced as performances enacted by someone from a partial position located somewhere. (See chapters 10 & 11)
- Since there are no essential or original characteristics attributable to people, places, or categories, we will only pragmatically/ethically work with such categories or deconstruct such categories to expose previously hidden differences. (See this chapter, & Chapters 8, 10, & 11).

Other assumptions I have set out in the introduction to the thesis (p6) have been:

- ◊ *Writing a thesis is an activity rather than any reflection or objectification of culture. Language is always participatory within, and constructive of, culture itself.*
- ◊ *There are historical forces and contexts that will effect how this text is to be read and how meaning can be drawn from it.*
- ◊ *The narrative (discourses) that are found herein have begun a matrix of dialogical relation between a variety of contexts and with a variety of people. This ‘conversation’ is an ongoing one that gets reinterpreted with each reading.*
- ◊ *There are transactions occurring between a variety of selves (protagonists) in the text.*
- ◊ *There will be no final say to be found in the text because the reader always participates in emergent meaning generation with each successive reading. (See also chapter 7)*

Some other theoretical resources lie as yet untapped in my struggle for melding philosophy and methodology into a theory of practice. Geography and feminism will be employed to help me ask: ‘How can places be inhabited in a new way?’ and ‘How can we re-imagine the *container* or the *envelope* of identity?’ The use (or abuse?) of the theoretical resources to be found in feminism for the analysis of the research practice of the writing of this doctorate will be given in the chapters in Section E. But I’d like to place something else as centre-stage just now: these are the performances of my research activities in the two analyses of the school grounds and the public play parks - Section D. But, a further stage has to be set. I have prepared some of the props (the readings) and rehearsed some lines and done some improvisations: my *Philosophical Considerations* and *Methodological Considerations*. The dramatis personae (myself and the participants in the research) have found a director (me as Stanislavski) and the production of the (another) ‘play’ is about to begin. As ‘Executive Producer’ you have the pleasure of making cuts, shortening each act, or replacing actors with others you know better. You might even wish to prompt the respondents from the wings or you may subversively change the set between acts while the lights are down. You might even get on stage

yourself wearing a mask: be a child, be an adult - the choice is yours. I await the review and the words of the harsh or sympathetic critics in the news paper after the previews. What I suggest is that Appendices A to H can now be read in the context of what has gone on in chapters 1 to 10 so far. Section C (to follow) gives a narrative of the context for the research in terms of the 'substantive issues': children's participation and outdoor public places.

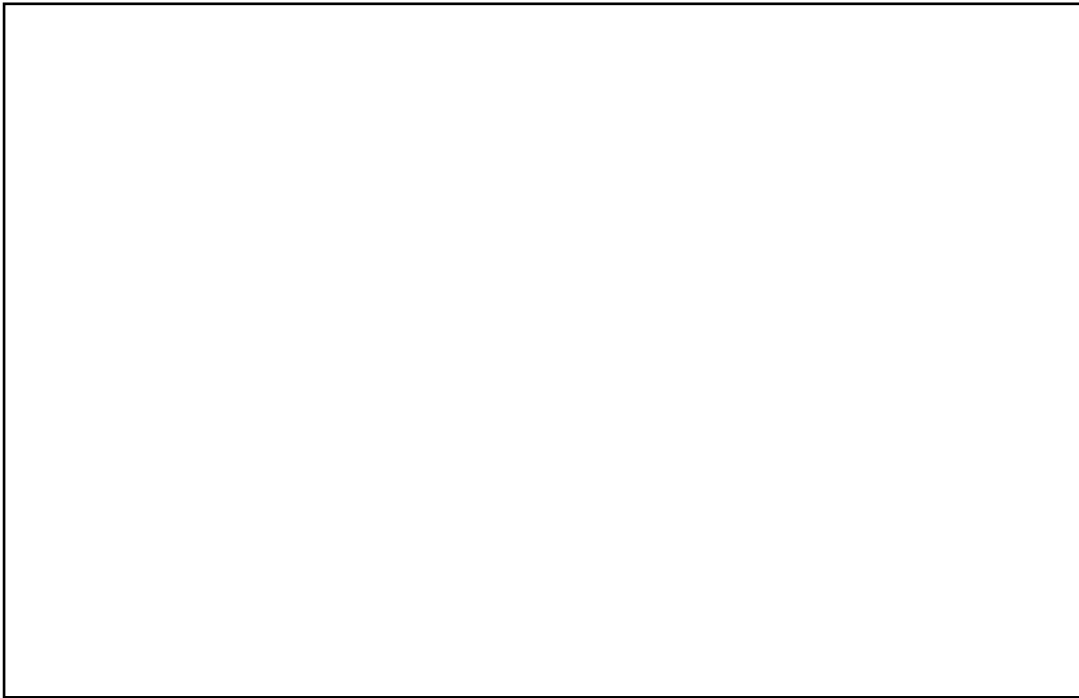


Plate 12.

SECTION C

***CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS***

## **Chapter 12.**

### **THE NARRATION OF CHILDREN'S EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION**

#### **A Slice of History**

In this chapter I give one possible narrative account of the history of children's participation *as I see it*. To narrate this slice of history, I refer readers to Appendix H where I give examples from adults' accounts of their own childhoods, an analysis of some photographs taken in Manchester at a time of urban change, some commentary from some famous educationalists' theories, and some referential (if not too reverential) treatment of some historians views of the birth of the construct 'childhood'. A largely unreferenced *summative account* of the chapter suffices here in to keep the thread of the argument of the thesis alive in one document but some readers may wish to dip into Appendix H for a more in-depth account. Along with Foucault and Aries, the main context for the writing of a history in this thesis is for its informative account of a present time rather than any effort to tell it as it actually was (see Cox, 1996, p199).

#### **Exclusion**

Most notable in my historical analysis are two gradual processes: the disappearance of children from the workplace and the appearance of children in schools and institutionalised care-giving settings outside of the close-knit settings of community and extended family over a relatively short space of time. With increasing modernisation came the loss of opportunities for children's participation in the communal work and play life of the extended family and larger community and the relegation of children's place to places of play and schooling. A later technological innovation, the car, reduces children's access to the street (given as an example of one of the last remaining communal settings), with children's outdoor experiences being further contained within the corralled play area. This historical aspect of the thesis advances the view that in Modernity, children have been increasingly separated from adults and distanced from kin-based relationships by a compendium of forces including the onset of industrial technology, the professionalisation of care and education, and the legislation of safety.

Historians have explained how new idea of ‘childhood’ could be traced through the introduction of child-specific clothes and toys for the upper classes (Aries, 1973; Stone, 1979), child-specific places such as separate bedrooms in the home and separate places for learning in the school (Echberg, 1998, pp50-58). But the single most important influence out of all of these is the onset of schooling which removed children from the spaces of labour. The narrative here is that children became disenfranchised from work-based learning situations (or learning-based work situations) within community settings or in relations of apprenticeship through the period of the Industrial Revolution and became a social group unto themselves. The advance of images like the innocent or evil child inspired even greater control and protection of children. They were seen as either evil or innocent but always weak. Adults felt they needed to protect their innocence and strengthen their weakness through regimes of discipline and control. From the perspective of children’s participation (seen in this study as a ‘good thing’) this is a story of children’s exclusion from participatory realms of culture, resulting in children’s participation going into marginal sites (children’s own spaces) for children’s own activities. Children were thus one social group (along with many others) that were relegated to participation in cultural practices in largely indoor places with some attendant effects on health<sup>57</sup>. In public spaces (like the street or the commons for shared grazing) the boundary between what was private and what was public, between what was work and what was play, may have seemed seamless in a way that is inconceivable today in most urban environments. With the regulation and surveillance of space in modernity, we find a loss of a participatory public space for children.<sup>58</sup>

## **Inclusion**

Currently, there are some movements that lay claim to spaces that are shared through counter-cultural practices. The reclamation of some public space is indicative of the severity of the regulation of most other space. Other points of interest in Appendix H include how waves of interest in the benefits of the outdoors become perceptibly important

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<sup>57</sup> Some of these effects may still be felt today; children’s levels of fitness are seen to be falling due to their lack of exercise.

<sup>58</sup> The account of the schooling of children, their delimitation by spatial practice, and their disenfranchisement through the loss of status is not just a story that pertains to children. We may be misled into thinking that children were thus marginalised and controlled *by adults*. By another reading, the processes of surveillance and control, through the advancement of technology in modernity effects other social groups in a similar way. For example the family was also ‘schoolled’ too through a moralisation of society or in Elias’s (1939) words through a ‘civilising process’.

in times of struggle, survival, or necessity. During World War 2 children were encouraged to use parts of school grounds as gardens. When tuberculosis was a health issue for children, the schools' outdoor aspects again regain importance. These stories give a further context to the present interest in outdoor settings for children (in school grounds developments and in public play provision) indicative, perhaps, of a culture's experience of new needs. For some the survival of 'the ecological community' is posited within the narrative of the need for a more sustainable future. For others, it is a locally-based struggle for a safer childhood experience through the spatialisation of local politics. The contest of ownership of space is symptomatic of a cultural movement which tries to connect people to places in processes of identity politics. These larger cultural movements shape and effect children's participation too and are given a fuller treatment later. The resurgence of importance of local knowledge seems to arise at times when the outdoors is a space that is recognised as increasingly separated from people's lives and becomes an important site of identity formation and learning.

In contrast to the loss of opportunities for meaningful participation in culture and politics, we find that, through the influences of television mainly, we have not left children with much difficulty in gaining access to *information* about the world. Children are now very knowledgeable about their rights, their sexuality, the effects of drugs, and many have the time and money to spend on the consumption of experiences at increasingly younger ages but few children find themselves faced with any obligation or opportunity to participate in decision making, in the democratic system, or in taking responsibility for others except perhaps in some homes. Some research evidence is presented that shows how more and more of children's own time and travel through space is managed and timetabled especially in middle class families. In this light, the allure of the exotic, the narcotic, the occult, and the entertaining are what we have left children to explore in the absence of opportunities for meaningful participation in their locales. As a result, children's own culture is forced into a subversive and counter-cultural 'underground'. Children's own culture gets consigned to islands within an otherwise 'adult-controlled' institutional world: the locked bedroom, the school toilet, the back of the school huts, or the few remaining outdoor public spaces where children can get free access. All this leaves children with few opportunities for participation in the oppositional adult world except through logging onto the internet or taking a badly

paid weekend job.<sup>59</sup>

Children's participation in culture and politics is centrally concerned with having a range of possible identification possibilities. The effects of our latest technologies inscribe new forms of control over identity formation while at the same time offering new opportunities. With time-space distancing (Giddens, 1990, pp18-19), technology mediates identity options through the processes of food production and consumption, and processes of message production and consumption. Mass consumption of products such as 'the ready made meal' and the advertising message means that localities are losing (or have lost) their previous local distinctiveness (Clifford and King, 1993) through an embrace of the corporate, the massified and the globalised. Global messages cut across the local spaces I describe in chapters 13-18. New opportunities for a different kind of subjectivity are enabled by participation in more virtual communities (through the Internet, within the fantasy worlds of the *Spice Girls*, or the 'New World soaps'). Interestingly, cyberkids and cyberadults are potentially given a more 'level playing field' in these virtual places.

Readers are invited to read Appendix H for a more in-depth analysis.

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<sup>59</sup> Importantly, Walkerdine (1997) sees how there are cracks in this narrative that show how children's creativity can navigate oppositional childhood identities are acquired by children even from within the range of identity options available to them through consumerism. Walkerdine (1997) shows how it is in children's glorification of sexualised versions of their identities that agency can be attained in opposition to the 'innocent, good girl' image that disenfranchises them from meaningful cultural participation within an adult world. Beresin (1993) shows that children organise themselves as a large community in an environment that is framed by adults but it is not as a result of adults' control that children's participation in making their own culture function in such a rich and diverse way.

## Chapter 13.

# CONTEXTS AND DEFINITIONS OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

### **The Construction of Childhood**

James (1998) argues that we need to view childhood as a construction that takes different forms in different times and places and that may not be found at all in some cultures. Most will now agree with James' understanding of the relative, socially-constructed nature of childhood (James, 1998): that childhood is a social and cultural, and not universal, phenomenon. Ennew (1986) has argued that the vision that the innocent child in need of protection is probably a particularly Western notion. The idea that the child can be envisioned as a worker, a carer, or a community activist are still images that are found to be unappealing to many in the West. Some recent interest in creating a 'new sociology of childhood' accepts this challenge arguing for a focus on children's point of view as active agents in the co-construction of child culture, childhood and society (Qvortrup, 1993, p14). Corsaro (1997) follows Qvortrup closely and stakes out an 'interpretative reproductive' model for the sociology of childhood. Here, children actively appropriate from adult cultures *and* actively influence adult cultures too. In this way childhood and adulthood get reproduced at the same time by a mixture of adult and child influences (Corsaro, 1997, pp18-27). By seeing adulthood and childhood in this 'messy' way the differences between adulthood and childhood are less obvious though not noted in their literature: children and adults both appropriate information and knowledge from each others' worlds; both adults and children independently participate and produce their own peer cultures; and both adults and children reproduce and extend adult and child worlds. Corsaro fails to draw out the glaringly obvious consequences once his premises are viewed this way. The (perhaps unanswerable) question I pose is: how will we recognise or find the ever-moving dividing line between the social worlds of adults and children if they both function and interact in the same way and they are both implicated in each others definition in a diffuse way through the action of reproduction? We are now more unsure than ever about what are the aspects of childhood that make it a structural form any different from the mythic realities of social class or race despite efforts to unite the socially-constructed view with biological perspectives (see Panter-Brick, 1998). Criticisms of the linear, developmental stories of



child development have gained in strength (Corsaro, 1997). While the fictional adult-child dualism is under threat, there are still few other useful metaphors for analysing the situation. The problems with lumping children (or adults) into a homogeneous group hides the internal differences within this social group along the lines of gender (see Appendix E), class, or disability or the confused identifications we can find in the childlike-adult or the adultlike-child. Constructivist theories of childhood have their use especially in taking a historical angle on things. Their relativistic view of reality can be used to explore how discourses construe childhood from different perspectives which is attractive. The ‘socially constructed child’ (James, Jenks, and Prout, 1998, Jenks, 1982, James and Prout, 1990) is structural but, open to deconstruction and change. But constructs are easily reduced to meaningless tropes by referring to the local and particularistic and yet, this paper *will* use social constructivist theory *for its utility* in discussing how discourses from the disciplines address children’s experiences of place.

Two popular constructions that have been identified in the literature are: the marginal child, and the tribal child. I will try to show how these metaphorical images of the child effect children’s experience of, and opportunities for participation in the changing of school grounds.

#### *The ‘Marginal Child’ - Children as ‘Oppressed Minority Group’*

Some theories of childhood try to sustain a semi-structural reading of childhood, taking a Marxist view of adults’ exploitation of children’s labour (Oldman, 1994, p163) or see children as a minority group not unlike women. Undoubtedly, some stories from schools can be read this way to support interpretations like these. This tale explicates the point. One school introduced loose play equipment to the playground with the restrictions that should play equipment be lost or damaged it would not be replaced until the end of the year. If equipment was ‘mishandled’ it would be withdrawn.

At the moment the box only contains a couple of things to play with. There will be more toys to come, *but only* on the condition that you are able to show that you are looking after, and playing properly with the ones you have been given for now. Classes who lose or damage equipment will not have anything added to their box. (Of course we realise that as toys get older they may break) If your class does not look after the equipment, or play well with it, your teacher has the right to withdraw

it from use at any time (or withdraw particular items) ('Teachers' Information Sheet' for pupils attention written by a teacher with playground responsibility)

Taking the 'marginal child' image to its conclusion, we may be tempted to claim that at school children are controlled and marginalised by their 'adult oppressors' where children's 'work' is unpaid and devalued. A sequence of one historical reading of the evidence supports this narrative of the marginalisation of children through schooling (Appendix H). Today, evidence of the spatially marginal child can be found in that most schools have designated 'no-go' areas. The 'banishment' of children from certain areas according to gender, age or behaviour along with rewards for good behaviour in the playground or lining up correctly are indicative of how strategies are in the tool kit of adults who control space (but who themselves may be under surveillance to enact the role of oppressor for some fictional and absent 'other').

But a counter view is just as easy to find. I will use evidence to show how children too control space within the playground, determining who goes where and gets to play with what. What we end up with is an agreement with the argument made in chapters 1-8 that we may be completely constituted by discourse but not necessarily determined by it (Benhabib, 1992). Some girls I interviewed (Appendix E) spoke of how they 'managed' the parallel bars (fixed climbing frame) as a space to which they allowed shared or restricted access within certain groups of children. But while there is evidence that children can create their own cultural milieu and participate in self-directed activities<sup>60</sup> (Beresin, 1993; Appendices A, pp22-24; Appendix B passim) children are not encouraged to self-direct their learning in the main. The Marxist, social class analogy is not appropriate for describing all the forms of control and domination that occurs. The 'enemy-oppressor' described by critical theoretical discourse is not as clearly defined as we would like. Oppression through surveillance or other social methods of control is an elusive entity. It can be internalised and be as much part of the decentred and non-foundational, non-essentialist 'self' as a part of some

<sup>60</sup> In Appendix A I discuss the findings of a piece of research that sought to discover the extent of children's familiarity with a local country park. I demonstrate the extent of the activities children undertook there alone and with their peers. Children regularly organised their friends to convene and go on visits there during which time they developed complex and detailed knowledge of the environment independent of adults. In Appendix B I discuss the evidence that supports the view that children in one locale continue to make their own dens, huts, forts, (reminiscent of the findings of Hart (1977) and Sobel (1993) while in school grounds settings I find that at least some children are in strong positions of control over the games they played in the playground.

imagined structural feature in someone's view of society (Foucault, 1980). Along Foucaultian lines, our societal experiences are undoubtedly riven with relations of power. Power may find itself played out through the actions and voices of unsuspecting actors as much as intentional actors and will appear in a multitude of settings where there are children or adults, or both.

### *The 'Tribal Child'*

This thesis centrally adopts the metaphor of 'tribe', (Maffesoli's neo-tribe, [1988, 1996]) to describe children's social lives for particular strategic reasons and because it metaphorically describes much of the evidence I encountered - it provides a 'truth' to be reckoned with and used as a tool for analysis in this participatory text. By seeing social phenomena as the tribal eruptions of sociality (Maffesoli, [1998,1996]) we can leave mainstream social constructivism of social class behind. I will adopt the metaphor of 'the tribal child' as a more *useful* metaphor than that of the minority child or the socially structural child. Maffesoli's view takes all societal activity as the tribal negotiations of multiple subcultures; for our purposes this includes the many and various childhood cultures we might encounter<sup>61</sup>. This metaphor tends to encourage the researcher to particularise all experience to local time and place, while referring to other meta constructs only in order to engage with their discourses. We can see patterns without using them to support strong structural readings of any one reality called childhood, and we can allow for a more effective dissolution of the difference between adult and child cultures as commonly imagined. The 'tribal child' metaphor usefully subverts the hegemony of adultist discourses of structuration and socialisation. It provides for more agency within child cultures than other images offer and can provide an exposition of how children engage in a navigation of identity formation (or subjectification) which will be portrayed as more similar to the experience of adults than dissimilar. In fact it may be easier to see it as the *same journey* fraught with the conflicting elements of having to make moral choices in a risk society and deal with rational, irrational, and ludic elements of life experience. Following Valentine, I seek to explore the 'fluid and unstable nature of 'adult' and 'child'' (Valentine, 1997, p68). Valentine argues for a radical geography that would work against the annihilation of children's public space by curfews and surveillance by placing the voices of spatially

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<sup>61</sup> Readers are reminded that this study is of children in a modern Western society. Children's cultures elsewhere will undoubtedly be different.

competent children in arenas where planning decisions are made. Alongside these arguments I argue for working against the forces that unnecessarily constrain children's participation in decision making when it comes to the planning and design of outdoor public spaces in the texts I write and in the action research I engage in.

### **The Imaging of Childhood**

Children are often photographed in ways that place them as either innocents at play in idyllic situations or in children-need-of-help or safety from dangers (as is the case with some of the photography of children in wartime situations or children at work in developing countries). Hevey (1992) found that the imaging of people with disabilities foregrounded the idea that they were to be pitied or given charity and sought to subvert this by taking alternative types of photographs. In a unification of aesthetics, ethics, and a valid research methodology (discussed chapters on methodology), I hope to subvert some of these images of the child by also presenting alternatives. We can usefully notice how the parallel problems exist for adults and for children with disabilities as exist for children generally: they are either to be pitied and are tragic or they are 'brave' in the face of their 'flaw' (see Hevey, 1997, 345-346). For the disabled, the 'flaw' they carry is their disability; for children generally, their 'flaw' is their immaturity, their confinement to being appreciated as a 'self' only within a constraining context. The context for the child is that s/he will be a citizen 'someday' *but not now*. Along with James (1998) I also attest to the ideology that 'how children are regarded, how they are treated and expectations about their competencies and abilities as social actors - varies both over time and in social space.' (James, 1998, p47). Cross-cultural studies have shown that the vision that the child is to be cherished and nurtured in their potential as the next generation of adults is a particularly Western one. Not every culture sees the need to separate off children off from the dangerous adult world, and to 'seclude them in a distinctive social and cultural world of childhood' (James, 1998, p49). The socially constructed nature of different experiences of a range of different childhoods now emerges in research to challenge socially structural approaches. For our research here the implications are that we will need to uncover the practical affects of the particularly Western vision of the construction of childhood when it comes to children's participation in decision making, planning and designing, and physical work-based elements of school grounds and public play park developments. We may find movements that challenge our common-sense notions of what we regard as the normal Western child in some school

grounds developments.

### **Children as Active Citizens**

A re-contextualisation of children's position in society is captured by writers focussing on children's rights and children's participation; the fiction of the 'marginalised child' is operative here. Having traced (retold) the story of a particular view of the history of childhood, we move into the specific arena of child activism and political action *for* children's participation in contemporary Western society. The child has had an interesting history. We have considered how valid the story of children's exclusion from the adult world is. Winter (1997) supports an exclusionist theory arguing that children are far from being the active citizens they can be. After a brief look at Winter's theory of the excluded (marginalised) child, we can then look to efforts to respond actively to the challenge of inclusion in different contexts: in schools, in the neighbourhood, and in wider society. There are sample cases from the literature that show how efforts are made to involve children in local projects and in decision making. These are the responses to Winter's plea: *we need to involve children as active citizens*. These stories give a yet more embellished context for the narration of my own action research projects in two arenas: the changing of school grounds and public play areas through children's participation.

### **This is the way to 'Youthland'**

Winter (1997) argues that children have been confined in a special glasshouse of 'Youthland'. We 'raise' children by keeping them 'down', getting them off the street (and into playgrounds or commercial play centres), getting them safe (and into care or out-of-school care), getting them away from the vices of 'child labour', keeping the evils of war and immorality away from them. The West's desire to legislate and create a culture wherein the child has a protected paradise (a 'Youthland') in which to express him/herself, has brought with it some serious drawbacks: 'For a large part of their young life the new generation is excluded from all sorts of things that happen in the world around them' (Winter, 1997, vi). School grounds have to be seen as part of this 'Youthland'. School grounds at best simulate the adult world and provide an education 'for' citizenship and little opportunity for actual activism 'as' citizens. But things are happening in school grounds that contest the idea that school grounds are 'set-apart' places. There is a quiet invasion of these spaces by people who would normally be outsiders in school contexts: most obvious

among these are the parents.

Much adult-child interaction happens at a bureaucratic distance. Usually, the result is that children end up as social outsiders; things happen *to* the child: plans are made, houses are built, playgrounds are designed, etc. and society ends up with an anonymous quality:

Who knows who the playgrounds in the neighbourhood belong to, who is responsible for maintenance and hygiene, whom to turn to to get something done about insecurity in the streets. And what child feels that the school is also his or hers, so that by breaking windows he is also breaking his own windows. This is what the world looks like to the present generation; however smart they are, they do not count until maturity. Then all of a sudden society expects responsibility, independence, and, in particular commitment. (Winter, 1997, vii)

Winter's account of the exclusion of children is seen as a serious miscalculation which we should redress. Organisations like *Save the Children* (1997) endorse the idea that we have a crisis of communication between adults and children. They ask for renewed efforts to involve children and young people. There are books written (Children's Rights Office, 1997, *Save the Children*, 1997) about getting adults thinking about these issues and techniques presented as ways of encouraging participation by children. It is as though we have forgotten (if indeed we ever knew) how to communicate with each other transgenerationally. The active involvement of children and young people in their own local environment is still not a mainstream reality and is hardly to be found in much social policy relating to children: this is what makes the activism between adults and children in school grounds contexts even more interesting. For Winter, participation brings commitment to the various social circles of which children are not a part. Currently we can find a movement to embrace school grounds within this widening circle of spatialisation. There are rewards to be gained in the present as well as in the future by both adults and children. Winter (1997) advocates participation because it will lead to increased confidence, self respect and a feeling of solidarity, all of which is supported to a degree by research (see 'The Utopics of Sustainability and Citizenship' and 'Communitarian Utopics' in chapter 16).

### **What is Participation?**

But before looking at the signs of benefits from participation we need to outline a broad

discussion on what participation actually is. Participation in democracy normally takes the form of one or more members (or representatives) of a community, a company, a committee or a group of deprived or under-privileged people, being invited to get together.



Plate 13. Children involved in groupwork outdoors drawing up their designs for a seating area in the school grounds. See Appendix C, p7.

The aim is about becoming sufficiently connected to solve a problem, take a decision, or develop a set of action plans. The work of the group may take a few days or weeks, the effects of their plans are expected to persist for months, years, or even decades. Miller (1997, p6) explains that participation is not just about being consulted about something. In consultation the power still remains with the people doing the consulting. In participation the decision making is shared *and so is the power*.<sup>62</sup>

### **How Shall We Know Participation When We Find It?**

In a classic democratic definition, following Pateman (1970, p110), participation by a stakeholder should mean that one is better equipped to make decisions (of the largest scope), better able to assess the performance of representatives, and better able to weigh up the impact of decisions taken by representatives on your own life and surroundings. One drawback of this kind of definition is that there is the opportunity to postpone participation by children because they are not equipped; education falls in as the great necessary postponer which is necessary to 'equip' the young.

Perhaps a better test for the presence of participation would be the recognition of its effects. Evaluations of good participation could reasonably ask: have those involved broadened their view beyond self-interest, improved their communication skills, decision making ability, or their ability to work with others? Is there a recognition that rights have been extended beyond the usual constituents? In extending rights to others is there a recognition of the stake for other species and the environment? Have new levels of compliance been accepted? Most importantly, we could ask: have those involved enhanced their sense of their own worth and increased their identification with a community<sup>63</sup> (and is this utopic community their 'own community' or the 'adult community' or some transgenerational reconstruction of a new community)? When it comes to schemae for analysing participation, the most widely accredited scale of 'levels of participation' goes to Arnstein (1979) who constructed a ladder to describe them. (See fig. 1 below).

