'Won't somebody think of the children?' The discursive construction of 'childhood': Marketing, expert knowledge and children's talk

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<u>Acknowledgments</u>

Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:...

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Summary

In the context of current fears about 'toxic childhood', and a marketing industry's celebration of children as empowered by consumerism, this thesis asks where does this leave children themselves?

Theoretically the thesis adopts a Foucauldian approach, with its understanding of the relations between power, knowledge and subjectivity and methodologically deploys a discourse analysis. The latter is used to scrutinise 'the child' and consumption as understood by 'experts' on the one hand and 'marketing' on the other. For the 'experts' the corpus for research is made up of a disparate set of populist and academic articles and books from the UK in 2007/2008, engaging with the ill effects of consumerism on children. Also included here is a transcript of the UK parliamentary debate on 'junk food advertising' from 25th April 2008. For 'marketing', materials were collected from one emblematic event: the annual British Toy and Hobby Association Toy Fair 2014, where marketing professionals promote their wares by 'selling' the benefits of (toy) consumption for children.

What emerges as a commonality from these two very different discourses is the child as 'subject' (and 'object'), placed in a homogeneous childhood. To investigate the authenticity of this construct, the third strand of research is focused on some children talking about consumption. Children from a local school, aged between nine and ten, were divided into focus groups of boys and girls, facilitated by a teacher but with the children able to discuss ideas relatively freely. This provides the final corpus of research for analysis. What the children's talk reveals is a distinctiveness in their interactions with each other and their teacher, in which they utilise their own 'methods' – what I refer to as 'dynamic bricolage' and 'collaboration'. Through these they perform an 'identity work' to resist or evade certain knowledges about them and create others to integrate into an individual and group 'childhood' identity, which is relished by them as *not*-adult.

I argue that these childhood practices complicate contemporary understandings of childhood: the child is neither innocent victim nor savvy consumer.

Contents

Introduction

'Mental health risk to children trapped in "toxic climate" of dieting, pornography and school stress' (*Independent* front page headline, 20.1.14).

On any given day it is easy to find a quote like the above in the British press. This particular headline was sparked by a new poll released to support a campaign called 'Young Minds'. The concern voiced illustrates the key issue that I address in this thesis: that children are so often spoken about in emotional terms, in terms of fear; but above all they are almost always spoken *for*. In this article the concern is the 'toxic climate' (ibid) in which children live, leading to mental health issues. But over the time I have been working on this thesis fears have been raised about children and obesity, children becoming sexual too early, children becoming violent, children being targeted and groomed for sex through social media sites, children watching too much TV or playing too many computer games, the list carries on. Of course these are serious issues, but what I am interested in is how 'the child' is placed as 'innocent' in these discourses. Indeed childhood innocence appears to be an accepted common sense construct in British society, and one protected and constantly reaffirmed. Whatever the catalyst giving rise to concern, the child is always placed as the (potential) victim, too young to cope without adult intervention. In addition, the child is reduced to an emblem, having no voice or agency. As Ed Miliband is quoted in this article as saying 'mental health is the biggest unaddressed health challenge of our age, and young people's mental health must be a top priority for Britain' (ibid p.2). The inference is that children are the nation's responsibility to be managed. My research is contemporary, exploring why children are spoken for in this way in different discourses, how the 'common sense' notion of children as innocent is maintained and, importantly, for whose benefit.

As I began looking at how children are talked about in relation to various social concerns, it was clear that the marketing industry was a key institution often vilified and feared for the way it talked to children when selling things. Having worked in marketing for many years, I was offended by the perception that marketers were the bad guys, pushing children into wanting and taking no responsibility for the repercussions, be it obesity, mental health issues or premature sexuality. Consumption seems to be set up as something children should not engage with and anyone attempting to 'lure' a child into buying (or pestering parents to buy) is often portrayed as amoral. The marketing industry as a whole is blamed for many ills, but one striking and continuing issue over the duration of my research period has been the link established between advertising and childhood obesity. The premise that advertising junk food leads children to eat it, and thus become obese has gained such momentum that the government agreed in 2007 that Ofcom[1] should ban advertising of junk food to children. This policy has been maintained, despite a paper produced by leading academics suggesting that the role of TV advertising in causing obesity has not been conclusively proven by any research and that what impact it does have accounts for 2% of the variation in children's food choices (Buckingham et al, 2009). To me it was surprising that a ban was put in place and sustained even when evidence contradicts the policy. I was interested in how the 'health' of children becomes government's responsibility and how this is supported through discourses from many different factions.

I wanted to discover how such discourses exercise power, supporting certain social and legal institutions, shutting down others. In particular, I was concerned with the place of children: the ruling against advertising junk food was passed in the name of the child, who seemed only to exist as a construct – 'the innocent child' to be safely

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[1] The Office of Communications, commonly known as Ofcom, is the government-approved regulatory and competition authority for the broadcasting, telecommunications and postal industries of the United Kingdom.

tucked away in childhood, hidden from evil influences including marketing.   In contrast to those concerned for children's welfare, the marketing industry talks about children in a very different way – suiting its own agenda. 'Savvy' and 'adult', a group who have no difficulty in understanding advertising, consumerism and its effects, is how marketing portrays children. Marketers are just as guilty of constructing the 'child' to suit their needs, but in their case the construct is of an empowered, consuming child.

In this thesis I argue that whether the discourse is about the child as innocent and to be protected, or savvy and to be freed, the child is constructed as 'other' to the adult and to be treated as a separate anthropological group. The child herself is spoken for by both groups. But how do children themselves speak, given these discourses to which they are subject-ed, and what does this mean for children and their identity? Whilst the majority of research is about children, not with them, I wanted to take an innovative approach in which some children had a chance to put forward their own perspective with freedom to explore issues pertinent to them. I could then counterpoint the views of those writing *about* children with the views of these children. I therefore selected to focus in my primary research on experts discussing children as a group to be protected; the marketing industry promoting children as consumers to be empowered; and a group of children themselves 'just talking'.

When I embarked on this thesis I was interested to discover that there is a specific academic field of Childhood Studies which engages with children as an anthropological group. What is pertinent in this field, is that the mode of discussing and conceptualising children has moved away from a biological approach, in which studies use a cognitive development approach, considering children as defined by age and stage, towards a social constructivist approach, This 'emergent paradigm' of Childhood Studies, (led by James and Prout 1997, p.3) has helped to introduce interdisciplinary approaches to the study of children. By suggesting that childhood could be understood

as a social construction, and therefore is varying and changing, they allowed children to be seen as active rather than passive subjects, engaging with the world around them, rather than being acted upon. However, in the nine years since I started this thesis, the field has moved on again. Firstly, it has become a much more defined discipline, with its own jargon, presumptions and foundational concepts, all of which could be perceived as constraining and supporting certain knowledges about children as separate beings, to be studied from a particular discipline rather than through many disciplines. Perhaps too, the focus on the agency of the child has led to too much emphasis on the child in research rather than on the interplay of the child with the social and cultural world that surrounds them.   Prout admits that this move to social theory has acted as a 'reverse discourse' (2005, p.84), whereby the emphasis has moved entirely from the biological to the social but without allowing for any other mode of representation. In a conference, 'Re-exploring Childhood Studies' (Dar, 2011) the organisers point out this issue, and suggest that the field has moved from a heavy emphasis on developmental perspectives to sociological ones which could be seen as equally problematic. They attempt to show that Childhood Studies should be cross disciplinary to allow children to be researched in their 'social, economic, cultural and political structural settings' (ibid p.3) in recognition that there is no agency for children except within a structure.   Alongside this acceptance that Childhood Studies is in danger of becoming 'set in a bio-social dualism' (Lee and Motzkau, 2011, p.2) there have been several new concepts introduced in relation to children, attempting to avoid this division of childhood. Such terms also cross boundaries to enable childhood to be considered in terms of multiple concerns. As Prout suggests childhood is a 'biological discursive social technological ensemble' (2008, p.22) and is therefore open to constant change. Children themselves are neither 'natural' or 'cultural' but constituted from heterogeneous materials, a 'multiplicity of nature-cultures' (ibid, p.32) and as such should not be divided from adults but should be considered together as part of a

complex interplay of discourses, culture, social, technological and historical 'materials' (ibid p.34).

In this thesis I align myself with this move towards complicating childhood and in particular on the work of David Buckingham who throughout his various academic studies (1993 onwards) focuses on the child as central, acting rather than acted upon, to be listened to and not spoken for. In his book, *The Material Child, Growing up in Consumer Culture* (Buckingham, 2011) , which I discuss in Chapter One, he focuses on the current debates about children as consumers and attempts to reframe these debates by considering children's consumption as embedded within a wider social life, which is part of all our experiences including children's.

However, I felt that there was still a gap in the way children are academically engaged with. There seemed to be an absence of research on children and their relationship to prevailing discourses of power and it is this which I want to address. I question how children are discussed and how the assumed knowledges about them impact on the children's own understanding and practices of being a child.

Thinking of childhood as a construct, and discourses as powerful, led me to utilize Foucault as a means of critical engagement. Whilst there is very little Foucauldian theory in the field of Childhood Studies I felt Foucault suited my project. His genealogical perspective enabled me to look at children and childhood and the taken for granted beliefs about them in a particular time and place, but in a way that also acknowledges change. As Hendrick (1997) outlines the 'child' has changed from the natural child of the 18th century, to the romantic child of the 19th century through to the child as a responsibility of the state in the early 20th century. A Foucauldian approach also enables the teasing out of complex strategies that have allowed certain discourses about children to become acceptable; for example, that children are more innocent,

less able than adults and should be protected and spoken for, and others to be

delegitimised.

Interestingly Foucault poses the idea of discourses as 'an event' (1971, p.2) which

allows him to consider their effect on many aspects of society. As he puts it:

> In the sense that this slender wedge I intend to slip into the history of ideas
> consists not in dealing with meanings possibly lying behind this or that
> discourse, but with discourse as regular series and distinct events, I fear I
> recognise in this wedge a tiny (odious, too, perhaps) device permitting the
> introduction, into the very roots of thought, of notions of chance, discontinuity
> and materiality (ibid, p.2).

I wanted to focus on how disciplinary power such as 'normalisation' imposes a

homogeneity on children, rendering them all the same, whatever their age, social

background, culture and geographical situation. In addition his formulation of 'power' is

tied up with 'truth' and 'knowledge', where power is not an external force, a sovereign

power, which is wielded over others, but is exercised via what he refers to as a

'capillary' action. In his 'micro-physics', power is dispersed across discourses. It is

through these webs of power that knowledge of the child is *constructed*. This is

important, since the 'truth' about children tends to be so tied up with systems of power

that any challenge (for example, to the belief that 'childhood' is a temporal domain

during which a child is different from the adult and to be protected) seems impossible.

But, as Foucault describes (above) 'a slender wedge' (ibid, p.2) can be driven into such

taken for granted discourses to question how they have been constructed, by whom

and with what result.

But the further issue then is how children themselves are placed by these discourses of

'childhood' and culturally 'act' within and against them. What kind of 'childhood' do they

produce?

To help me to consider this I draw on Foucault's much cited lecture, *Techniques of the Self – a Seminar,* (1988). Here he articulates the overarching aim over his career:

> My objective for more than 25 years has been to sketch out a history of the different ways in our culture that humans develop knowledge about themselves: economics, biology, psychiatry, medicine and penology. The main point is not to accept this knowledge at face value but to analyse these so-called sciences as very specific 'truth games' related to specific techniques that human beings use to understand themselves.' (Martin, LH et al, 1988, p.16).

Over this period Foucault developed the concept of 'technologies of power which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject' (ibid p.16) and later, in an attempt to move beyond the 'docile body' and suggest agency, the:

> technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality (ibid, p.16).

In relation to children, I consider the operation of these two technologies and how children work on their identity whilst subject to the discursive power exercised via adults and institutions. I develop these ideas further through feminist development of Foucault's ideas. In particular I use Judith Butler's idea of sex as regulative and repressive and as an effect rather than an origin, a product of discourse and power not a universal truth. I argue a child's age along with their sexuality is a regulative strategy and this allows me to question why this particular categorisation has been constructed and the effect this has. In Butler's terms this is 'to politicize the processes and categories through which identity is formed' (Gutting (ed), 1994, p.301).

Adopting a Foucauldian perspective allows me to highlight that 'childhood' as a relational term to 'adulthood' is a useful 'truth'. Through the research with children themselves I demonstrate that they neither have complete agency, nor none, but 'work'

and constantly negotiate (an identity) within the constraints of the prevailing discourses in which they are embedded.

As my route into studying the child I have chosen on the one hand to look at the way children and consumption are discussed in two very different fields and on the other to explore how children themselves talk about consumption. Consumerism is a topic where discourses in relation to children are very definite – either children are the victim of a power they do not understand (as voiced by the experts, Chapter Three) or they are active agents, enjoying the freedom consumption gives them (as voiced by the toy industry's marketing, Chapter Four).

My aim is to develop a more interconnected understanding of children and their relationship with the institutions that exercise power. By looking at the discourses produced by those that seek to protect children – the experts (together with the government and parliament), and at those generated by the marketing industry I set a context for exploring children's own talk. This drawing together of three disparate sets of primary data opens up the possibility of exploring their interrelations and the impact of the first two on children themselves.

> By openly encouraging and validating the subversive side of childhood, marketeers are unleashing forces it's becoming increasingly difficult to control (Palmer, 2007, p.239)

For the first corpus of texts, the 'anti' marketing materials; I chose to use an internet search for 'children and marketing' and this led me to various articles, produced by experts, both populist and academic, as well as the government debate on children and junk food advertising in 2008.

> Play is an essential part of growing up. Through play children hasten their development while they learn about the world around them. This booklet has been produced by the National Toy Council to help you select the best toys for your child (The Value of Play leaflet).

I chose the UK British Toy and Hobby Association Toy Fair 2014 as my source for marketing texts. Partly because this is an event where toy manufacturers of all sorts convene to showcase and sell their products to toy retailers, and partly because the marketing industry seems particularly tight lipped in their press and publications when it comes to marketing to children. By going to an industry event I was aware there would be more material available for me to analyse.

> One person comes in and says, 'Oh that's cool, I want one… and then he comes back with one and then it spreads around (Line 375 boys focus group)

My ambition for this thesis was to allow space for some children's voices to be heard. I chose to carry out focus groups with children for my third set of materials. I did not expect to find any underlying messages or definitive answers about what children think or feel about consumerism, or about being a child or part of childhood, but instead wanted to show that they are not simply victims or simply celebrating consumerism but a complex mix of many subject positions using various strategies of resistance as well as accepting certain constraints of the discourses that surround them.

Once I had collated my research from the three disparate sources, I needed a way to look at them to find commonalities, or threads between the discourses to consider what knowledges they constructed about children and childhood, and since discourses are related to power, how they both enable and constrain what is said, by whom, where and when. (Parker, 1992). I chose to use a Foucauldian discourse analysis. By considering anything a 'text' a Foucauldian discourse analysis can be used as an

interrogation of what is perceived as normal in our society, how certain 'truths' are accepted.

By using this methological trajectory I was able to tease out commonalities in this corpus of texts to analyse the way children are constructed as other and different and yet children construct themselves as different but also the same; Savvy and innocent and many other things too. By using this approach I could look for themes and taken for granted notions in these disparate texts under the same spotlight which allowed me to critique them and explore the implications for children.

Chapter One reviews current debates and academic theories around childhood – how it is constructed and what this means for children – in order to contextualise my own ideas. I take as a starting point the work of Neil Postman (1985) which raises many issues about childhood and led to discussions on the agency of the child. I then review the changes over the past twenty years, evolving from psychological to sociological approaches to current Childhood Studies. Adopting the latter, referred to as the 'new wave' (Ryan 2012), academics attempt to challenge the *either* psychological *or* sociological stance, to also take into account more cultural approaches. For example, I draw on ideas by those studying childhood innocence, such as Renold (2005) and how the discourses around keeping children innocent serve to 'other 'them. I also utilise some ethnographic studies of children and how they are influenced by consumption (such as Chin (2001) and Russell and Tyler (2002)) to consider how other cultural and social influences are mixed in with consumption as part of the individual's identity work. In this context I particularly engage with the inspirational work of David Buckingham: his continuing social and cultural focus on the active child has provided a necessary grounding for my own research.