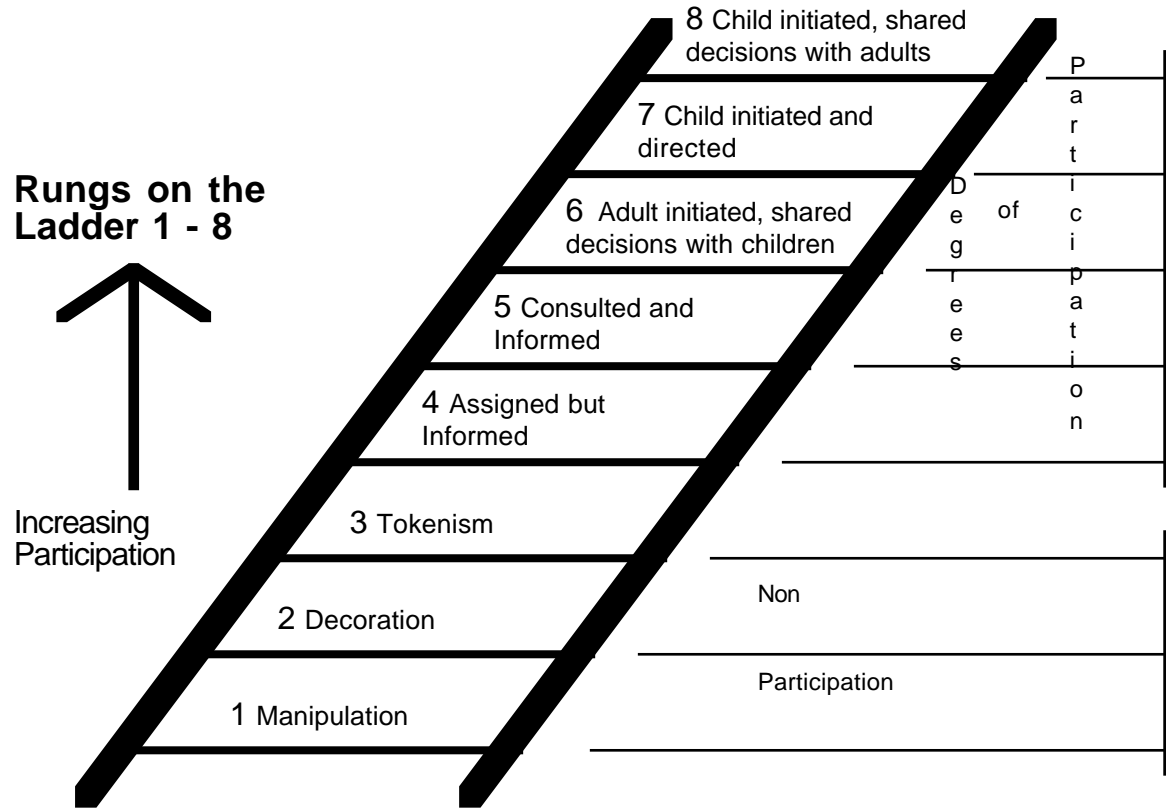
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<sup>62</sup> To be more Foucaultian about it, we might think about the redistribution of power in relations rather than any 'sharing' of it.

<sup>63</sup> Aside from the many other footnoted definitions of community I would draw attention here to Talen (1999) who gives space to the spatial aspects of the development of a sense of community. Public space, she argues, can provide opportunities for 'chance encounters' and for community gatherings that work against the fragmentation of community through privatisation.



# Hart's Re-Configuration of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation



Hart (1992); Arnstein (1979)

Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Hart's Ladder of Participation. (See Hart, 1997, p41).

**NOTE:**

While Hart (1997) notes that the ladder shows a model of increasing participation as one goes up the ladder, he makes no claim that one should be working towards being on rung eight for all situations. Children may be happy to work on different levels. The most important thing is to avoid working at the three lowest levels of 'non-participation'.

## **Arnstein's Ladder of Participation**

Commonly known as the 'ladder of participation', this formulation of how children's participation can be conceptualised is gaining recognition. This is mainly due to the work of Hart (1992) who reconfigured Arnstein's ladder so that it reads from the perspective of children's participation. Flekkoy (1997) has given her own interpretation of the ladder<sup>64</sup>. I give my own account of how I explained Hart's ladder to groups of children with whom I worked to assess their own levels of participation. I used the more easily understood language (in caps) with the children. My purpose was to enable children to gauge their own level of participation in projects undertaken in schools. The eight levels are described in child-friendly language (in block capitals) starting with the upper most rung (though this is not necessarily the 'best' form of participation). I used this 'ladder' to discuss and assess children's participation in projects that I came across in the schools I visited (see Appendix D).

**8. Child initiated, with shared decisions with adults:** children have the ideas and come to the adults for advice, discussion and support. LOTS OF SAY, WELL-INFORMED, SHARED DECISIONS ALL THE WAY & CHILDREN DECIDED ON THE PROJECT IN THE BEGINNING AND THROUGHOUT THE DURATION OF THE PROJECT.

**7. Child initiated and directed:** adults are available but do not get involved at all. ALL THE SAY ALL THE WAY - adults are excluded from the project or adults fail or decide not to get involved.

**6. Adult initiated, shared decisions with children:** children are involved every step of the way. The children have a full understanding and are involved in all aspects of the project.

INVITED, INFORMED, LOTS OF SAY ALL THE WAY - but the adults started

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<sup>64</sup> Franklin (cited in Boyden & Ennew, 1997, p53) gives her version of the same ladder but places 'Children in Charge' at the top rung which has implications for seeing children as a coherent and probably marginalised group rather than a group of people within a community. Even though Hart (1992) makes no claim that any particular rung is necessarily the best, I fear for the now popular use of ladders such as these for those tempted to use the rhetorical implications of the top rung being best. Franklin's model would exclude adults from children's decision making and participation (which for Boyden and Ennew means 'empowerment') except for when the children ask for help. In my version of the ladder, I place 'shared decisions with adults' as a 'top rung': in hindsight I think my rhetoric is about a more communitarian approach that dissolves childhood into personhood or community with all of the problematics this implies. I currently 'toy' with the idea of making a kaleidoscope of children's participation which can be 'turned' around for different situations.

the project.

**5. Consulted and Informed:** children are consulted but the project is designed and run by the adults. The consultation involves them in gaining a full understanding of the project.

CHILDREN ARE INVITED, INFORMED, THERE ARE SOME SHARED DECISIONS - but not all decisions are shared and the project is started by the adults.

**4. Adults decide and run the project:** The adults are the initiators in getting the project going. The children may get involved and may be allowed to continue to be involved but their presence is only incidental. They were *not sincerely invited to take part* however; children's views *may* well be respected but it is not a built-in feature of the project.

CHILDREN MAY HAVE SOME SAY, SOME CLUE, SOME CHOICE - but there was no invitation.

**3. Tokenism:** Children are asked to be involved but little or no account of their views is made.

CHILDREN HAVE SOME (false) SAY, THEY MAY HAVE A GOOD CLUE and SOME (false) CHOICE.

**2. Decoration:** children take part but don't understand the issues. CHILDREN MAY HAVE SOME (*uninformed*) CHOICE PERHAPS but NO CLUE & NO SAY.

**1. Manipulation:** children do or say what they are told to but have no real understanding of the issues. THEY HAVE NO SAY; NO CLUE; NO CHOICE.

In Appendix D a discussion of my use this refined version of the ladder with children to enable them to give an assessment of their own levels of participation is given.

### **The Benefits of Participation**

Nagel (1987, p13) describes the developmental or educational effects of participation. Participants are changed by developing in them new values, attitudes, and beliefs. Children who participate in activities that involve decision making may well be led to believe they can contribute to social change. They get to see adults in a different role (see Appendix F, p25). Adults reveal other ethico-political side to the dispassionate professional or the teacher who

goes off to an unknown address after school is closed. Children who work with adults on projects that make a difference to a local culture see time and energy being invested - especially their own. The family home, the school, the neighbourhood, and more distant people, animals and places, can provide the political context for participation for children of almost any age.<sup>65</sup> Participation reconfigures children's identities out of the role of 'one with a problem' or 'one who should be cared for' into new roles of 'active agent' or 'contributing members of society'. For Winter (1997) the absence of participation can lead to psychosocial problems. For him, participation is a basic need: and a basic right with a beneficial effect (1997, ix) if not a universal remedy for other problems like unemployment, urban decay. In this light we can go along with the premise that participation is an essential but not sufficient component of good education and local democracy.

### **The Climate for Active Citizenship and Participation**

Many authors write about the general paranoia that is prevalent among adults about the problems of childhood and youth, about their health and their protection. Given this atmosphere of fear for children from paedophiles, from the dangers of physical abuse, and so on, there are some serious barriers to children's participation.

Nel Noddings (1986) has championed the value of care for some time now. Feminists have argued for its elevation to a greater status within a society that is patriarchal and phallogocentric, often devaluing the affective and the caring aspects of human nature. One school takes 'We Care' as its school motto. On the theme of care, Winter (1997) paves the way for a feminist interpretation of activism in encouraging participation for a more inclusive democracy:

Only when active commitment of the client community is raised to a fundamental principle of care, is there any chance of creating a mature form of democracy via a system of indirect representation. (Winter, 1997, p138)

Bartels and Heiner (1994) claimed that we need an environment for children that allows for

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<sup>65</sup> Children in one school I visited collected money throughout the school through their own initiative to raise money for an appeal to save the orang-utan in Borneo.

their optimum development, leading to 'life competence'. This environment would encompass these features:

*The optimum development environment:*

- adequate care
- secure physical environment
- continuity and stability (in living conditions, care and relations)
- interest (of carers in the personality and the way of life of the young person)
- respect (taking the client's wishes seriously)
- security, support and understanding (from at least one adult, preferably the carer)
- emotional security
- adequate examples (contact with children and adults who can serve as models for behaviour, standards and values)
- education (scope to develop talents)
- mixing with contemporaries in varied situations
- knowledge of and contact with one's own past

Now, while I don't expect children to want to live in completely insecure environments, Bartels and Heiner's compendium betrays their 'belief' in protectionist stances to children's needs (emotional and physical security). Similarly, the opportunities for children to 'mix with contemporaries' presumably excludes adults which does away with any chances of children getting into apprenticeship roles in decision making let alone into the powerful role of *decision makers*.

### **Winter's three R's**

Using a rights model to advance his cause, Winter calls for three new R's in the place of the old 'Reading, wRiting, and aRithmetic. His new rights are:

- ◇ **The Right** to personal integrity, good facilities, and a healthy future
- ◇ **Room** for playing and growing up and the opportunity to explore society other than through abstract information
- ◇ **Respect** and appreciation by adults contributing to the feeling that they count.

### **European and International Context - The Right to Participate**

Malfrid Grude Flekkoy is a well-known advocate for children's rights. Flekkoy (1991, 1997) has acted as ombudsman for children in Norway and written about her experiences.

Underlying the work of advocacy for children's participation is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 of the UN convention is worth restating. Article 12 relates to freedom of expression assuring to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely and in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with age and maturity. The Children (Scotland) Act seeks to translate the UN agreement in a Scottish context. So far the most obvious impacts of the Act are that children with disabilities are consulted in their own assessment, children due for adoption are consulted now as a matter of course, and the courts are now obliged to appoint a 'safeguarder' in all children's hearings. Little impact is noticeable in 'mainstream' schools, local planning, or neighbourhood decision making procedures although there are new moves to create advocacy groups and procedures for children (Matthews et al, 1999). Flekkoy's role as ombudsman in Norway is an example of an adult's role in advocacy for children's right to participate. Radford (1995) calls for an ombudsman for children (possibly situated in the local citizens advice bureau) to aid children in engaging in initiatives. Others (Gulbenkian, 1991) have made the case for a national ombudsman in Britain too.

Flekkoy's rationale for children's rights is one of reciprocity with needs and wants. She looks at Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs for a starting point. A cursory look at Maslow's hierarchy suggests that children might not be quite ready for the form of self actualisation that would be necessary to constitute a democratic character structure, problem solving solving ability, and acceptance of self and others. Policy decisions about children's needs concentrate on the more 'base' physiological and affective needs. After all, it is commonly held, children may not have the adult's 'richness of emotional reaction', or a 'developed sense of values' and so on.

### *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*

1 Physiological

2 Belonging and Love

3 Esteem: self and others

4 Self-Actualisation: (including) perception of reality, acceptance of self, of others and of nature, spontaneity, problem solving ability, self direction, detachment and the desire for privacy, freshness of appreciation and richness of emotional reaction,

frequency of peak experiences, identification with other human beings, satisfying and changing relationships with other people, a democratic character structure, a sense of values (Maslow, 1954).

On the contrary, Flekkoy argues that Maslow's hierarchy of needs points not to a reason for forgetting about children's rights but rather points to the need *to engage in helping* the child participate. She takes on board what Piaget and Erikson have to say about child development and set up these premises:

1. Children need more assistance to be able to fulfil their needs, exercise their rights and take responsibility according to their capacities
2. The ways in which the needs/rights of the child are satisfied will vary as the child grows.
3. The needs/rights of children will be satisfied in different ways in different cultures.

She rightly shows that Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not sufficient to explain the changing pattern of how children's needs/rights are to be fulfilled (1997, p23). Similarly, we may need to get beyond the constraining adultist discourses of child development in our efforts to discuss children's participation. If children are not quite developed 'yet', adults can have a way out of taking the child's voice seriously. A critique of the developmentalists from a Vygotskian perspective might show how participation is an active deconstruction of the epistemology of knowing that fundamentally informs Piagetian developmentalism (Newman and Holzman, 1997). After Flekkoy what is needed is an expansion of what a space for participation might be when compared to a Vygotskian zone of proximal development between the cultures of adult and children (see chapter 20). That said Flekkoy's construction of 'participation as a basic human right' for all with human rights as reciprocal to responsibilities is useful. In this Flekkoy epitomises an interesting place in the conjuncture of different discourses. She speaks from a position of convergence; human rights, the 'science' of the development of the child, and European and international legislation for human rights for children co-join to produce her argument for greater democracy that includes children.

Democracies, at least in theory, thrive on an open expression of new and competing ideas, negotiation and conciliation of conflicting viewpoints, public tolerance of

broad and competing political organisations, an informed and attentive public and accountability of officials to the people they have been selected or elected to serve. (Flekkoy, 1997, p9)

A 'rights model' for children's involvement in community action initiatives need not be the best model, however.<sup>66</sup> Rights imply choice is important and may position a consumerist idea of children's participation which could exclude collective understandings of people and place that are vital to a vibrant community life. Being user-led in service provision is fast becoming the popular language in many industries, not least the education industry. Gaining a shared sense of group needs through community work or educational initiatives may help to counteract purely individualist approaches. For Hasler (1995) 'the right to belong' is enveloped in any 'right to become'. Gaining a sense of detachment and personal identity happens within the dialectic, the counterpoint of which is gaining a sense of belonging to a place and its people. By his understanding, seeing the network of relationships between all generations and the environment will give a clue as to how best to deal with an issue. Rarely are projects so specific that they impinge on one group, 'adults' or 'children', alone. Usefully, Hasler helps us prepare the way for doing away with the strict dualisms of adult-child which became apparent in some of the research processes involving children and adults in communities as well. Becoming a self happens within a context of belonging to a collective; becoming adult happen as much within adulthood as within childhood (and vice versa?), all of which holds true for adults as well as children. Co-joining this idea with current understandings of lifelong learning we may come to a better 'fuzzy', and less bounded way of grappling with adult and child cultures. The adult continues 'to become more childlike' at the margins of children's cultures; children 'belong' to their own cultures and those of the family and community while continually negotiating a new adultlike identities of self-in-a-place.

If children's rights to participate in decision making is viewed against this backdrop, we can see how it becomes central to community life. Active participation in managing, caring for an environment can be about self, other, and place concurrently. It can be about

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<sup>66</sup> While children's rights may seem to be safeguarded (eg UN convention) we can look at the few examples from practice in citizenship and education for citizenship, the family, the neighbourhood, the school and youth work policy where there is little or no reliable quantitative research into the actual spread of participation by children in these domains.



restoring a 'place for me', 'a place for others' and thereby the construction of a new self in a place for a new self within neo-tribal affinity groupings. Or, it can be about designing a 'place for us' as a group of children work on a school-based project to install a seating area in a playground. Or, it might be the 'taking over of a place from us' for children who largely have ruled the roost in playgrounds that are less intensely supervised.<sup>67</sup> Or, it can be about sharing a task as adults and children in collaboration where the origins of whose idea it was may be unclear due to the merging of motivations and the permeability of boundaries between adults and children. Or, it may be about creating 'a place for other creatures' too: reinstating lost habitats engages a broadened sense of place identity that includes other species of plant or animal, or even future generations.

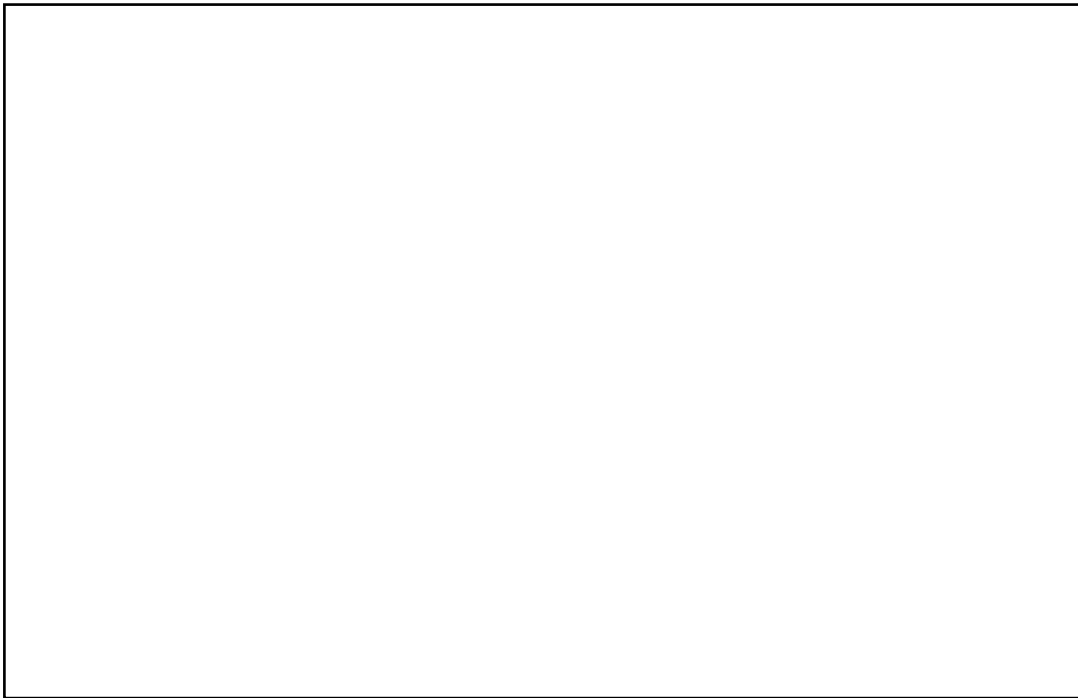


Plate 14.

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<sup>67</sup> I have met children and janitors who expressed dismay or unease at the use of the football pitches for planting trees.

SECTION D

***STUDIES IN CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION***

## **Introduction to Section D**

The next section of the thesis addresses children's experiences of participation in changing some local environments: school grounds and the public play areas. Within these spaces children seem to be finding new ways of expressing a participatory identity (Wenger, 1998) but the often divergent desires to increase children's participation in matters that affect them while at the same time wishing to protect children from perceived dangers results in a confusion about how children should or could participate in local change and decision making. The studies used a participatory action research methodology defined as 'Catalytic Action Research' are narrated in the Appendices (A to G). Appendix A presents some initial forays into 'the field' wherein I developed my ideas, piloted some methods, and got to grips with the issues surrounding collaboration in action research. Appendix B, C, D, E, and F provide a background narration of the details of my study on school grounds developments which is given a further analysis in chapter 14, 15, 16, 17. The second territory for investigation turned out to be local public play parks. Chapter 18 (supported by Appendix G - a report written for the sponsors of this segment of research) details how some children with disabilities were invited to participate in devising changes to the local authority's play park design and installation practices. These sections of the thesis also document my experiences and the experience of a local authority's efforts to enhance public play provision for children with disabilities by involving the children (and their carers) as advocates for change. The central debate of the thesis gets a localised airing through the exploration of these studies where contemporary essential beliefs about the nature of the child and the child's 'place' in society are found to constrain or expand adult constructions about children's experience of participation.

## **Chapter 14.**

### **CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN CHANGING SCHOOL GROUNDS**

Without participating in some form of public as an integral part of schooling, students will leave schools both without the skills to form public spaces and without the desire to form such spaces, since they would not have experienced the shock of active selfhood that comes from 'appearing' in a location around a common project. (Schutz, 1999, p90, speaking of Maxine Greene's recommendations about fostering public spaces)

#### **Introduction**

The inclusion of a study on schools grounds changes is opportune for some obvious and some less obvious reasons. Aside from the obvious reasons that include the fact that schools are experiencing a renaissance in school grounds development of late, and that school grounds are places where children spend substantial amounts of time every school day, there are other rationales for the inclusion of this space as a territory for investigation. Less obvious is the notion that school grounds are partially a public space and partially private in that they are often enclosed or partially enclosed spaces within the regime of control of the local authority who allow schools to exercise control more locally. Set within the context of the history of children's participation (presented in chapter 12 and Appendix H), there is the added interest that children may be finding possibilities for participation in the very institutions that were responsible for taking children away from the workplace and out of circulation within transgenerational and apprenticeship settings.

Another point of interest will be that schooling is experiencing a resurgence in interest in the outdoor aspects of learning again. Within the values and meanings (discourses) attached to the popular movement to change school grounds can be found a larger move to reconfigure space generally and to change the way we perceive open public space particularly. As a 'children's space' we can read the effort to change the territory of school grounds as a utopic practice of identity politics that gets spatially played out. Children's participation in this movement is posited within the larger discourses of childhood. Some of the efforts to

involve children challenge contemporary notions of the child. The child in need of an education, in need of care, and in need of protection are overturned in the conceptualisation of the child as agent in making changes to a locale whether 'in collaboration' with adults or separate from them.

### **Sources of School Grounds Changes**

A general discussion without referenced material suffices here to paint a broad picture of the situation as I see it. Sometimes the changes being made to school grounds bear witness to an adult-driven desire to *optimise* the environment for children. It is made 'safer', 'more educational', 'less prone to bullying', and so on. At the same time, the interest in children's participation in this research bears witness to cultural change in mindset that encourages a respect for children's views on things. But often the adults' motives hold sway: some head teachers see the training of supervisors of school grounds as a way of optimising adult role models in children's lives where adults are so starkly absent; in other initiatives to redesign school grounds the social dimensions of the outdoor environment are optimised in efforts to increase children's opportunity to mix with one's peers which is seen to work towards helping their development. Other advocates for school grounds developments foreground social changes like the decrease in family size, the increase in time spent indoors or in cars, the opportunity for children to find others to play with informally is on the decrease. These children's advocates may call for a reinvention of an idyllic childhood, recognising that the childhood they themselves as adults had (or wish they had) is either in danger of disappearing or has already been eroded. Sometimes adults think that children no longer know how to play and, in a move to sidestep away from the onward march of technologically mediated entertainment, set about helping children rediscover traditional games they once played themselves. Culturally, symbolically, and politically, the school grounds offer us many windows on the world of childhood and adulthood today and their respective relationships with the institution of the late modern school. The outdoor school site offers a script ready for exploration that narrates current trends in the role of place in identity formation, the relationship between place and group culture, the political struggle of marginal groupings (like some NGO's and participatory movements like the National Parents Council) to have a 'say', the discourses that inscribe what it is to be a child and an adult today, and the effects of particular discourses on the socio-political, and cultural field (like environmentalism, education, and architecture). As such, I will argue that the school

grounds site is an iconic place of struggle about divergent and shared ideas about childhood today. There are tensions to be discovered between the conservation of traditional games and the insurgence of new play forms by children onto the playground. Teachers themselves attempt to break the normalising influences of the school grounds architecture that is often inspired by discourses from another time. Children are sometimes invited or encouraged to realise their own visions for the future in school grounds developments. The school site is then best conceived of as a semi-public open space (See Schutz, 1999) where the school authorises or obfuscates a dialogue between adults and children, between old and new worlds, between the inside and the outside of the school, between wider society and the institution.

### **Why School Playgrounds?**

While other sites could be chosen to fulfil a similar role for the explication of the thesis on children's participation, it has been particularly pragmatic to choose a site that is marginal to, yet at the same time fairly integral to, the running of a particularly modern institution: the school. A historical analysis (in chapter 12 and Appendix H) of the origins of institutionalised schooling in the contexts of the decline of agriculture, the rise in industrialisation, and the arrival of technologically mediated communication, is given as a contextualisation of the importance of 'the school'. School grounds provide an inviting 'stage' (see chapter 11) of performativity; we try herein to give an account of the 'plots' and 'scripts' that give rise to the enactment of roles and narratives on what it is to be a child-participant in the late 1990s. To do this we first need to look at definitions, rights to, benefits of, and barriers to, of participation, for children as discussed in the literature and as experienced in the study of specific sites of participation: some schools grounds. I will try to give a variety of metaphorical understandings of the situation; I will try to expose the discourse of 'essence' about what it might be to be a child-participant today and how these empower or constrain children's participation. Implicit in all this are my own assumptions and positions in relation to the 'data': that perhaps increased participation would be a good thing for children. I encourage your dissolution of this as a worthy position.

## **The Narration of ‘Threat’ to Open Space**

Morphet (1994) discusses the category of ‘open space’ and the subcategories of private and public space. Within this definition, school grounds can be conceived of as open spaces that provide an arena for much of the popular childhood experience of the pupils, teachers, parents and others both during and often after school time. At the moment there is no statutory obligation on any local authority to provide open space for the public’s use although a play area within a school setting is seen as essential. But as resources become scarcer, open spaces get sold off for development and money gets ploughed into other areas. The National Playing Fields Association claim that as many as 300 school playing fields are under threat and some schools have no green areas whatsoever (Hoyles, 1994, 11). Set against this, Hoyles (1994) notes the beginnings of a movement to re-make old connections between the public and the private spaces of the private garden and the public park. This movement blurs the boundaries between the anonymity of a public place managed by a distant municipality and the high ownership value of one’s own back yard.<sup>68</sup> In schools grounds developments I will explore how this is manifested through efforts to involve children in gardening for wildlife, in growing vegetables, and so on.

Like open spaces everywhere there are commentaries available on their quality. Open spaces are regarded by many studies as being badly designed and maintained (Morphet, 1994, p5). Morphet comments that a lack of holistic vision for the usefulness of open green space may mean that a single factor like house density may give a priority on an individual site to the exclusion of other place uses. Similarly, we can find that ‘single factors’ may dominate some discussions about school grounds (like ‘bullying’ or ‘play value’). Morphet (1994) outlines some signs that things are changing towards a more holistic view of person-place interaction where the social is necessarily spatial and visa versa (Massey, 1992). Certainly, the relationship between people who use (outdoor public) places are beginning to be taken into account particularly by environmental psychologists (Korpela & Hartig, 1996; Herzog et al., 1997) who find that natural settings as having the highest overall ‘restorative effectiveness’. Burgess et al. (1989) has shown up the importance of incidental open public spaces to locals for such uses as the relief of stress, and for connecting with memories of one’s childhood. School grounds seem to fall (fairly neatly?) into a category of space that is

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<sup>68</sup> See appendix A for ‘Frequency of visit’ and ‘Reasons for Visiting’ a local country park as well as Appendix B for children’s experiences of visiting a local park in an urban setting.

in demand by society for its role in fulfilling these roles (of memory, identity, and distinctiveness) though we may look to distinguish adults' needs from children's in this.