In this chapter I also introduce the ideas I draw from Foucault, in particular his theories on discourse and power, technologies of power and technologies of self. But additionally, I raise his term, noso-politics (or 'health politics') which he deploys in *The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century* (2000) and which I suggest can usefully be applied to today's concerns about children and consumerism.

In Chapter Two I explain my reasons for choosing a Foucauldian discourse analysis approach, its problems and limitations as well as its benefits. I also briefly raise the issue of moral panic in relation to children and junk food advertising, since it impacted on one strand of my corpus of research (the anti-marketing materials) as one discourse became privileged over others. I also consider the concept of the 'moral entrepreneur' and how one person can draw on certain discourses to support their moral crusade. I then go on to explain how I chose the materials for, respectively, the 'expert' and 'marketing industry' research and the problems and complexities that ensued.

I then outline the challenges of researching children, and the moral and practical considerations. Rejecting a questionnaire or other constricting research methodology, I decided to create an environment where the children could talk freely, rather than be led by my questions (and therefore my pre-conceptions). Negotiating with a local primary school, focus groups were set up with nine and ten year olds. These took place in the classroom and were, led by the class teacher but without set questions or agenda. I discuss the practical issues of this research method with children and the issues involved in ensuring a safe and creative environment for the children to talk in. I also consider the problematic idea of there being a 'voice' for children and how I attempt to balance all three sets of texts without over-privileging the children's talk.

Chapter Three explores the corpus of texts created by experts, in this case specifically those that speak out against marketing and suggest childhood is under threat. Key to

this set of texts is the discursive articulation of expert and scientific knowledge. Through analysis of the documents produced about junk food advertising, together with the transcript from the government debate on banning these advertisements in 2008, I track how certain 'truths' come to be accepted, for example 'toxic childhood' (as raised by Sue Palmer, 2007). The assumption here is that childhood is not what it was, and it is this discourse about childhood under threat which, I argue, leads to the UK government supporting changes to advertising regulations. Bringing Foucault's ideas to bear to demonstrate the inextricable links between discourse, power and institution, I draw on *Madness and Civilization* (Foucault, 2001), to explore how rules privilege, prescribing what is sayable and by whom, thus subject-ing others. Furthermore, I utilise the idea of expert discourses to question why experts have a voice and children do not and how these voices sustain a hierarchy of power.

Chapter Four analyses the marketing images and materials from the British Toy and Hobby Association (BTHA) Toy Fair in London 2014. I question what these can suggest about how this industry constructs the child and childhood through their marketing and how they rely on certain discourses (such as play as 'the work' of children, or children as imaginative) to divide children from adult and reduce them to the status of lesser beings. I also argue that the absences at this event are more telling than what is present. There were no children at the BTHA Toy Fair and yet its sole purpose is to allow toy sellers to choose toys they think children will like. I consider the reasons for this absence, and how it positions the child as to-be-decided-for, even when it comes to toys.   I draw on Foucault's concept of 'internal discourse' (1991) to consider how those exhibiting are at once obsessed with children consuming (and the ensuing financial gains), yet attempt to invisibilise them. This is similar to how schools of the eighteenth century work to contain and silence children's sexuality, as Foucault discusses.

Chapters Five and Six turn to the subject of all these discourses: children, analysing the conversations in the focus groups where the children talk about their relationship with consuming, about junk food and their way of dealing with the constraints and challenges of childhood. In Chapter Five, to give a sense of the focus groups in action, I firstly draw out, in an impressionistic way, something of the exchanges and dialogue the children had with each other and the teacher facilitating the groups. I draw particular attention to how the children use humour and excitement, creating their own way of talking. By drawing on Coates' idea of the 'collaborative floor' (Givon(ed), 1997) I propose that conversations are part of the children's shared culture, their way of speaking together provides insight into how they appropriate culture from other sources for their own cultural ends. I propose that they are 'bricoleurs' and, using the analogy of 'bricks' and 'a wall', I argue that working together they build a cultural space through this style of talking.

In Chapter Six, I focus on how the children attempt to form an individual but also group identity. I argue that their enthusiasm and uncontainability is a form of resistance. They know their love of consuming is particularly transgressive and use it to push against the notion of children as innocent. In addition, I highlight other linguistic and cultural means through which the children work on a distinctive identity. For example, use of the word 'cool' and knowledge about certain objects (such as how many Gogos[2] everyone has!) to show individuality whilst trying to remain part of the group. Active in their negotiation with consumerism, these children work within discourses and knowledge in creative ways.

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[2] Gogos are small collectible plastic figures.

In the Conclusion, I reflect on what these analyses suggest about 'the child' and what the methodology may have enabled. I also consider what further research issues could be explored. Perhaps the most significant implication of the research is that children should not be homogenised into a single group, nor should we accept the notion of 'childhood' as anything other than a 'regime of truth'.

Chapter One

'Childhood', 'Childhood Studies' and utilising Foucault

Introduction

This chapter forms a conceptual foundation to the research chapters which follow. Here I consider how children are constructed and how childhood as an institution is sustained through discourse. I begin by reviewing current academic studies about childhood and focus on those academics that have most informed my own research, such as Allison James and David Buckingham. Rather than starting with the history of childhood and how it has developed, from Aries' 'discovery' of children as a social group onwards, I have selected *The Disappearance of Childhood* by Neil Postman (Postman, 1985) as a springboard, since his work led to more focus being given academically to the study of the changing nature of childhood. It also provoked conflicting arguments about childhood as a construct and its relation to actual children as well as about the degree of agency children have. I also draw on another area of study which has relevance to my own work; childhood innocence. This has been considered across many different fields, from law, to media to social studies and questioned as a concept. I am particularly interested in how the discourse of innocence forms part of the construction of childhood.

I also consider recent theory in relation to children's culture. I would suggest that the assumption of a particular culture common to childhood assists in constructing childhood as a particular 'other' place and supports certain knowledges about children as 'different' (from adults). By engaging with academics such as Lurie (1990) and Qvortrup (1994) I challenge what this notion of children's culture can tell us about how children are situated in society.

I then explore contemporary debates about children and consumption drawing particularly on Buckingham's *The Material Child: Growing up in Consumer Culture* (Buckingham, 2011). I also review research that was useful to me in working on my own research methodology, such as Nairn, Griffin and Wicks (2007) and also those studies that reveal the complexity of the relationship between children and the commercial world, such as Chin (2001) and Pugh (2009).

The engagement with current 'Childhood Studies' revealed an absence of theory about children and power. Yet this is perhaps key to understanding how children might have agency in relation to questions of identity. There was also little on the wider discourses featuring the child as subject circulating in society or on considering childhood as a construct rather than as a particular anthropological group. Foucault, however, provided the means to tease out issues of power and knowledge in relation to childhood by offering the concept of discourse. Assuming childhood as a construct meant Foucault's genealogical approach could be adopted to question taken for granted assumptions about children and childhood. The second part of this chapter therefore outlines the ways I draw on this approach and on Foucault's theorisation of power and discourse.

A key term questioned in this thesis is the meaning of 'childhood'. Development psychologists offered a straightforward (if limited) definition, through their study of children as a biological stage, distinct and different from adulthood and universal, regardless of social conditions. Childhood was a phase, in preparation for adulthood and, as Qvortrup explains, necessarily considered incomplete or incompetent (Qvortrup, 1994). Age was its defining characteristic. Childhood was seen as a community, with a stable structure, but with its membership always changing, and more

confusingly, one that everyone has been part of. To define it as such, assumes
children are moving towards leaving this community; that is its role.

However, as other academic fields have become interested in childhood, its definition
has changed. The argument that childhood is created out of cultural forces, and
shaped and reshaped depending on social relations between those within childhood,
i.e. children, and those that organise and control the hegemonic order within which
childhood has to fit, is now a popular one. It is adopted by, for example, academics
such as Scraton (1997), James and Prout (1997) and Steinberg & Kincheloe (2004).
By accepting childhood as a variable in constant negotiation, it can be seen that it must
be a relational term, reliant not only on contemporary ideology about childhood, current
laws and expectations, but also and more importantly, on current discourse about it as
a kind of 'space'. Through literature, art, history and the media, an understanding of
childhood is created and reinforced: it becomes a representation rather than a
'structure'. This shift in thinking about children is supported by Buckingham, who
throughout his writing focuses on childhood as an ideological construct:

> Cultural representations of childhood are thus often contradictory. They
> frequently say much more about adults and children's fantasy investments in
> the idea of childhood than they do about the realities of children's lives; and
> they are often imbued with nostalgia for a past Golden Age of freedom and play
> (Buckingham, 2000, p.9)

He applies a cultural studies approach to children and supports the agency of the
individual child. I agree that much academic theory on childhood misses some of the
complexity of what it means to exist 'in childhood'. However, as I go on to explore, it is
perhaps useful to consider childhood, not just as a cultural construct, but also as a
personal category, both for those currently in childhood and for those who have their
own memories and understanding of what childhood was for them.

The Disappearance of Childhood and Beyond

> To have to stand and wait as the charm, malleability, innocence, and curiosity of children are degraded and then transmogrified into the lesser features of pseudo-adulthood is painful and embarrassing and, above all, sad. (Postman, 1985, p.xiii).

As this rather emotive and depressing statement at the start of *The Disappearance of Childhood* (ibid) shows, Postman's contention is that childhood in the post-industrial world is no longer a separate, protected and enjoyable space for children. They are no longer innocent and free from responsibility, but are becoming pseudo adults. Postman believes this to be a social disaster, blaming television for the collapse of childhood. His argument is based on the theory that childhood was created along with the printing press, because print enabled those who knew things (i.e. the reading adults) to have secrets and more access to the knowledge, culture and civilization of society than those that could not read (the children):

> As childhood and adulthood become increasingly differentiated, each sphere elaborated its own symbolic world, eventually it came to be accepted that the child did not and could not share the language, the learning, the tastes, the appetites, the social life of an adult (ibid, p. 50).

He believes that with the rise of television, children have access to the same information as adults and hence are no longer sheltered from adult secrets and protected from adult life. He argues that since television is for everyone and gives total disclosure, children now have access to all information of the 'real world': 'Through the miracle of symbols and electricity our own children know everything anyone else knows, the good with the bad'. (Ibid, p.97) With children sharing this knowledge, they no longer play traditional games outside but instead resort to crime, sex and drugs as they attempt to deal with the adult world. His solution to this is a morally conservative

one, to control access to television for children so that they can remain innocent and free from the knowledge until they are 'ready'.

Postman is not the only one to have this negative view of the end of childhood and of innocence or of television's dumbing down and depiction of violence and sex contributing to this by merging childhood and adulthood (see Meyrowitz (1987) and Sanders (1994). But there are others who whilst agreeing with the 'end of childhood' thesis, provide additional social explanations. For example, in 'Hurried Child' (2001) Elkind argues that the stress of divorce, drugs and modern life on children, and the way that children are being 'hurried' at school and home, and by the media, has led to high levels of pressure for children to grow up fast before they are emotionally ready and ahead of their 'natural' developmental stages. Keeping children separate is the solution posited here too, although with the opportunity to express themselves and so develop at their own speed. Marie Winn, (1985) also believes that social problems are now affecting children, due to the decline in child supervision. She also blames the media for giving children adult secrets and also for replacing play in their lives. Again, the solution is to create fixed boundaries.

I disagree with this fatalistic concept of childhood being eroded by modern life, because I do not accept that childhood is a stable structure that can be 'eroded'. In all these arguments, the authors appear to wish society could revert back to the early twentieth century when, they assume, innocence existed and children were happy. Stronger control and boundaries seem to be the answer, with children being firmly shown their place. However, David Buckingham helpfully argues that these opinions are about more than a concern for children: 'They embody a growing sense of anxiety about social change, and particularly about the changing power relationships between adults and children' (Buckingham, 2000, p.25). He believes that this combination of panic and nostalgia is more to do with fears about the post-modern world than it is about children.

Children are being used as the metaphor for a more widespread concern that the world is changing too quickly for adults to keep up. This use of children as a loci in 'risk society' (Beck, p.6 in Lupton (ed) 1999) is addressed by several academics, for example Lupton and Jackson & Scott (ibid).   They suggest that the two processes of individualization and de-traditionalization have led to a context where parents are expected to invest more in keeping their children 'safe' from the less predictable and stable world around them. Kehily (2013) posits that because of this risk and anxiety, the media as well as political policy produce a dominant discourse of childhood under threat and 'in crisis'.

Of course the arguments suggesting the end of childhood, thanks to television, were framed in the 1980s. Since then the rise in the internet and the digital access children now have has led to another set of concerns, this time about the access children have to the adult world through their computers.   However for many academics the electronic media has been heralded as a positive change for childhood. For example, Tapscott in *Growing up Digital* (1997) argues that whereas television is a passive activity for a child, the digital world gives them independence and power as well as knowledge. Papert (1996) takes this further and sees technology as liberating children and their natural wisdom, giving them a chance to self-direct their learning. Katz (1997) and Rushkoff (1999) also agree that the digital age gives children an opportunity to learn and become active agents. They believe that adults do not like this because they are not comfortable with the new technology and, as the TV generation, are conservative and inflexible.   These utopian arguments that the Internet will lead to a democratic literacy, releasing creativity and liberating children are based on the idea that children use the technology for education and not entertainment. They also assume that the computer and its content are not determined by society and economic relations but are somehow free and autonomous.   I would argue against such 'future-nostalgic' arguments. Again, they have less to do with children and more to do with

overall themes in society.   As Buckingham argues, by allying children with technology it places them (sentimentally) as 'the future' whilst ignoring the agency of children: 'Simply to blame the media or indeed to celebrate them, is to overestimate their power, and to underestimate the diverse ways in which children create their own meanings and pleasures' (Buckingham, 2000, p.57)

My issue with all of these debates about childhood is that whether they see the changes in childhood as good or bad, all assume that childhood is a definitive state with a fixed boundary around it, which can therefore change to something different, or even, disappear. Buckingham's title for his book *After the Death of Childhood* (2000) shows his disquiet at this assumption too.   As Buckingham suggests, 'childhood and the thoughts and emotions attached to it are not given or fixed but subject to an ongoing process of definition - a social struggle over meaning' (ibid, p.103). Change is therefore inevitable and not necessarily something to be concerned about, or indeed celebrated. The emotive language used, particularly by those that believe childhood is being eroded, or spoilt and destroyed, relates more to a particular discourse about children than about the actual institution of childhood. Arguably it is not beneficial to talk about the end of childhood. If childhood is defined as the state in which children exist until they are adult (of course how you further define this, by age, for example is problematic) then it cannot be ended as children are still here. It is not useful at this point to go further into whether childhood can end, and if so why (divorce, commercial culture, increasing surveillance etc.) but it is worth emphasising that those focussing on childhood are really often discussing society as a whole and wider concerns about how culture is changing. Children are the means to talk about this, and because discourse about children is often nostalgic (for the writer's own childhood and past) and emotive (in relation to the potential future) the actual debate about childhood is confused. Kenway and Bullen are also concerned with the discourse about the end of childhood assuming there was a golden age. They suggest that this discourse is 'informed by a

dystopian view of the present that fails on a number of counts' (Kenway and Bullen, 2001, p.3). These are that there is a version of childhood we should agree to; that due to their lack of 'fit' children are now deficient; that the traditional hierarchical relationship between adults and children was preferable; and finally that the discourse is a form of denial because it does not acknowledge today's young children. Kenway and Bullen suggest instead that we are entering another stage of childhood and that the demarcations between adult and child may be blurring in some areas but they are hardening in others.

This social and cultural constructionist view is the most prevalent of recent academic theories marking a distinct move away from the developmental psychology perspective previously so popular in thinking about childhood. I agree with this move. The agency of children should be accepted as well as the individuality of each child so that childhood can no longer be considered a homogenous catch-all for all children. As Steinberg and Kincheloe suggest 'children are not merely entities on their way to adulthood; they are individuals intrinsically valuable for who they are.' (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004, p.5) They view the backlash against TV and other media as based on an assumption that children should only be exposed to adult knowledge when 'appropriate' i.e. which is whenever the childcare experts dictate. Thus the idea that children are passive entities, uniform and developing based on biology and therefore less than adults is now, on the whole, opposed. Nevertheless, Steinberg and Kincheloe argue that through discourse and laws, education and supposed protection, children have been rendered powerless. Therefore central to their new paradigm is 'the effort to make sure children are intimately involved in shaping their social, psychological and educational lives'. (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2004, p.8). Instead of just looking at children they argue for the need to look at social influences, including corporations, popular culture and the mass media. They have named this approach 'Postmodern Childhood Studies'. As Kincheloe posits: 'because of the profound

changes initiated by a variety of social, economic, political and cultural forces, many

analyst maintain we can no longer make sense of childhood using traditional

assumptions about its nature' (Kincheloe, 2002, p.76). Yet this new perspective on

childhood still believes that it exists as different from adulthood but with the boundaries

broken down as children become more empowered and knowledgeable. This

perspective, whilst positive in its attitude to children is however deterministic in that it

assumes that corporations, through popular culture and consumerism have ideological

influence over children. Thus to enable children to create 'strategies of resistance'

(Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2004, p.14) they argue that children should be taught how to

critique these influences through critical media literacy. As Buckingham points out, this

ignores the agency children already have as audiences with the freedom to choose

how they interpret information, without necessarily understanding it on a critical level. It

also assumes that knowledge now comes mainly from large corporations rather than

education, parents etc. My own view on this 'new' attitude to childhood is that whilst

presenting a somewhat fatalistic view of children as 'victim', it does at least accept that

childhood is changing. My study builds on this premise to show how children are

subject to social influences but also have agency in relation to cultural pressures.

Childhood Studies – the Active Child and Beyond

The academics I have referred to so far in come from a range of disciplines including

media studies, psychology, anthropology, sociology. But as Daniel Cook explains,

Childhood Studies as a discipline is a new development, (he is head of one of the first

Departments of Childhood). Whilst many seem to agree that there should be a specific

discipline of Childhood Studies, what this should constitute and in what direction it

should head is a site of conflict and emotion – just as everything to do with children is.

For example, in a recent conference set up to 'define Childhood Studies' the organisers

(Cox & Dar, 2011) explain that whilst James and Prout's description of Childhood

Studies as an 'emergent paradigm' (1997) moved the discipline in a new direction it also caused a proliferation of studies focussing on children's agency. This shift from child within a development paradigm to child as socially defined was (according to Cox & Dar) just as constraining: research became overly 'child centric' (ibid, p.3). Some academics have since tried to move away from always looking at the child as active social agent and instead tried to look at children and childhoods in their social, economic, cultural and political structural settings (see Anne Scheer, Avivia Sinervo and Chana Etengoff's papers from the same conference, (Cox & Dar, 2011)).

Another group of researchers are trying to focus on the concepts of multiplicity and hybridity to attempt to move beyond Childhood Studies as either developmental or social. In an article using the term 'new wave' to describe this direction Kevin Ryan suggests that Childhood Studies is still in a 'binary groove' (Ryan, 2012, p.441), where either culture or nature are used as the lens through which to focus on children. He suggests that 'to escape the constraints of bio-social dualism' (ibid p.443) Childhood Studies needs to problematize childhood whilst at the same time redescribing it and moving on from its earlier definitions and theories. For example Lee and Motzkau (2011) have focused on Foucault's bio-politics as a way of looking at childhood and have suggested that the concept of 'multiplicity' is useful, to show both that there are many actual and possible childhoods and that within any specific childhood there are many different events or processes (political, ethical, legal, medical and biological) constituting it. Jenks (2005) has also moved into a new way of thinking about childhood. Again using Foucault, as well as Georges Bataille, Jenks works with the concept of transgression which he believes helps to look at childhood beyond the constraints of social category or cognitive frame.

Others believe that the focus should remain on the active child, whilst accepting that children are learning to become adults as well as living 'being a child'. For example,

Willett et al suggest that 'we needed to acknowledge the complexity of 'childhood' as a social institution and as lived by children…bringing together social, historical, and biological perspectives '(2013, p.19). Further, Mayall (1994), among others, has taken a different approach again, using feminist theory to consider children as a minority, subject to oppression.

It is ironic that at one and the same time Childhood Studies is becoming a specific discipline focusing on children and childhood, and now more than ever drawing on theories from wider fields. For example, Smith (2012) uses Foucault's governmentality to consider how children are portrayed not just as Dionysian (evil) or Apollonian (innocent) as Chris Jenks suggests, but also as Athenian 'as a tool for representing and interrogating governmental strategies of responsibilization' (ibid, p.24). Affrica Taylor (2011) uses human geography theory to argue that the discourse of childhood as 'natural' is a romanticized and idealised concept that can be reconceptualised using geographers who focus on nature. Adopting another approach, in *The Children's Table* (2013) Duane suggests that Childhood Studies should not be put in its own field of study but instead overlaid on to any field of study: 'To include the child in any field of study is to realign the very structure of that field, changing the terms of inquiry and forcing a different set of questions' (ibid, p.2). Duane believes that when we are talking about childhood we are really talking about power and knowledge, ideas which underpin society and the human subject more generally.

I have found these new ways of reflecting on childhood in relation to power and discourse useful as they reveal the complexity of childhood. They have encouraged me to draw on academics from other fields to inform, as appropriate, my own critical approach. They also start to fill the gap in the current study of childhood: how discourses construct the meaning of childhood in contemporary society.

Discourses of Childhood

> The nature of the child is not discovered but produced in regimes of truth created in those very practices which proclaim the child in all his naturalness (Walkerdine, 1997, p.169).

If childhood is constructed by discourses then where does this leave children? As Valerie Walkerdine suggests, childhood can be thought of in terms of what Foucault would describe as a 'regime of truth'. Indeed a distinct field of knowledge about what childhood is has been created and set up as 'the truth'. The natural child, innocent and less than adult becomes the 'common sense' definition and through the supposed protection of children (for their own sake) society in fact ensures they are subordinated and controlled. As Jenks argues, 'Care become part of a subtle ideology that possesses the moral high ground, defies opposition and exercises a continual control over the other in the name of 'what is best for them' (Jenks, 1996, p.42). Children are therefore locked within childhood – dependent and disempowered. James and Prout (1997) take up the issue of time arguing it is a means through which children's everyday lives are ordered and controlled, at home and school: time is organised for them. In addition, children/childhood can be seen as 'out of time': rooted in the past, or as part of the future (i.e. protoadults). The criteria for the development of a child, still follows a set order, with education by age leading the way. This also sets children apart and constrains them.

Adults also speak for children. Even the media produced for children is created by adults: television, books, web sites, toys, are all based on an adult perception of what it is to be a child or what a child wants. As Holland (1992) and Buckingham (2000) agree, the collective image of the 'child' is controlled through adult descriptions and articulations: not only in discourse about children but also discourse for children. In this

way the innocent and supposedly authentic child is kept alive in popular culture. Even when adults believe themselves to be speaking for children they are helping to sustain these discourses of children as different and less. For example, in her book, *Don't tell the Grown Ups* (1990) Alison Lurie revisits classic children's texts to suggest that they are in fact subversive. However her choice of books (ones she herself read when a child) and the language she uses serve to give a picture of children as, and these are her words: 'a partly savage tribe' (Lurie, 1990, p.ix). Her speaking for children is based on her own nostalgic memories: 'anyone who has spent time around children and observed them carefully, or really remembers what it is like to be a child knows that childhood is also a separate culture…. a primitive society' (Ibid, p.194).

Integral to discourses about children is hyperbole and an emotional tone – expressive, passionate – the upshot perhaps of adult memories of their own childhoods and the shared myth of childhood as a time of innocence and happiness. As Jenks explains, 'when we talk of the child we are also talking about recollections of time past, images of current forms of relationship and aspirations towards future states of affairs' (Jenks, 1996, p.11). It is no coincidence that much of the writing about childhood uses the analogy of a garden where children live a golden existence (for example, *Out of the Garden*, Stephen Kline, 1993). Childhood is associated with a natural state of affairs, protected and apart from the real world. In fact the garden could be seen more as a prison, as Holt suggests (1974 p.12,) and according to Walkerdine sustains the regime of truth about children (1997). But as Jenkins suggests such representations address adult concerns:

> Childhood – a temporary state - becomes an emblem for our anxieties about the passing of time, the destruction of historical formations, or conversely, a vehicle for our hopes for the future. The innocent child is caught somewhere over the rainbow – between nostalgia and utopian optimism, between the past and the future (Jenkins, 1998, p.5).

Or as Jenks describes:

> We need children as the sustainable, reliable, trustworthy, now outmoded treasury of social sentiments that they have come to represent. Our 'nostalgia' for their essence is part of a complex late-modern, rear-guard attempt at the resolution of the contradictory demands of the constant re-evaluation of value with the pronouncement of social identity' (Jenks, 1996, p.108).

By using the 'idea' of children, a regime of truth about the 'child' is sustained, whilst at the same time decisions and concerns are made in their name. As I argue in Chapter Two, most moral panics, such as concerns about TV violence, overt sexuality, as well as consumption are all raised for the 'sake of the children' not for the adults. These panics then give rise to certain discourses about children needing 'to be protected', thus constraining children themselves. The fact that children themselves are rarely consulted indicates that it is the 'idea' of the child that is being appropriated. The child's own identity is emptied to be replaced by the 'child as innocent'.

However with the rise of the internet, it might be argued, that children's access to it opens up a space where they can articulate their own feelings and ideas, unmediated. Certainly they now have blogs, personal web sites, and chat rooms etc. where their voices can be heard. Yet those who point to use of the internet as an example of children's 'empowerment' (Rushkoff, 1999, Katz, 1997, Papert, 1996) are perhaps overly optimistic. A quote from Holt in the seventies, still resonates today:

> It is condescending when we respond to qualities that enable us to feel superior to the child. It is sentimental when we respond to qualities that do not exist in the child but only in some vision or theory that we have about children. (Holt, 1974, p.78).

Related to these concerns is the problem of generalisations and the labelling of children. Many academics have worked out a set of definitions of types of child, for

example Mills and Mills (2000) list 6 types: innocent, apprentices, persons in their own right, members of a distinct group, vulnerable, and animals. There are other 'lists', such as Benton's, (1996) with seven versions of the child: polite, impolite, innocent, sinful, authentic, sanitized, holy. Trying to pigeonhole all children into neat categories is not only oversimplified but reductive but also a further means to power for adults. Of course the widest generalisation is to place every person between 0 and 18 into a category of child. This 'forced commonality' (Jenks, 1996, p.122) clearly constrains children within an ideological discourse of childhood even when it may no longer seem appropriate. As Foucault outlines, definitions play an important part in the normalisation of subjects. In this case children become what adults are not and are also less than adult. The fact that children grow up to become adult only adds to this imbalance. Since adulthood is regarded as the goal, then childhood becomes a preparatory phase. This idea of childhood as a transition ignores or underemphasises a child's current lifestyle, experience and views. Children are not given a voice, since adult perception deems them not ready 'to speak' for themselves. Based on this premise, Qvortrup extrapolates that: 'childhood is the life-space which our culture limits it to be: i.e. its definitions through the courts, the schools, the family, the economy and also through philosophy and psychology' (Qvortrup 1994, p.3). In this way, as Jenks suggests, the 'myth of childhood' empties the children of their own political agency and childhood becomes about society's symbolic requirements. One 'requirement' of childhood is that it should be innocent, which I would like to now explore.

Childhood Innocence

The concept of innocence has been studied in a much more diverse fashion than other areas of childhood, in the context of law, corporate culture, media education and childhood sexuality. What innocence is and how it is portrayed, what it does as a discourse and how it impacts on children has been addressed by numerous

academics. Renold (2005) (who I will return to below) believes that innocence is fundamental to common sense notions of childhood. She suggests that the representation of children as vulnerable and innocent, as 'developed by Rousseau (1762) and reappropriated by Victorian sentimentalists, indeed brought about the birth of modern ideas of childhood' (ibid, p. 18). Jenkins (1997) also suggests that aspects of innocence can be traced back to Rousseau, believing that its 'modern manifestation' (ibid, p. 132) came as a response to the changes in society towards industrialisation. Whatever its roots, the academics I now engage with reflect my own belief that 'childhood innocence' is still a resonant discourse informing 'knowledge' of children. Arguably it relies on a sentimentality so that children are perceived in emotional terms; it is thus often at the heart of moral panics about their wellbeing.

Focussing on innocence as a discourse: Duschinsky defines it as, 'socially complex and as complicit in the production, stabilisation and occlusion of potentially troubling effects on relations of power, emotion and meaning in modern societies (Duschinsky, 2013, p. 2). He cites many others who have also written about the representation of childhood innocence and refers to Foucault's *Abnormal: Lectures at the College de France 1974-1975* (Foucault, 2004) to show that innocence is a discursive apparatus enabling governance through a form of bio politics. He argues that discourses of innocence are performative, 'producing the representations that they appear to simply designate' (Duschinsky, 2013, p. 6). However, because such discourses are performative 'innocence' can never be stable but is more a 'resource', a 'referent' that can be appealed to by those supposedly fighting for children's rights or safety. He suggests too that innocence forms a symbolic boundary for childhood: there to protect children from potentially problematic forces such as 'knowledge', 'experience' or 'desire'. As he argues childhood innocence has come to mean 'natural essence' (ibid, p. 6). 'The figure of the child is placed as an expression of a natural essence that needs to be supplemented by total enclosure within the protection and control of

cultivated culture, and nourished by the current processes of parental, institutional post-colonial training' (ibid p. 8).

Some of these ideas are echoed by Giroux in his study of the relationship between corporate culture and children (Giroux, 2001). He too argues that the 'myth' (ibid, p. 2) of childhood innocence suggest a natural state that marks the child as pure and passive. Children are therefore in need of protection but denied any agency or autonomy; rather adults are responsible for protecting their 'innocence'. For him 'innocence has a politics' (ibid, p. 21) with culture the 'primary terrain in which adults exercise power over children both ideologically and institutionally' (ibid p. 4). This 'conceptual space' (ibid p.4) is where childhood as a construct is struggled over with parents holding onto childhood innocence in the face of what is regarded as corporate culture's attempts to appropriate it.

Framing children as innocent and in need of protection, so constraining and controlling them is raised across a range of academic fields. Jenkins, for example, in his discussion on children and the media in the digital age (Jenkins 1997), explores how the myth of childhood innocence 'sees children only as potential victims of the adult world, or as beneficiaries of paternalistic protection' (ibid p. 31) and argues that this 'opposes pedagogies that empower children as active agents in the educational process' (ibid p. 31). For him childhood has always been perceived to be under threat; seeing children as 'innocent' and as victims only serves to disempower them and allows real children to be restricted and regulated for their own supposed good. His discussion centres on media education, but similar ideas about the protection of 'innocent' children are repeated in a study by Shelley Day Sclater and Christine Piper, who adopt a legal perspective. They consider how children are perceived in cases of divorce and how a discourse around the 'best interests of the child' positions children as dependent, vulnerable and victims. Thus the welfare discourse utilised by the

courts also draws on the idea of childhood innocence. This study raises another important aspect – the separation between the private sphere (the family) and the public sphere (including the state and the legal system). The authors suggest that society acts on the basis of an image of childhood as a place of innocence and vulnerability and, of course, powerlessness so that children's needs are addressed in terms of an adult/public agenda. This involves excluding children from the public sphere but, for their protection, maintaining them in the family.

Faulkner (2013) similarly focuses on the privileged site of innocent childhood as something adults attempt to control as a separate 'space': as if 'innocence was an empty trait, valued precisely as a deficit of experience as if experience itself were corrosive of virtue' (ibid, p.127). Thus childhood, idealised, even fetishized, is a state of defencelessness, which is 'overdetermined by a variety of adult exigencies, desires and crises' (ibid, p. 127). Again, children are set up as an emotional resource for adults to embody vulnerability but thereby their agency is stifled. In this way Faulkner argues that innocence operates in Western society to enable adults to manage their concerns, but positions children as 'responsible' for the innocence they represent.