Discourses from ecology and sustainability also find their way into the discussions on changes to school grounds. Sustainability attempts to reconfigure space in a totalising discourse including the economic, social and ecological elements but is conspicuous by what it excluded from debate as much as what it offers as an inclusive framework for analysis. Some ecologists will say that, environmentally speaking, cities may still be the most efficient form of land use. Green spaces within the city become increasingly more important for the dense populations that need them for recreation, for softening the effects of city noise and pollution, and for psychological and symbolic reasons. Similarly, the interests of those promoting environmental education (Jickling, 1992), education for sustainability (See Huckle & Sterling, 1996), and education for a sustainable future (see Hicks & Holden, 1995) are to be found in school grounds initiatives as well. The school grounds get reconfigured as an outdoor classroom for the study of the environment and the study of many other subjects too. Children's own concerns for 'the environment', for each others' welfare, and for their locality also find their expression in the studies.

Lastly, new planning practices within local authorities and in architecture and landscape architecture are fast embracing the idea that open green spaces have intrinsic value and can be 'planned for'. These three signs of change apply to the pressures for change on school grounds too.<sup>69</sup> No longer is the vast expanses of tarmac once seen as the norm in school grounds seen as acceptable. But, like all open spaces, school grounds will continue to be vulnerable places if planners see open public spaces as a residual part of the planning process. The interactions of schools with local authorities will give us a view of this lack of status among some planners. We will look for evidence of these pressures for change in the context of children's participation too.

The importance of the school site's outdoor aspect allows this text to converse with the ongoing concerns about children's continued access to (Hillman et al., 1990), and ability to learn in outdoor settings. The worry is that children are losing the opportunity for outdoor

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<sup>69</sup> Another influence has to be from the rise in interest in D.I.Y. and gardening in the UK which encourages people to get out and make a difference to their 'own spaces'.



self-directed activities at a time when concern for children's safety, danger from traffic, the increase in the taxiing of children to organised events for entertainment and learning, and the State's desire to 'care for' children in a more timetabled and co-ordinated fashion, are all on the increase. The status of the school grounds within the school's timetable takes on a new significance for some in the light of these perceived changes in the child's experience.

### **Some Initial Caveats**

The context of children's lives has supposedly changed a lot over the past twenty to thirty years and changed drastically over the last fifty years. It may be that in your lifetime as a reader, you personally have seen the demise of the many street and playground games once visible to earlier researchers like the Opies in the sixties (Opie & Opie, 1969). Yet, in a Scottish context, my experience, on many interviews and observations, was that *Hide and Seek*, *Tig* and *Bulldog*, were still the key games being played by children on Scottish playgrounds though the street has dramatically changed. Other social forces are in play besides traffic. The commercialisation of specific toys means that 'waves' of interest in certain games and toys like *Furbies*, *Tamagochis*, *Polly Pockets*, and *Gameboys* cut across the seasonally inspired and traditional games of 'conkers' and 'marbles'. This is understood as the very same influences that brought marbles into playgrounds originally: the market. School grounds have always been evolving; there is no 'original' time that we need to look back on as 'better'; traditions have always been on the move. Nowadays, things continue to evolve but the influences are different and, as with all trends these days, the *rate* of change is also different. Similarly, the continued valorisation of gender specific products for children by the market (like soccer for boys, and *Barbies* for girls) also effects playtime cultures. Traditional songs and games get replaced by songs from the charts; football can be an all-consuming craze for many boys. So, while the shape and forms of children's play have changed, we need to be careful not to 'write it off' sentimentally as valueless when compared to our memories of childhood when recalled from adulthood.

Similarly, we need to be careful not to blame the perceived 'loss of traditions' on a band of brainless consumerist children who spend all their time in front of a computer: mostly parents are the ones who buy them the hardware in the first place and the traffic on the

roads that keep children in houses is driven by adults too. Interestingly, it has been market forces that brought about the recent rise in demand for yo-yos in the UK and Ireland, thereby resurrecting this popular traditional playground toy (albeit in rejuvenated fluorescent colours and with strings that don't tangle as easily as the old ones). We need to suggest different readings of the playspaces wherein children and teenagers find themselves. These new spaces are bounded, restricted and culturally 'riven through' with forces often not of the children's own making, often having their source in a far-distant country and time. Children's identifications are imposed as much as composed. The restrictions on choice are largely constructed by others. 'Who I can be as a child today?' is reconstructed by the market as 'What can I buy today to tell me who I can be?'. Attending to local environmental change and children's participation will reconfigure the question as: 'Who can I be as a child today in *this place*?' Mainstream culture encourages individual children and groups of children to create various identifications though discussing their favourite music or TV programmes. But children still carve out spaces that allow them to determine their own identifications. Girls define a physically gymnastic self through exhibiting prowess or agility on parallel bars. Others are more content with performing clownlike acts or impersonations, organising one's friends for a game of tig, or 'bullying' one's peers. All spaces in the playground are potentially politically significant sites of personal and group identification involving forces that include and exclude. The freedom of the playground is only there within the limits placed on it by the culture that imbues it. This culture is in part derived from adult choices, in part by children's choices, and in part by the unpredictable nature of the mix of these forces with the effects of technology, the media, weather, and nature. Power is faceless, and nameless. No one knows the whole story, no one knows who is in 'ultimate control' of any particular space. Janitors, teachers, visiting parents, virulent weeds, national legislation, the head teacher might all play vital roles in maintaining the choice range of person-place identifications available at any one time and place.

### **Children's Participation in Other Areas of Education**

Schools are being asked to look outside the school for links for funding, pedagogy, community development, after school hours use, education and business partnerships, and projects to support sustainability. In these efforts there is the potential for a recovery of the school as a socially significant place. For the state, it may be a way to convene many costly

social services in one site or a way of handing over many financial responsibilities to the market. The possibilities are that schools will become places where communities do many things. The inclusion of a variety of community needs in the school building could be a move towards a deschooling of the schools. The more likely scenario is that schools will have to market the space available to groups that can pay for them and thereby further expose education to market forces. While contemporary notions prevail that elevate parents as the primary consumers of education the prospect that children will be given a stake in decisions remains unlikely although things are changing. Stirling Council, Scotland, has supported schools in setting up school councils in both Secondary and Primary schools in 1998-99. Local Area Forums involve locals in decision making and sometimes involve young people in their work (as in the region of Fife in Scotland).

Where will children's opportunity for other agency be in all this? In fact, there are few schools that give pupils genuine control over how they are taught, how they learn, and how the school operates (Hodgkin, 1995, p122). Hodgkin notes that it was once necessary for the government to abolish the right of pupils to be school governors (in England) and forbids 'partisan political activities' by any junior pupils. Child-centred education debates have become hollow, she claims, in a climate that fails to acknowledge that children are consumers of education and have a right to freedom of expression and self determination. The argument is that they have the right to be involved in a more real way in how education gets delivered. The theme that children are seen as 'problems to be solved' rather than potential agents of change is picked up by the Elton Report (1989).

Our impression is that, in schools with a negative atmosphere, pupils learn to see themselves as irresponsible beings who must be contained and controlled at all times. Our evidence suggests that pupils tend to live up, or down, to teachers' expectations. (p142)

### *Schools Councils*

Children's participation in schools grounds changes sometimes takes the form of their participation in decision making in schools councils. Some authors point out how children's views in schools councils often do not get beyond tokenism and tend to deal with only certain issues like uniform, toilets, and school dinners (Clough and Holden, 1998, p56). In the course of my research I sat in on a couple of school council meetings when

they were specifically dealing with the school grounds. Similarly, their concerns seemed to be restricted to the issues of the tuck shop, free milk schemes, lunches, the wearing of earrings during gym time, and the surveying of attitudes to bullying. In one school, when I asked the children about a recent extension that had been made to the school, they said that they had been involved: they had made posters that were put up on the barriers warning children of the dangers of entering the building site. It should come as no surprise then that when asked, the children felt they would not be in a position to discuss or to comment on such things as the selection of teachers for supply work. It seems there are clearly marked areas of influence defined in most school councils for where children's agency lies. Mostly, the school councils seem to be arenas for involving children in discussing the day-to-day running of things and it is hoped, by the staff, that by involving the children in discussing them that solutions can be found to the problems that *adults find annoying*. Less common is the invitation to involve children in plans for change that are exciting, new developments that go beyond small issue, day-to-day problem solving.

There are good reasons for this other than the fact that teachers may not think it appropriate. Children themselves will attest to the idea that they would 'not have the experience' (primary seven boy) to deal with bigger issues. So small-scale issues like bullying are more the 'norm' for schools councils discussions. Bullying is one of these regular day-to-day events that often is seen to get in the way of the smooth running of the school. School councils often appoint 'monitors', or 'prefects' that are expected to support teachers in getting these problems (like litter in the playground) sorted. Children themselves are also interested in getting these difficulties resolved and so school councils spend large amounts of time discussing the ways forward. One group of children initiated their own group entitled 'Playground Friends' which they set up to deal with bullying without any adult help. In another school, the school council became the forum for some primary seven boys to discuss how they would like to be trained in how to get the goal mouths set up so that they could effect a quicker setting up of the pitch for playtime (large suburban primary school). When adults have been involved in school councils and other forms of democracy, I have found that, similar to other studies, children find only a marginal status in decision making procedures in school grounds changes.

In the past, however, children's activism over schools working conditions have been more

vociferous. Children have gone out on strike over the lack of schools meals or in sympathy with local miners or a sacked teacher. More recently older children in some schools saw how restricted models of democracy were about the use of children to further adults' roles in the surveillance of children and have called for 'no prefects' and 'no secret files' (see Hoyles, 1989, p88).

But some schools councils are aimed at being authentic attempts to involve children in more authentic participative ways and while initially schools councils may discuss the nitty gritty of school practice, they build up to more participative models of democracy. To get to this point, children may need to learn (on the job) about how the school works, what the role of the head teacher is like and to what extent teachers can reasonably expect that the children may have an input 'as a matter of course' within the constraints they perceive. In the main, however, schools councils seem largely ineffective in allowing children to define their own problems or in defining the shared problems of a community at large. Because they get convened within the school, at school time they get configured as part of the 'culture of simulation of life' outside; democracy is 'practised' using the small, incidental aspects of school life as experiments in democracy. Greater participation by children in schools grounds changes will find it much more effective to employ other ways of involving children besides school councils (see Fielding, 1996, p19) that might allow children to collaborate with locals and others in effecting change in new ways; working at weekends seems a far more appropriate arena for getting children involved in decision making and active participation. Large schools will also find that their institutional arrangements need restructuring to allow for greater communication across class levels and age divides and outside of traditional timetabling arrangements.

### *Local Knowledge*

In any move to give agency to local participants, questions of ownership of knowledge are likely to be significant. Prime (1995) describes how one secondary school actively sought to make as many school-community links as possible in an effort to develop abilities of participation in decision making, developing an appreciation of local cultural diversity, and the developing thinking skills. They set about getting pupils teaching adults how to read and write, visiting the elderly, making the school accessible outside school hours, and getting extra curricular clubs up and running. Their report of the experiences acknowledged

that local knowledge about people and places were essential to getting things going and making community links outside the school. Locals (school governors, parents, friends, pupils) were seen to play a key role in identifying 'resources' in the community.

Other 'learnings' about the experience of trying to increase participation across sectors cited by this school, and found in common within my studies, were:

- that objectives had to be clear and limited,
- that all staff need to be 'on board' in agreeing with the general aims,
- and that the role of the head teacher was important.

As in any democracy the results were a sequence of compromises. By being strategic in involving the inspectorate in 'helping' give direction to the work and by managing the press correctly, they also managed to meet their goal of acting as a resource for the community without compromising the need to complete the traditionally accepted 'tasks' expected of a school. The same experience is found in attempts by schools to change school grounds. Teachers invite professionals (landscape architects, local authority specialists) locals, and parents to help out in designing playground features, constructing buildings and play features and generally getting things moving in schools grounds changes. Farmers, businesses, shops and others donate materials, give their time and expertise, or arrange for plant hire free of charge in order to make things happen. Often in their desire to make the desired changes, the children's agency in decision making is forgotten about and adultist ideas that they 'know best' run amok with the rhetoric of collaboration with the children. Again and again, head teachers will say that projects 'have to be supervised' and controlled by the adults; children are positioned outwith the regimes of power and decision making in the end. This move to exclude children is often founded on the idea that for safety and health reasons, and for budgetary restrictions children's plans could not be expected to go to completion. Instead of including the children in these tricky and difficult negotiations children are somehow left aside. This is probably due to adult ideas about the restricted domain for children's potential agency in a project or / and the desire on the part of parents, teachers and others to 'protect children' from the difficult aspects of living an 'adult life'. Spatially, children rarely make it to staffroom meetings, group meetings of adults that direct

school grounds projects,<sup>70</sup> or meetings with local council representatives. Excluding children from these settings requires spatially exclusive thinking on adults' part given weight by the idea that either certain things (language, concepts etc) are beyond children's comprehension or beyond what adults deem as a suitable cultural setting for children's active citizenship.

### *Education for Citizenship*

Most worrying of all is the development of interest in education *for* citizenship rather than any development in school cultures to view education *as* citizenship for the children. In this children are maintained as non-agents in need of assistance:

The process of assisting children to become active citizens requires the teacher to keep a delicate balance between providing security and offering challenge. (Holden and Clough, 1998, p13)

The distance between school cultures from cultures of active participation by a group of citizens becomes clearer when we see articles that discuss the need for 'specialist citizenship teachers' (*Times Educational Supplement*, 1997). Children, from the adult's point of view, seem incapable of taking action without adult help and need opportunities to be provided for them to become involved as active citizens. These 'adulto-centric' ideas about the nature of childhood are perhaps the place we need to start with education as active citizenship but is actually virtually completely missing from Holden and Clough's text: *Children as Citizens - education as participation* except for a short discussion in the introductory chapter. But even for Holden and Clough (1998), in the end the teacher is the one who will be central in *assisting* children; the teacher is the 'knowledgeable other' (Holden and Clough, 1998, p17). Participation in a school context is currently being consumed by the taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature of the child and the potential of the child as an active citizen: we ask: 'How do we prepare children for participation?'. By seeing the child as a 'future citizen' we undermine all the possibilities for present-day participation except for

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<sup>70</sup> One school did have some children representatives who attended their school grounds development meetings but felt that there was a lot of things going on at the meeting that would 'not be of interest to the children'. In their later arrangements, they dropped the idea of having children on board at all. We must also bear in mind that not every child will wish to be participating in cultures that are usually the sole realm of the adult; we may need to create times, places and events (cultures) that are more amenable to children's cultures in order to invite participation and there will probably always be spaces that are the sole reserve of one age-group or the other.

its educative value in simulating a future opportunity and in doing so participation itself is lost. The construction of participation as an adult activity excludes children as citizens and undermines the project of education for participation itself. Participation by children in making changes to their locale must therefore be about adults' efforts to reconfigure participation to include children on their terms as much as children's concomitant need to skill-up and engage in the adult world with efficacy.

The forces that require young people to struggle for an identity of 'citizen' are discursive ones that name a 'youthland' (Winter, 1997) as the dwelling place for children as non-contributing, consumers of a certain age. Schools' role in addressing the young person's need to navigate a path of identification (with others and with the local environment) through this land is a contested one. One of my jobs in this research is to look at a couple of physically recognisable outdoor places (school grounds and public play parks) to discover what expressions of identification and subjectification are recognisable to me as a researcher of current trends in children's participation in planning and design. School grounds are chosen as a territory wherein the contest is made (and continually remade) anew.

### **The Neighbourhood**

Children have traditionally been visible on the street and in the public domain within neighbourhoods. The decline in their presence is notable but more interesting is the account of the reasons why. Henderson (1995) has noted that children are being denied access to neighbourhoods. He sees children's loss of access to a local participation in citizenship as being influenced by forces affecting neighbourhoods generally: the lack of social contact, the loss of a large group of locals that are recognisable by sight. Following his interdisciplinary view of children's place in society, Rosenbaum (1993) has shown how pollutants like lead, nitrogen oxide, sulphur oxide, ozone, asbestos cause a variety of illness and bad health in children who are more susceptible to their effects than adults. For some communities the story is undoubtedly connected to poverty, unemployment, drugs, and the increased presence of police and surveillance mechanisms. The problem is sometimes cast in terms of 'what have our children become?' as in the case of the James Bolger incident. We are encouraged to respond thereafter in terms of fear *of* our children as much as fear *for* them. Children who do go 'out and about' are close to the changes that have been happening to our streets: they are more likely to find used syringes, and to hear what has



been happening generally on the street. They can get close to public tragedy. Sometimes they get ‘drawn into’ crime and drug addiction.

They [children] were used as messengers, deliverers, lookouts, and through this they gained their own ‘respect’ and found their own positions within groups [involved in drugs]. (Russell, 1995)

Research has shown (Hillman et al., 1990) that children’s mobility and independence have been drastically eroded in the last two decades. In 1971, 80 per cent of children aged seven and eight went to school without adult supervision. By 1990 only 9 per cent were doing so. This statistical evidence may not be as relevant in a suburban or rural Scottish context, however (see Appendix A, *Local Findings* ) but we can expect that this may well be the *future* for children’s mobility.<sup>71</sup> In our efforts to care for children we have restricted them; in our efforts to raise standards of living we have increased risk or at least the perception of it. A disregard for the importance of the local neighbourhood to young children has allowed a tradition of housing estate design that all too often discourages independent mobility for many children. For a host of reasons girls’ mobility is being steadily reduced even more than boys (see Appendices A & B for ‘gender differences’). Studies will need to explore the other dimensions of the heterogeneous nature of children’s experience of place according to race, ethnicity, age, and background. Coming out of findings on children’s experience is a more informed understanding of young people’s need to learn to explore beyond the back garden which could inspire different approaches to local development that up to now has rarely included any consultation with children (see Wheway and Millward, 1997; Appendices C & D).

Alongside the disabling factors for children’s participation in changing their neighbourhoods are a growing number of projects that actively encourage children’s participation as local citizens. In Christchurch, New Zealand, the local authority invites youth participation in decision making through a Youth Council. This innovative council also consulted with over 2,000 young people and children on their views of the city through a schools-based participatory programme (Campbell, 1996). Many other cities

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<sup>71</sup> In conversation with a playground designer we discussed an irony in children’s lives today. He mentioned to me that for perhaps many decades parents have commented how lucky their children were in comparison with the childhood they remember from their own past. Now the tables seem to have turned and parents sometimes comment that they wish their children could have the E

around the world involve children specifically in festivals and street events and through community arts events. Other initiatives invite children to give their views before designers decide on the changes to be made to public places or invite children's participation in 'clean-up' or recycling campaigns. Some countries have now got an Ombudsman for children's needs or a locally based children's advocate in place; other local authorities make provision for intersectoral communication between social services, education departments, parks landscaping divisions, and play and out of school care by having a 'Children's Services' department. The *Growing up in Cities* (GUIC, 1997) programme sponsored by UNESCO uses participatory action-research methods to involve children in evaluating and improving local environments in cities around the world.

Adults who begin by setting out to consult with children sometimes find that their thinking needs to move on and get beyond simply deciding what is best for children. Callaghan and Dennis (1997) found that 'practising consultation with children on issues which affect them begins to challenge the social structures in which we live and the status we afford ourselves [as adults]' (Callaghan and Dennis, 1997, p40).

### **Children and Work**

Child-initiated work-based projects in paid or voluntary employment outside the school or family probably account for the the most interesting arena of children's participation in civic life. But children's work lives have not been systematically analysed until recently in the west. Only lately have children's experience of work been found within scientific or academic publications. Yet children's work has been an invisible category (in the same way as women's work in the home was once perceived perhaps). Children act as unseen (and unpaid) carers for their own siblings and very often, siblings prefer their brothers or sisters to adult carers too! Is this exploitation or a key learning about responsibility? Two thirds of children are supposedly working illegally by being on the job too early in the morning or too late at night (O'Donnell and White, 1998). Others work in prohibited areas or for too many hours. One in five children between the ages of 10 and 16 have a part-time job. Over a third of fifteen year olds are at work. Rates commonly paid were between 50p and £1 an hour.

Research by O'Donnell and White (1998) at the Low Pay Unit at Southbank University

found that children in North Tyneside very much want to work but not necessarily for the accrued benefits of responsibility and participation. They work, it seems, 'for money' which they use to buy consumer goods often with designer labels which seem to confer the status they were after. The findings may hide a richer layer of meanings which are as yet unreported by children however. My findings on the popularity of physical labour when engaging in school grounds projects (Appendix D) indicates that there is likely to be a lot more going on than meets the eye in children's experience of labour; there is certainly more going on than the 'exploitation of the young', or children's desire for increased consumer behaviour when it comes to children's work.

### **International Rights Campaigns**

In the pragmatic effort to do something about children's participation this there have been pleas for the organisation of self-advocacy groups for children that call for the empowerment of children on the basis of the Children Act 1989 and the UN convention on the Rights of the Child. An example of such a grouping would be the emergence of self-advocacy youth groups around the issue of curfews for young people in the UK. The adults involved in self-advocacy movements would hope to achieve its aims by 'skilling up' local groups before going about involving children and providing information and narratives on good practice. One such group is *Save the Children*. They identified these key issues when considering involving children: firstly, children and young people need to be clear about what is on offer; secondly, people hoping to involve children need to be clear about what is expected of them in terms of information and support; and they give these guidelines for involving children and young people that clearly acknowledges the power element in adult-child relations:

- different working methods for different groups are essential
- it can be burdensome for participants (children and adults)
- it is time consuming and costly
- you need clear safeguards about how one's views will count or not
- it involves giving up control over agenda setting to a group
- it must work towards involving all groups not just those that are easily involved (Bell, 1993).

A couple of discussions presented in Appendix G<sup>72</sup> of this study deal in more detail with such issues as the impact of the UN Convention and articles 12 and 31. The issue of children's citizenship and participation in environmental change finds some scope in following chapters but is also found in Appendix G and chapter 18. In fact, the same discussion can be presented here with respect to children generally as has been aired with respect to children with disabilities. I could substitute 'children as a marginal group' in place of 'children with disabilities' in this sections of the text to show where their problems of marginality are shared without losing their distinct 'differences'. Alongside this image of children as a marginal group, I can play out the narrative of children as a 'tribal group' which has a membership of competent social actors with their own views and agency in changing the world. These images of children work competitively and cooperatively to tell the story of how spaces control children and children work to make their own spaces within the controlling mechanisms of adult behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, institutionalisation of care and protection, legalistic notions of safety and supervision. These barriers to participation are given an airing below.

### **Barriers to Participation**

#### *Concerns About Safety and Insurance*

An often unmentioned but prevalent concern that can act as a barrier to participation is the rise in concern for children's safety. This is perhaps particularly noticeable in the Scottish context. Since the incident in Dunblane where a school was attacked by a gunman who shot into a crowded classroom and killed a number of children and their teacher, there has been an increased concern for children's safety. Other concerns about the risks of child abuse from un-vetted child care workers and babysitters has also added to fears for children's safety. New measures to counteract the possibility of children being left open to such abuses have been instated in Scotland. Most noticeable of these are the security measures at the doors of schools and the now compulsory need to have a criminal record check if one is to work with children. Some schools even have criminal record checks done on casual employees in schools and on visiting parents if they are to come in and help out in school. These measures can act as serious inhibiting factors in how participation by children in

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<sup>72</sup> Therein we can also read in more detail about how local authorities now try to include children in evaluating services. There is a growing awareness in local authorities of the need to enable young people and families have a greater say in the policies and services that impact on their lives.

changing school grounds occurs.<sup>73</sup> All of these regulations are supposedly for the protection of the child but may be barriers to participation at the same time.

Other concerns for safety come in when consideration is taken of the need for insurance of any perceived risks. Some schools insure their grounds as one would a construction site in an effort to be sure of their status and their culpability in the case of accidents. The school site suffers and benefits from its public aspect: on the one hand it is an opportunity for community ownership and a group sense of place; on the other hand concerns for compliance with regulations and the insurance against risk prevent children from getting much opportunity for a hands on approach or opportunities for forms of apprenticeship in citizenship by working with parents and others. Here adults' attitudes seem to function better at preventing children from getting involved than encouraging participation.

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<sup>73</sup> At a meeting I attended, concerns were raised about having parents helping out in a school grounds project in the playground without having their record checked. Here we can find one of the many regulations about health and safety, insurance and codes of conduct that may present barriers to how and when people from the community can be involved to enhance children's participation in projects. We seem to have legalised parents out of the public spaces of our schools, preventing them from being with their own children or neighbour's children without first getting insurance, criminal record checks and so on.

### *Local Cultures*

As my research will show, smaller communities in rural areas seem more likely to take ‘ownership’ of this public spaces available to them like school grounds, communal land, and parks through community action. In larger communities and in places of ‘urban decay’ or unemployment there may seem to be a less engaged attitude towards local participation in the care and maintenance of public space<sup>74</sup> but it is often in such areas that children are more likely to be out and about in unsupervised settings. A less visible sense of place or ownership may be operative where children may have a more developed local knowledge than their parents (see Appendix A).<sup>75</sup>

### *Adults’ Attitudes*

The child’s voice is often subsumed within a chorus of ‘voices’: planners will tell us about good practice in sequencing the planning process; gardening programmes advise on garden design; psychologists give accounts of how settings effect self-identity; educators work towards creating ‘outdoor classrooms’ for various subject areas.

*I: Do you think the children should decide what get’s done to the playground?*

Primary four girl (P4G): Yes.

*I: And do you think adults listen to children?*

P4G: emmm ... sometimes.

*I: And why do you think adults don’t listen to children?*

P4G: Cos they’re too busy and aw that. They’re correctin’ things.

Adults sometimes feel that younger children are unable to be involved in real life situations where their involvement might otherwise be appropriate. Other reasons besides fears for children’s safety come into play when children’s participation is suggested. In one school, fears that the children would be incompetent, unruly, or physically unable to achieve things were brought up as reasons for their exclusion from elements of the work. These attitudes

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<sup>74</sup> A television documentary reported how some council tenants regarded the garden of their council house as ‘council property’ and hence would not be enthused about gardening in it or cutting the grass despite having lived there for some ten years.