One key area of study here is children's sexual innocence. Robinson (2012), for example, argues that 'childhood' and 'innocence' are utilised to regulate access to sexual knowledge and to support the idea of the 'normal' (read innocent) child. With the equation of children and the private sphere any child who has gained sexual knowledge is deemed to have entered the public sphere too soon. Sexual citizenship is tied up with the politics of the private and public spheres: 'hegemonic discourses of childhood and childhood innocence have been mobilised to strictly police citizenship norms through children's access/inaccessibility to knowledge of sexuality' (ibid p. 258). Moreover, 'innocence' is a means to govern the 'good' subject. No longer innocent but

corrupted, the child with sexual knowledge has transgressed the boundaries of childhood and is seen to be on a path to deviant adult citizen.

Kitzinger (1988) is also critical of the way contemporary images emphasise a child's youth and passivity: 'childhood is presented as a time of play, an asexual and peaceful existence within the protective bosom of the family. This image is both ethnocentric and unrealistic' (ibid, p. 78). For her innocence is a powerful and emotive symbol, but for three reasons is counterproductive. Firstly, it fetishes the child, secondly it excludes the knowing child and thirdly, it denies children access to power and knowledge, rendering them weak. In short, children's protection overrides their rights. Adults repress children and their sexuality in the name of childhood innocence; the knowing child is no longer innocent therefore damaged goods, no longer warranting protection. Problematically, children in poverty, refugees, abused children, even soldier children are not deemed innocent and so are excluded. As I explore in this thesis, the problematic nature of innocence as something we should want for our children often causes the child to be rendered powerless.

One discussion on childhood sexual innocence that is particularly relevant to my own work on the construction of children and their conversations, and referred to above, is Emma Renold's engagement in her book *Girls, Boys and Junior Sexualities: Exploring Children's Gender and Sexual Relations in the Primary School* (Renold, 2005). In this she focusses on childhood sexuality and identifies the primary school as a 'key site for the production and regulation of sexuality' (ibid, p. 17). By studying the dialogue of children talking freely, Renold investigates how they describe themselves and points to what she refers to as 'sexual generationing' (bid, p. 17). This concept usefully address how girls and boys both use and are positioned and controlled in different ways through 'age-appropriate sexualised discourses' (bid, p. 17). Her discussion highlights for me that by trying to separate children from the adult world, children are not only excluded

but made '*other*'. I will return to this idea in my analysis of the expert texts in Chapter

Three and the marketing texts in Chapter Four, both of which involve this 'othering' of

children. But whereas Renold focuses on sexuality, I focus on consumption to consider

how children respond to this 'othering' and mobilise it in their own identity work

(Chapters Five and Six).

The common thread running through these various approaches to studying childhood is

the difference between childhood as a definition and construct and children

themselves. As I have discussed, childhood represents the adult's past, a myth of

being a child. It is also a suppository for an idealised, nostalgic and emotive view of a

separate group of people to be protected and controlled. Against this are actual

children, contemporary citizens, part of society, with their own ideas and culture. Each

child is different in terms of age, class, sex, ethnicity, education, location and so on and

influenced by different forces, cultures and knowledges.

Bearing this view in mind I turn now to look briefly at what might be described as the

culture of children within which perhaps children do find their own voice.

<u>The Culture of Children?</u>

The idea that there is a particular culture associated with childhood, is problematic and

another example of the nostalgia often found in discussions about children. As

Qvortrup explains it is to look at children as if they are a foreign tribe to be studied:

'From an ethnographic point of view, children's culture, with its riddles and songs,

games and toys, is regarded as a construct that is passed down from one generation of

children to the next' (Qvortrup, 1994, p.157).

This anthropological view is reflected in several writings, for example Lurie:

> Too often, as we leave the tribal culture of childhood – and, its sometimes subversive tales and rhymes behind, we lose contact with instinctive joy in self-expression…staying in touch with children's literature and folklore as an adult is not only a means of understanding what children are thinking and feeling, it is a way of understanding and renewing our own childhood (Lurie, 1990, p. 204).

This statement highlights the confusion between culture created for children by adults: books, television etc. and children's own culture: what children themselves choose to play and do. Whilst some argue that children are only offered adults' ideas through the adult-produced culture they have access to (e.g. Kline 1993, Rose, 1993), others argue that in fact children are active producers of their own meanings (Walkerdine, 1997, Buckingham, 2000, Seiter, 1995) and create their own culture. Yet as soon as this culture is studied by adults, it becomes clear that it is impossible to ring-fence it as the culture of childhood.

However, what is interesting, as several scholars have pointed out, is how children take and use the ordered games and cultural artefacts they have been provided with and make into their own, in a process of 'rebellion' and 'independence' from adults. As Mitchell and Reid-Walsh show (2002), the study of children's culture (in their case popular culture) is as much a way of looking at the relationship between adults and children as it is about childhood itself. They highlight that if studying childhood has low status in academia, then the study of children's popular culture is even lower. But those scholars who do engage in this field argue that: 'a child's engagement with popular culture is often determined by the child not the adult, so the space of popular culture may exist as a pocket of resistance, within and against a larger space of quality culture' (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002, p.15). Perhaps children's culture in this sense is the only unregulated aspect of their lives, where they can be part of a group, express individual traits and assert themselves against adults. But even this view is

questionable if, rooted in a nostalgia for childhood, as remembered by adults, it again offers a romanticized view of the child, battling against adult influences. Play, toys, games are all part of an 'idea' of childhood that Postman et al fear is lost: when a certain generation played games on the street with friends, free from the bad influences of consumerism, television or the internet. For this reason, Mitchell and Reid-Walsh suggest that only by asking contemporary children can a researcher find out more about 'children's culture'. Yet even this act they advise poses complications: 'there are ethical concerns about asking children to comment on or analyse self-consciously the very culture within which their identity is being formed' (ibid, p.32).

In this thesis I do aim to explore and analyse children's culture, but I hope with some critical distance and without making emotive assumptions. One article that inspired my approach was Alison James' article on 'Kets': 'a word which, in the adult world, refers to despised and inedible substances has been transformed, in the world of the child it refers to a revered sweet' (James, in Jenkins(ed), 1998, p.394). James talks to children and studies their behaviour to understand their social world and relation to adult culture. She believes that by turning around the meaning of 'kets', and purchasing sweets that adults disapprove of, the children are confusing the adult order. The cost is not an issue, which in itself differentiates children from an adult culture of value, instead, the more junk-like or unpleasant the sweet, the more popular it is. The eating of the sweets is thus also an integral cultural practice. Instead of eating at a table, with knife and fork etc., sweets are eaten messily with fingers, out of the package, wherever the child chooses. This epitomises the structuralist ideas of Levi-Strauss on how culinary modes reflect significant conceptual categories. But if the sweets despised by adults are symbolic of the child's difference, they also enable self-expression by the children: kets become 'a metaphoric chewing up of adult order' (Ibid, p.404).

What I take from James is that children's culture may be subversive or oppositional but not necessarily in an obvious or direct way. Children are active in creating their own culture. The choice of sweets may not be a dramatic event, either for the child or their parents, but they are in a small way a site of struggle over power. Sweets are not the only cultural good mobilised to challenge the culture 'enforced' by adults. Toys, television programmes, books, can all play a part in allowing the child to transform or redefine adult efforts to pin down what being a child should mean. In Chapter Six when I analyse children's talk I return to this idea.

A further study that is useful for thinking about the negotiations involved in children's culture, and which I draw on in Chapter Five, is Anne Dyson's research with children learning to write in the US. She suggests that children appropriate symbolic materials, such as adult ways of talking, and then recontextualize them for their own purposes (Dyson, 2002). But she argues this is not an act of rebellion on the part of children, a view supported by Jenks (1996) who makes it clear that child's play and culture should not be romanticised as sowing the seeds of revolution. Children's culture is often visible to adults. For example on web sites, in blogs or even in any child's bedroom, where the chance to express themselves in their own space, can reveal much about what is considered appropriate, what is popular and so on. But adults may not understand these cultural forms or necessarily appreciate them, just because they have access. Indeed their lack of control of popular culture causes concern. But where violent computer games may be seen as unpleasant and dangerous by adults, for children they may be a means to exercise control, try out different subject positions and test boundaries. What a child finds pleasure in will often seem offensive and grotesque to adults in its seeming celebration of disorder and the transgression of boundaries. In this respect adults' response may be part of the reason for the child's pleasure. I develop these ideas in Chapters Five and Six when I suggest that children enjoy pushing against adult rules.

In addition, in the same way that the 'other' causes adults to feel unsettled, so the child's culture becomes a cause for concern. As part of the constant efforts to transform the children into an adult, like us, and part of the official culture, their resistance to this becomes a site of struggle, revealing the child as not the same, and therefore potentially as a threat:

> 'The child is familiar to us, and yet strange, he or she inhabits our world and yet seems to answer to another, he or she is essentially ourselves and yet appears to display a systematically different order of being' (Jenks, 1996, p.3).

Society is constantly striving to repress and control their culture or to amalgamate it back into the hegemonic culture, and using nostalgia as a means of making sense of it.

As I have mentioned previously, children's culture is not isolated, it is entwined with adult culture, and influenced by it. Most items children use as part of their culture have been made by adults, even if they have been appropriated for a different use or pleasure. Children are creative producers with agency creating their own culture of the moment. Later in Chapter Six, I will look at the role of consumption as part of children's contemporary culture, and how by becoming a consumer, children are creating their own identity and their own culture directly with the producers rather than through their parents.

<u>Children and Consumption</u>

As I have already suggested, this thesis attempts to tease out how children are talked about by experts and by the marketing industry and how in turn children talk amongst themselves and to adults. As a way into this study, I have focused on children's relationship with consumption. I would therefore like to now engage with the academic work on consuming children; an area which is quite polarised around two perspectives.

On the one hand there are those suggesting children are victims, easily manipulated into wanting, and suffering emotionally as childhood becomes commercialized (see Schor (2004), Linn (2004), Acuff and Reiher (2005), May and Nairn (2009).) On the other hand are those theorisations that see shopping as a route to empowerment for children, an opportunity to express identity, behave in an adult way and to experience a freedom not normally allowed to children (see Lindstrom (2003), Seiter (1993), del Vecchio (1997), Sutherland and Thompson (2001)). Again, as with other issues concerning children these two approaches generalise and are imbued with a sentimentality. Take for example the title page of Mayo and Nairn's call to action, *Consumer Kids – How Big Business is Grooming Our Children for Profit* (2009). Apart from the reference in the wording to 'grooming' and its connotations of paedophilia, and the use of the words 'big' for the enemy and 'our' to make it personal, the image is of a toddler holding on to the 'bars' of a bar code looking sad and confused. Their emotions on the subject are clear before you open the book. And again on the front cover of *Brand Child* (2004), a celebration of consumerism, three happy children (or 'kids' as they are always called by Lindstrom) smile upwards, a positive emotive narrative is set up right from the cover. On both sides of the argument, children are firmly placed as a group separate from adults, with different needs, desires and behaviours.

However, returning once again to David Buckingham and his efforts to put the child's agency at the heart of any theory of childhood, in his book *The Material Child: Growing up in Consumer Culture* (2011) he points out this 'highly polarized debate …. Creates a paradox – and indeed a political dilemma' (ibid, p.21). He believes this choice of two positions makes it hard to find a middle ground or move on. He therefore seeks to 'reframe' the debate on the child consumer. As he puts it:

> This book seeks to refute the popular view of children as incompetent and vulnerable consumers that is espoused by many of the campaigners; but it also rejects the celebratory account of consumption as an expression of children's power and autonomy. Rather, it aims to challenge the terms in which the social issue of children's consumption is typically framed and understood; and in the process, to question how human agency and identity are experienced in late modern 'consumer societies' (ibid, p.2).

He suggests that we should look at children's consumption as 'inextricably embedded within wider networks of social relationships' (ibid, p.2). He argues that consumption is part of our lived experience and children are not outside but instead an important aspect of this and should be studied as such. Through a detailed and engaging summary of current debates about children and consumption; by what he calls himself a 'whistle-stop tour of theories of consumption' (ibid, p.44) a review of theories on consumption and children consuming, a summary of the history of the child consumer and how they are now constructed, a review of the contemporary children's market, and through a critical analysis of two current consumption concerns, sexualisation and obesity, Buckingham challenges some of the taken for granted terms in which these issues have been couched. He also focuses on two terms that I have also found of interest; 'pester power' and 'peer pressure'. He questions why the issue of children and consumption is so grounded in psychology and sociology, instead of considered in the broader cultural and historical context of a capitalist society. Buckingham also focuses on the marketing industry and the anti-marketing experts, including Sue Palmer, and discusses how these two positions construct childhood in a similar way:

> Both approaches rest on assumptions about the natural or innate characteristics of children, which are in fact socially and historically defined. Both appear to place childhood in a space that is somehow outside or beyond the social world – and hence the commercial world as well. (ibid, p.21).

In his conclusion, Buckingham reiterates that we need to move beyond the polarised debate over whether child consumers are passive victims or empowered citizens and think about these debates as part of 'the narrative of the 'commercialization of

childhood' (ibid, p.226).   He shows the children's consumption is embedded within a more complex social world and commercial culture, it is not separate and should not be treated as such. It is not possible to 'protect' children from consumption and thinking about children as different from adults when it comes to using consumption is problematic.

Of particular interest to me is Buckingham's focus on the discourses about children and consumption. He uses the term 'framing' (ibid, p.22), and explains; 'framing defines a problem, what is important about it and why it matters; but in the process, it also prevents other possible definitions and explanations, and obstructs the consideration of other potentially relevant issues. The frame includes, but it also excludes' (ibid, p.22). He suggests there are three frames. Firstly, the 'diagnostic frame' (ibid, p.22), which focuses on the relationship in particular of children and advertising, where children are vulnerable and lacking. The second, 'motivational frame' (ibid, p.22), is more broad and considers the problem of children and marketing as part of a bigger story of the goodies and baddies, where children are the innocent victims, and marketing the evil threat. This relies on sentimental assumptions about childhood. The third frame, 'prognostic frame' (ibid, p.220) requires a complete ban on marketing to children or at the very least to put parents as responsible.

Borrowing from Buckingham I try to adopt a similar way forward: acknowledging and questioning these 'frames', the discourses about childhood and children and assuming that the child does exercise some control of expression and 'identity work', notwithstanding considerable constraints and controls exercised by adults and institutional practices.

Buckingham and his work over the past decades on children is a key influence to this thesis but there are other studies of children and consumerism that I have also found thought-provoking, particularly in terms of my research methodology.

Firstly, (and ironically, given that she is one of the influential academics against marketing to children that I analyse in Chapter Three), Agnes Nairn and her joint study of the role of advertising and brands in children's lives (2007). I found her work useful because she moves away from the Piagetian age and stage focus on children and instead tries to understand consumption from a children's perspective and how they construct meanings from brands. I was particularly interested in the way she did not have prescriptive questions in her research, but instead asked the children what they 'were into'. This allowed them to speak freely and provide a richer source of ideas about what had social currency for them. One finding that echoed in my own research, was the way that for the children brands and celebrities are classified in the same way. Brands are just part of their social and cultural world. As I explore in Chapters Five and Six, the way the children I listened to relied on brands as much as films, TV and other media was seamless.

Secondly, the work by Russell and Tyler (2002) on Girl Heaven, a store specifically for girls. Their focus on the relationship between consumer culture and the 'process of becoming gendered' (ibid, p.621) was useful because they believe childhood as a key difference over other social influences in the complex creation of identity is over privileging childhood and not allowing for the 'inter-subjective experience that involves the constant and complex re-negotiation of a range of social and cultural identities'. (ibid, p.622). They show that girls 'do' gender within the constraints of the range of options available in how to be feminine, and this idea of children 'doing' identity within certain parameters helped me to think about my focus groups and the way the children use the way they talk as part of their identity work – doing not just becoming.

In addition, their further exploration of the way girls shop (2005) reveals the role of bricolage in the way the girls pick and choose certain elements of 'femininity' and suggests that children (like adults) take from many sources in a complex and constant effort to create their identity.

Those academics that focus on the children they research not as subjects but attempt a much more in depth ethnographic approach, reveal that the children's relationship with consumption is not just affected by the commercial world but by many other influences. For example, Elizabeth Chin (2001) considers the relevance of social networks on children and their consumption. Through her ethnographic research, not just with the children but their community, she looks at how each child's relationship with consumption is different, influenced by the marketplace but also by their community and family. Pugh (2009) also engages in a detailed ethnographic study. She focuses on the everyday interactions between children and parents and each other to tease out the influences of poverty and social exclusion on an individual child's consumption practices and to explore how children's interaction with parents and each other helps their sense of belonging.

Finally, Martens (2005) considers the market as consumption educator. She illustrates this with a diagram showing the nexus between children, consumption and education to suggest that a focus on the market as educator neglects the cultural world, contextual issues and individual lives of the children. She posits that it is inadequate to concentrate solely on the market and instead we should also allow for the 'broader network of relationships that enfold the consuming child' (ibid, p.350).

All these studies seek to complicate the discussion on children and consumption and show, just as Buckingham argues, that the engagement between children and consumption is embedded in their wider world, which itself is complex and changing.

This body of work goes some way to making what Cook (2008) calls the 'invisible' consuming child visible. He argues that in theories of consumption children are never part of the theory, but an after-thought. He suggests that those that have considered children's consumption are not in place with current consumption theory. The two fields are not yet positioned together. He argues that we should acknowledge in particular the premise that children do not consume alone. From the moment they are born children are consumed for and within consumption. They are never outside it, so any suggestion that they can be protected from it, or kept from it until a certain age are irrelevant. In addition, to blame marketers for 'dragging' (ibid, p. 233) children into the consumerism world is unhelpful. Cook also focuses on mothers as an often ignored co-consumer to their children. He believes 'once children's and women's centrality to consumption and economic life are grasped as profound, ongoing social truths, the entire landscape of social and cultural consumption theory transforms' (ibid, p.237).

This view is pre-Buckingham's *The Material Child* (2011) which does draw together current consumption theory with children and consumption theory but I think that Cook's rather depressing argument still has validity – consumption theory should include children not as an afterthought or separate group but as part of consuming culture. In addition, children's relationship with consumption is not solitary, as the academics above highlight, other influences and co-consumers as well as other types of media all form part of their consumption landscape.

This complexity is also addressed by Gary Cross (2002) who focuses on the ambiguity of the relationship between children as innocent and too young to engage with consumption and adults spending on the same children to lead them towards maturity.

Cross takes an historical perspective to 'the child rearing practices that are shaped by, build around and react to consumer culture over the past century' (ibid, p.442) and argues that children were at once kept in the private sphere away from the market place but child rearing taught children that material possessions were appealing. He suggests that children were protected from the market on the basis that they were too young to engage with commercial culture. This 'model of maturation …stressed deferred (and repressed) gratification and social responsibility'. (ibid, p.442).

The part of his argument that particularly resonates for me is the confusion of children to be sheltered from consumption but as depositories for it too. To show their love adults spent on them. To create what Cross calls 'wonder' (ibid, p.444) the adult enjoyed giving surprises to the child to create 'wondrous innocence' (ibid, p.444). Cross terms this as 'desire in its purest form' (ibid, p.444) and believes the vicarious enjoyment that parents got from giving goods to their children is problematic as it 'introduced kids to a fantasy world of desire, unbounded freedom and even rebellion.' (ibid, p.445). Children are therefore a reason to worry about commercialisation but at the same time a reason for it, 'causing us all much confusion', (ibid, p.445).

Cross (2002) raises an interesting idea around power negotiations in his work – parents (and indeed society as a whole) choose when consumption is acceptable and part of growing up and when it is deemed inappropriate and dangerous. The child is caught up in this without the opportunity to choose for themselves.

This review of the current debates in Childhood Studies and in particular children and consumption, led me to consider what seemed to be a gap in thinking about issues of power and knowledge in relation to childhood. To think about childhood not as an anthropological group but as a construct of discourses, required moving out of Childhood Studies. I turned to Foucault which seemed to offer a more appropriate conceptual framework for this research.

'Foucault concentrates the mind on issues of discourse, discipline and power' (Barker, 2000, p.179).

As Rabinow, a leading expert on Michel Foucault suggested, he was an influential, 'social scientist and historian of ideas' (Rabinow,1991 p.iii) But further attempts to define his theoretical approach become problematic as Foucault refused to align himself with any other theorists of philosophers and rejected labels about himself such as being poststructuralist, or post Marxist. However, calling him an anti-essentialist thinker is possible, in that he was extremely sceptical about the concept of there being universal truths. Instead his approach was to 'historicize' such truths.

Foucault referred to his own attempts to analyse how discourse and practices are tied up with power and knowledge as 'the genealogy of the modern subject' (1976). It is this focus on discourse as producing knowledge through language and material objects, and social practice being given meaning by language, i.e. discursively formed, that is key to my research. Foucault uses a study of the discourses of madness (Foucault, 1973) to illustrate his ideas and to articulate that what is sayable or thinkable is created by discourse. He outlines how certain discourses acquire authority and 'truth' at a given historical moment whilst others become excluded and 'unsayable'. He also considers how the institutions dealing with the mad and their practices also form part of the knowledge about what being 'mad' means in a particular place and at a particular time.

On the basis that discourse regulates what can be said, by whom, when and where, Foucault is concerned with power and its relationship with knowledge. He believes the two are entwined and cannot be separated. Later on in his work he concentrated on what he sees as three different types of 'disciplinary' discourses: the sciences, dividing practices and technologies of the self (Foucault, 1988). In this way he highlights how power is distributed through social relations and is woven into the social world. Power is productive and not 'owned' by any group.

Having arrived at the point of regarding 'childhood' as problematic, by no means a real, tangible thing, turning to Foucault's genealogical approach allowed me to challenge taken for granted assumptions about childhood. I could delve into a range of discourses constructing childhood, explore knowledges about children and identify institutions and groups sustaining these constructs.

However Foucault himself wrote little on the subject of children, except in the context of *The Privilege of the children and the medicalization of the family* (Foucault, 1988) and in *The Repressive Hypothesis* (Foucault 1978) on changing attitudes to child sexuality. Nevertheless his ideas on discourse, knowledge and power can be extended to enable a more challenging exploration of children and childhood.

In particular, I have drawn on Foucault's interview with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino (Foucault, 1977). In this interview he attempts to define his ideas on 'regimes of truth' (ibid p.131) and explores why it is important to question facts and taken for granted ideas, considering how they are bound up inseparably with systems of power and knowledge. Borrowing these ideas, it becomes clear that what is said about children is a constructed idea, not a universal fact, with the 'child' created through and supported by a network of discourses producing particular knowledges. As Foucault articulates:

the types of discourse which it (society) accepts and make function as true: the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (ibid, p.131).

As I analyse in Chapter Three, the government, academics, scientists, charities and a range of other 'do-gooders' are allowed to define what children are like, and to adjudicate on whether consuming is good or bad for them. This tends to be taken as a given, whereas in fact critics should be looking behind this 'truth' to see who articulates it, who benefits from it, what power relations are at stake. Truth has a 'political economy' (ibid p.131). Going further, the term childhood also becomes open to question. Who decides what childhood is? Which discourses are privileged over others in relation to childhood? And who benefits from having this status? Adopting Foucault allows me to suggest that childhood is not an eternal truth. As he puts it:

Genealogy … is a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledge, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history (ibid, p.117).

I like his term 'empty sameness' because this is how it seems that childhood is portrayed. A perfect place, always the same, and something we should be protecting from encroaching dangers (such as marketing, sexuality, television, fast foods). The threats change, but childhood is portrayed as a constant. Foucault's conception allows a challenge to this. It becomes possible to ask questions. Foucault's approach is helpful too in that he does not suggest that children are repressed by the power networks. Rather he argues:

If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh

on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse (ibid, p.119).

Children are not repressed by being put in childhood, rather such discourse also opens up pleasures as well as forms of knowledge.

If the term 'child' is historically and cultural created, Foucault also considers gender to be created through discourse and that sexuality is a focal point for the exercise of power: 'Discourses analyse, classify and regulate sexuality in ways which produce sexed subjects and construct sexuality as the cornerstone of subjectivity' (Foucault in Barker, 2000 p.237). This approach has been taken up by many feminists to consider how women are positioned as inferior, purely by their sex. In particular Judith Butler uses *The History of Sexuality volume 1* (Foucault, 1978) to argue that univocal constructs of sex are there to create social regulation. Butler believes that the:

> Category' of sex is 'thus inevitably regulative, and any analysis which makes the category presuppositional uncritically extends and further legitimates that relative strategy as a power/knowledge regime (Butler, 1999, p.122).

I develop this idea in later chapters by considering the category of 'child' versus 'adult'. In the same way as with sex, a biological difference, in this case, age, is integral to power relations.

As part of his study of power, Foucault became increasingly interested in how subjects were constructed historically through disciplinary practices. The subject is, to use Foucault's term a 'docile body'. I find this problematic and agree with Habermas (1990) in his criticism of Foucault' early work, when he argues that Foucault is overgeneralizing, and universalizing, relying too heavily on power's influence in modern culture and society and denying the individual any agency. However in his later work, Foucault addresses this concern, when he suggests that whilst discourses are

constraining subjects also have agency. In *Technologies of the self: A seminar with*

Michel Foucault' (1988) Foucault talks about how identity is constructed by both society

and the individual.

He explains that he has become increasingly interested in the:

> Technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality (ibid, p.16).

I use this idea of the individual 'working' on their identity in negotiation with power

structures to consider how children are not merely the objects that society constructs,

but might also be capable of deploying 'technologies of self', and if so, in what ways.

Foucault's development of ideas in relation to discourse is wide-ranging so that I also

draw on his discussion in *The Repressive Hypothesis* (1978*)* of children's sexuality:

> Speaking about children's sex, inducing educators, physicians, administrators, and parents to speak of it, or speaking to them about it, causing children themselves to talk about it, and enclosing them in a web of discourses which sometimes address them, sometimes speak about them, or impose canonical bits of knowledge on them, or use them as a basis for constructing a science that is beyond their grasp – all this together enables us to link an intensification of the interventions of power to a multiplication of discourse. The sex of children and adolescents has become, since the eighteenth century, 'an important area of contention around which innumerable institutional devices and discursive strategies have been deployed (Foucault, 1978, p.30).

Swap the word sex for the word consumption and this quote summarises my concerns.

Foucault also talks of the 'qualified speakers' about children and sexuality and again

this matches the experts who have stepped forward to highlight the dangers of

consumerism in relation to children (see Chapter Three for my analysis of their

arguments). In fact many of Foucault's insights into the way sex is talked about can be

overlaid onto consumption in relation to children. The two have similarities, they are at once talked about but deemed inappropriate, they are both 'out of our control' and they are both something to be concerned about, not indulged in and enjoyed.

Additionally, Foucault suggests:

> This was not a plain and simple imposition of silence. Rather, it was a new regime of discourses. Not any less was said about it: on the contrary. But things were said in a different way; it was different people who said them, from different points of view, and in order to obtain different results (ibid, p.309).

The same can be posited about children talking about consumption. Others are allowed to discuss it on their behalf, and for their safety, but when children talk about buying things, or worse, enjoy talking about the world of consumerism this is not deemed acceptable. As I discuss in Chapter Six, children express a jouissance about consumption, an attitude deemed 'out of control' and 'unhealthy' and a key concern for the experts. In the same way that Foucault discusses how sexuality in children seen as 'an epidemic menace that risked compromising not only the future heath of adults but the future of the entire society and species' (ibid p.146), so is consumerism today's menace. Similarly Foucault suggests that the supposed moral and physical dangers of sexuality in children led to parents, doctors and others taking charge of the problem, so too are these same groups expected to control a child's relationship with consumption.

Erica Carter's study of the German housewife post Second World War in West Germany (1997) is one study on consumption that also draws on Foucauldian ideas. Carter describes how the housewife was positioned as a 'privatized domestic labourer (ibid p.78), whereas her husband was the male 'public citizen' (ibid p.78). Through consumption, however, she is able to bridge the public/private divide but in doing so is 'transgressing', creating the 'ambiguity of consuming housewife', thus making her the focus of disciplinary regulation. Discursive effort is invested in (re)defining her, placing her back in a feminine sphere. Arguably children can be thought about in a similar way.

They are not meant to be in the public/adult sphere, rather they should be safely tucked away at home in a protected 'childhood'. By engaging with the outside world through consumption boundaries become blurred, children manifesting perhaps a similar, and concerning 'publicness' and 'ambiguity' which must be regulated.

Conclusion

From this review of debates about childhood and its significance in contemporary culture, two key views of children and childhood stand out. Firstly, that children are innocent, adults-in-development, and therefore need protecting from the adult world. In this 'protectionist' approach, influences such as technological developments, the media, and consumerism are all regarded as affecting children in a negative way, breaking down the safety of 'childhood'. In effect, as Jenks puts it children 'remain enmeshed in the forced commonality of an ideological discourse of childhood' (Jenks, 1996, p.122). With periodic moral panics upping the ante, effort is invested in sustaining the child as innocent, vulnerable and dependent. The child is without agency, unknowing and disempowered 'but for good, altruistic reasons' (ibid, p.124). Thus with childhood decaying, thanks to a postmodern world, the adult is invoked to stop the disintegration of childhood and to protect the innocence of the children.

In this thesis I refute this position, and align myself with a second group of scholars who believe that through education, and their own actions, children do have agency, and definitely have a voice. If Buckingham (2000) and Seiter et al (1995) believe that children are already able to make their own choices and engage in cultural practices, others such as Canella and Kincheloe, (2002) propose that to empower children, they should first be taught to critically engage with the forces that shape their world, such as the media and corporations, on the grounds that:

> Without a progressive childhood politics and pedagogy, we are left to the mercy of the patriarchal, authoritarian, misogynistic and child-fearing regressive politics of the right (Ibid, p.113).

As Kincheloe proposes education needs to catch up with modern culture, and help children to create 'strategies of resistance' (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2004, p.14).

Throughout this review of Childhood Studies, one position has largely been missing. That of the child. As Mitchell and Reid-Walsh argue, until the child's voice is heard and their perspective understood, scholars and adults more generally are treating children as lesser beings, an object to be studied, or defended. However, researchers should perhaps not over privilege the child's independent voice either, but accept that 'there are dimensions of childhood that can be understood only in a post hoc way' (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, 2002, p.36). I explore this issue in my methodology chapter and draw on Pam Alldred's work (1998). Children may attempt to redefine themselves but 'locked' within the convention of childhood, they also remain constrained. Despite the attention childhood now receives, it remains a discrete structural division 'underpinned by naturalistic and biologically-determined conceptualisations' (Scraton, 1997, p.27). Adults continue to exercise power, acting in the child's supposed best interests, because that is the 'natural' state of affairs. Childhood is deemed a state of being instead of a social practice and the children themselves are not part of this pedagogy. It is interesting to note that back in 1974, Holt suggested that children should have the same rights as adults, and that the institution of childhood should be discounted. As he proposed 'perhaps when a custom, a ritual a tradition, an institution seems most to need preserving, it is already past preserving' (Holt, 1974, p.14). And yet forty years on the institution remains, fiercely protected by hegemonic discourse and even by the academic focus on Childhood Studies.

My turn to Foucault is an attempt to counteract this construction of childhood as an anthropological group. In Chapter Three, where I analyse the anti-marketing texts, I draw on Foucault's theories of disciplinary discourses such as 'dividing practices' and 'discipline through science'. I also suggest that Foucault's discussion of surveillance and the creation of 'docile bodies' is relevant to children who as 'experts' research and analyse them are 'normalised. In addition, I consider whether Foucault's concepts of 'governmentality' and the 'health of the nation' can be productively used to reflect on contemporary concerns about children. In Chapter Four, in the study of toy manufacturers' discussions and address to children, I engage further with the use of dividing practices, this time as they differentiate children and adults, boys and girls.