<sup>75</sup> Twigger-Ross & Uzzell (1996) discuss ‘self-esteem, self-efficacy and distinctiveness’ as operational in the process of developing attachments to a place.

compound circumstances against children's opportunities for involvement.<sup>76</sup> It strikes me that to fail to leave a primary school without knowing how to lay a brick or mix cement is a bit sad these days: the construction of a home or garden is a key event in everyone's life that contributes to a sense of ownership and connectedness to a place.<sup>77</sup>

The same criticisms could be levelled at secondary school curricula. Cossetting children is not always their interests; it can create unnecessary dependency. The professionalisation of trades and skills can only be detrimental to children's opportunities for involvement in managing and maintaining their homes in later life. The recent rise in the DIY industry is witness to the fact that people are keen to reject an outright professionalisation of all house maintenance if only they could learn the skills. We return here to the construction of school curricula that excludes practical skills and know-how and concentrates on less 'useful' knowledge at times. We can compare this situation with the experiences of children in developing countries who can contribute to house building and maintenance and learn the skills by apprenticeship. 'Local knowledge' (whether about farming practices, in building and construction, or about the local environment) will fail to get passed on transgenerationally as a result. Within larger schools, children are excluded from each other into differentiated playgrounds according to age often 'for their own protection'. How much would be lost if all the children experience in the making of school grounds changes is a tokenistic posing for a photograph for a local newspaper? Are we not contributing to the ongoing decrease in children's health and fitness by not encouraging meaningful, fun and collaborative community work?

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<sup>76</sup> When it came to the children being involved in bricklaying for the construction of a three brick high wall, it was suggested that it would be dangerous and that they could perhaps be invited to go along to a construction college to be involved in bricklaying in a 'controlled environment' where there would be plenty of supervision.

<sup>77</sup> Yet in another school where children were involved in doing some painting of their school fence, a safety officer asked in hindsight if the children had been wearing plastic goggles to protect them from any splashes.

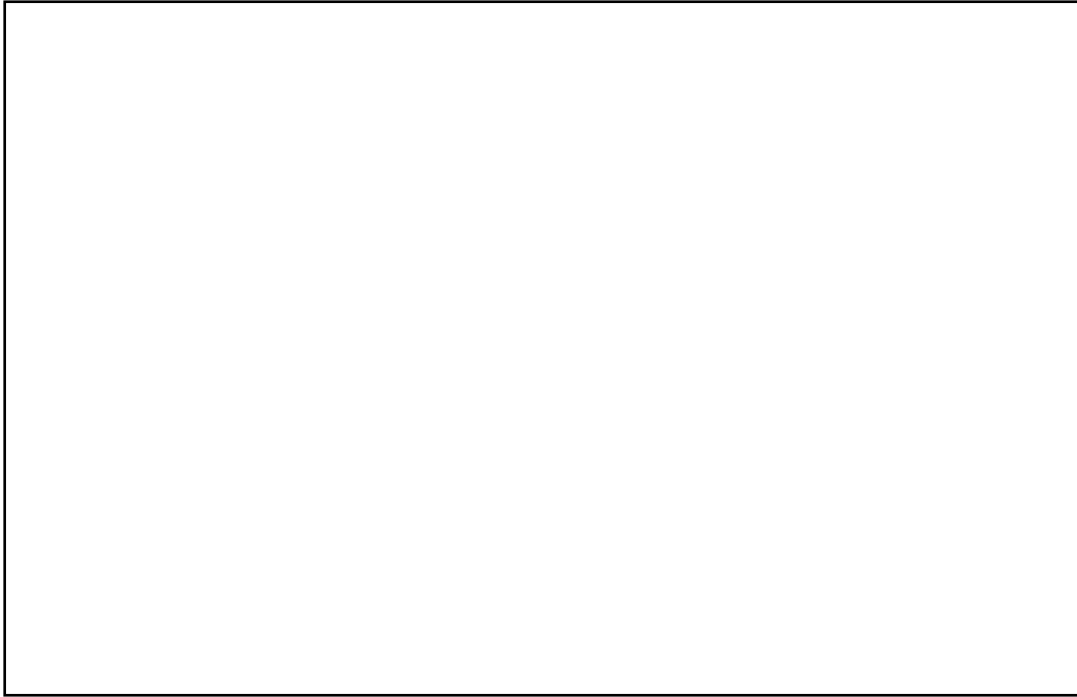


Plate 15. A class of primary two children (ages approx. 5) paint the entire inside of a school fence during *School Grounds Day 1998*, with minimal direction of their teachers and others.

### *Designers' Attitudes and Roles*

Some options faced me in my style of work with the children and staff when I set about attempting to encourage children's participation in schools grounds changes<sup>78</sup>. Some options were attractive pitfalls, others were ethical conundra. Would I fall into the trap of expecting the children to do all the work and come up with the design solutions so that I could claim that 'they did it'? Would I set about pretending that they did it all while in fact there was much input from others? Would I try to show what and how much they learned from the process and forget to discover what they learned from the experience of putting in place an actual product - an environmental intervention that made a difference? What I *was* interested in was documenting the joys and the messiness of planning and design: unforeseen incidents, offers of available expertise and money all play a part in defining the arena where children can have a say. For many designers, the 'design process' seems to be a fairly solitary process that takes place in a political vacuum.<sup>79</sup> The social status of the

<sup>78</sup> The details of my attempts are detailed in Appendix C

<sup>79</sup> In recent years, the view of design as an essentially individual creative activity has come under increasing question. Instead, design is being viewed, studied and developed as a group process. For further information visit the CoDesigning 2000 web site at:<http://dougal.derby.ac.uk/drc/co-design>.



user participants seems remote from the context of their involvement. Also, by paying most attention to design processes and failing to acknowledge the emotional reactions of participants adult designers run the risk of causing greater lack of trust for the person who follows with a plan to encourage participation. That so many children have acted as ‘guinea pigs’ in trying out techniques for research purposes is the undocumented narrative of some research literature. At times there is no mention at all of whether and how any designs actually made it onto the ground once the ‘design process’ is complete. Following Hart (1992) I would say that it is not acceptable to stop our discussions of children’s participation in environmental decision making and environmental change at the ‘paper and model stage’. True participation is about giving a ‘sense of meaningful involvement and responsibility in society’ (Hart, 1992, p83). Only a few authors describe attempts to work in a participative way with children in community based planning and design projects<sup>80</sup>. In contrast with the spartan literature describing how children’s agency in change can be enhanced, some authors remain less concerned about such matters.

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<sup>80</sup> The most significant being Hart (1992), Adams (1993), Moore (1986), Iltus and Hart (1994), Titman (1994), Johnson et al. (1995), Bain et al. (1996), Simpson (1997), Hart (1997), Chawla (1997), Horelli (1997), West (1998), Callaghan and Dennis (1998), Growing Up In Cities (1997-1999). Some of the latest books and articles on children’s participation in decision making generally and in research include: Lansdown (1995), Miller (1996), Boyden & Ennew (1997) Save the Children Report (1997) Thomas & O’Kane (1998), Adams & Ingham (1998), West (1999).

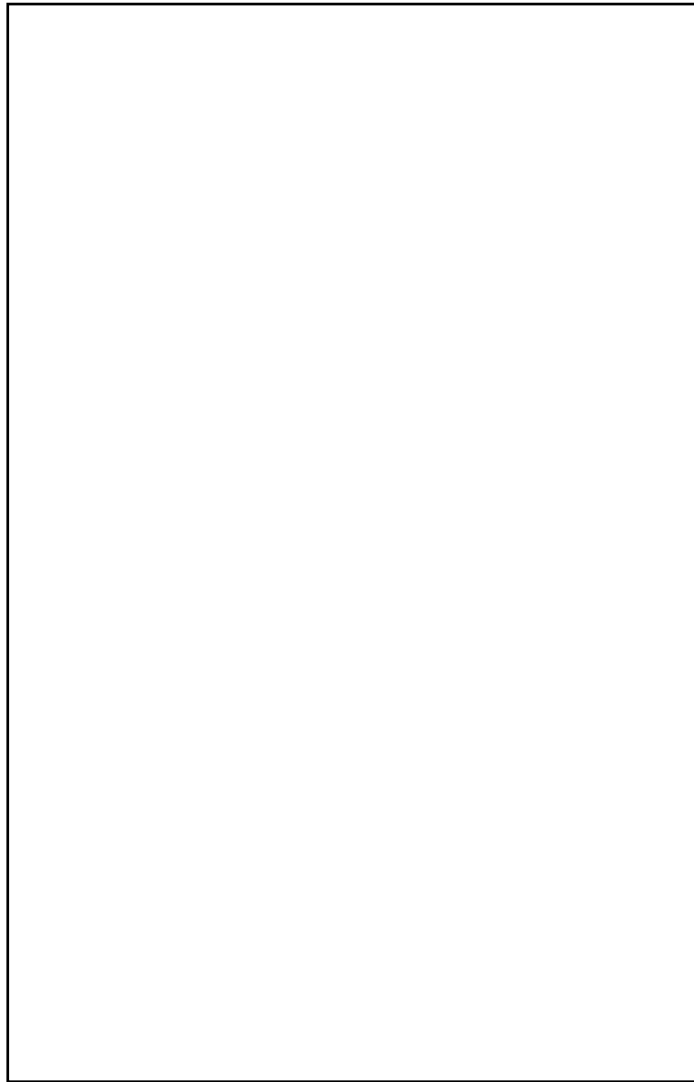


Plate 16. The ‘language’ of the architect and the ‘language’ of children can be challenging to merge. Here a participatory appraisal exercise is used in combination with an architect’s sketch of the school grounds site.

Sheat and Beer (1989) quote Hart in the same way as I have just done, yet they never mention how or if any changes were actually made to the young people’s environments. In their investigation of the potential of user participatory design techniques as environmental learning exercise, their one main aim seemed to be enabling children to ‘learn about landscape architecture and the design process’ (Sheat and Beer, 1989, p19). In addition, such projects can enable children to learn about ‘environment-behaviour relationships’ which, they argue, ‘goes beyond this’ (Sheat and Beer, 1989,p19). Yet, ‘going beyond’ the drawing board is where Sheat and Beer seem to fall short of the mark in assessing participation as I see it. ‘Going beyond’, for Sheat and Beer still leaves us trapped within a

concept of education that fails to be socially critical about the lives of the children who 'participate'. The children remain within the school laboratory; 'real life' is left outside. Learning as 'pretending to be doing' lacks the critical edge of active political, democratic involvement. Education that patronisingly invites children to practice the skills of the adult professional which may never get used can demoralise and dishearten children (see Appendix C, p12). One is brought to wonder why should a young person ever vote at eighteen if their opinions have only been consulted at best and encouraged tokenistically for simulation at worst up to that point. A socially critical form of education 'goes beyond' tokenism. Making designs count is surely the vital political participative ingredient in any design process.

Some particular adults who are finding themselves in the situation of having to 'broker' the level of children's participation in schools grounds projects are landscape architects. From my own attempts at involving children in making changes to one school grounds (see Appendix C) I too became aware of the politically sensitive arena in which visitors to schools (designers, architects, rangers, and others) may find themselves when invited to help make changes to a school grounds. It now seems to me that three styles of interaction can occur between visitors such as landscape architects and their 'clients' the teachers and the children:

**Option 1.** *Children get construed as learners about design or the work of the architect.* Children learn about the ways maps work and learn about the language of the landscape architect. They may be involved in simulating design work by being asked to sketch out things or to list off the criteria for the design of a new place. No necessary change in the school grounds is set as an objective of the project but this may happen through the activity of others involved in the project.

**Option 2.** *Landscape architects are given the job of designing something or someplace for the children by the teachers.* Children can have varying amounts of input into the process but if the landscape architect has only a little understanding of what ways there are of getting children participating in decisions, the level of participation may never rise above Hart's 'non-participation levels' (levels 1-3 on Hart's ladder of participation, chapter 13). The idea here is that the 'services' of the landscape architect are to be the 'expert' on what will work best because they have an expertise in this area. Landscape

architects do up a 'professional drawing' to best show what needs to be done. They may overview the work or do it themselves but significantly there may be no concerted effort to involve the children in any of the design or works aspects of the project. The main objective is to succeed in making the school grounds different for the purposes of improving play value in the playground, improving the 'safety' of an area, improving the 'aesthetic value', the 'natural heritage value', or improving the 'educational value'. These objectives may be communicated to the children but they are largely set out by the teachers or the architect or some collaboration between both. This would be considered to be a project with level 4 type participation at best where children's views *may* well be respected but it is not an in-built feature of the project which is adult initiated and controlled.

**Option 3.** *The landscape architect is involved in trying to hear as many of the voices of the stakeholders in the project to change the site or in naming the next project.*

Stakeholders can include parents, children, the janitor, the teachers, etc. During all of this the landscape architect will give her/his input into the project as an 'outsider' who has tried this sort of thing before. The 'insiders' learn by apprenticeship. The landscape architect works with all of the stakeholders using varying procedures to maximise the participative inputs from the greatest number of stakeholders at the greatest number of stages (e.g.s the surveying, planning, designing, physical work, assessment, all decision making) by convening them in the same places or by acting as a conduit for communication between them. For meaningful participation to occur in any level above 3 there must be a 'community action' component in the project (Hart, 1992) even if 'the community' is considered to include only the children and their teachers.

Often, however, working in the style described in '3' (above) is seen by the architect to be beyond the remit of their role as irregular visitor-expert although I have met architects who strove to construct their role in this way despite the wishes of the teachers or parents. Schools should be careful in taking on the services of an outside landscape architect and be sure what role they expect the visitor to perform. in the process I have witnessed some projectwork involving large sums of money that had very little intention of becoming real community action projects ever. in the process children's hopes are elevated and deflated:

*I: What do you think of the project? Can you tell me what you've done so far?*

We have designed [subject matter deleted for anonymity].

I: And did you enjoy that?

Yeah

*I: And do you think there'll be any changes eventually?*

Naah

*I: So you've no hopes there'll be any changes at all?*

No hope at all

*I: So, why are you getting involved?*

Cos we have to. There's nay hope.

*I: But is there any harm in getting involved in the planning just for the fun of it?*

Well, ye get yer hopes up.

*I: So, planning is about hoping?*

Yeah

When children are involved in a tokenistic way they are reticent to become involved again:

When I was told that something was going to happen in our playground I was not so sure about taking part in it. ... I was thinking about the time before when we were told that something was going to be done and how we were let down when nothing happened. (Child, suburban primary)

By contrast, projects that actually effect changes in the landscape are judged differently; this child records her experience from the same school:

The project was good last year. It was good designing because we made something.  
(Primary five child, suburban primary)

Meaningful participation goes beyond learning about an architects profession, beyond learning about how we relate to an environment and how an environment influences us, and beyond learning the ins and outs of how maps work to include experiencing the active political involvement of making real decisions that have *some chance of impacting on the world* even if they fail to make physical differences to environments (although it has to be said the symbolic aspect of making a difference to a locality is more likely to be effective if 'performed' in a physical way). Worthwhile projects, it seemed to me, were about really

trying to make a difference to someone's life (or the life of another species) as opposed to the practice of simulated decision making and design 'workshops' that are set up 'for the sake of experiment'. There is a sense that some planning and design education needs to get out of the 'lab' and get into a more significant (if not 'real') world that is meaningful for a shared group of people. This is the socio-political aspect of participating in design work. It is about citizenship and attempting to cross boundaries between cultural domains democratically. Researching this seemed initially to be about documenting children's experience of being included and excluded from this political activism which is missing from almost all of the literature in this area. It is here that the effects of working across the disciplines of landscape architecture, environmental psychology, history (or archaeology), sociology and cultural geography had been vital and strategic so far.

### *School Cultures and Curricula*

Schooling is seen as possessing a colonising influence in studies that look at education and indigenous cultures by some authors (Brady, 1997; Sissons, 1990).<sup>81</sup> From the perspective of seeing children in the school grounds as 'indigenous and possibly 'under threat of colonisation' by colonial forms of education I will look to formulations of environmental education in particular. Three constituent components of environmental education are offered as a compendium of the necessary features for a good all round form of environmental education: Education about the Environment; Education for the Environment; Education in the Environment (Palmer, 1998, p145). I survey these formulations of environmental education for their potential to encourage or obfuscate the form of participation Hart (1992, 1997) has in mind:

*Education about the environment* is more commonly associated with schools grounds changes when the audience being addressed include teachers. In indicating the many ways in which a school grounds can be utilised to effect learning *about* the world (geography, science, history), teachers are encouraged to 'colonise'<sup>82</sup> the spaces of the

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<sup>81</sup> Brady (1997) looks at the impact of colonisation on indigenous teaching & learning in Australia where she claims Western European institutions like the school have been dominant over indigenous ways of knowing. Sissons (1990) discusses how the New Zealand concept of 'bicultural partnership' encourages an illusion of cultural distinctiveness while still increasing a bureaucratic colonisation of Maori life.

<sup>82</sup> Giddens (1990) sees colonisation as an obsession of modernity and a control of space, risk, and action.

school grounds for traditional curricular objectives. Educational designs for the school grounds compete with other forms of identification that already hold sway in these spaces.<sup>83</sup>

### *Education for the Environment*

In any one school, an individual teacher, an interested adult, or other party, may take on a role we might caricaturise as ‘green activist’ or ‘activist for sustainability’. Improving biodiversity and restoring natural, native habitats removed ‘during urbanisation’ is prioritised by these individuals or groups. Sometimes these ‘activists’ explain their progress in their own terms as ‘infiltration’. They see their own cause as marginal and developments being made by varying degrees of stealth, winning others over to the cause, and spreading the message from school to school in locales in a form of underground, grassroots movement. The spaces around schools offer those inspired by a green or red-green ideology which inspires them in engaging in a territorialisation of children’s play areas that are *seen as* uninviting, barren and devoid of any opportunities for play. I discuss this issue in the ‘Utopics of Sustainability and Citizenship’ (see also chapter 16; in Appendix B I undercut the now contemporary view that large areas of apparently bare tarmac is a children’s desert without play potential).

### *Education in the Environment*

The formulation ‘education in the environment’ can also sustain certain forms of participation by children in changing their school grounds. When viewed as a child’s own space, the school grounds becomes the environment that the child can potentially change every day. By this understanding, children actively participate in creating, managing and socialising in, an outdoor environment during playtime and sometimes after school and may be involved in child-initiated projects to change it in ways that are hidden to adults’ view. My research on dens, huts, forts, etc (see Appendices B & G) shows that children are capable of using a myriad of implements and tools to create self-built environments. Children’s own cultures and ‘ways of knowing’ remain the most under discussed aspects that impinge on school grounds developments and also remain

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I discuss this issue in the section on the ‘Utopics of the Outdoor Classroom’ (chapter 16).

under-analysed opportunities for starting points for environmental education. Mostly, though, children's own cultures are ignored or referred to tokenistically in efforts to involve children in planning and design. By and large, the job in hand requires the child to learn the language and problems of the adult world: the problems of finance, and safety when plans for changes are discussed. The adult (landscape architect, teacher) is less commonly required to learn the language of the child's world before decisions about changes can be made. Children are aware of the need for learning:

*I: Why do you think the teachers helped you [to make the changes]?*

Child (aged five): People who are four don't know how to do things. We didn't even know how to walk properly then!

but also recognise their own lack of agency in matters:

*I: Do you think the adults listen to you?*

Child: No they take your ideas and say yeah but they don't do anything about it.

*I: So why are you on the playground committee if you think that adults don't listen to you?*

Child: *Some* teachers do.

Adults show less signs of being prepared to admit that they do not know about children's lives or that they understand their language and cultures well. For the most part, however, teachers are unaware of the intricacies of playground life; their only access to the world of play or playtime is when someone comes in with an injury or bullying problem. The most obvious barrier to children's participation in school grounds changes may be the culture of the school and the choice of curricula. Teachers who see their job as primarily to teach the skills of reading and writing and other 'core curricula' may not be amenable to encouraging children to do anything that goes beyond this remit. Still it is apparent that many teachers have always taken an interest in certain other curricular areas that may encourage meaningful approaches to children's participation. School head teachers are probably the key figures in who gets selected to work on a staff, what kinds of activities get funded, supported or praised in school, cultures. These factors constrict or enhance initiatives that advance children's participation generally in school life and community life outside the school. Omnipresent in most schools is the taken-for-granted veto that can be exercised by those adults in power at any time. Children's participation in decision making is usually at their own peril of not being listened to or of having their wishes overturned by



'someone' in the end often with little or no communication of the reasons why.

## Chapter 15.

### ASSESSING PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS GROUNDS PROJECTS

#### **Discussion of Findings**

A detailed analysis of the methods I used to conduct an assessment of schools grounds projects is given in Appendix D. As Hart (1992) points out, to be successful, not every project needs to be an 'Eight' project, i.e. posited on the uppermost rung on the 'ladder': *'Child initiated, with shared decisions with adults'* ; different settings will require different levels of children's participation. Of interest to us here is which levels of participation we think we should be able to find in schools, and, alongside this assumption, the results for which levels the children reported as their level of participation. As I have shown, schools generally seen to invite, or enable participation by children at level 'Six': *Adult initiated, shared decisions with children* and rarely is level 'Seven' or 'Eight' represented in children's own assessments of projects.

Few children in schools picked level eight, seven, five or four. Level seven projects (projects that are 'child initiated and directed') can be easily excluded from school work because children's 'own work / culture' is sometimes seen as 'just play', is ignored or, not encouraged. A huge variety of children's own projects *do exist* in school settings as I have shown in my discussions of children's own spaces: children's activities in helping others, their activities in den and hut building, their complex organisation of the social and environmental arena during playtime found in my analysis of the 'The Utopics of the Tribal Child' (chapter 16) as well as evidenced in much of the photographs. Currently, 'Seven' projects - 'child initiated and directed' - are the unseen, invalidated work of children in creating their own spaces in school grounds. They may be short lived or ongoing; they may be secret or unnoticed. Rarely, are they used as starting points for a school's grounds project by the teachers or those in 'control' of the institutional arrangements in schools. I would have to argue that children's estrangement from decision making generally in schools gets reflected in the lack of children's choices of levels seven or eight on my adaptation of Hart's ladder. Schools claiming to involve children in participative ways are still working under the premise that adults need to supervise and control projects and that

children are in the subordinate role of needing to learn from adults or needing to be protected from dangerous aspects of work, or from the detailed organisational aspects of choosing and ordering materials, making phone calls, etc. I discuss the essential views of 'the Child' as driving motivations for leaving children on 'rung Six' in adults' efforts to involve children in meaningful ways.

When children did acknowledge that they had been 'left out' of aspects of decision making and organisation of a project (e.g.s the making of phone calls, physical work, or letter writing) their assessments sometimes positioned the project into level 'Five'. Only in some schools, was there a sense among a minority of children within a class that they shared the role of initiating the project. Most children felt that projects were 'adult-initiated' which results in the swing towards a 'six' assessment overall in my cumulative scores (see fig. D.5., Appendix D). Generally, when a majority of the children seemed to agree that they 'had a say' and were not just assigned work, a 'Six' ('adult initiated, shared decisions with children') was the obvious choice. In one small rural primary school some children did select 'Eight' as a representative level with conviction. They discussed how there was a familial atmosphere in their school and that they did not distinguish between adults and children as Hart does in his ladder. In effect, they deconstructed the 'tool' for analysis of participation right before my eyes. Children who selected 'eight' commented that they felt the adults had been more like facilitator-friends during the work. Indeed one child wished not to use the adult-child dichotomy at all in the assessment because she felt it could not be sustained as a metaphor for how adult-child relations worked in her school. The children seemed to feel a greater sense of agency when they selected 'eight' as the assessment of the work overall: 'because we have done things and the adults have discussed it with us' (primary six child).

Children rarely selected 'level 4' (where adults decide and run the project, children are assigned work but are informed about what's going on) to represent their experiences of participation within the school cultures I visited.<sup>84</sup> Children reported that only some of the time was their contribution considered 'incidental' rather than important. We might surmise, however, that there may be a vast amount work being done in schools which I did

<sup>84</sup> Again I remind readers that projects were selected as a set of 'best practice' examples selected by discussing things with people who were familiar with the many school grounds projects to be found across Scotland.

not visit (because I restricted myself to schools that seemed to represent 'best practice') where participation is in level four or even in the 'non-participation' levels of three, two, or one (see chapter 13). Further work on this would be necessary to gain a global picture.

We may also be aware that a project can be assessed in different ways within one class of children because different children had different levels of agency within the projectwork undertaken: so some children may have simply been assigned work, while others had a major part in making decisions or getting things going in the first place. This provides us with an understanding that the individual differences in children's abilities, attitudes and experience will all conspire to result in differences of opinion in their assessments of an initiative. Children can have different relationships with their teachers, they will have differing amounts of enthusiasm for different kinds of work (e.g. gardening or building), and their expectations from a project due to past experiences may all effect how involved they were in a school grounds initiative. As a result their assessments will also be different.

### *Small Rural Schools*

First, it has been my experience that the smaller rural schools I visited have been most active in making efforts to change their school grounds. With some exceptions, it has been noticeable that the smaller more rural schools have also been particularly of interest to those advocating forms of best practice to others. In my search for schools that were 'exemplary' in involving children as participants in planning, design maintenance, care, and change of school sites, I have most often been sent to small (roll numbers of less than about 80) schools in rural settings. In the applications for grants and in the winning of awards for schools grounds changes in at least one award scheme, these schools have also been most noticeable. A few complementary reasons for this are possible:

- Smaller schools can involve fewer children in doing more jobs and activities (see Big School, Small School by Barker and Gump [1964] for a discussion on how school size effects teacher-pupil interaction).
- smaller, rural environments are less susceptible to vandalism, violence, and teenage drinking on the school grounds
- smaller schools have an advantage over bigger schools because it is the accepted norm for adults and children to help out 'out of necessity'

- smaller, rural schools have stronger community links because of heightened awareness of local resources
- parts of rural Scotland is now experiencing certain amounts of recolonisation through a process of counter-urbanisation as evidenced by experiences elsewhere in studies by Perry et al. (1986) and Cross (1990). Often those who are categorised as the ‘recently arrived’ find the school to be a target site for their desire to be involved in a community
- the atmosphere, ethos, and the attitude to adult-child relations in smaller schools loses some of the large school institutional atmosphere that makes communication and participation difficult
- the curriculum is more often taught in a cross-curricular way in ‘mixed classes’<sup>85</sup> which are the norm in smaller schools

#### *Possible Problems with the Statistical Evidence*

Sometimes children were unsure as to which level of the ladder to pick in their assessments. This in itself is an indication that the ladder may not be an appropriate tool for assessment or that I was using it in too crude a manner. I could have asked the children to think more specifically about different activities within the project or to be clear about one particular phase of work rather than asking them to think about whole projects that may have gone on over a long period of time. Due to the length of some projects, their sense of it being a ‘Six’ or a ‘Five’ project may have been confused because of the differences in the ways in which the project progressed. Sometimes the children may have been instigators of decisions or ideas, sometimes initiatory moves may have been made by the teachers or some outside body, usually the parents. But I was keen to get an overall impression of the culture of participation that they felt existed when school grounds projects were attempted. I did encourage them to be selective of one ‘rung’ on the ladder even when there were two to pick from in their assessments. Even though I acknowledge that the children may have been tempted to pick rungs higher up in the ladder because they may have wished to put their work in a good light, I felt that I did give plenty of warnings about why no particular answer was the right one and that no particular rung on the ladder represented the necessarily ‘best’ type of participation by children in schools grounds changes.

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<sup>85</sup> An organisation of having children of different ages in classes together as a result of the small school size. In the past children and adults often went to school together; it was not uncommon for adults and children to be in the same classes - a feature becoming more acceptable as adults return to study and as the diversity of student types effects schooling generally.

## Summary

My attempts to assess participation may be marred by contextual factors: the presence of teachers while conducting the research, the possibility that children are so disempowered that even a ‘whiff’ of participation may be considered ‘great’ by this marginalised group, or the possibility that the structure of the ladder skews results in favour of ‘higher’ scores of participation. Given these and many other possible interpretations, I find that level six (adult initiated, shared decisions with adults) projects represent the majority of the best of schools grounds projects being conducted in Scotland. I imagine that the main reason for this is the essential belief among educators (who are in control of schooling) is that children are posited as learners rather than active agents in social and environmental change. Other fundamental ideas about children that conspire to leave children at this level of participation include:

- ◇ children are not ready for the real world (they can not make phone calls or write letters)
- ◇ children need to be protected from dangers (in the construction of ponds, brick walls, in painting with oil paint)
- ◇ children are to be kept happy and carefree

Essential beliefs that increase participation would seem to include:

- ◇ people with lesser knowledge about something like to learn from people who are more experienced and can therefore benefit from apprenticeship relations to them (Adults may need to be in relationships with children that place the adult as bearer of knowledge about the world but this becomes a relationship of learning rather than a relation defined by age or power over the younger person; similarly adults can learn from children too - interestingly adults make jokes about the teenager in the house who is the only one who can reset the video recorder to come on at the right time)
- ◇ children are a tribal group that can organise and control their own environments so we as adults can use their ideas and learn about their ‘own cultures’ to better learn how to increase this group’s participation in local environmental change.

## Chapter 16.

### GROUNDS FOR UTOPICS<sup>86</sup>

#### The Utopics of School Grounds Changes<sup>87</sup>

The essential subject is only ever a fiction, *but it is a fiction with real political effects*. In ‘real politics’ the pertinent question in the face of ‘an identity’ is not “Is it coherent?” but “What does it achieve?”. (Burgin, 1996, p17, emphases in original)

Burgin (1996) speaks of Freud’s ‘psychic reality’ and the need to look at spaces in a psychical way (Burgin, 1996, p47). In that politics pertains to the advancement of someone’s new society, we can also try to unite the fictional and the real in a ‘psychical realism’ (Burgin, 1996, p56). Louis Marin has called ‘utopics’ the spatial play of ideas of utopia (cited in Hetherington, 1998, p108). The spatial practice of envisioning a better society can be called a spatial utopics<sup>88</sup>. While no ‘where’ can actualise Utopia itself, places can symbolise aspects of utopianism. In the following sequences of photographs and text I try to expose a place ‘between perception and consciousness’ (Burgin, 1996, p47) that unites the analysis of culture and politics spatially through an analysis of different fictions of the ‘essential child’ as participant in change. The context for changing school sites is that there is a public need for it. It is probably true to say that the work of the many charities and organisations encouraging schools grounds changes is premised by the notion that childhood is in some way at risk of losing another outdoor public space. Children, their teachers and communities, are seen as needing some assistance at this time even if the fears for children’s safety are only ‘perceptions’. The ‘taken-for-granted’ driving their work is that there is a need to deal with ‘bullying’, to address the ‘aesthetic impact’ of the school site, to improve opportunities for play, to increase the diversity of wildlife present, to deal

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<sup>86</sup> Heterotopia is Michel Foucault’s word for places that there are probably in every culture, in every civilisation, which are something like counter-sites in which ‘real sites’ are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted. Foucault’s ‘heterotopia’ (1986) is a favoured term among those who understand space this way. Hetherington (1996, p18) has used the concept ‘heterotopia’ to analyse how space is ordered and reordered. A Foucauldian analysis of space shows how local acts of resistance become possible. It is these political and cultural acts that create an alternative ordering of space that interests Hetherington and me. Hetherington calls these acts utopics (1998, p138).

<sup>87</sup> Appendix F gives a more detailed account inclusive of photographs of the analysis of how children’s participation is approached in different ways depending on the essential beliefs taken up.

<sup>88</sup> The concept of the locally distinct effects of the practices of an ever-emerging utopia that can never fully arrive is akin to Massumi’s transcendental empiricism (see chapter 8).

with issues of safety, and to increase the potential of the site as a teaching resource (Kenny, 1994). Other motivations include hopes for doing away with the (perceived) separation between school and community, the inclusion of parents as more direct partners in school life and the advancement and advocacy for more sustainable ways of functioning as schools. School grounds, I argue are examples of marginal sites that display the elements of the spatial practice of a few different utopics; the utopics of sustainability, the utopics of community, the utopics of a safe childhood, the utopics of fun and play. Within each of these are found traces of the utopics of children's participation in changing school grounds. This last utopics permeates the discourse of this text as a whole; it is an implicit 'good thing'. Participation is the 'in thing' and children's participation is hard to argue against.

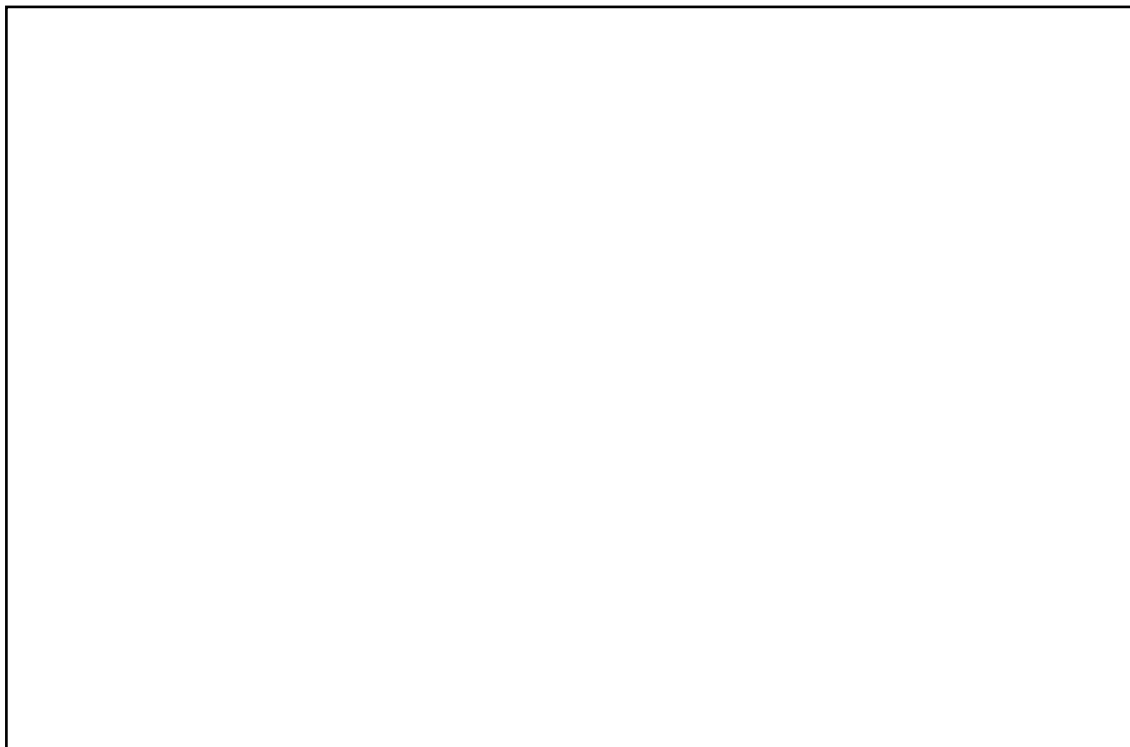


Plate 17. Our reading of children's cultures can be coloured by essential views about the 'nature of the child'. How do we 'read' these children's activity: as play, rough and tumble, aggressive play, bullying? (See Pellegrini [1996] for an introduction to rough and tumble play).

We discuss each of these 'utopics' in turn in Appendix F to see what evidence there is for the different levels of participation in Hart's terms (Hart, 1997). Each form of 'Utopics' has an associated 'Essential' view of what the child is. Essential root metaphors drive



discourse in different directions. The metaphors I suggest for 'essential views of the participant child' are given as a guide to help give a fictional overview of some possible approaches being taken to children's participation in changing school grounds or any locale. For most of us the essentials of what counts as a child are more muddled than separated as given in the table (fig. 2., below). In any one school grounds project we may find much grater confusion and diversity among adults may be working with many or all of these essential views about childhood.<sup>89</sup> The table does provide us with a framework for exposing some of the underlying rhetoric about children's participation and how it can mean very different things to different people depending on their 'Essential' view of the child. For children, their experience of participation will probably be 'coloured' by the position taken by the significant actors in a schools grounds development project more so than their own view of themselves although this 'view of self' is probably highly influential as well. Further research using the rubric presented here would usefully employ strategies for getting children to converse with these possible adult views of children in conjunction with their own views of their potential as agents of change and perceived barriers to participation etc. The impacts of adults' essential views on children's participation are discussed in Appendix F where a more detailed analysis of the framework is given.

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<sup>89</sup> The strategy in the text here (and throughout) is to address an 'adult audience' which excludes a the child as a possible reader and also excludes a discussion of children's own views of themselves from any analytical rubric or set of essentials.

The Essential View of the Child	Approach Taken to Children's Participation
The child-in-need-of teaching	Utopics of the Outdoor Classroom : Playspaces become learning spaces.
The child-in-need-of protection / The child-in-need-of-control-and-direction	Utopics of Safety: design a safe place to play & work; children must remain under supervision. Participatory rule-bound; management and surveillance of anti-bullying, anti-racism, etc
The child-who-should be happy	Romantic Utopics: Adults remove the difficult, contested political aspects away from children - it's not their
The child-who-symbolises-community-hope	Communitarian Utopics: Doing something for the children becomes the motivation for community development, school survival or celebration
The child-who-would-be a citizen (The minority group child who can make a difference)	Utopics of Citizenship and Sustainability: Adults would simulate or make real opportunities for children to have a say. Children make a place better for themselves or some other species
The tribal-child	Utopics of the Tribal Child: Children need space away from adults to do their thing - unstructured freedom and children's own culture are important

Fig. 2. The 'essentials' of who we think children are and the corresponding approaches that may be taken to children's participation by adults or children.

## Chapter 17.

# THE SPATIALISATION OF CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN POSTMODERNITY

### The Postmoderation of School Grounds

The last ten years [1990s] have seen new movements to get 'back into the open'. Running has suddenly acquired popularity and jogging and orienteering, of American and Scandinavian origins respectively, have led people in different ways back into the open air. ... Adventure holidays and neighbourhood street festivals also illustrate the tendency towards open air activities. ... Since the 1960s, Europe and America have both offered fertile ground for meditational forms of exercise from East Asia that combine gymnastic and spiritual elements: yoga, t'ai chi chuan, tantra, zen ... (Echberg, 1998, pp58-59)

The long-time established trends of modernity are no longer stable. And so we have to ask which mythologies, 'after modernity', will result from this destabilisation, and how will they be related to sport and bodily rituals. (Echberg, 1998, p161)

Echberg's discussion of the history and prospect of the spatialisation of sport provides a good 'jumping off' point to discuss the school grounds in a similar way. We have reached a point where green revivalism has again surfaced. 'Return to Nature' rhetoric has been with us since at least 1800:

Philanthropic teachers had taken to wandering off into the open country with their pupils, and there encouraging them to go swimming or ice skating. Their recommendation of open-air gymnasia for the schools also testified to a new pattern of body-environment relationships. 'Education', according to J.C.F. GutsMuths, 'thrives best in the bosom of nature'. (Echberg, 1998, p52, quoting GutsMuths, 1804)

In education during the same period [early 1900] reformists were aiming the brunt of their criticism at the spatial configuration of the Wilhelminian school,

the 'school barracks', and the tendency to model school playgrounds on parade grounds. (Echberg, 1998, p57).

### School Grounds in Modernity and Postmodernity

Modernity and postmodernity are best understood as fictional thematic cultures that may exist concurrently at any one time and place. We can find a framework for analysis of this contemporaneous cultural pattern by thinking about the use of time, space, the interpersonal relations that exist in modernity and postmodernity. Our educational goals and values have also shown signs of change with the advance of the epoch of the labyrinthine (Echberg, 1998).

	<b>Modernity</b>	<b>Postmodernity</b>
<b>Time</b>	Leisure versus work dualism; the use of the stopwatch for sport ; play is compartmentalised into periods of fresh air <i>between</i> learning	The value of slowness instead of speed - quiet areas are introduced; learning is informal and incidental; the 'outdoor classroom';
<b>Space</b>	School yard designed like a barracks; spaces are specialised according to age; the carnival is repressed or ignored	Lines are replaced with curves; the labyrinth is introduced; wildlife gardens; tarmac broken up; theatrical amphitheatres encourage community participation
<b>Inter-personal Relations</b>	Isolation of generations and year groups; adults are there to control things; the janitor picks up rubbish and maintains the site; males dominate the space.	Outsiders come in to help; parental involvement; adults come in for sports day and join in the fun; children work with adults in making changes.
<b>Objectives</b>	Optimisation of indoor work ethic by release of energy outdoors; competitive spirit developed; bullying is part of life; litter is managed	The social well being of the whole community is addressed; health and quality of life are seen as important; the greening of public space through post-hierarchical politics.
<b>Values</b>	Hierarchical control, low maintenance, low cost; supervise and punish vandalism, bullying. Adult, male, managerial values.	The ethic of care, personal and ecological health, biodiversity, community participation, diffused control. Familial (female) collective values.

Fig. 3. School grounds with attendant meanings in modernity and postmodernity.

Schools grounds conferences herald in themes about the arts and gardening in schools grounds.<sup>90</sup>

The structures of modernity and postmodernity (see also footnote 3, chapter 1) are problematic to encapsulate.<sup>91</sup> Perhaps the forms of postmodernity I am thinking of are the ones that need modernity for its critique. But I do not follow Beck (1992, 1996a) whose counter arguments to modernity are still modernity's projects contrived into more reflexive forms. These counter arguments are derived from the modernity's need to counter postmodernism's responsibly anarchistic (Schurmann, 1990) critiques modernity. As such critiques are of a time and a place. They are strategic and effective because they reflect the opposite of the situations they wish to change. Postmodern critiques work to utilise non-foundational claims to undercut the lack found in modernity. These postmodern critiques will need further deconstructing at a later time and place. Hence we can see how some critiques get 'recycled' over time.

### **The Resurgence of Greening**

It seems we have arrived (again) at a point where the outdoors has something to offer our educational aims. While in Margaret McMillan's times health issues converged with educational ones (see Appendix H), today, issues of power between the sexes, ecological awareness and anxiety about the sources of our food, worry over the decrease in children's fitness levels through lack of outdoor exercise, and local desires to find 'places of engagement' for groups that are seeking greater alignment and participation in the decision making processes in schools (the parent-teacher associations, parents themselves, landscape architects, architects, non-governmental organisations, local authorities, governments). Set among all this is a rise in agreement among a whole range of parties that children should have a greater say in things and that education should address politics and citizenship more directly. Different forms of practice (place-identity politics) are taken up by adults and children in the space we define as the school grounds. I discussed these practices as forms of 'Utopics' in the last chapter. Children's participation is never easy to spot because

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<sup>90</sup> Some recent titles have been: 'Breaking Up the Tarmac' and 'Taking Root' to discuss the uses of landscape art (including labyrinths), gardening and play features in schools grounds.

<sup>91</sup> Stronach & MacLure (1997, pp19-32) give a comprehensive set of approaches to how modernity and postmodernity relate. The possible metaphors include *real-unreal*, *nature-culture*, *body-clothes*, *life & death*.

people work form different essential views of 'the child', 'learning', 'community' and so on; it is also defined by adults for adults' purposes rather than defined in children's terms. This text also falls into the trap of speaking about children to adults in academic language. Yet, my contribution to the need to research this field of study is to continue to struggle to find ways of reifying these narratives through picture and story that invites the reader to retell these stories anew in the reader's own context whether it is one of a spatial practice, a community practice of learning, a community development model, a pedagogical teaching of children, or a form of ecological activism with children. These contexts for 'reading' are attributable to different utopics, different 'viewings' of the content of the photographs and different interpretations of the evidence I present here.

### **Postmodern Approaches to School Grounds**

We can give a characterisation of the movement to change school grounds as a post-modern manoeuvre that is not orchestrated by any hierarchy but is the result of a combination of forces that challenge some of the tenets of modernism which elevated individualism, materialism, scientism, anthropocentrism and ecological vandalism<sup>92</sup>. The loss of the feminine under the power of patriarchy in modernism is also recovered in some moves to change how a school site works not only in the significance of where women themselves are involved in different levels of activism, but in the affirmation of the values of care, cooperation and other values associated with a feminine 'principle'. The coalescence of discourses from environmentalism (education for sustainability), feminism, alternative healthy lifestyle, and increased political participation, converge and intermingle in the cultures of activism to change school sites. Idealised models of what is a 'healthy and good childhood' underwrite and intersperse much of the discourses that give rise to impacts 'on the ground' and in the cultures that inhabit, control, and infuse them at various distances.

In early farming methods the involvement of children in manipulating the environment for human needs was a matter of survival and ongoing development in the agricultural revolution and later in industrialisation. Now, at a time of high industrialisation in the West, different needs are being actualised: the need to relate in a different way to the environment; the need to use outdoor space as a place for leisure and identification for all.

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<sup>92</sup> Jagtenberg & McKie (1997) connect postmodernity in its many forms to a cultural movement of 'greening'.

We need to identify with a variety of 'others' - multicultural education and development education ask us to look to the 'other' who is treated in an unjust way; environmental education, education for sustainability, and new scientific stories indicate a new attitude is required towards the 'other' - in this case 'our environment' which which is seen as needing to be treated with greater sensitivity and care if we are to have a healthy future as a group or as a civilisation. Ethical responses to our environment will require more than a rational response to perceived risk. An emotional, intuitive, and compassionate component to our response is included.

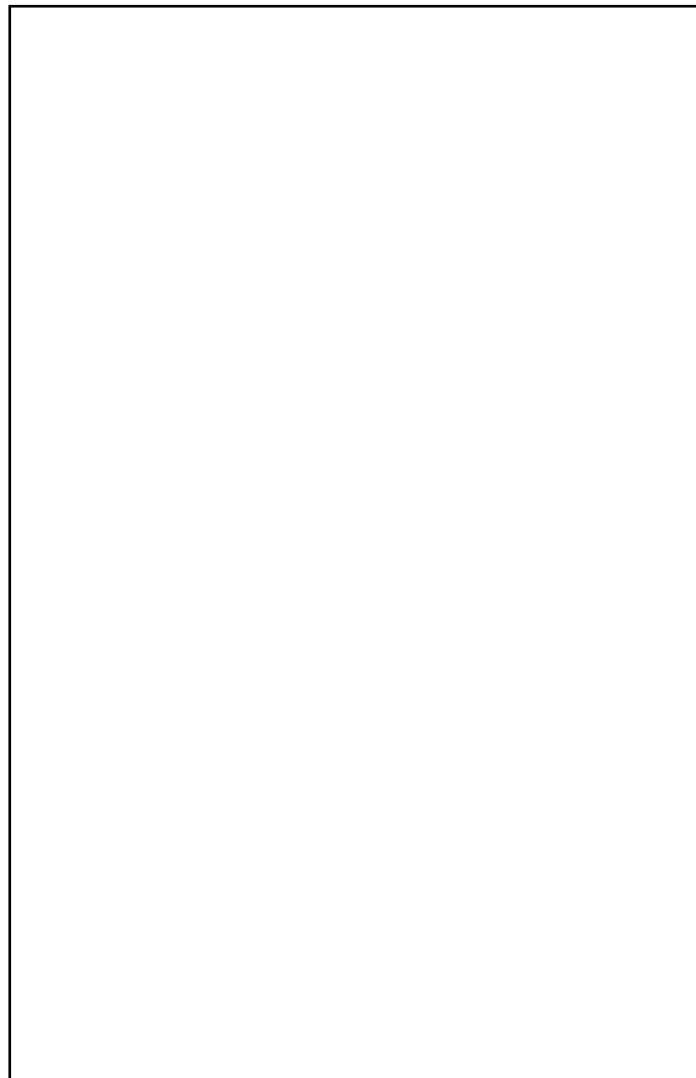


Plate 18.

Where cultures validate certain kinds of action as worthwhile yet corruptive of the environment, root metaphors for those cultures will need challenging by counter-cultural actions.<sup>93</sup> What more counter-cultural activity can there be but for a whole school to abandon indoor school work for a day:

The day [*School Grounds Day 1998*; see plate 18, above] was easy to organise and was a huge success. One staff member was heard to say “It was a super day, we should do it yearly, if not termly”, while another commented “The children have learned more being outside for an hour than they would have if we’d stayed in the classroom all day”. ..... For us teachers, the most striking thing was that we conducted a whole school day with all the doors to the building left wide open. Teachers, volunteers and children spent most of their time outside taking part in activities. The children felt they were doing no ‘work’ despite all the painting, gardening, drama, gym, art, planning, designing, co-operation, and team work that went on...the curriculum was allowed to spill over into the school grounds for over 500 children - the classroom ‘went bush’ and the kids ‘went walkabout’ for a day - and it was a lot of fun! (Teacher writing about the experience of *School Grounds Day 1998* )

The contest over what school grounds are to become is set to continue into the future. We have seen the historical forces at work in the rise and fall of successive regimes from the school grounds as ‘barracks, to the school grounds as ‘outdoor classroom’ or ‘the tribal place of childhood’. We can expect new definitions to take their place as people’s needs for a different construction of childhood changes too.

### **The Postmodernisation of Schooling**

Wenger (1998) notices, as I have done, how the outdoor semi-public playground can offer a multitude of ‘affordances’ (Gibson, 1979) for children’s needs for identification regardless of whether the teachers or others involve themselves in creating opportunities for adult-child negotiations of identity. Wenger’s assertion that educational attainment is deeply connected to issues of identity is one that the institutions of care and education have yet to

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<sup>93</sup> See Larans et al. (1994), Smith (1995), Seidman (1995), Jagtenberg & McKie (1997) for a discussion of new social movements, counter-cultural elements of their activities and their configuration within postmodernity.



grasp as a central influence on how curricula get constructed and delivered:

It is no surprise, then, that the playground tends to become the centrepiece of school life (and of school learning), that the classroom itself becomes a dual world where instruction must compete with message passing, and that some students either seek their identity in subversive behaviour or simply refuse to participate. (Wenger, 1998, p269)

The challenge for the school is to open up the ‘economy of meaning’ (Wenger’s word) as a community of meaning internally and in relationship with the broader world.

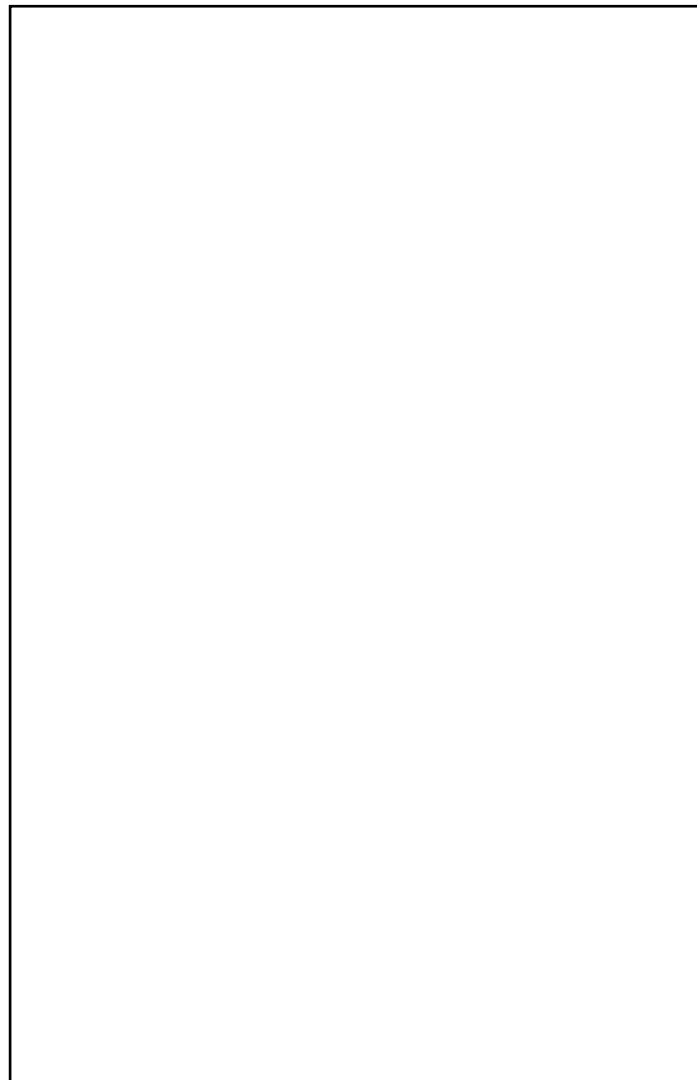


Plate 19. A classroom doorway designed and painted by a primary six group during *School Grounds Day*.

According to Wenger, students need:

1. places of engagement
2. materials and experiences with which to build an image of the world and of themselves
3. ways of having an effect on the world and making their actions matter. (Wenger, 1998, p270)

Like Arendt's public or open space, the 'places of engagement' can be indoor or outdoor but, as we have seen, the outdoor public aspect of the playground is seen by outsiders as extraneous or marginal to the school curriculum and hence a good place to get a grip on things as an outsider (be they a semi-state body like Scottish Natural Heritage, a parents' group, an 'artist in residence, or a local countryside ranger). For transgenerational tribal identity formation (my word) to occur a 'community of practice' (Wenger's word) will require 'activities requiring mutual engagement, both among students and with other [adult] people involved; challenges and responsibilities that call upon the knowledge ability of students yet encourage them to explore new territories; enough continuity for participants to develop shared practices and a long-term commitment to their enterprise and each other.' (Wenger, 1998, p272, brackets added)

A curriculum would then look like an itinerary of transformative experiences of participation than a list of subject matter. (Wenger, 1998, p272)

I learned that you can't just let your imagination run wild! (Primary school child, recalling what he learned from a school grounds development project; he realised that plans can be hard to implement)

I learned that things cost a lot of money! (Primary school child recalling what she learned from a school grounds development project)

The onset of a participatory culture in a school cannot be left to the domain of school grounds changes alone. The consequence of asserting the importance of participation in meaningful experiences of identity formation *as learning* is that children must also have opportunities for deciding on the institutional arrangements *inside* the school as well as learning about how to attach wood to brick or how to mix cement. The children are the ones

with the greatest stake in their own future, yet are excluded from being held accountable for their ideas for change even if they are requested. In a postmodernisation of schooling, children will be required to make their ideas count in a way that is accountable to the adult world and *vice versa*. We have seen how some teachers can act more effectively as role-model adults to smaller class sizes of children, who have possibly got fairly well developed identities of participation already, and engage their learners in an apprenticeship to their ideals (about a sustainable future etc).