In Chapters Five and Six, I develop Foucault's work on the 'technology of the self', to consider how children work within the confines of childhood, how they choose or choose not to accept certain discourses about them and how through working together and individually they negotiate a distinctive identity, despite the regimes of truth about what it is to be a child.

Even in this review it is hard to separate children from childhood, the two are intertwined, the one often meaning the other. Adopting a Foucauldian perspective reveals that to have a single term for a group of people of varying ages, gender, race and class is a product of discourse. It is this issue perhaps that runs through this thesis as I explore how the marketing industry, experts and children themselves talk about children and childhood.

Chapter Two

Research Methodology: 'Doing' Foucauldian Discourse analysis and the complexity of researching children

Introduction

My original interest for this thesis was children: how they are talked about by adults, by the marketing industry, by the government. I wanted to question how assumptions about them in effect construct the child and their childhood. I also wanted to hear the child's side of the story. So much of the academic research I read, whilst considering how to approach this thesis, discusses children but rarely seemed to actually listen to them. Rather much of it treats them as if they were part of an experiment, to be observed, tested and collated (See John (1999) for a detailed review of consumer socialization research with children). I wanted, maybe rather naively, to allow a group of children to talk about themselves, freely and without constraints made by me, the researcher.

The ongoing 'moral panic' about children and junk food forced my hand. When I initially looked for material about children, junk food advertising kept on appearing: in Google searches, in marketing literature, in the press. As I had decided to use Foucault and his genealogical approach to inform my research, since junk food was the dominant discourse, it seemed appropriate that this issue was what I should engage with.

Time and space constraints meant I narrowed down the groups I should engage with to three: people discussing children and concerned for their wellbeing (the 'experts'); the BTHA Toy Fair's marketing assemblage focussing on children; and some children

themselves.   My challenge then was to find a method which allowed a means to analyse each of these disparate domains and give some kind of cohesion to the study. I chose to deploy discourse analysis in order to tease out issues of knowledge and power in what these groups had written or said (in the case of children). This chapter articulates the process through which I made decisions on how to research these groups, the challenges I faced, both practical and theoretical and the usefulness of a discourse analysis approach.

Moral Panics and Discourse

As a start point, I would like to engage with moral panics. This might seem like an unnecessary detour, but insofar as ongoing public concern about children and junk food can be seen as a moral panic (leading to certain discourses and institutions becoming privileged), in turn, this has impacted on my corpus of research texts in particular privileging the views of experts and silencing those of the marketing industry.

Cohen's (1973) foundational text includes what could be termed the definitive check list of what constitutes a moral panic. The first of his criteria is that 'a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests'. (1973, p.9). That 'group of persons', I would suggest, is the marketing industry regarded as a threat to societal values and interests through indirectly causing obesity, mental disorders and so on. Secondly, a moral panic's 'nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media'. (ibid p.9). The very term 'junk food' shows this to be true, with the list of problems it causes repeated almost verbatim across the discursive output from the experts. Thirdly, 'The moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right thinking people' (ibid p.9). As I will show the alleged fate of our children has been raised by educators, celebrities and both sides of the government. Fourthly, 'Socially accredited experts pronounce their

diagnosis and solutions' (ibid p.9). In this respect, starting with Sue Palmer (2007), a well source for much of the rhetoric on the 'evils' of marketing to children, many others have contributed their views and proposed the solution – namely, to ban advertising of junk food to children. Which advertising and within what parameters, they do not specify, it is just a broad target. Fifthly, 'Ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to'. (ibid p.9) – the standard response for anything threatening children – surveillance, disciplining children and the casting out of the bad influence, namely marketing.

Cohen then describes a phase that we have arguably not yet reached, 'the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates' (Ibid p.9). This moral panic seems to be ongoing, with articles on junk food affecting children cropping up regularly (for example, a 2014 headline-grabbing story – 'Mental health risk to children trapped in "toxic climate" of dieting, pornography and school stress' on 21 March 2014 (downloaded from bbc.co.uk/news). Goode and Ben-Yehuda's understanding of moral panic suggest further characteristics which also match this children and junk food panic. Firstly, concern becomes heightened about the behaviour of a particular group and its consequences for society: in this case, the marketing of junk food to children. This must be manifested in concrete ways, and we will see how the adoption of statistics and opinion polls represents this concern as a real threat. Secondly, there must be increased hostility to this group where members are:

> Collectively designated as the enemy, or an enemy of respectable society whose behaviour is seen as harmful or threatening to the values, interests and even existence of society, or at least a sizeable segment of it. This group must be 'clearly defined'. (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2002, p.33).

In this case the marketing industry has no face and is believed to be potentially harmful to children and so to all of society. Next, there must be consensus and little opposition to allow the moral panic to continue. Indeed, the marketing industry has been given

little chance to explain itself, and children have not been asked their opinion. Instead, in their name generic 'parents' and 'carers' have agreed that marketing to children is wrong and should be stopped. Fourthly, the concept of moral panic rests on disproportionality (ibid, p.38). An emotive language is used, with issues affecting children extrapolated by the experts into an adult future where they are in prison, mad etc., Blaming marketing alone for childhood obesity and further ills would seem disproportionate: no other factors, such as social influences, parents, genes, education, are even considered.

Thus this moral panic has generated much debate, the government has intervened and Ofcom has made changes to advertising regulations. Yet it would seem that there is likely to be another phase articulating yet again similar issues and more rhetoric about a potential worrying future for our children. Interestingly Hall defines a moral panic as 'one of the key ideological forms in which a historical crisis is experienced and fought out' (2003, p.221). In some ways this thesis marks an intervention, challenging this crisis.

Certainly the discourse of moral panic has shaped my research and methodology in several ways. Firstly, the materials I found on the day I searched on Google, were of that moment in the UK and their discourses contributed to the narrative of moral panic. I only found those talking about junk food advertising in negative terms. This did at least provide a unified set of texts to analyse from a very specific group of people. As Critcher, referring to Foucault outlines (2003): moral panic discourses include and exclude certain groups and topics they affect the way we 'see' a problem; they delimit the field and establish the right to speak for certain groups whilst laying down the rules for the way in which the problem can be talked about. In searching for appropriate materials to provide my corpus of texts it was clear that the voice of actual parents and the child were silenced. The discourse of the expert was the only one available. As I

will explore in Chapter Three, this group are set up as the expert who speak for adults and children and accrue the power to influence government policy.

Critcher believes that 'childhood becomes the securest terrain for a panic, since moral boundaries are more easily secured'. (Critcher, 2003, p.130). In addition, he suggests that moral panics are particularly persuasive when they present threats to children and rely on the belief that adults can resolve the problem by increased regulation of children. Children and their special 'place' – childhood – are thus seen as at risk from adults marketing to them. This fear then sets up the need to defend children and their innocence and, of course, to intervene to protect them. As Critcher outlines, this is usually a disproportionate reaction to a threat because the child symbolises the wider social order and so affects us all. Adult anxieties and nostalgia for their own childhood (allegedly a time before the world became so perplexing and changeable) are projected onto children.

The focus of concern in the moral panic may change – from sexual abuse, to sexualisation of the child, to obesity, but the underlying anxieties and the demand for something to be done, remains. What is interesting in this particular moral panic is the call for more regulation and surveillance of children, for their own sake. The implication (never quite voiced) is that the only resolution would be for all advertising to children to be banned (well beyond junk food) and for children to remain outside consumer culture, and therefore adult culture, safely locked away in 'childhood'. The key notion - that children are vulnerable and under threat whilst at the same time part of the bigger threat (to all of our futures) is woven through all the materials I examine, as it is in any moral panic about children. In this case though, the marketing industry are the deviants to be controlled. Childhood is constructed by the legal, social and moral frameworks around it and these are reinforced by the moral panic.

Choosing a Foucauldian Discourse analysis

I was particularly drawn to using a Foucauldian discourse analysis rather than any other form of discourse analysis because it does not just focus on language, but instead looks at the relationship between language, knowledge and power, both in terms of how power structures and knowledge frame what is said, and in terms of how what is said shapes the social world. Since I argue that to some extent children are both constrained and constructed by discourses , an approach that tries to draw out what these discourses might be, and accepts that there is no 'truth' defining what a child is or what childhood *should* be (despite the best efforts of many of the experts), appealed to me.

However, before I explain how I have adopted this approach, it is worth giving some consideration to whether Foucauldian discourse analysis is, in fact, related to Foucauldian theory. Foucault himself did not carry out discourse analysis in this way, rather the concept of Foucauldian Discourse analysis was created in the late 70's by a group of psychologists influenced by Foucault and who wanted to explore the relationship between language and subjectivity. Julian Henriques, Wendy Holloway, Cathy Urwin and, Venn Couze published *Changing the Subject: Psychology, Social Regulation and Subjectivity* (1984) which demonstrated and argued for the usefulness of a post-structuralist approach to psychology through adopting a Foucauldian discourse analysis. This in turn led Potter and Wetherell (1987) and similarly Parker (1992) to create their own 'toolboxes' to analyse texts as a means to consider not only what discourses enable, and what they might constrain but also by whom, when and where. This method of analysis has since become increasingly popular and accepted but perhaps at the cost of losing sight of discourse as understood by Foucault. One academic who strongly believes that these forms of analysis are a mis-applications of Foucault's concept is Derek Hook. He argues that by carrying out an analysis of

certain texts not enough attention is paid to the underlying knowledge they rely on, or to the social structures and institutional supports that help maintain them. Instead assumptions are made based on language and by doing this a discourse is reduced to a single text. Hook accepts that Foucauldian discourse analysis has a use but believes it should be more about destabilising the meanings a discourse tries to convey, and less about giving one text a privileged status because it is the one the researcher has chosen. To consider discourse in its Foucauldian sense he suggests that a 'macro overview' is required (Hook, 2001, p. 34) and even then, the researcher 'can only be able to make isolated comments, with a generalizability and political relevance limited to the reference point of the analysed text'. (ibid, p.38). Taking Hook's argument into consideration I felt that whilst my analysis would of course be limited, at least it allows me to question the contradictions and gaps in what is said, and allows me to look too at what is unsaid, who benefits and who doesn't. As Hook himself suggests, we should be looking at 'the seams to be pulled, the joints and weaknesses to be relentlessly stressed' (ibid p.26). I accept that my Foucauldian discourse analysis will have a different reading to someone else's analysis of the same texts, but at least it is a start point to think about discourse as tied up with power relations. Foucault himself, whilst accepting that there is never a hidden, universal meaning to be found through analysing discourse, suggests that such an analysis can reveal some of 'its external conditions of existence' (Foucault, 1971, p.2). Further his idea that discourse is an event rather than revealing a definite truth helps to question those 'rules' that would otherwise be accepted as unchangeable and fixed. Following these precepts, my analysis of various texts does not provide some hidden meaning but instead highlights and then challenges 'truths' that are allowable. Or to use Foucault's analogy I attempt to drive a 'slender wedge' into them.

I also wanted to try and tease out the idea that the discourses highlighted in this thesis about children are particular to the UK and to the decade 2004-2014. Children are the

subject of consideration by legal institutions, government, schools and academia which are all involved in the production of discourses and knowledges about children and therefore to some degree form networks of power within which the children are positioned. A Foucauldian discourse analysis allows me to reflect on this social context and to acknowledge that discourses are of a particular historical moment and not fixed.

Another appeal of this form of analysis was that it is possible to carry out a Foucauldian discourse analysis using almost anything as a 'text'. This possibility allowed the analysis of very different materials, namely some written documents about children, a government debate, marketing literature and children's discussions. This consistency of approach facilitated the highlighting of similarities and differences in the discursive construction of the child, and of marketing in relation to children. Wetherell calls this seeing what 'sticks' (1998, p.393) – what becomes accepted and legitimised.

Moreover, if I was going to analyse how marketers and 'experts' wrote about children I wanted also to hear what children themselves said. Adopting a discourse analysis approach meant that children's own voices could be placed on a par with those of the experts and marketers: their talk was subject to a similar analysis. This felt like a 'fair' way of proceeding, albeit there are ethical and technical problems in carrying this out, which I discuss later in this chapter.

Problems and Limitations of this Approach

By choosing this Foucauldian discourse analysis approach I am putting forward a hypothesis that the idea of the erosion of childhood and of risks associated with children's consumption is discursively constructed. As Prout suggests in *The Future of Childhood*, (2005) this does not allow for 'nature' or for that matter, individual psychological, experience, playing a part in the social development of children. This

'constructionalist' perspective is debated by Hammersley and Potter at length (see the journal *Discourse and Society* (2003) volume 14 for their discussion). Hammersley suggests that instead of using only discourse analysis, a more 'eclectic' methodology would be valuable to allow for the limitations of just looking at some texts and making assumptions based solely on them. For Hammersley there is an existence outside of representation, i.e. 'reality' is not just constructed through discourse. Potter, however, disagrees and argues: 'We are not in a position of being able to compare representations to reality; rather we are comparing different representation of partners in a relationship' (Ibid, p.799) and calls this approach 'practical scepticism'.

A second concern raised by those adopting Foucauldian discourse analysis is that of context. When engaging in research we cannot help but focus on what interests us, thereby creating, as Schegloff puts it, 'a kind of theoretical imperialism'. (Schegloff, 1997, p.167). He believes that since the researcher creates the terms of reference, and chooses what to focus on, 'discourse is too often made subservient to contexts not of its participants making, but of its analysts insistence (ibid, p.183). Again, this is debated, this time by Wetherell. She believes that if you carry out a social postmodern analysis you are looking at the structure behind the discourse and accepting that the meaning is never fixed. In agreement, Willig suggests that the researcher 'authors' rather than discovers. He also raises several other issues with this form of analysis. He asks how can subject positions be stable even in one discourse reading? Willig calls himself a social constructionist who assumes there is no one 'world' but a number of versions constructed through a variety of discourses and practices.

Integral to these debates is the use of labels by the academics involved to summarise their approach: social constructionism, realist, sceptic, relativist and so on. I have avoided such labelling, since my approach is not a 'pure' Foucauldian discourse analysis, in that I borrow other ideas and I do not follow every step as proposed by

Willig (for example). However, I would agree with Potter when he says that: 'For social scientists the study of discourse becomes a powerful way of studying mind, social processes, organisations, events as they are lived in human affairs' (ibid p.791). In this research it is just one tool opening up some interesting questions around how children are constructed. I have therefore not positioned myself as a critical realist, such as Parker who believes there is a real world outside discourse, nor as a relativist, such as Potter, who believes discourse constructs the real world. Instead I have used discourse as one route into considering how children are talked about, and how children themselves talk.

On the practicalities of actually doing discourse analysis, Burman and Parker list 32 'problems' (Burman, Parker, 1993, p.156). These vary from it being labour intensive (problem 1) to political issues such as that analysis is never going to lead to collective action (problem 26). There are some that particularly resonated for me. Problem 18 – by analysing a 'text' you remove it from everyday life into an academic pursuit, and therefore (problem 19) make the everyday 'strange'. To choose certain texts and then analyse them is changing their meaning, giving more importance to some articles/voices than others. One pertinent example here would be that I have turned children chatting into a 'text' worthy of detailed analysis.

To address this issue, I have tried to be open and reflexive as I carry out my research. I have followed the ideas set out by Drury and Willig in their *Partisan Participant Observation*, (2002) (which they label social constructionism). Their epistemology was useful. It provided several reminders, including that research is historically and culturally specific, that taken for granted knowledge should be critically considered and that knowledge is sustained by social processes. There is also always more than one version of events and experiences can be read differently. They raise the issue of an academic tending to be put in the position of expert and suggest instead that one

should deliberately take sides and adopt the perspective and objectives of those we are studying.