### **Childhood Reconstructed?**

It is probably now high time to collect again the songs, games and folklore of younger adult cultures in our playgrounds in a similar vane to the epic work of Iona and Peter Opie (1969) whose work was conducted in the sixties. By looking again at the games adults have no hand or part in we might reveal the continuity of children's cultures and the complexity of the cultural rituals children create among themselves. To do a kind of postmodern anthropology of children's cultures could be to advance the notion that these cultures are 'worthy of study in their own right independent of the perspectives and concerns of adults' (Jenks, 1996, p51). Like the early anthropologists, e.g. Haddon and Rivers in Papua New Guinea in the early 1900's, the new sociologists of childhood now move into the 'native' cultures of children to capture and record their lives and rituals, analyse and collect their 'artifacts'. As adults trying to ask the right questions of a participants in a different culture the same mistakes and pitfalls are before the ethnographer in the schoolyard that were present to the early expeditions to ethnic populations of exotic places. But in postmodernity it is not as simple as before: concepts underlying our work cannot be so unreflexively clear cut. Adult as the 'knower' and child as the 'Other' will not suffice as a rule of thumb. Our *alien neighbour*, the *stranger* is not necessarily 'the child' (Schutz and Luckmann, 1974, Bauman, 1993).

Some elements of the new movement to change school grounds are seen as progressive and forward-thinking: the new sociology of childhood does allow for agency in children's constructions of their worlds; childhood is not seen as necessarily natural or universal; childhood can be seen as a construction seemingly common to most cultures. By advancing a new paradigm of sociology of childhood, Jenks and others claim to be advancing reconstructions of childhood (Jenks, 1996, p51). In the same way as the savage was

constructed by early anthropology, the child is constructed in discourses of childhood in late modern sociology and ethnography. The difference is only that there is a heightened awareness that constructing rather than defining anything but a fictional reality might be what is going on.

But new reconstructions of childhood and children are potentially no less influential or constraining than developmental theories proposed by Piaget or Kohlberg. A new sociology of childhood will need to do more than try to confirm that ‘without addressing childhood there can be no adequate account of the social’ (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998, p199) if they are to show any potential for dissolving the adult-child dualistic nature of our thinking.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps we need to do more than attend reflexively to models of what it is to be a child which operate to constitute what we see and how we see it. As humans over the age of perhaps 18 or 21, we are socially constituted in the West as ‘adult’ which differentiates younger humans as either youths, children, or babies. We may be prevented from not seeing what we do not see. We must acknowledge how this realisation effects our work. I, and others, have been tempted to advocate the image of ‘the tribal child’ in an effort to account for children’s agency. As such I am positioned in the western culture that has placed children outside of adult culture. It may be that we need to recover the stories of childhood and validate their worthiness *while* we begin to reinclude children as citizens in collegial relationships with adults: it will be an emergent process that readers of such a text as this may look back on with a smile or a grimace. We need to discover if what is in children’s best interests by studying the variety of situations where the ‘transgenerational encounter’ is working to engage learners (adults and children) in new forms of identification. We may need to look to the East as well as to places where children create their distinctly western ‘own cultures’. We need to dissolve the homogeneous group that we call ‘children’ to discover which subgroups of children (girls, boys, ethnic groups, etc) and adults (parents, teachers, older adults etc) are ‘ready’, ‘willing’ or ‘able’ to increase their levels of participation in adult-child encounters within schooling and without.

James (1998) and others, talk of ‘the socially constructed child’ or ‘the socially structural

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<sup>94</sup> The rhetorical position I take up here is that the adult-child dualism may be *strategically* the most ‘worthwhile’ dualism to disturb the normalising influences on children that regulate rather than celebrate difference. Against this we must be careful not to subsume the ‘difference-from-adults’ that children themselves may wish to maintain.

child' particularly if and when they wish to speak of the determined nature of what I perceive in the field (James et al, 1998, pp206-218). These images of children have merged, floated in and out of my writing as I document the story of children's participation. I am convinced, however, that structural approaches to describing 'childhood' or 'the child' will only serve to enshrine certain views that constrain children's participation. Social constructivism as a critique of 'childhood' and children's agency will, most likely, be the preserve of the academic discourse. Similarly, seeing children as 'a minority group' runs into the difficulties around the winning of rights as a way of increasing freedom without discussing more fundamental underpinnings about the shared nature of the citizenship of adults and children which I evidenced in the historical analysis of children's experience. In this context I have argued more strongly than for any other image for the (re)introduction of fiction of 'the child of locally and temporally specific tribes'. This locally 'tribal child' (and 'transgenerational tribal child') is of use in this text only in that it can be a vehicle for saying what I hope is something slightly different from what has already been said: that children's worlds are probably *more similar to adults' worlds than we care to admit*; that children have participated in the worklife and civic life of adults in the past and continue to do so in other cultures outside of the West. The implications for how we view time, the space-identity problematic, the dualisms of work-play and adult-child are yet to be explored in more depth. I have attempted to show that the politics of place-identity is a fruitful arena for discovering new moves to include children in participative ways in the changes being made to some school grounds and in the planning and design of some other local spaces like public play parks (Chapter 18).

The teachers are nicer at the weekend! We can go into the staffroom and have tea with them and I got to sit on the swivel chair! (Child who commented that working with the teachers was what he had learned the most from in a school grounds project)

As explained earlier I set out initially in my study to explore the narration of children's participation in school grounds development and change. What I found in the 'field' was a cultural scenario that needed to be understood not from structural conceptions of 'society' or 'childhood', but a more elusive concept of 'societal action' in line with Bauman's analysis (1993). I move intentionally from the noun (society) to the adverb (societal) here. Children are better described (by using verbs) as actors too. Their lives are better described

as action stories in the same fashion as adults narrate their 'life-stories' Denzin (1989a, 1989b).

Doing the design work made me feel like a professional because there was a good chance that something was going to happen. (Child commenting on what she enjoyed the most in a school grounds development project)

A 'new sociology' of childhood agrees that listening to children's voices is a 'good thing' and not something that ethnographers have done enough of. In adults' efforts to listen to children through their conversations, their art work, their diaries, their actions etc. the binary opposites of 'adult-child', 'time future-time now', 'work-play' are challenged. Only by actually involving oneself in children's efforts at agency in some way might we begin to unpack how our ingrained concepts affect the communications that occur; this may not be the just the simple version of the 'new sociology of childhood' presently being advanced. Noticing challenges such as these is the first step, making them explicit in our writing is another. Deciding on who our audience is when we write is yet another. If I advocate anything as an explicit voice in this text it is that we cannot ignore the self-referential nature of academic writing, the adultist nature of most forms of literature that discusses children and leaves children as uninvited 'readers', our closed-minded passion for the division of our work from our play, and our certainty that there are clear distinctions between playful children and rationally superior adults. Shall we assimilate the child as neighbour or exclude the child as alien? Let us make room for ludic wisdom and expose any evidence we can find for adultist charades of rational ignorance.

Plate 20. (Over) A child's poem about what an adult can do. (From a classroom wall)

blank  
top What and adult can do

**Chapter 18.**  
**THE PARTICIPATION OF**  
**CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**  
**IN CHANGING LOCAL PLAY PARKS**

**Introduction**

Appendix G, *Replay Research - encouraging the participation of children with disabilities in changing their local play parks*, is a report prepared for Stirling Council which I wrote collaboratively with a steering group as part of the research I undertook for the thesis. It remains intact in its entirety fairly unabridged and unedited. As such it can now be understood as a 'set of data', a text of its time and place, for informing the larger question about children's participation in change. In this chapter I could review my own work described in Appendix G using a 'de-authorising' process (Lather, 1998) where my main aim would be to unstable any attempts at giving a coherent narrative in that section of research. Like Lather (1998) I find that I have attempted to make previously unheard voices audible and make the 'subaltern speak' (Spivak, 1988) in my research with (and sometimes implicitly 'for') children. This desire is expressed in the aims and objectives of the research detailed in Appendix G which include to 'encourage and listen to the self-advocacy of the children through research methods and the dissemination process and to encourage and listen to advocacy for the children coming from carers, befrienders, and other key informants' (Appendix G). In a way, in collaboration with the many other adults in the research process, we may have successfully 'tame[d] [the] interruptive force' (Lather, 1998, p12) of the heterogeneous 'child-with-disabilities' who is constructed for the reader in Appendix G as a key 'Other' who needs to be listened to so that we (adults) can enable them to 'play publicly better'. The taken-for-granted are, perhaps, that children with disabilities should be seen publicly *for our sake*, because if we (able-bodied adults) can see them we are assured of our status as those who have tried and possibly succeeded. We wish to make the 'Other' like ourselves - to normalise their play by creating enabling designs of our public play parks. This reading of the research could conclude that children with disabilities are 'given a voice' only to be have their difference 'translated' into new



'policies and practices'<sup>95</sup> within Stirling Council where 'voice' gets subsumed into an all embracing rhetoric of the 'child-who-plays-publicly' disregarding the perhaps very necessary need to accept difference without trying to accommodate it or selectively appropriate it on 'our terms' as researchers, or adults, or simply able-bodied. In creating 'a kind of gap between text and the reader' (Lather, 1998, p4), I am trying to hold out against any easy success story being read that accepts our undeniable capacity to know about the desires and wishes of children with disabilities generally, and children in general. Perhaps we (the steering group for the research) failed to an even greater extent than we claim in that research to empathise with these children, to hear their voices, to be advocates for them, to arrange communication so that their self-advocacy could be heard, to authentically write their voices onto the pages regardless of what kind of participative methodologies were used. Perhaps we did not provide anything like 'a clear appraisal of specific playground features from the perspectives of children with disabilities and their carers' (Appendix G, p13) because of any number of reasons: perhaps the effects of power relations between adults and children, or because of the effects of discourses of care that affect children with disabilities within their families, or because of the types of provisions given by local authorities to these children.

### **Subversions and Counter Practices**

Lather (1996) reminds us of the inescapable power imbalances of inquiry situations and the possibility that research that seeks to effect 'counter practices' may yet be doing more damage than the seeking of objectivity within conventional research methods. The response Butler (1993) feels we should make to methodology of the kind that attempts to speak 'for' others is 'subversive repetition'. She argues for repeating a subject's account in a different way that will displace the story it has already represented. A second response Lather (1996) makes (following the theories of flux and chaos theory) to the now non-innocent attempts of ethnographers and others to tell an authentic story is the enactment of a 'double science'. 'Double science' requires the researcher to try to give a mimetic (if weakened) double of the 'reality' as seen by the scientist *and* at the same time present the complications of seeing things in that scientific way. It requires a process of doing science and doing an 'anti-

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<sup>95</sup> The Council were anxious to get some participative research going with children with disabilities about their use of public play parks with the specific understanding that 'public play provision for children with disabilities could be enhanced by making change through encouraging the primary users (the children and their carers) to be advocates for change' (Appendix G).

science'. In a way Lather's subversive repetition and double science are really reenactments of new forms of reflexivity<sup>96</sup> that result in infinite regress and vicious circles that are brought on by the acceptance of relativism's ambivalence within a commitment for a better world for someone (see chapters 1-8). My research throughout this thesis seeks to affirm the statement that one can be an analyst and a participant<sup>97</sup> at the same time (see Ashmore, 1989, p108). This seems to require an insider - outsider role that is outwardly untenable. If I stay as an insider, I may lose critical purchase on the 'bigger picture' and get side tracked into making specific local differences within a paradigm that has some essential flaws (as I do in making particular recommendations about how children might better access the top of a swing etc in Appendix G). If I opt for a reflexive move to be an outsider I may lose the opportunity to make any locally distinct difference to anyone because I get disabled by the recursive moves to continually reconsider one's actions - in other words I try to keep away from 'sinning' because I fear someone else will say 'forgive him for he knows not what he does'.

Since the remit of the research fell into the domain of children's participation in changing the locale, I was happy to go ahead with this piece of 'sponsored research'<sup>98</sup>. Being paid to do research is not a common practice for doctoral students in education but doing research of this kind was illuminating because it demanded ...

- that I work with people whose responsibility it was to deliver care and education to children (in this case children with disabilities)
- that I try to find ways of encouraging the advocacy for, or self advocacy of children with disabilities and their carers (parents and befrienders) as primary users and secondary users respectively of public play parks
- that I be the catalyst or conduit for a chain of communication between all the participants in the research leading to the making of changes to the provision of public play being made by the Council

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<sup>96</sup> See Ashmore's *Reflexive Thesis*, (1989).

<sup>97</sup> My use of participant observation after Fine & Sandstrom (1988), Spradley (1980), Whyte (1955), participatory action research along the lines suggested by Park et al. (1993), Whyte (1990), Reason (1994), participatory methods derived from the participatory appraisal tradition (Inglis, 1998), and the timbre of the text itself that invites the reader to see the research as performance, all herald in a participatory view of knowledge generation (see Skolimowski, 1992, for an 'new paradigm' version of this philosophy).

<sup>98</sup> Funding for this research project came from the Council and two companies: one is a play area design and installation company and the other is a playground equipment manufacturer.

- that I attempt to employ participative approaches to making changes to the environments of a specific group of ‘users’ of play parks
- that I try to navigate the sometimes difficult waters of satisfying a group of ‘sponsors’ and stakeholders in the process who had disparate ‘interest’ in the kinds of results the research might throw up

### **Performing Participatory Research**

The process of doing the research may have been far more important than any text I attempted to write after the event. This is the nature of participatory research which is often never ‘written up’ at all because practitioners acknowledge the difficulties of representing another’s voice and the politics of communication. Participatory research (in a participatory universe) is always an ongoing political act<sup>99</sup>, a performance<sup>100</sup> that is only as good as the last act<sup>101</sup>. The activities I undertook to ‘do’ the research with children with disabilities, their carers, and those in Stirling Council will have had untraceable effects. I can certainly vouch for this and I did try to disclose some of my own learning in ‘Findings that are some of my own reflexive discoveries that resulted from the process of attempting this kind of research in the first place’ (Appendix G, p81 and p136). In my version of catalytic action research, the effects *on others* will always be beyond my reach no matter how much methodological reflexivity I build into the process. This is because the ‘action’ of doing things reflexively is the very stuff of the epistemological stance of the ‘action researcher’ and because all research is an action in and on ‘the field’ which changes and effects the power relations and moves things on (Section B). Participatory action research text, like Appendix G, are best understood as ‘reminiscent texts’ of the judgments made by people in particular places and times about what they should do and how they arrived at these (temporary) decisions because judgments seem to have to be made. They are traces of the ongoing struggle of (hopefully ‘concerned’) groups or individuals who wish to make a difference to someone. They do this by constructing someone as ‘other’ (even themselves)

<sup>99</sup> See Martin (1990) for a discussion of the embodied political self through performance; Turner (1990), Schechner (1990), Blau (1990) are all discussed in chapter 11. See also Denzin (1989) for a discussion of performance texts.

<sup>100</sup> An Ibsenian view of the function of a ‘play’ (see Eslin, 1978) is to depict human beings against a backdrop of certain operative social conditions and attitudes. They often depict scenes of crises in systems of relations between human beings.

<sup>101</sup> Perhaps my last act will be the viva. The scripts of plays are always fixed but get performed differently each time. Alternatively, we could imagine that the ‘critic’ (in this case the examiners) are the ones who need to ‘go on stage’ during a viva.

and accept our 'thrownness'<sup>102</sup> in the world. The 'person-place-events' I sought to describe (Appendix G, p10) are never fully captured on film or in my narratives<sup>103</sup>; they are merely framed by some researcher positioned spatially, culturally, and politically, at a particular moment in time and influenced by some technology (see Strohmayer, 1998, pp118-119).

My problem in constructing the doctoral text is complicated by my desire satisfy a few different groups as part of the process of doing participatory forms of research and as part of the process of writing participatory texts for different audiences (which, as I see it, is part of the doing of the research as well). I wish to satisfy those 'with whom' I worked 'in the field' because I was a catalytic action researcher *and* I wish to satisfy others (my supervisors, my examiners) because I hope to get a doctoral degree out of the process. My success in this seems to depend on how knowledge gets constructed in the reader's approach to the thesis. If the reader 'agrees' with the ethical desires of the participatory action researcher<sup>104</sup> then the text will have found its validity in being a reflexively authentic attempt because it admits to its success/failure. I should restate, however, that while 'insider epistemology' has no credibility in 'natural science' (Ashmore, 1989, p108), neither does realist practices of realist writing (which accounts for the timbre of much of Appendix G - especially when I discuss the practical outcomes of the research). So my attempts at reflexivity usher back in the effects of relativism in a form of meta-meta-analysis which is recursively never ending and re-localised within my own personal practices of doing research and which, for reasons stated earlier) is doomed to fail to some (deconstructed) degree. So while, 'A general direction was given to the focus of the research by the drive for a practical, pragmatic outcome: a clear appraisal of specific playground features from the perspectives of children with disabilities and their carers' (see Appendix G for fuller treatment), such research may have ignored the poststructural questions pertaining to the roles of local authorities, the position children were in within their families as agents of

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<sup>102</sup> Heidegger describes existence as a "thrown project". By this he means that we paradoxically find ourselves always already situated in circumstances about which we have little control but which can change depending on how we respond to the situation (Heidegger, 1927, pp344-46).

<sup>103</sup> I use visual effects (in the form of photographic evidence) as do directors of plays (who may use costumes, masks) to unseat stable social codes about the inclusion and exclusion of children as participants.

<sup>104</sup> We should remember that both Ashmore [1989] and I find this position of insider-outsider within reflexivity to be difficult if not impossible to achieve. Strohmayer (1998, p118) also finds that there can be no uncomplicated 'outside' and that the possibility of critique is denied.

change, etc.. Other readings include the story of how local (adultist) ‘authority’ continues to institutionalise adult control over children and advances the continuation of the corralling of children in places of care and play and away from places of ‘real meaningful work’. The premises of my research with children with disabilities can be unfounded for any number of reasons (e.g. the unfounded belief that ‘open access, unstaffed public play areas, are an important part of the spectrum of play provision for children and carers’ (Appendix G, p14). Another irony of the research is that in order to even be consulted on play parks construction, location etc, one might be more likely to be ‘heard’ if one was labelled as ‘disabled’ or excluded because of some other categorisation. When ‘we’ asked *Will ‘the problem’ be located in the body or in the play park construction?*, we set up a dualism that precluded other ways of viewing the problem<sup>105</sup>. I hoped for ‘A fifth phase’ in the as yet unwritten history of play park design which would reconfigure the play park in postmodernity under influences from new social movements (see Larans et al., 1994; Smith, 1995; Seidman, 1995). I named parents’ activism, green activism, mobile play events, community celebrations, and children’s own increased involvement in decision making as potentialities that might reconfigure ‘public play space’. I may have hoped in vain.

### **Problems with Participatory Rhetoric**

The quickest ‘deconstruction’ of the work on children’s participation throughout the text is to say that trying to accept one’s power-ridden position and reflexively expose it and work with/in it in a text is an inherently flawed hope which merely undercuts any attempts at doing participatory research *with* or *for* others. This is because there is an inescapable gulf between one person and another which is never fully traceable within a text. The relations between children and adults is probably so power-ridden that to attempt participatory research with children is perhaps most difficult within the organisations that have the most influence over children (the family, the local authority and the school). The ethical principles of participatory research with children given by Thomas and O’Kane (1998) are very difficult to carry out:

- 1 The principle of children’s consent to participate;
2. Children’s freedom to withdraw if they felt like it;
3. That children should have choice about *how* they participate (e.g. choice over

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<sup>105</sup> For example, that public play provision spatially confines children from other adult spaces.

research methods);

4. That any forced position that demands that the researcher must disclose things to carers if the child is seen as needing protection might reduce researcher credibility.

There are many drawbacks with accepting these principles for doing participatory research with children. Firstly, a researcher may do no research at all if these principles (above) are strictly adhered to in the context of today's institutional practices. Secondly, given the power relations that exist within families, children are likely to rarely be given the chance to make the decision to participate without adult consent or advice. Lastly, given the difficulties of communication that exist between children and adults already, one might expect that a lot of suggestion and preparation will remain the remit of the innovative researcher until we generate cultural milieus where children get used to having more of a say. With these misgivings in mind readers might re-read the research carried out in Appendix G to discover the very positioned and locally power-ridden situation of the researcher, the children, and the adult employees in the local authority. We<sup>106</sup> did succeed to some extent in allowing children an opportunity to interpret 'data' but only after much adult-led framing and within the power relations that existed but which were challenged by the research process.

### **Finding Validity**

This summation of the problem of participatory research with children leaves me with a couple of 'ways out' of the conundrum: either, as Denzin suggests, the subject is 'more than can be contained in a text' (Denzin, 1991, p68) and therefore the processes of catalytic participatory action research has had 'good' effects beyond the text (which only the reader can surmise about), *or*, the subject is 'texts all the way down'. The latter position is taken up by many proponents of strong poststructuralism, a position I have occupied in this text for many chapters, but the former is a position worth considering if research is to have positive effects at all (even if we cannot write about them effectively).

But my narrative (Appendix G) remains 'true' to our essential belief that the public play areas will continue to be (for some foreseeable future) the most likely place for children to

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<sup>106</sup> 'We' can gather together Irigaray's 'We-you/I' (Game, 1991) in a dispersed authorship, reflecting the dispersed self (Tyler, 1986, p139).

visit on foot outside of the immediate street scene near their home (which is becoming increasingly more congested with traffic). And, because we felt that we need to make an effort to make a locally distinct and pragmatic difference to some particular group of people in some locally significant place, we made ‘an effort’ at making things different by ‘possibly empowering’ children’s own voices in effecting change. We realise that we may not have been successful in being authentically vocal ‘for’ children with disabilities but we did try to be *advocative* about what responses as designers, manufacturers, and providers of local public play spaces may need to make to *what we perceived as their needs* at that time and within the power relations in which we found ourselves as adults working in a local authority context. The validity here is a locally distinct and pragmatic effort to enhance children’s participation into an arena from which children with disabilities have largely been excluded.

### **Further Footnotes**

In an in-conclusive way, I / we can look back using a footnote within the main body of the text to refer to Appendix G in hindsight. Further counter-practices may be enacted by readers in their encounters with this text which is supposedly an attempt at an anti-science’ of the science of Appendix G. The ongoing performative political act that is reading will necessitate this. Perhaps in future books and publications readers can all leave further footnotes for their authors in which they can scribble in an anti-dialogue to be read by the author and other readers by electronic conferencing.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Blank footnote for readers’ pleasures:

SECTION E

***FINAL CONSIDERATIONS***



## Chapter 19.

### GEOGRAPHY, THE MARGIN, AND CHILDISM

This chapter enacts the forging of a link between the discourses of feminism, geography, and the discourse of advocacy for children's participation as rhetorically advanced through the action of other chapters. In making these links between feminism, the geography of the margins, and advocacy for children, I create the foundations for a 'minor theory for minors' which I call 'Childism'.

#### Feminism, Deleuze and Space

Useful commentary on how the circle of discourses about children's use of space and time could be opened in Deleuzoguattarian fashion can be found in other feminist critiques of the 'phallogentric' refrain (see Rose, 1995, p766 and passim). Irigaray (1993, p7) argues for a new image of space-time that destabilises conventions. How can places be inhabited in a new way? How can we re-imagine the *container* or the *envelope* of identity? These are the questions of feminists but they may be our questions too. In answering these questions we need to be careful not to replicate a territorialised controlled paradigmatic-disciplined grip over discourse that feminists have argued has been in the flaw of modernity under patriarchy. Irigaray reminds us that 'no narrative, no commentary on a narrative, are enough to produce a change in discourse ... unless they go beyond the utterance into the creation of new forms' (Irigaray, 1993, p177). Rose's strategy (1995) is to look again and again without ever reflecting the same. She has done away with the mirror.

The pose is a mask, a surface, which offers itself as complete to the gaze. It is hiding (from) a lack. (Rose, 1995, p774)

For if the self is not whole, if it is incoherent, always punctured by the gaze, then a perspectiveally organised space of self/knowledge will always produce a self whose vulnerabilities are obscured. I suggest that then that a critical geography aware of the intersection of knowledge with power should consider abandoning the illusion of full self-knowledge. This means, as many geographers have argued, abandoning claims to all-seeing analytical insight. (Rose, 1995, p778).

Rose rightly recognises the problem for situated knowledge too. The same argument applies. Situated knowledge assumes some possibility of a transparent coherent perspective which I have attempted in the studies. Rose reinterprets (places under erasure) the 'situated knowledge' narrative of Haraway by recognising that the situatedness is only in 'spaces that are fissured, punctured, opaque, doubtful: spaces vulnerable to the gaze (of others): spaces that produce hesitant accounts of the self and the world. Diverse reflections from different locations in a multiple space' (p778). Again we find that situatedness is a refrain that has an in-built component always ready to deterritorialise itself. The skeptical questioning of conventional spaces is a double edged sword that slices through feminist geographers own stories about embodiment, and situatedness and experience. And feminists are, for the most part (Rose, Irigaray), happy with that. Shattered mirrors remain in shards. There's no need to replace the mirror with another one. But I have attempted to do just that in my presentations in much of my research. Despite my attempts at including varying amounts of reflexive accounts in my own work, I have attempted to give a fairly transparent coherent perspective on such things as the history of children's participation, children's participation in public play park design, and in the development of school playgrounds. Photography, 'rich data' in the Appendices, and rhetorical strategies in the body of the text have probably coalesced to tell my story despite my efforts to destabilise it from within. There are other voices that are not heard in the text. Essentialisms have had their wicked way.

### **Braidotti and The Body**

For Braidotti (1994), the essentialist questions are important only for their strategic usefulness to the feminist project. Essentialism, as patriarchy had it, is no longer as important as understanding how the subject is constructed, by whom, and under what conditions. Questions of agency are paramount. But, as Foucault and Haraway would attest, the self in contemporary Western society is constructed through technology, chemicals, and the media. The cyborg we have become is a particularly Western problem but one that effects children as much as adults.

The Deleuzian body is an enfolded collection of external and internal influences that has a memory that is always 'becoming'. The instant of becoming is neither past nor future. The Deleuzian body exist in a continuous state of becoming wherein the past never catches up

and the future never arrives. This Deleuzian present can never be captured in/by time or a chronos. Stopping time kills off the radical immanence of becoming. The planes of simultaneity for Deleuze (1990) are the Aion and the Chronos. The Aion is always dividing the past from the present and always sidesteps the present. The Chronos manifests the material side of becoming. Materiality is present only by stopping time which would disallow the Aion to have its way in 'becoming'.

The paradoxical theory of Deleuze is used by Braidotti to name a similarly paradoxical materiality for her feminist situational-situated or positional-positioned approach to naming the sexed subject. She uses Deleuze in a sophisticated way to do what so many feminist need to do: maintain an embodied experience for women against the tide of interest in postmodern circles for valorising an anti-essentialist subject. Feminists refuse to give up the desire to have *a* point of view: female corporeal reality. Yet this is not the point of viewism of the phallogocentric worldview they wish to alter. The 'feminine' such authors as Irigaray are after is a 'yet-to-be-defined feminine'. The poststructuralist tendency to fail to define what's new without paradox is found in Braidotti's discussion of feminism using Irigaray as a model (Braidotti, 1994, chapter 6). She wishes to create new space for female subjectivity by maintaining a version of non-essentialism. A modernist reading of her work would find it flawed, but within poststructuralism, her arguments are not flawed, just attentively and reflexively irreconcilable. The reasons for this are the same as those that mean that this text is irreconcilable with 'a position' on many of the issues. A revitalised political subjectivity for children invites in the paradoxical conundrum such as about whether (a) we want children to be participants in the complexities of the adult world that involve decision making about funding, safety, timetabling and control or (b) whether we want children to be free of these problems so that they can enjoy a 'happier childhood' along the lines advocated by the idealists (Rousseau and Wordsworth). It seems to me that as adults we grapple with this conundrum, and many others, when we invite children to participate in changing their locales in any meaningful way beyond tokenism.