One academic who engages with these issues specifically in relation to children is Pam Alldred. In her chapter on the dilemmas in representing children's voices, she asks the question 'what claims to represent children's voices can adult researchers legitimately make?' (Alldred, 1998, p. 147). This is a key issue that I faced when carrying out research with a group of children. I wanted to allow them to be active subjects, not objects, allowed to talk, but it was not so simple. As Burman (1992) points out, the researcher both interprets as well as represents the children they research. I am constructing them whilst I try to 'amplify' their voices through my 'findings'. In addition, my analysis is produced at a particular time and place, and relies on the power relations with the children. I agree with Alldred that my 'gaze' must alter what they say, and my perspective will affect what I think they are saying about how their culture is created. It would be objectivist to assume that children's culture (and way of talking) exists independently of my interacting with the children, I am not merely observing. By being present when they talk, and by having their teacher present, and by recording them, I am only hearing a particular version of their talk. As Alldred argues, a 'participants 'voice' is seen as produced from what was culturally available to her/him, rather than from a private reserve of meaning' (Alldred, 1998, p. 155). There are no authentic subjects; these children are probably trying to please (and sometimes shock) their teacher, they are obeying him and following the rules of the school, and they are behaving how they think they should during 'research'. What they say can only be thought of as within this setting. In this thesis I am trying to tease out the way childhood is constructed, and I have to accept that I may be unwittingly reinforcing this and also that part of this construction is done by the children and their talk. They are also speaking within and helping to maintain the constraints of our discourses about children.

Another issue raised by Alldred is the very act of treating these children's discussion as something to be researched risks reinforcing them as 'other'. I am in danger of homogenising all children as a social group as represented by the small focus groups I listened to, in a particular place and time. Having said this, I was definite I wanted to hear from some children rather than just focusing on those that talk about them. I have attempted to be reflexive, both at the time of the research and when I interpreted their talk in my research. In Alldred's terms I attempt to re/present the children's voices through a particular 'lens', by being impressionistic about the way the children talk, and how they resist certain knowledges about being a child and a consumer. Alldred suggests that by bringing in knowledge of discourses from 'outside' the research the issue of power can be highlighted. By putting the discourses of the toy industry marketers and the experts alongside the children's focus groups I hope I achieve this and show that these children's voices are being presented 'within and through the networks of meanings made available to them, including where they resist the dominant meanings ascribed them' (ibid, p.161).

I am also aware that having worked in marketing, I am less predisposed to regard the marketing industry as an evil predator out to destroy childhood and I do not perceive the marketing industry as a single entity. In addition, I like children and believe they are often underestimated and overlooked. The fact that I have chosen to allow the focus groups to speak freely probably shows this. In the end I do not grant the British Toy and Hobby Association Toy Fair marketers or the experts the same consideration. I am definitely more interested in what the children have to say than the other groups and this privileging of them undoubtedly colours my research methodology. However I have attempted to be as analytical in my study of the children's talk as I have the experts and marketers to ensure I am apply the same Foucauldian perspective in my engagement with what they say.

Doing Foucauldian Discourse Analysis

In seeking out how to carry out a Foucauldian discourse analysis I found many lists.

For example Parker lists '7 criteria for distinguishing discourses' (1992, p.5). Willig has

a more accessible 'how to' guide giving the example of an analysis of patient talking

about cancer. (2001, p.107) which I partly followed. To summarise, he breaks the

analysis into stages. Stage 1 is to find the 'discursive constructions' (ibid p.109), that is

to consider how objects are constructed by the text, both implicit and explicitly. Stage 2

is to then look at which different discourses are drawn on to construct this object.

Stage 3 looks at the context, what is created by this construction. Stage 4 considers

the subject positions offered by the text and then stage 5 is concerned with the

relationship between the discursive construction and what practices are legitimised by

it and which are not. Stage 6 then explores the relationship between the text and

subjectivity, what can be felt and thought from within the various subject positions.

Whilst this strict stage by stage process felt rather confining, I used this methodology

as a start point, to understand how discourse analysis can reveal the way discourses

both facilitate and limit what is said and enable and constrain who says it, where and

when. An example of the output from this analysis can be found in Appendix 1.

I then read various examples of Foucauldian discourse analysis to see how others had

approached their subject. Jean Carabine's analysis of unmarried mothers 1830 – 1890

(Carabine, J in Wetherell, M, Taylor, S, Yates, S (2001) was particularly useful as she

uses Foucault's conceptual ideas as well as adopting Foucauldian discourse analysis.

There are very few others who really relate their analysis back to Foucault's ideas on

genealogy, discourse, power and knowledge. She also highlights the problem of

'stepping outside' the data when you are looking at contemporary texts, as I am:

> It is sometimes difficult to identify discourses within which we ourselves are immersed, or that we agree with, or which we accept as "taken for granted" or common sense' (ibid, p 307).

In addition, Hepburn's analysis of teachers and secondary school bullying (1997), which understands bullying as discursively organised, was also insightful for my consideration of how children are deemed innocent, as I discuss below. The analysis by Cook, Pieri and Robbins of how scientists talk about GM foods (2004) was very useful for my analysis of the experts as they argue that the scientist is seen as expert and the public as non-expert and therefore not as privileged.

Another study I found pertinent, even though it was not specifically a Foucauldian discourse analysis, was Drury' s critical discourse analysis of mobs which explores moral panics (Drury, 2002). This was particularly useful to me in my study of how children and their relationship with marketing are discussed, suggesting the way terminology can be used to create a dominant discourse. Finally MacDonald's analysis of the funeral of Princess Diana (2003) offered up some interesting ideas on the way one particular discourse becomes privileged over others and how to attempt to look behind the 'truth' to engage with the social and cultural processes that are bound up with it.

Drawing on this range of approaches and having decided to focus on the three groups – experts, the marketing industry and children – I adopted the same research tools to consider each group. I did not follow the 'lists' favoured by many, but instead, started out, at least for the first two groups, by looking at how children were talked about. This involved focusing on the discourses constructing children and then any positioning and behaviours these discourses seemed to suggest. However as I detail below, in some cases this became slightly problematic.

<u>Researching Expert Texts</u>

The first Foucauldian discourse analysis I carried out was focussed on texts about children and the problem of consumerism. My start point to find relevant texts to analyse was simple – I searched under the term 'marketing to children 2008' in Google (see Appendix 2 for the print out of my search results downloaded on 21.07.08). The results were interesting in themselves in that one of the top ten was a pro-marketing article (Ethical Corporation Brandwatch, www.ethicalcorp.com), another was for a website specialising in marketing to children (www.peekaboocoms.co.uk) and the rest were all about the need to curtail marketing of junk food to children, focussing on the proposed bill on *Food Products (Marketing to Children)*. Since they were found in this google search I studied the Consumers International websitewww.consumersinternational.org) and the Family and Parenting Institute website (familyandparenting.org). Since the Google search brought up the Food Products (Marketing to Children) Bill three times, I decided to review the House of Commons debate about this Bill. I downloaded the parliamentary debate held on 25 April 2008 from the government website, www.publications.parliament.uk)

To find further material to focus on I looked for those 'experts' referred to in the House of Commons Debate as I was keen to consider how different texts become linked through cross referencing. This led me to the *Which?* Campaign against marketing of junk food to children, (www.which.co.uk/campaigns/kids-food) the National Consumer Council (www.ncc.org.uk), specifically their study of 9 to 13 year olds, *Watching, wanting and wellbeing: exploring the links* (www.ncc.org.uk), and the letter to the *Telegraph* on 12 September 2006, 'Modern life leads to more depression among children' (www.telgraph.co.uk/news/1528639). The lead proponent of the latter was Sue Palmer. I wanted to explore her views in more depth, since her phrase 'toxic childhood' was used in the *Which?* Campaign and on the National Consumer Council

website as a definition of the contemporary state of childhood and she was often quoted in other texts. I therefore chose to focus particularly on her chapter which discusses marketing to children, titled 'Word on the street', in her book *Toxic Childhood. How the modern world is damaging our children and what we can do about it* (Palmer, 2007). I wanted to see how one person's opinions and writings are used and re-used until they become part of a privileged discourse and appear to be facts, rather than just opinions.

Of course, at one level my selection process was quite random, and on a different day, different search results may have appeared. However, it did enable the collection of a range of related materials which were likely, whatever their differences, to construct a similar regime of truth.

Researching Marketing Texts

To consider how the marketing industry talked about children I wanted to find a means to access a diverse range of marketing texts which would not be defensively written (fearful of being judged as manipulating children). I started with an internet search which was surprisingly unfruitful. I then tried marketing magazines as the voice of the industry, but again found very little reference to children and marketing. Not surprisingly, the industry has become rather nervous about talking in public about children and consumption. As Goode and Ben-Yehuda indicate in their analysis of a moral panic' the opposition is 'silenced'. (Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2010).

As a way round this, I chose the British Toy and Hobby Association's (BTHA) Annual Toy Fair in London, which I had previously visited. This seemed an ideal opportunity since toys are an obvious consumable for children. In addition, The BTHA Toy Fair is for the toy industry where toy manufacturers show their latest products to those who

will be selling these products to children and their parents; toy shops. This would give me a chance, I hoped, to look at how the industry talked to itself, through its marketing assemblage of stand design, literature, advertising, press releases and information leaflets, in the 'privacy' of its own exhibition.

I therefore attended the BTHA Toy Fair 2014, a three-day event at London Olympia in search of materials to analyse. In this case these would be written material and visual. One of the reasons I had chosen a Foucauldian discourse analysis is that it has the flexibility to deal with this range of 'texts'. As Parker (1992) suggests, anything can be analysed through the lens of a Foucauldian discourse analysis, because everything and anything in some way will reflect the power negotiations of society. This gave me the opportunity to attend the BTHA Toy Fair with my Foucauldian glasses on as it were, looking for anything that I could use as a 'text' to consider how children and childhood are constructed by this particular group, and also to divine what other discourses were apparent, what other 'institutions' were being supported and which groups of people were being allowed to speak or were privileged over others. As well as the organisations' website, I found leaflets, magazines, posters as well as the toys themselves. I also took photos of several stands to consider their spatial organization and use of words and imagery.

Whilst this set of materials is quite specific, it provided an interesting sample of what the toy industry deems as appropriate and acceptable marketing communication when discussing children and consumption.

Researching Children – some practical difficulties

Carrying out the analysis of the marketing industry and anti-marketing texts, was quite straightforward, since I had discrete texts to analyse. However in researching children, how best to choose a 'text' through which they had a voice, was much more complex.

As Buckingham (1993) and others have highlighted, too often in thinking about children's issues the debate is carried out without giving the children any power. As Christensen and Prout (in Fraser, Levis, Ding, Kellet and Robinson 2004) summarise, children have usually been treated in four ways in research. Firstly, the child is perceived as an object, where it is assumed that they cannot deal with the information about the research and are thus observed or tested, as in the early (and now much criticised) research into television advertising by behavioural psychologists. Secondly, the child is treated as subject: asked questions but given no opportunity to deviate from the set agenda. Used in much sociological research on children it raises the problem of whether the child's experience is actually reflected in the findings. Thirdly, and more recently, ethnographic researchers have realised that the child should be given more control and influence over the research. The child should be treated as social actor, the same as adults, or even as a participant, empowered by the research. However, it became clear in my review of these various research methods that children were rarely allowed to just talk. I therefore decided I wanted to work with a group of children, to understand their perspectives more clearly. To do this I chose to use a method favoured by Buckingham (1993) where the children are researched in a focus group. This provides the opportunity to move on from the initial questions and, as Buckingham points out, it is in the conversation led by the children that we can further identify how relationships and understandings are constructed and defined. This approach was substantiated for me by Renold (2003) who also allows children to talk freely to gain more insight into complex issues of identity.

This route did, however, raise some further practical and ethical issues. I discuss these as more general issues and then consider how I dealt with them. Firstly, the initial act of an adult choosing to question or observe a child is in itself exercising a power over the child. The adult researcher has decided to carry out the research, has their own cultural background influencing their decisions and methods, has decided which child to focus on, what the questions will be, how they will be asked, what will be watched, who with and where and, of course, what the results will attempt to show. The researcher will also have their own perspective of the role of child and the definition of childhood, whether it be a romanticized version where they are naïve and innocent, or that of the child as cynical and wise (Buckingham 1993). And this is before the child has been asked a single question. How the children in the research are ordered, by age, social group and gender is also decided by the researcher and again will reflect their own beliefs and understandings. Do they consider the child as undeveloped, as incapable, as less than adult? Another impact on the research carried out is the political, social and financial context, what is the current cultural view on children for example?

The next stage of the process is choosing the children to participate. The Marketing Research Society sets outs guidelines for the protection of children during research (MRS 2000) and within this, consent is covered as an important part of the guidelines. The child must be willing to take part in the research. However a child's consent should be taken in context. Much of the research I reviewed was carried out through the school, or through parents. The child agreeing to be researched is therefore questionable in that they are being given strong signals by their authority figures that this is what they should be doing, that it is educational. Also which children to use creates difficulties: are they chosen by age, social group, school, perceived intelligence or level or articulation? Again, how the researcher chooses their participants reflects

their own agenda and beliefs. As Buckingham suggests (1993), often children are treated as a whole, only different by age, rather than by social class, race, geography, social environment etc. This simplistic, assumption of biological development and that thus children should be defined by age, is a central one in much research on advertising and children. Much of this research is produced by psychologists and relies on the Piaget model of cognitive development which gives stages to a child's development: the perceptual stage (3-7), the analytical stage (7-11) and the reflective stage (11-16). (See Buckingham, 2004, for a discussion of this). This idea of stages common to all children, 'implicitly adopts a rationalistic notion of child development as a steady progression towards adult maturity and rationality' (Buckingham 2000, p.109). It ignores the whole range of other influences on a child, such as peers, family, social environment, cultural effects and so on. Splitting research groups by age may be straightforward but does not necessarily give meaningful results.

The next, more practical step within research is the actual observation, the questions or tasks. Again these will have been set by the adult researcher; it is unlikely the child has had any say in the methodology of the research. The methodology will have been created from an adult perspective with adult logic. The child's own perspective will be unlikely to be revealed. Little of the research allows for comments outside the defined questions: there is no space for the child to raise further ideas or even articulate their reasons for giving certain answers. As Buckingham comments, 'their preoccupation with identifying the "inadequacies" of children's understanding as compared with adults – has led to a neglect of children's own perspectives' (Buckingham 1993, p.14).

The final stage of the research, the analysis of the data, is, like all research findings, influenced by the objectives of the researcher, what they want to prove or conclude. The results will be dependent on the methodology of research, the questions asked and the subjects used, all of which are under the control of the researcher. For

children, as for any research subject, their views of the findings are unlikely to be sought. Also in the case of research about children, their understanding is bound to be judged in relation to adult understanding. The results themselves are often given as percentages as if there is a 'norm' which other children have fallen outside of, but percentages do not give a complete picture. However, statistical representation is commonly regarded as providing more credibility than the verbatim comments of children, thus is more widely accepted.

Children's Research Methodology

Given the various ethical and practical issues I have raised above, it seemed politic to carry out a small pilot study, Initially I talked to just one child aged 10, to get an idea of what they wanted to talk about, what level of understanding they had on marketing and how my general questions and ideas would work with a child this age. I carried out one interview with my godson in a café, his mother seated nearby. The idea was to keep this as an informal chat with someone who knew me well, not to include it as part of the research. It was extremely useful in revealing several key things. Firstly, the child jumped around whilst talking – both physically and in context. This made direct questions and answers pointless and offered up a much more interesting approach of allowing them to talk and see where it took them. Secondly, it became clear that he was trying to 'please' me. This is not surprising since children spend their day at school coming up with the 'right' answer for the teacher. It did mean though that the child was more reticent to give his opinion up front and only when allowed to talk around a topic did he give his views. Finally I learnt that my actual research would need to have some kind of visual stimulus to keep attention. An adult asking questions is boring.