### **From Feminism to Childism**

I wonder about the sense that we are being drawn into a kind of mental gymnastics of assessing the journey to empowerment and the articulation of new subjectivities for women. But this journey is strategically useful because we *are* interested in overcoming the

difficulty of maintaining a critical realist (and corporeal) positionality in the search for new spaces for child-subjectivities. It will require the slippage from the polemic discussion on children (as a group of fictional others) who are in need or redefinition of our 'natural and habitual' categorisations of men, women, and children, into the specific of the embodied, corporeal realities of differentiated others we categorise as children. In the same way as Braidotti, I have been essentialist only in a strategic political way. Children are fictional characters in the lifeworlds we call forth by categorisations in the same way as we fictionally categorise men, blacks, or anti-racists.

The parallels with the feminist project need to be drawn out further and given a 'childlike' spin. Braidotti names some features of the 'real-life women' she wishes to replace the image of 'woman as the other': experience, embodiment, situated knowledges, woman-based knowledges, empowerment, multiplicity of differences (race, age, class, etc.) (Braidotti, 1994, p162). I argue that 'real-life children' (my fictional characters in this volume) can replace the image of 'child-as-other' - and as 'other-than-adult'. My analysis of children's 'own cultures' (Appendices A, B, E, and F) has shown up their own ability to generate knowledge, act independently of adults, and have agency in, school and wider political circles. In Wenger's terms, children have highly developed 'communities of practice' that involve the creation of identities of participation (Wenger, 1998). Like some feminists, I have tried to carve out a liberatory space - e.g. a space for exposing ageism, developmentalism, and other essentialisms as forces that unduly restrict children's agency and participation as citizens. I argue for the need to make the case for new child-subjectivity where children can engage in communities of practice with adults and independently of adults in situations that have meaning for them. This requires a retelling of the stories that categorise children - it has to take some (strategic) essential position on the category of the child - e.g. the child as 'yet to be sexually differentiated', the child as 'other than man or woman' in order to make the point that the category itself is flawed. Like feminism the strategies and textual manoeuvres are similar in their strategic use of an essential. The strategies are different in how the emphasis of how 'otherness' is inscribed: the emplotment of the individuation of women under patriarchy as sexual needs to be supplemented with the emplotment of how the individuation of children is inscribed as developmental and maturational. Women are what men are not: irrational, emotional, uncontrolled, immanent, and identified with the body that is exploited and reduced to silence. These are some of the

devalorised aspects of women's representation that feminists wish to recover. For children, a similar list can be made. Children are what adults are not: irrational, emotional, uncontrolled, immanent, and identified with a developing body. The alliance with feminism in this text enables an opportunity for the recovery of these traits as positive for both the adult and the child. The move to recover the child as active agent, citizen, and cultural participant can be called 'Childism'. Such a movement is controversial and as problematic as feminism and racism for a number of reasons. It carries a radical challenge to contemporary democracy, a subversion of adult-generated knowledge sources (like the university and the workplace), and a critique of the educational system the obfuscates children's ability to participate by creating 'identities-that-lack' knowledge, experience, and a rational approach to problem solving. The parallels with the feminist movement are obvious. Yet the consequences for creating an comparison between childism and feminism are not easy to untangle. A look at the possible spaces where childism could find a voice reveals how it is silenced. In a way the patterns are also similar in how feminist characterise the silencing of women.

Within each woman, Braidotti claims, there is a multiplicity in herself, a network of levels of experience, a living memory and embodied genealogy, and an imaginary relationship to variables like race, age, and sexual choice. The female feminist subject is not a (modern) 'Woman' who is conscious of herself; she is also the subject of her unconscious (Braidotti, 1994, p165). It is this version of feminism that can help me make openings in this text for a new child-subjectivity: the 'Not Fully Child' young person and a new adult-subjectivity: the 'Never Fully Adult' adult.

A Deleuzoguattarian view of presence requires a recovery of history as 'present moment'. In this text my 'History of Childhood' is included as a presence too. Our own living memories of 'childhood' remain with us - our childhood continues to be part of our embodiment. History has become our biology and our culture. Alongside this reading of adult and child identifications, feminists may try to give a largely gendered analysis of the situation. Undoubtedly, for some feminists the story of the individuation of the child will be a story of a gendered identification which functions to reincorporate all theory back into a radical feminism. I do not deny the gendered aspects of identification; there are good reasons for seeing things this way. But it is not the only perspective available to us. The

totalising influence of feminist discourse in any radical political theory is potentially unavoidable if only certain kinds of feminists are the only ones who do the writing. But the positioned, partial, and embodied voice of this text can be revealed as political in the same way as any feminist one. Can we articulate a non-feminist, non-patriarchal, speaking position for the father, the boy, the man? I think so; I think we need to.

### **Signs of Becoming Child / Becoming Adult**

The image of the 'lifelong learner' is but one among many cultural carriers that demonstrates how the process of 'becoming-child' is already with us today as much as the process of 'becoming woman' is also gaining attention. No longer can the adult claim to be complete or mature in a physically or psychologically way. The 'finished product adult' is replaced by the a processual ever-becoming one. Like the child, adults need to continue to learn, deal with physical change and psychological crises. If the child is developmental then the adult is too: we cannot delineate where one begins and the other ends. Other cultural changes can be noticed which help us identify the 'becoming-child' of adults and the counter movement of 'becoming-adult' in Western society: the recovery of playtime for adults in the increase in the leisure industry, the acceptance of cartoons for both adults and kids on TV, the recognition of the child as negotiator in family decision-making all blur the boundary between adult and child cultures. There is now no interlude between children's and adult's television time. No one can tell the age of the virtual identities of many child-adults on the internet. Teachers struggle to instate institutional identities in child-bodies that on the one hand are accepted as different by a curriculum that fails to renegotiate how difference is to be culturally significant in schools. Meanwhile, a twelve year old 'divorces' from his parents in the United States. Reading these signifiers as eruptions in adulto-centric discourse is one way of demonstrating the possibility for a cultural movement of becoming-adult in children and becoming-child in adults. These inseparable movements are probably also inseparable from other forces of capitalism and technology. I have given my reading of the other traces of children's opportunities for participation in 'the adult world' and in their own spaces in Appendix H, *A History of Children's Participation*.

Yet, differences between adults and children cannot simply be contained within discourses about the sexual differentiation of the female body. Indeed, many feminist would agree that women's liberation is co-dependent on the liberation of many other 'others'; some of them

will be men, some children. As the trajectories of consequence and causation are impossible to determine in the process of identification, everybody can be a celebrated 'other'. What then are the openings and possibilities for a 'childist' (as against or within a 'feminist') political subjectivity. This is one of the spaces I hoped I have tried to map out in the studies discussed in Chapters 12-18. It is a narrated, pictorial map that seeks out the places of opportunity for children's participation within different utopias and spatial practices inspired by essential beliefs of 'what it is to be a child'. While I have traced the contemporary notions of the essentials of 'What it is to be a child' I have less often drawn attention to the essentialist beliefs of my own that run amok with the text: that children today are too cared for and that (in line with Winter, 1997) that children need to be released from the 'Youthlands' in which we have placed them and so on.

As children expand their own territory through participation, it threatened to alter their cultural status, which adults relegate to 'play and leisure'. (Horelli, 1997)

Some of the places of opportunity for children, as I have seen them, are possibly postmodern, counter-cultural spaces of new social movements (see Larans et al., 1994; Smith, 1995; Seidman, 1995 for a discussion on postmodernity and new social movements) where children can be 'post-*children* children'<sup>108</sup> I have tried to map out how we can conceptualise the developments taking place in some school grounds as postmodern and counter-cultural spatial practices of communities that espouse identifications of participation and collegiality between generations, between adults and children, between teachers and parents, and between people and their environments (see Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997, pp106-108). I have found that in mapping out these things I have ended up in the folds<sup>109</sup> of the text, in the interstices of things adult and things childlike. The places of opportunity for children to be active citizens turn out to be the in-between spaces that children (and adults) continue to carve out for themselves. Children do this within their counter-cultural 'own spaces': behind the school huts, in their own dens and 'bush houses', and even in some of the virtual spaces that children access on the internet. But throughout my research I have found that the modern spaces of school, street, and public play park can often be places of the confinement of the active child-citizen, bounded by discourses from education, professionalism, and adult life in general. The problem is that the regulation of safety, the

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<sup>108</sup> See BeckGernsheim (1998) for a discussion of ther 'post-familial family'.

<sup>109</sup> Stronach & MacLure (1997, pp28-29).

insurance against risk, and the projection of ideals about the future onto children's options for identification, work together to inscribe children as non-participants more often than not.

### **Moving the Margin**

Postcolonialism, multicultural studies, feminism and poststructuralism invite us to reconsider voices other than those traditionally seen as being central. The success of such discourses in the academic world is reflected in the world of the visual media where a preoccupation with difference dominates the airwaves with stories of abuse and victimisation and stories of sexual diversity being told more commonly than many others. Those who wish to go on air with their story of marginality are given 'centre-stage' to the point where a public 'victim' identity is 'assured' in an ironic way. Certeau (1984) asserts:

Marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive ... Marginality is becoming universal. A marginal group has become the silent majority. (Certeau, 1984, xvii)

Brah (1996) contends that all society has been transformed into a 'diasporic space', jointly inhabited by migrants and indigenous individuals. So we must give up thinking in terms of 'children as minority', which preserves the hegemonic discourse of adulthood. Katz (1992) suggests we should seek the 'other' within us. Her approach seeks to move between positions. It is a cultural geography on the borders between description and analysis. We will need to be multivocal but yet speak for ourselves. Her practice seeks to make connections between groups who may be separated by time and distance, and between the micro and the macro aspects of society's problems.

Shields (1991) uses social spatialisation as a tool for getting beyond Bourdieu's *habitus* (his structuring structure) to find ways of uniting the empirical and the mythological. The result is a cosmological approach to geography where individuals are 'placed' according to discourses of space which are restated in social spatialisation and are themselves produced in social spatialisation. Shields uses Foucaultian 'disciplinary technology' idea to found his description of social spatialisation. Shields' spatialisation is regarded as a paradoxical 'concrete abstraction' but it is not not causal as it is for Soja (1989) and Lefebvre (1974). Places lose their foothold in reality through Shields' strong constructionism. In a way, I have found that school grounds and public play parks have too lost their footholds in 'A



Reality'. My attempts to be statistical in my analyses is countered by my allusion to the metaphorical and the fictional. The empirical is forever shaded with the metaphorical, the emotive and the connotative. Shields' research, like mine, seeks out the cosmology that brings the places we take for granted into existence. Everywhere is populated by the mind's constructions of places and by the people who produce these imaginings. As a result of Shields' embrace of strong constructionism, he also looks to a fractured subjectivity to replace any whole coherent self (Shields, 1991, p269). Part of the fractured subjectivity we all inhabit is the ever-present and ever-changing and emerging 'child-self' that we carry around with us. This is our psychological 'inner-essential-child', a larval self that speaks to us from our own past and may determine how children get positioned, 'placed' in participative terms in society.

Jones (1998) asks us to listen to the silence in the ears of the powerful. The dominant group's exclusion is based on an inability to hear the marginalised voice (Jones, 1998, p13). But is it not the silence of the subaltern that is also problematic? What is remarkable is that the subaltern is *required to learn the language of the oppressor* even when we presume a pedagogy of the oppressed is operational. They do not talk the same language. We may ask whose language is winning here? Whose language gets heard and by whom? Barthes tells us that understanding lies not in a text's origin but in its destination (1977, p148). It may not be sufficient to think that goodwill is enough to be able to 'hear'. The dominant group (adults) wants to be able to access the thoughts, cultures, lives of others (children). In children's 'tribal cultures', the dominant group's voice (the children's) may at times want to access the thought and cultures of adults. They are asked in research (like this, perhaps) to make themselves (the marginalised) visible to the dominant group be they adults or children. We may order, invite or request them to open up their territory. Show me your home. Let me into your space. But all the while, mine is another's territory: the space of a doctoral thesis. We have seen how adult's use of power may find it easier to demand access to the child's world. We have seen how adults' 'invasions of children's own spaces' may be one of surveillance and colonisation<sup>110</sup> or, by another reading, an opportunity for empowerment of child others. Alternatively, we might, as adults consider the possibility of

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<sup>110</sup> Giddens (1990, 1991) uses the concept colonisation to discuss the obsession of modernity with predicting the future. In colonising childhood with adultist discourse we can find validity in the narrative that modernity has colonised the future of society through the prediction and control of children's environments. See also Wenger (1998, p228).

the convergence of two worlds - the adult's and the child's - as an opportunity for adults' empowerment in collaboration with children in the creation of a hybrid culture where the oppressor and the oppressed need to learn new language together. Jones (1998, p16) helps us ask why *must* the oppressed speak. Is it always the case that the master's concerns predominate? In the renegotiation of a transgenerational tribal culture (which I seem to be advocating) we can be sure that a certain amount of colonisation is to take place: children's language interpenetrates adults' and *vice versa*. In our journey into the places children frequent presented here, there is a visible colonisation of children's 'own spaces' by adults: the outdoor classroom invades the playground; British Standards define the structures for play in the play park. But children still manage to find their own spaces within these adult regulated space: they are not fully constituted by adultist discourses. They manipulate places to their own ends, and tell mythic and poetic stories about places that pay little regard to the wishes of parents and teachers. We have seen spaces function as collaborative places of hybridisation of child and adult cultures too: adults who colonise the child's play space for play and interdependent activity in play parks; adults and children who use the school grounds site as a place for communitarian utopics and so on. I have no doubt that the adults who work with children with the belief that there is a need for a hybridisation of adult and child cultures will accept that they learn as much from children as the children do from the adults. Validating and documenting this transgenerational learning is not yet a popular theme in research circles, indicative of the sparsity of spaces in which this kind of learning takes place.

### **Minor Theory**

Katz (1996) asks us to look closely at the cultural turn in geography wherein the discourses emerging from feminist, queer, and anti-racist theory rework what it is to be marginal by 'decomposing the major' (Katz, 1996, p487).

Knowledge of the body results in a messy text where it is 'streaked with the peculiar temporality and spatiality of everyday life (Katz, 1996, p488)

Katz criticises Deleuze and Guattari for placing too much emphasis on the *journey of becoming*.

But to improvise is to join with the World, to meld with it. One ventures from

home on the thread of a tune. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p311)

Instead she argues for taking notice of one's 'position'. She shares Braidotti's (1994) concern that theories of becoming desexualise the subject *before* equality has been achieved between the sexes (Katz, 1996, p493). In a blend of Marxism and Feminism, she describes how minority groupings cannot give up their own historically and geographically specific struggles just yet. She tells us we need engaged accounts of the world. She calls for a change in the nature and meaning of the academic project. This change will not be brought about by an everlasting dislocatedness and, along with Spivak, she is disgruntled at Deleuze and Guattari's 'cruel metaphor' of deterritorialisation. Where once minority grouping's efforts at theory and practice have been ignored, been left out in the cold as outsiders, now she wants 'minor' theory's efforts at reconfiguring the academic project to 'come home'. But Katz's own speaking position cannot be the centre either. Katz's interstitial politics, moves 'outwards from a space of betweenness' (p497) that will rework 'major theory' by cleaving it apart from its centre. The difference between Deleuzoguattarian and Katzian thinking is that Katz does not celebrate marginality, she is situated (put) there by the discourses of major theory.

Minor theory (and my theory of minors, i.e. children) gives us a new slant on what will count as knowledge. The rejuvenated objects, subjects, and practices of knowledge generated by feminist cultural activity (an example of Katz's minor theory) have sought not to work with the binarisms of 'living and writing, art and life' (p498). In geography, she calls for a 'renegade cartography, rooted in experience and wrought of 'involvement', [which] struggle to name a different spatiality and chart the politics to produce it.' (p498). Inspired by this theory for minors, I have sought involvement in designing and reconstructing my own power relations with the children I have met.

Despite her reluctance to accept deterritorialisation, Katz, I believe, is Deleuzoguattarian in her venture into minor theory. Katz's 'refrain' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p310-50) is the refrain of *home*. She is reluctant to accept that a deterritorialisation of this refrain is inexorable. At the same time she is adamant that a deterritorialisation of 'major' theory's delineation of 'the centre' is necessary: it is her 'bigger project to change the nature and meaning of our academic "home"' (Katz, 1996, p497). The naming of a new home requires

a territory to be mapped out. Then will she say: 'Now we are at home.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p311)? However, I doubt Katz would agree that a territory is to be defined for once and for all: 'home does not preexist: it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile centre, to organise a limited space' (p310) in order to keep the forces of chaos outside. I suggest the naming of a home for renegade geographers would follow Deleuzoguattarian thinking on territory: 'Finally one opens the circle a crack, opens it all the way, lets someone in [a feminist geographer, or a child perhaps?], calls someone, or else goes out oneself, launches forth. One opens the circle not on the side where the old forces of chaos press against it but in another region, one created by the circle itself.' (p311). Also, new a 'territorial assemblage implies a decoding and is inseparable from its own deterritorialisation'. My reading of Deleuze and Guattari is that we are always and ever 'at home' *and* 'homeless' at the same time. The inscription of an inexorable slippage into homelessness is found in the territorial uncertainty of home. Conventional geographies are pulled apart by situating minor theory in its midst. Katz's aria is her own deterritorialised (Derrida's strategy of deconstruction) refrain: the *song of home*, the melody of the renegade geographer. The difference between the timbre of Deleuze and Guattari and Katz is that the paradox of the term 'deterritorialised refrain' (where meaning is continually deferred) is purposefully ambivalent for Deleuze and Guattari, while for Katz it is positioned, situated and embodied. The irony is that feminist thought agrees that the position, the embodied place is actually an interstitial place, an 'in-between place'.

A notable paradox in Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* is that there is as much rhizomatics in arborescence as there is arborescence in rhizomatics (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p20). Feminists will generally accept the point that it is not always a case of feminism *against* patriarchy. It can be Marxism and Feminism, Environmentalism and Disability theory, and so on. The enfolding of one marginal space in the other makes borders hard to judge. Value judgments become harder to make as the 'oppression' of one is more obviously bound up with the 'oppression' of the other. A quick scan over the journals will allow us to say that the feminists have possibly 'cornered the market' on the claim to marginality along with, perhaps, the anti-racists and the disability theorists. In order to maintain the 'authenticity' of their voice for their constituency, they *need* to maintain the marginal status.

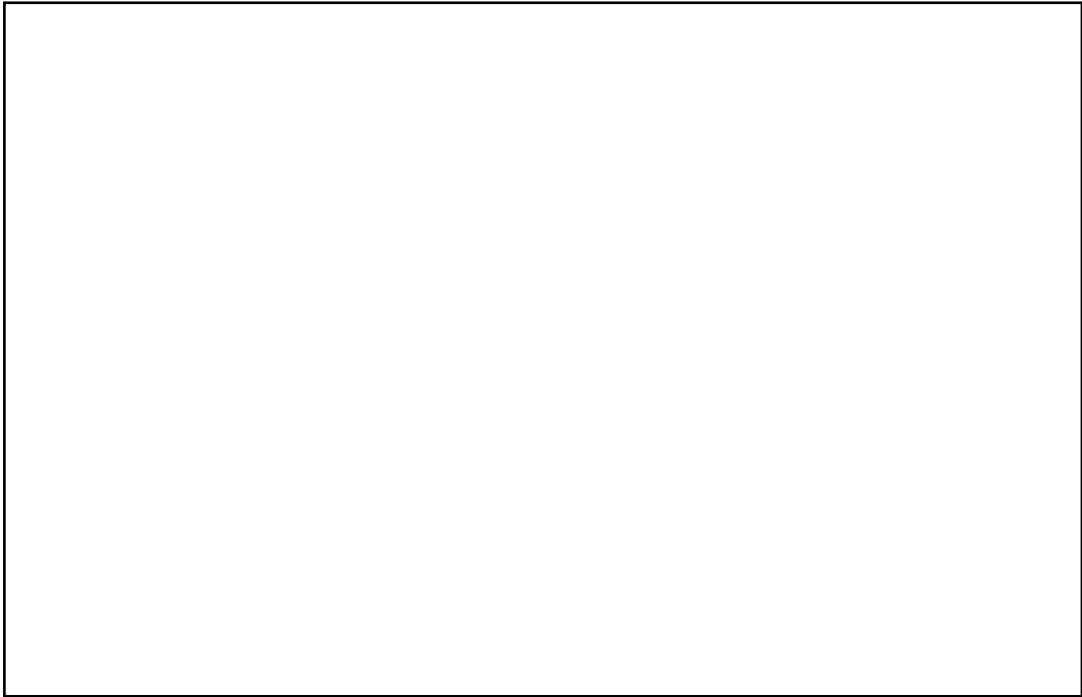


Plate 21. Adult-child encounter.

## Chapter 20.

### ENCORE: ADULT-CHILD ENCOUNTERS

#### Back to Children - Theory for Minors

After Foucault, Laclau, Hall, Deleuze, and the feminists, the subject gets replaced by the displaced or decentred self (Chapter 7).<sup>111</sup> With *one reading* of history, we could argue that a displacement of children has occurred in the way we have cleaned (ethnically cleansed?) children from places where they once held more sway: the street, the workplace, even some thrones. With the development of regulated sports, rules and rigid spaces for team games were marked out (Echberg, 1998). Spaces were defined. Now playgrounds and commercial play centres are seen as some of the *designated places* of childhood outside of compulsory schooling. Where once play was experienced across all ages, it is now segregated and delimited with the oncoming of industrialisation (see Appendix H). In this narrative, we have a loss of 'an original' - a time when things were better, different. My temptation is also to remain historical<sup>112</sup>, to present a time when the playfulness of adults and children together was a reality that escaped the confining forces of 'Reason'. This idealisation of culture of mediaeval times is a reverberating echo of my utopia, that you as reader need to be aware of. It may well be a false original, a dream. I encourage readers to be aware of the functioning of this 'original' (and others) in my texts.

So while there may be an irrational presence in our cultures today, we may never be able to speak of it, for if we do it may get consumed within rationality. Derrida would say this is

because there is no outside-of-the-rational. It still remains for me to perform an attempt to

<sup>111</sup> Taking on board what has been said about the decentred self, the now contemporary distinction between a speaking 'individual' and a 'subject position' needs to be made in this chapter. Our uniqueness is not a pre-given and forever fixed entity. Our subjectivity is continually conferred and negotiated. We participate in the processes of subjectification (of ourselves and others) in living a life in a place. This is why attending to the cultural spatial practices of institutions in heterotopic sites and their influences on identity (and hence learning) is so important. They are the unstable and unfixed sets of meanings that are available for subjectifications/'subject positions'.

<sup>112</sup> Foucault was later to accept Derrida's arguments about the problem of never being able to locate in history such an ideal past. Foucault, by later admitting that all his archaeologies were really 'histories-within-reason', accepts the hypocritical aspect of his earlier work. Bakhtin presents us with the presence of more 'Madness' (his carnivalesque culture of the Middle Ages). Derrida would say that all of this has been consumed and organised within reason and could not ever have been transcendental - there was no original. Silence is Derrida's only response to the transcendental; there is nothing outside of the text. Foucault, on the other hand retained a socio-historical context for his textual offerings. Although my intention have mainly been to present an alternative 'history' that acts as a commentary on the present than any hunt for an unchangeable past.

use the Deleuzoguattarian elements in Hetherington's (1998) work about counter cultural movements to explain how a deterritorialisation of spaces and reterritorialisation of spaces can be a 'Presence' in sociology - the coding of spaces into a territory implies that it is inexorable that it can be decoded by someone, sometime, some place. We have found children playing in sites that are not designated for play, truancy is found among school-going children, and under-age children work illegally and consume alcohol etc. There is indiscipline in schools grounds, in teachers implementation of the curriculum, in parents actions to find a space where they can have an impact on the curriculum. There is indiscipline in theory too (Genesko, 1998, see chapters 1-8), and there are still carnivalesque spaces where performative acts in 'the occasion' are expressions of local, plural, and complex identities (Hetherington, 1998). Public play parks and school grounds get reconfigured by the imaginary bodies that use them daily. Their symbolic structures of meaning count for different things for different user groups; parents, teachers, children, those who write curricula, Ofsted inspectors etc. The processes of territorialisation and deterritorialisation are ongoing in the spaces I have visited. The narrations of these processes *from my point of view* is all I can hope to achieve in this text. I cannot represent another's 'voice' except through the filters of my own 'structures of feeling' (Hetherington's word, [1998]), my own imaginary essentialist ideologies.

Hetherington (1998, p124) summarises the rise in interest in 'spaces' generally and in 'spaces marginal' in particular. The interest in the margins in cultural geography and in the sociology over the years has given us plenty to build our ideas on: Relph (1976), Tuan (1977), Massey (1994a, 1994b). And in relation to postmodernism: Soja (1989), Harvey (1989), and Shields (1991) give us direction. The spatial turn in sociology and the cultural turn in geography draws on the idea that space is socially constructed. These non-essential places are better understood as virtual or non-existent outside of people's experiences of them; at the same time places are texts that reveal the inscriptions of others 'writings' on them. Poststructurally, place then participates in the intertextual production of self or community and *vice versa*. A political interpretation follows this view to emphasise the contested nature of spaces. The mythical (Shields, 1991) and symbolic meanings of places become the important thing. Foucault's 'heterotopia'<sup>113</sup> (1986) is a favoured term among

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<sup>113</sup> Heterotopia is Michel Foucault's word for places that there are probably in every culture, in every civilisation, which are something like counter-sites in which 'real sites' are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted.

those who understand space this way. Hetherington (1996, p18) has used the concept 'heterotopia' to analyse how space is ordered and reordered. A Foucauldian analysis of space shows how local acts of resistance become possible. It is these political and cultural acts that create an alternative ordering of space that interests Hetherington and me. Hetherington calls these acts utopics (1998, p138), a term that has proved useful in the operationalising of a description of schools grounds changes. Like Law (1994), Hetherington also attempts to show how the use of heterotopic sites can also enable new and different forms of identity through their use as liminoid ritual practice. He distinguishes his interest in the liminal from Turner (1969, 1973) by claiming that acts of resistance and transgression will not always end up reproducing the social order (Hetherington, 1998, p138). Instead there is room for agency but not a functionalist agency brought about by structuring conditions. Voluntarism, facilitation, and participatory approaches are never 'pure' and free from the influences of ideology and imaginary essentials.

Most usefully, Hetherington (1998) shows *how* the difference between centre and margin becomes blurred. Centres become margins for the nomad or pilgrims that pass through them, margins become centres for those that use them ritually for key sites of identification. Hetherington pulls back the concepts of 'communitas' and 'bund' (as tools) from anthropological research conducted by Turner (1969, 1973, 1982) and Scheler (1954) respectively. He subtly re-evaluates Foucault's heterotopic sites to enable them to provide a reinvigorated definition of community within difference: a 'distinctive place for being different and a shared sense of belonging expressed through that difference that takes the form of a communitas of intensely affectual forms of sociality among the initiands' (Hetherington, 1996, p39). The living of a life *in a place* (one's spatial practice) can potentially undermine the rigidity of boundaries imposed by observers or authoritarian figures in the reinterpretation of that place (Gregory, 1990). I recover the potentiality of Hetherington's work for analysing the cultures of change in school grounds development in chapter 16 and this chapter.

### **Spaces for Children's Participation in Democracy**

Robinson (1998) draws on Laclau and Mouffe to show how space is implicated in the emergence of democracy in South Africa. Unstable, uncertain, and contested identities and spaces can be understood as indicative of an emerging democratic culture. In such a culture



space can be (need to be) remapped and spaces remade. In parallel with the democratisation of South Africa, the growth of a politics of space can contribute to new possibilities for democracy for children. Massey (1993) and Soja (1989) have shown how social process can be thought of in spatial ways which highlight difference, contradiction and impurity.

Massey's reading of place attests that it is always multiple, socially produced and hence politicised (Massey, 1994a, 1994b); another reading reinforces the fixed or bounded nature of space and how people can be excluded or eradicated (Sibley, 1995). These two approaches are not exclusive to each other but refer to polarities of interpretation, one emphasising the potential for change, the other emphasising spatially constraining forces. Because of the convergence of the personal and the spatial, the changing of space is conceived of as always political by Robinson (1998, p534). She also advocates moving away from a positioned approach to space which is too stable. What is required is the instability of spatial imaginings for democracy to emerge. Rather than working for a stable identity in a secure and singular form of space, she suggests that unstable identities in constantly changing places are the prerequisite for a process of democratisation to occur. Robinson takes on board what Massey (1993) has said about Laclau's distinctions between space and time and argues instead for a concept of 'space-time' where space is always part of the historical dynamic of social life (Massey, 1993, p535). But she profitably builds on Laclau's ideas about the impossibility of the coherent, fully-constituted subject. In common with so many of the authors we have discussed, subjects are always 'dislocated'; 'home' is always around the next corner. Dislocation is actually a necessary component, a counterpoint to the locatedness one is after which seems to enable the space-time political identity project. The subject is enabled by the possibility of continually constituting oneself through and perhaps against the forces of dislocation that are experienced spatially. The art of reinterpreting elements in places that are 'dislocated' is a *politics of space*. There is a key manoeuvre that is crucial to an understanding of agency in subjectivity that reverberates around many writings in cultural geography and spatial approaches to sociology. It requires a delicate balance between the located, coherent, subject, seen by some as essential to any democratic society, and the dislocated, incoherent subject of postmodernity, seen by others as fully constituted by discourse. Given that these are the same experiences for both adults and children in a neo-tribal reading of adult and child cultures, we can see openings for a shared spatial practice by adults and children together. In this research, I have sought out

the ways of destabilising the coherent subjectivity of ‘the child’ and ‘the adult’ especially when their relations between each other are fossilised and lacking openness to change as a form of my own spatial politics of child-identity. With Brah’s (1996) contention that society has been transformed into a diasporic space, we can hope to find more spaces jointly inhabited by migrants and indigenous individuals (adults in children’s spaces and children in adults’ spaces). The ‘double edged sword’ referred to as a central theme in Section A, is not dissonant with the political social practice of renegotiating the margin if not doing away with the false sense of boundary that becomes unstable in postmodernism.<sup>114</sup> Yet, without some partial locatedness, if only for brief moments, voice is hardly attainable. Put another way, the place of enunciation for the dislocated self is always an in-between place. Without the interpellation of discourses in the determination of subjectivity, no extraneous forces are nameable as powerful and dominant. Living a subjectivity is about falling prey to identities that are not freely chosen *while at the same time* engaging in a praxis towards understanding the history that has brought us to this place which allows us to envision alternatives. These utopic futures need not be fixed or impossible. Instead, they are continual projections, cinematic images of a very possible and better present. They are essential to creative resistance. This is the utopic spatial practice of Hetherington (1998, p137-8 et passim).<sup>115</sup>

Laclau (1990) tells us that the reinterpretation and contestation of space is increasing and with this process come new ‘myths’ about who we may be. Our evidence from the two territories of school grounds and public play parks have given weight to this assertion in the details of their narration. For Laclau, it is impossible for any one identity to assert itself to the ultimate exclusion of the other in a healthy democracy. This crucial argument within democracy has far reaching effects in the context of adult-child relations. For children, it means that they must be invited to assert their identities in the post-hierarchical democratic

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<sup>114</sup> For the utopic practices of writing a doctorate in Education, the normative ‘privileged voice’ is usually the linguistic and traditional interpretations of what counts as acceptably ‘rational’ within a territorially defined discipline. But disciplines can enforce unnecessary constraints on knowledge generation and single, author-conferred meanings may also be tyrannical (Birch, 1991, p151-3). A critical practice (socio-political spatial practice) will be about recognising a multiplicity of meanings found in alternative places like children’s talk or photographs of local places.

<sup>115</sup> As author, I accept (hope) that you, the reader, have found many different meanings in this text. I actively encouraged you to connote rather than denote and to ‘act’ rather than fixedly ‘know’. You may again need to ask yourself: what new critical social practice can I now employ to better advance the ‘cause’ I wish to advocate fighting for? Then our only essentialism will be a strategy, an embodied strategy in a locale.

social practices whether they be found in schools or within any of their recreational, educative or caring institutions or in their rights as citizens. Robinson's assertion is similar: that the movement between 'moments of fragmentation (or segregation) and integration' (Robinson, p541) are what enables democracy to flourish especially at a local level. So, along with Mouffe (1995, pp261-3), we advance the cause of democratic values in a relativist way. For the child, the 'other' may be an adult adversary or the adult mentor; for the adult it may be the unapologetic child or the child as collegial citizen. The necessary conversation between the two is the vital component in the political playing out of new identifications for adults and children. One may not agree with the 'other' but one should uphold people's rights to hold a different view.

So why all the fuss about children's participation? The fact that I claim it as worth studying, that it seems to be so uncommon until recently in the literature, that it is understood as marginal and innovative in terms of the practice of the adult-organised institutions I visited, are all indicative of the change in mindset that is occurring towards the inclusion of children from meaningful involvement in democratic procedures in late twentieth century politics. Children have become the 'other within' that we remember, fantasise about and worry for. The attention being paid by adults (parents, non-governmental bodies, local authorities) to childhood's public spaces is evidence of a current preoccupation with the child as 'Excluded Other' within our cultures. As a result we have the many efforts being made to team up pupils, representatives from the local council, parents, and teaching staff in an effort to make changes to places. These places signify the possible presence of a new tribal social movement (Mafessoli, 1988). This new tribe attempts to be transgenerational rather than age-specific as in the the past. It attempts to renegotiate a new communitarian culture of kinship across age and spatial boundaries. Hence the movement's desire to make culturally significant statements about this change in their relationships through the collaborative attempts to change places that are marginal to adult cultures but seen as central to children's culture.

## Learning Transgenerationally in Adult-Child Tribes<sup>116</sup>

When old-timers and newcomers are engaged in separate practices, they lose the benefit of their interaction. (Wenger, 1998, p275)



Plate 22. Transgenerational encounter.

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<sup>116</sup> The final strategic act of this text is to rally around a call for intergenerational spatial practices with all the attendant risks of the further colonisation of children's own cultures within adult-led institutional practices. The manoeuvre does not exclude the possibility that leaving children to do their own thing may be a better option or that adults may also need to have separate spatial practices from children in contemporary western society. However, the strategy seems to be the best one for opening a space for the parallax of discourses to enact a finale of dialogism.

The adults weren't saying 'You can't!' They told you in a gentle way and explained to you why it would not be possible. (Primary school child reflecting on a school grounds project)

Perhaps the best person to help us make some final comments about the possibilities for thinking about learning between adults and children will be Wenger (1998). In line with much of my argument in the end of epistemologising in chapter 4, and the need to unite ethics with practice, her concept of learning is that it is an emergent process (Wenger, 1998, p267) which we need to honour more and that learning may have little to do with the intentions of teachers in their efforts to teach because of the unpredictability of identity formation (and hence the opportunity for learning). She points out that if the school or the local authority (or any institution concerned with children today) fails to look beyond itself as 'community of practice', it will help children learn nothing but the identity formations available within that institution itself: the child will only learn about the institutional identity created for it which may be far from participative. Because identity formation (in our case an identity of participation) is what allows us to carry experiences from context to context, learning must have an identity component, she argues. Echoing Arendt and Greene (see Schutz, 1999), she claims that if learning is inextricably coupled with identity then what we need are 'spaces' (like Bhabha's (1996) 'spaces of negotiation), where experiments of participatory identity formation can occur which requires new membership opportunities for membership of other groups. For children, the one important group with which I feel they can usefully experiment in terms of identification in transgenerational tribal learning settings is the adult group and, by corollary, for adults, the opposite would seem to be the case. Tribal approaches to transgenerational education and participation (my words) should be looking for a multitude of ways of finding encounters (Wenger's word) that will be fraught with difficulties that can only be overcome with negotiation (especially negotiations between the generations, within institutional practices in the family, the school, the local authority etc). Undoubtedly, one of the biggest problem for teachers in schools is that they are small in number; (I discussed barriers to participation earlier). But increasing pupil-teacher ratios may not be the answer. The teacher's role will need to change from being an 'impartor of knowledge' to being a facilitator of interaction between a multitude of others (virtual, imaginary, visitors, older adults, locals, spatially distant others) and learners in projects of identification that mean something to the learners. For other institutions like the

local authority, it will be a necessary shift away from discourses of ‘care and education’ of the young to their participation within structures that at present are fairly child-unfriendly (Horelli, 1998; Matthews et al, 1999). What students or citizens need in developing their own identities may be contact with a variety of adults who are willing to invite them into their adulthood but I have argued, children will also need adults who are willing to change the essentials of what they consider to be a healthy childhood or adulthood. The transgenerational encounter is an educational experience for all because it is an identity-disturbing spatial practice.<sup>117</sup>

### **Describing Transgenerational Tribal Cultures**

Children’s own cultures are heterogeneous in terms of gender (see Appendix E), age, social class etc but they do seem to share these aspects in common:

- 1. The search for ‘authentic experiences’ and personal growth.*
- 2. Empathy with the rights and freedoms of others and interest in a shared ethnic identity as children.*
- 3. Emphasis on the need to find a distinct space for like minded associates to meet.*
- 4. The group is held together by their emotional and moral solidarity.*
- 5. The body is an expressive source of communication and identification.*
- 6. Interest in knowledge not available in institutional settings. (see Hetherington, 1998)*

When taken to represent the experiences of children in their ‘own spaces’ (see Appendices A & B mainly) we can rewrite these six points thus:

- 1. The search for ‘authentic experiences’ and personal growth.* The children were ‘growing up’; we can all associate growing up with the rich learning environments we found outside of school, church and home.
- 2. Empathy with the rights and freedoms of others and interest in an ethnic identity.* In the children’s case, ‘others’ count as those like themselves. These groupings of children take the form of locally distinct ‘ethnic’ groups found in the different classes, different ages and different towns. The children sometimes met children from other parts of the playground; they met children from other classes more often; and they rarely met the children from other towns but they looked forward to meeting these other ‘ethnic groups’ in secondary school.
- 3. Emphasis on the need to find a distinct space for like minded associates to meet.*

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<sup>117</sup> The spatial dimension seems necessary but not sufficient.

The children were fond of the park, the street, 'The Glen' as sites where they could meet each other and engage in the micro identity politics of childhood cultures.

These places have a social centrality in the lives of children where a sense of belonging can be engendered like sites of pilgrimage, play or festival (see Shields, 1992, Hetherington, 1996).

*4. The group is held together by their emotional and moral solidarity.* The children stayed in largely gender and age specific groups bound by ties of friendships made through their own association while at school and through sharing interests in sports, boys, or adventure games. These bonds are either encouraged through or deplored by the normalising forces of school and home and further reinforced or discouraged by discourses in the media and in larger society about what is considered an appropriate toy, an appropriate time for being at home, an appropriate distance to be allowed roam away from the home alone.

*5. The body is an expressive source of communication and identification.* The children were usually involved in using their bodies to play a game or activity in a myriad of ways; they also spent time looking at others' bodies. The performance of their identity politics is an embodied activity that is rooted in affectual ties between 'good friends' or in competitive, cooperative, ludic (or carnivalesque) or sporting events between peers.

*6. Interest in knowledge not available in institutional settings.* The children were finding out about their locale, their own bodily changes, their shared and separate interests *outside* of school where subjects were taught, the home where adults teach children more didactically from a source of experiential knowledge, or other institutions like the church or the scout group where right and wrong is delineated by adults. (Derived from Hetherington, 1998, p5 and p68-74)

Within a postmodern reading (after Maffesoli, 1988) we can extend this analysis to include the occasions when adults are participants in a tribal transgenerational identity politics to see adult-child interactions thus:

- 1. The search for 'authentic experiences' and personal growth by adults and children together (adults and children are both lifelong learners)*
- 2. Empathy with the rights and freedoms of each other and interest in a shared 'ethnic identity' as people together.*

- 3. Emphasis on the need to find a distinct space for transgenerational associates to meet: school grounds and public play parks were my cases in point.*
- 4. The group of adults and children is held together by their emotional and moral solidarity regardless of institutional definition of role.*
- 5. The bodies of adults and children become an expressive source of communication and identification in expressions of play and work (wherein the difference is dissolved)*
- 6. Interest in knowledge not available in institutional settings because the participatory identities they are after are not normalised within them.*

In many ways the transgenerational age may already be with us. Meyrowitz (1985) uses an analysis of the medium of television to discuss the ‘levelling’ impacts of technology on our lives. Through the transmission of huge volumes of information about the roles adults and children play, a veritable merging of the cultures of adulthood and childhood. What we witness today is a new wave of childlike adults and adult-like children (see chapter 19: ‘Signs of becoming adult’ etc). This new subculture of child-adult behaviour includes the wearing of ‘play clothes’ even to work (e.g sneakers, shorts, t-shirts), the equality of the popularity of new forms of play (e.g. computer games) among both children and adults, the increase of places of play and fun for adults (e.g. paint ball arenas, ski slopes), and the social acceptability of a return to education for adults of all ages. For children it is now popular to wear designer clothes, to know and speak about sex and to experiment with drugs and alcohol. This merging of age-related roles is brought about, in part at least, by the switch from a ‘book culture’ to a ‘television culture’. Because children have access to the same information now about the world, they are parley to all of the debates adults used to keep secret when information was transferred in book form about sex, adult anxieties about how to bring up their children, children’s rights, the worlds of work, crime and drugs. In effect the construction of childhood is narrated for children by television role in dissolving the image of the child as innocent and immature. In the same way, television exposes of the way adulthood is constructed exposing the myth of the ‘all-knowing confident adult’. We may have already heralded back in a period of child liberalisation that is reminiscent Mediaeval times when children played games in the street with adults, when adults and children listened to tales and legends, and when children slept with adults in the same room and drank in the tavern.



## Positive Influences on Children's Participation

In Appendix H, I have discussed these four influences on children's participation<sup>118</sup> as being positive:

- the new agreement in the West that children should have an increased say,
- the effects of television (Meyrowitz, 1985) and other forms of technologically mediated communication,
- the rise the shared interests in consumerism among adults and children, and
- changes in the structure and lifestyle of late-modern (postmodern) families.

There are further possibilities. The influences of

- ◇ 'Third Agers' (grandparents who are experiencing a time in their lives when they have good health and have disposable income and time on their hands),<sup>119</sup>
- ◇ non-governmental organisations (and other 'Third-Sector' organisations and agencies), new attitudes to teaching and learning,
- ◇ parents and businesses in the management and organisation of ('community') schools,
- ◇ increased concern among both children and adults about local and environmental issues,

may also have as yet unforeseen positive effects on children's participation generally (see Appendix H).

But there is an awareness that there are many essential beliefs still in place that contradict the move to increase children's participation despite the fact that there are also indications of renewed faith in the capacity for agency in children (see chapter 13 and 14 and Appendix F; see especially my 'Barriers to Participation, Chapter 14). The stage seems set in the West to play out the power struggles between these discourses about the child and her capacity for participation. Further work on participatory approaches to researching children's participation will undoubtedly try to make new spaces for the 'situated performance' of children's identification as participation. It will require contextualising the spaces that adults

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<sup>118</sup> Like Wenger (1998) there is no necessary definition of participation as always a 'good thing' especially if participation is just taking part in a culture. my rhetoric here was about increasing children's participation in meaningful ways (ways that are defined as meaningful for the participants) which, as I have shown, is often about children's participation in work, in changing their locales etc.

<sup>119</sup> See Laslett (1996).

and children consider to be heterotopic in relation to the dominant social order. It may mean a renewal of spaces they (collectively) feel disempowers children unduly from participation. Finding and naming these sites should be a process of discovery for children as much as adults. That I have found possible sites for the playing out of children participation in schools and in local authorities, in the playground and in public play parks, shows that these places are out there. We create them out of our imaginaries founded on non-essential beliefs about the nature of the subject and the effects of age, gender, and maturation. That we can easily describe large amounts of the adult social scene as neo-tribal, allows for a renewed celebration of children's own tribal cultures (at least in a Western European setting). Thereafter, forging a further spatialisation of adult-child tribal cultures becomes an easier process. But the dangers of the ever-present relations of power and homogenisation in doing away with difference are always present. We should remember Mouffe's concept of the post-hierarchical community wherein we are never really ever one community but 'we are in fact always multiple and contradictory subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities' (Mouffe, 1998, p44). Similarly, we remind readers that in Massumi's 'becoming Deleuzian':

There is no final synthesis. The synthesis is at every turn, in the combat of energies from which a new situation will again emerge, necessarily, as a precipitate.

(Massumi, 1999, p405)

### **Summary of the Thesis' Findings & Strategy**

If a summative 'finding' can be written about (situated, partial, and culturally located as it may be), it is that in participatory approaches to the changing of places, *adults seem to continue to take the lead*, reflecting the differential in power between adults and children. A fundamental largely unquestioned phrase that comes again and again from adults' lips is : 'the adults (parents, teachers etc) need to monitor and direct things'. Decisions are taken ultimately, by adults. But many adults are beginning to question their practices in decision making that effects children. Children's participation is experiencing a surge in interest among planners, teachers, local authority members and politicians. The meta-narrative that underscores this is challenged by new writing (e.g. Matthews, 1999) set within discourses of children's geographies, and the so-called 'new sociology of childhood' that emphasises children's agency. My own attempts to tell a history of children's participation adds weight to other examples of research that expose how the construction of childhood is neither

stable in time or place. In the studies (Chapters 14-18) I have attempted to open some windows on the world of children's participation in changing their locales in their often hidden or unseen local environments in the country park (Appendix A), the school grounds (Chapters 14-17; Appendix B), the locally distinctive use of the public play park by children with disabilities and their carers (Appendix G). But to do this it has been necessary to place children at the margin and at the centre at the same time in a postmodern reading of the decentred self, and non-foundational belief structures. Within modernity they are narratively positioned at the margin of the adult world. No simple reading of where the boundary lies between adults and children can be made, however, after a postmodern reading (Stronach & MacLure, 1997, Chapter 1). To simply say that the boundary exists between adults and children when it comes to participation is to over-simplify the relations of power that are not totally located in any one homogeneous group (see Hockey & James 1993, chapter 6). I cannot afford to lose the heterogeneity of adult-child beings that are 'out there' and lay blame on one group (adults?) doing a further violence with 'data' and 'meta-analysis'. In my avoidance of the 'postmodern embrace' (Stronach & MacLure, 1997) I have avoided some pertinent questions about the power relations between me as researcher and the children and adults I met; instead I have often made tidy regimented sets of results about play park design, and about the role of the school in spatially defining identity. None of these narratives will do. They close the door on difference at times. But the violence of the text is almost complete. Readers need only 'suffer' a little more.

Philosophically, I have attempted to draw on a variety of resources that set up the assumptions for the research as a whole (Chapters 1-8). I have brought in theoretical resources from disability theory, to the theory of photographs to enact an unstable text with opportunities for reader participation. I have tried to give opportunities for seeing common ground in a formulation of childism with(in) feminism (Chapter 19). Methodologically, I have sought to use a mixture of methods to draw out current trends in children's use of outdoor spaces in some Scottish contexts, I have tried to interrogate my own findings (particularly in Appendix G) and attempted to open new spaces for readers' interpretations by drawing the reader's attention to the rhetorical construction of the text itself. At times, I have simply chosen to move the centre into the margin in a naive way: the writing of a doctorate about children's participation inevitably consumes children's voices within a dirge of philosophical and methodological considerations. At its best there are reflexive moments

in the text when a photograph, a piece of text or a combination of the two may have ‘worked for you’ to create a new space outside of the essentialist view that you may previously have held. When it works well, it will be a participative text about children’s participation where the process gives openings for emergent properties, socio-spatial ‘precipitates’, for the reader.

In the mixture of margin-and-centre a happy confusion of purpose may be the result. But catalytic participatory research is not without its risky practice; it can be a different way of working that may seem as a threat to the dominant group. I have espoused that doctoral theses may not only be read by external examiners or other students. Neither are 'PhDs' simply for supervisors: I have written *for others* in the construction of this text. I have bound it so that those wishing to read about school grounds, country parks, or public play parks can do so easily by the structuring of appendices in disparate sections with photographs. In a way much of the appendices provide the narratives that are ‘The cases in point’ that particularise this text. Had this section of the thesis been placed in the appendix (the veritable ‘entrails’ of the thesis), I’m not so sure many academics would have been impressed. But like all entrails, they are the ‘life blood’ of the theoretical considerations I have performed in chapters 1-20. But these chapters cannot stand alone without the ‘meat’ of the situations narrated in the appendices (and consumed herein).

What of my own motivations. Perhaps adults like me want to be absolved of the vices of the power they have over children by finding the happy childhoods they seek in the study sections. Adult’s demands are ‘Love me!’. Children no longer give economically to the home but they must be loving. ‘I don’t want to be powerful over you, child!’ cries the dominant adult group. ‘I care for you; this is for your own good’. But I have tried to show how being overly concerned to care for children does not absolve adults of their obligation to give ‘real’ responsibility and opportunity to children to participate in situations that are meaningful to children. The other fictions: that the (worst) abuse of children happened long ago (when children were expected to work, were physically beaten etc.) have been deconstructed in my analysis of children’s own work. Similarly, the fiction: that ‘schooling today is not colonisation’ deserves new consideration in the light of the narratives I have presented. In today’s discussions about the health and welfare of the child are we really demanding a cleansing from children for past abuses? Yet in cleansing our (adult)selves we

may be perpetuating a further colonisation: the ethnic cleansing of the child tribe and the possibility of adult-child transgenerational tribal experience.

Try as I might, I cannot seem to help you, the reader, away from my own belief that I think that children would much rather come out from behind the caring arms of institutionalised care and education and return to forms of apprenticeship and economic participation in the lifeworlds of adults. Children want out of the shadow of pacification by adults and the consumer industry. The pleasures of *Gameboy* and the 'good life' the leisure industry offers will never compete with the opportunity to 'make a difference'. The child is not the adult consumer's shadow. Yet cultural change is not easy and forces of consumerism and advertising are as strong as culturally acceptable norms about keeping our children indoors and safe from 'strangers'. In making the first steps into a politics of revised and radicalised democracy for children and towards their inclusion in all manner of influential societal institutions, we shall need to embrace a politics of disappointment. We shall fail, that is certain. Yet trying can be fun and small success can be celebrated. With Stronach and Maclure (1997) I advocate being resigned and committed to strategic acts that do away with a methodological will to certainty of vision in this - hence my (failed?) attention to essentialisms. The play of productive tensions is what leads to powerful insight: these tensions between the differing views on the essentials of disabled identity, and the essentials of what it is to be a child are, hopefully, played out herein. Strategically, the alignment of childism with feminism and with the discourses of disability have proven useful in finding the 'in-between' space that children inhabit. But a closer look at identification has shown that the nature of many of our affinities to social groups and spaces are as incomplete, positional, and neo-tribal as children's own cultures. The importance of the spatial dimension to identity formation and hence education has never been found absent in all of the fieldwork I conducted. So, the last manoeuvre was to look at a potential for using space for a rejuvenated transgenerational tribal (educational) practice that seems lacking in children's experience in the West. Postmodernity's influence in the spaces of the school, the school grounds and the public play park have reaffirmed the idea that we are in an 'age of ecology' (Jagtenberg & McKie, 1997). But no easy prescriptions are given as to how this practice is to be performed. In the end Jones (1998) may be right. We need to be resigned and committed to the swirling mix of disappointment, uncertainty and ignorance about most things - perhaps especially about what we should do with / for / about children.

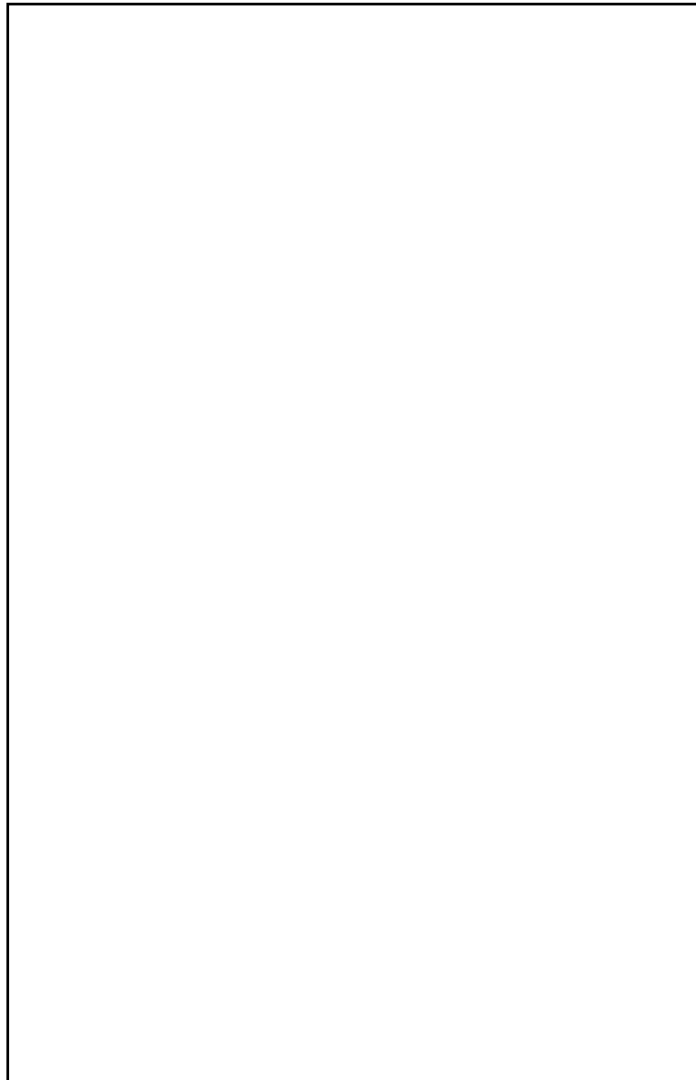


Plate 23.

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