My next step was to find some groups of children to listen to as they chatted. I chose a particular school nearby in a semi-rural town, where a friend was a teacher and the school were happy to work with me. The children at this school are on the whole from a disadvantaged background, many eligible for free school meals. The children are predominantly white. The teacher and I discussed the best way to approach this task, based on his experience. He agreed that focus groups, where 5/6 children were put together would work well. We decided to keep boys and girls separate since otherwise the girls tend to dominate proceedings and the boys tend not to engage. We agreed on the year group of 10 year olds since they were old enough to be articulate about marketing and fitted in the age group discussed by the marketing industry and experts. Also it is in this year group (year 5) that children start to learn about advertising in the curriculum. This is 'Module 1: Writing to Persuade'. Within this children 'read and evaluate advertisements, write promotional material, and write a letter, using persuasive language' (National Literacy Strategy Guidance, issued 10/02 and found at http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primaryframeworks/downloads/PDF/nls_flspack0359 02intro.pdf (Accessed 24/6/08).

Whilst it was not ideal to pick children based on their age alone, given my concerns over assuming all children of the same age are the same, practical considerations made it necessary. Also these children are in the same class so are familiar with each other and comfortable talking together. This 'focus group' would be a departure from their usual routine for the children where they sit and answer questions so we wanted it to be as close to normality as possible to ensure the children felt happy and relaxed.

Finally we decided to include the most popular 'leaders' out of the girls and boys in the two groups as I wanted to explore their influence over the other children and because their teacher felt they would help keep the focus groups talking and animated. Of course I was aware that all of these decisions would impact on my findings but given

practical constraints I felt at least these groups would be a start in trying to get some sense of how children talk.

To help provide questions for the teacher trying to encourage children to talk I leant on the research carried out by Nairn et al on the role of advertising and brands in the everyday lives of junior school children (Nairn, Griffin and Wicks, 2007). This is ironic given that Nairn is one of the experts I analyse in Chapter Three. Their research followed some interesting avenues by asking children what 'they were into' to generate ideas about cool and also mixed questions about brands with those about celebrities and TV, i.e. trying to engage with the children's social currency rather than specifically ask about consumption. Questions that were open ended would hopefully allow the children to talk amongst themselves. There was no particular agenda or question that need to be answered; in fact I was more interested in their conversation than in the answers to any questions.

The teacher and I also agreed to have a white board with some brand logos on it, to help explain to the children what brands were, and to hopefully get the conversation going. The brands we picked were ones we hoped they would be familiar with and would relate to, as we wanted them to feel confident in their discussion.

It made sense for the teacher to lead the discussion instead of me, as the children all know and are comfortable with him. I would sit at the back, and after being introduced, not talk or engage at all to help keep the children focused. Once the teacher and I were happy with the research plan I obtained consent from the University Ethics Committee (see appendix 4).

I then ensured that all the children to be involved and their parents had given written consent to my presence during their lessons. This was entirely optional so if anybody

did not want to participate they were excused. I provided information about the nature of my research. (See appendix 4).

I then followed the guidelines set out by the Market Research Society, March 2006, on how to research children, (http://www.mrs.org.uk/standards/downloads/revised/active/children_young_people_mar06.pdf. (Accessed on 24.6.08)

In particular, as outlined in section 2 of the MRS guidelines, under 'subject matter', I ensured the subject was not contentious or disturbing to children and would not cause any tension between children and their parents. In terms of personal information (section 3 – 'interviewing' of the MRS guidelines) I did not note any personal information relating to other people when mentioned by a child. I asked the teacher to avoid asking any intrusive or difficult questions and to ensure the language used was sensitive to the age group and their capabilities. Since the teacher was their year teacher this was anyway his area of expertise and responsibility. Since the research was being carried out in school the safety of the participants was the responsibility of the school. I did not offer any incentive or reward offered for participation since it formed part of their curriculum. The teacher ensured that my presence was explained before the class began and also that the discussions would be recorded.

Once the discussion started, it was very noticeable that children wanted to please, to find the right answer and found it hard to accept that their opinion was all that was required. As Frazer discusses in her research with teenage girls, during an interview a subject is likely to adopt certain 'discourse registers' and can also switch registers (Frazer, 1987, p.421). That is, how they talk will be situational specific, culturally familiar and institutionalised. In the case of children what is sayable in school, with a teacher present will be very different from how they talk to each other, out of school. Of

course, I would have preferred to hear what children said in private, but this would pose ethical issues, so I have had to hope that their more careful and lesson-like conversation still reflects their own views to some extent. Also as they relaxed during the focus groups they spoke more informally anyway.

Although I was tape recording the class, I did not take names so that all children are referred to as child a, child b etc. The tape and the transcripts are available for my reference only. Since my aim was to allow children the freedom to articulate their views without influence I also adhered to article 12 of the 'UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child' which states that 'Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturing or the child'. (UNCRC page 4, article 12, point 1, http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm (accessed on 24.7.08). This meant that the teacher did not correct or stop children when they were talking (except when he felt the need to remind them of the dangers of alcohol!).

The recordings of these focus groups was were then transcribed and provided the basis for a Foucauldian discourse analysis. As I discuss below in Chapter Five, it was not appropriate to try and follow as rigid an analysis as for the marketing literature and experts. Instead I tried to tease out certain discourse constructs such as childhood, children and marketing looking for other discourses that might be seen to be 'created' or 'resisted' by the children (see Chapter Six below). I tried to avoid focusing too much on areas that fitted my personal agenda or making assumptions or judgements based on my adult pre-conceptions and emotions. Since their language is not mine and they were discussing their world, I also avoided 'translating' what the children said and coming to conclusions about what they meant. Instead I have tried to convey some of

the 'personality' of their conversation and show how they feel about themselves as children and marketing as an influence in their lives.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed my research approach both theoretical and practical terms. But it is worth repeating that this research cannot help but be personally inflected. My background in marketing allowed me 'insider' knowledge of how marketing 'fairs' are organised and what materials will be made available, and I held a strong belief that a sample of children should be heard and allowed to speak freely rather than follow a restrictive questionnaire. As Burman describes, I have made a 'series of strategic decisions' (Burman, 1992, p.48) that have led to a particular set of texts being analysed in a particular way.

The Foucauldian discourse analysis which I have largely chosen to adopt is, of course, an imperfect science. The degree to which it achieves what I hoped, that is, not only opens up discourses of 'childhood' and highlights knowledges and power relations, but also gives voice to children's own negotiations within and against such knowledges, will become evident in subsequent chapters. In the next chapter I will focus on the first analysis I carried out, the 'expert discourses'.

Chapter Three

Expert Discourses: Constructing the child as innocent and other

Introduction

In this, the first of my chapters based on primary research, I will be analysing a range of texts which engage with the current debates about marketing to children. Whilst I have carried out a detailed Foucauldian discourse analysis on each of these (see Appendix 1 for a sample), I will not be organising my findings according to typical discourse analysis templates, such as that recommended by Willig (2001, p.107). Instead I will be pulling out some interpretations and findings that I think are particularly relevant to my overall concerns: with how children and their relationship with marketing are talked about; what this can tell us about those that produce these texts; and how through intertextuality and the use of certain shorthands, knowledges and repertoires, some practices are deemed legitimate whilst others – such as children being consumers – are portrayed as morally wrong.

Drawing on ideas from Foucault's study of *Madness and Civilization* (1973), I will be exploring how particular statements in these materials contribute to a 'regime of truth' concerning children, how some rules become prescribed about what is 'sayable' and the processes by which these discourses acquire authority and support certain institutional practices, for example, the government as responsible for the health of the nation. I will address how the 'expert' is constructed as capable of speaking rationally and given a privileged voice over others such as the child, the parent and the marketing industry. I will also return to my proposal that the current concerns over junk

food advertising can be described as a moral panic, and the impact this has on the materials I analyse.

As I explained in chapter Two, the materials I focus on in this chapter were all chosen from a google search, which led to a diverse range of sources. From a best-selling 'book that sparked an international debate' (Palmer, 2007, front cover), to consumer websites such as *Which?,* and through to a government debate, this corpus of texts provide a combined discourse about children and consumerism.[3]

Children and Childhood: A Tactical Productivity

Following Willig's guidelines (2001), as the start point to my Foucauldian discourse analysis I found three main 'discursive objects' (ibid, p.107); children, childhood and marketing.[4]   Whilst other groups were made the subject of discussion, such as parents and government, I believe it is marketing and children and the way their relationship is defined that offers the most interesting focus.   Through looking at how these texts construct and define children and convey certain truths about them, I draw out some of the contradictions within them and how, when tied in with the discourses about marketing, they serve to support certain practices and ways of behaving, whilst repressing other groups and putting the reader in a position where a certain subjectivity is offered.

> Children are vulnerable to advertising because they are less able than adults to fully understand that the purpose of advertising is not to inform, but to persuade and ultimately to sell a product (*Consumer International* Website)

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[3]Full details on each of the materials is given in Appendix 2.
[4] For a detailed example of my Foucauldian discourse analysis, see Appendix 1.

The first discursive construction I found is that of children as other – as not adult. This 'dividing practice' as Foucault would define it, is found in all the materials. Often the writer refers to 'them' for children and 'us' for adults (for example, Sue Palmer(2007) throughout her book) and often 'they', the children are less than adult; less capable of understanding, less able to control themselves, less able to, 'adjust, as full grown adults can' (*Daily Telegraph* letter, p.1).   Using a relational definition makes children what adults are not, and this leads to an inequality, based on a presumed inferiority. The fact that children grow up to become adult only adds to this imbalance since adulthood becomes the goal, with childhood as the preparatory phase. Alongside this division is the suggestion that children are not yet 'finished' adults and so are still innocent and in need of protection because they cannot protect themselves, 'Adults are able to make rational decisions. Children are not.' (Palmer, 2007, p.230). Children are portrayed as passive victims, a different social and cultural group from the active, consumer adult.

As I summarise in Chapter One, this argument that children and their childhood is a structural division, separate from adults and their culture has been posited by many academics such as Winn (1985), Scraton (1997) and Postman (1985). They may argue over how it is constructed and maintained but they agree that childhood is something that society believes can be protected. This is reflected in many of these texts, for example: 'Children have a right to be protected until they are old enough to make an informed choice' (House of Commons Debate, p.5). The idea that it is up to society to protect children runs through all the materials – although not all agree that this is being done effectively at the moment; 'our society….seems to have lost sight of their emotional and social needs' (*Daily Telegraph* letter, p.1). 'Regulations don't do enough to protect children' (*Which?* Campaign, p.1)

By defining children as different, another discourse is allowed, that of children as an object of enquiry. It is acceptable for children to be researched and tested within a scientific framework without any agency for themselves or voice in how they are researched. Again, this perception of children as an anthropological group, worthy of study has been highlighted by academics such as Qvrortrup (1994) and Buckingham (2000). In addition, a Piagetian discourse is often relied upon, namely that children can be split by age and stage as they move towards becoming an adult. This suggests that children will reach a magic age when they understand advertising, but until then it would be wrong to subject them to it, 'not until the age of eight' (Family and Parenting Institution, p.2). This reliance on scientific and psychological discourses over any cultural or social information is a feature of the texts. 'Facts' are supported with research findings and 'models' to analyse them. For example in the *Watching, Wanting and Wellbeing* report, (Nairn and Ormond, 2007), The Goldberg Youth Materialism Scale and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale are both used to test children to provide statistical information. Children are examined and then classified both of which, in Foucault's terms, act as instruments in creating a successful disciplinary power, rendering children as 'docile bodies'. In addition, frequent references to making sure children are 'normal' supports the idea of conforming and not challenging the status quo, another form of creating docile bodies through normalisation. Children are organised through the education system and their parents into either ready to be subject to marketing (adult) or not ready (child). This binary classification both imposes homogeneity on children and highlights those that fall outside the correct category as somehow different.

This focus on the child as a definite 'subject' helps to create a circular logic. As Hepburn explains in her analysis of bullying and victims (Hepburn, 1997), it is easy for certain temperaments to be assumed as fixed, such as a victim temperament being shy or weak, then because a child is shy and weak they are bullied and become a victim,

hence the circular logic. In this case, children are defined as those that are influenced, hence childlike. And to be childlike is to be influenced. The child cannot escape from this construction.

> During research for this chapter I've been shocked by the extent to which children's play and culture has been invaded by consumerism. Peer pressure, subtly directed by the forces of mass marketing, has even begun to undermine the relationship between children the adults who care for them (Palmer, 2007, p.243).

To support this construct of childlike meaning innocent, a repertoire of adjectives and metaphors are frequently used to create a more emotive language, and therefore convincing argument. For example, Sue Palmer uses; 'tender…tiniest of tots….ripe for the picking….premature' (Palmer, 2007, p.232, p.235, p.240) as words to describe the innocent victims. It seems that when children are being talked about it is appropriate and expected to use expressive language and personal perspectives. 'I' is often used and personal examples given, especially in the House of Commons debate, 'on the basis of seeing my own child and those of parents I know'… 'many of us have had to say to our children' (House of Commons debate, p.2) This seems to imply that children are something we can only refer to personally not professionally, interesting when those discussing them are meant to be doing so from a political or expert perspective.

In addition to the construction of child as other, and as innocent there are some other knowledges suggested. The first of these is that of children as a possession. The words, 'our children' (*Watching, Wanting and Wellbeing* Report, p.2) are used as well as phrases like, 'the country's kids' (*Which?* campaign, p.1). Children are portrayed as belonging to the nation, to the adults – as if they are objects rather than individuals. This forced commonality of all children as the possession of adults, with no consideration of other factors such as sex, race or cultural knowledge, ensures children remain constrained as belongings through discourse.

> Since children's brains are still developing, they cannot adjust…to the effects of ever more rapid technological and cultural change,' they write. 'They still need what developing human beings have always needed, including real food (as opposed to processed "junk"), real play (as opposed to sedentary, screen-based entertainment), first-hand experience of the world they live in and regular interaction with the real-life significant adults in their lives (*Daily Telegraph* letter, p.1)

However the focus is not just on constructing children as less than adult. A second knowledge is the privileging of the child and its health as the sole objective of parents and the responsibility of all adults, including the government. The focus is not just on the child, but their health. The issues that are caused by eating junk food, such as obesity, mental problems and 'distractibility, impulsivity and self-obsession' (Palmer, 2007, p.244) are placed in a medical discourse, as about the child's health and the impact this ill health will have on the country in the future. 'The consequence for our children's health, our nation's economy and our national health services would be catastrophic' (House of Commons debate, p.18). The Food Products Bill is portrayed as 'primarily about children's health' (House of Commons debate, p.19). By focussing on the tangible health issues many of the authors make an assumption that marketing to children leads to children buying junk food (with no other influences) and this in turn is leading to a 'Childhood obesity epidemic' (*Consumer International* Website, p.4) creating 'a health crisis' (*Which?* Campaign, p.1). And the government is held as responsible for the health of children rather than parents or children themselves.

Tied into the discourse where a child's health is seen as the government's responsibility is the idea that the future is also somehow their responsibility too. Children are perceived as a metaphor for the future and therefore a threat to that future if they become obese, mentally ill or even just influenced by consumption. As Sue Palmer warns: 'the next generation can look forward to a future based on superficial appearances, disrespect, hedonism and instant gratification' (Palmer, 2007, p.241). By discussing, 'the health of future generations is at risk' (*Consumer International* website,

p.4) these authors are once again placing the child as without agency – specifically without agency today. They are used to construct our fears for the future, and to feel nostalgic for the past. This issue around time and children has been highlighted by James and Prout (1997) as I discuss on page 33, but I think in this context they are more to help support the moral panic around junk food marketing rather than talking about children and their actual response to marketing. As Jenks argues (1996) the child is symbolic of social order and as such has the anxieties of adults projected onto it, as a reaction to their own adult experience and identity issues.

Considering these texts believe it is the responsibility of adults (and the government) to save children is it interesting to note whose voices are missing, as the absences tell us more about what is acceptable and by whom. Children themselves are given no voice, no quotes – they are constructed through scientific statistics and anecdotal evidence but they are not given the power of any opinion. Even in the '*Watching, Wanting and Wellbeing'* report (Nairn and Ormond, 2007), which is based on interviews with children, they are reduced to statistics. This is not surprising, but the fact that the voices of parents are absent is unexpected – they are not deemed 'expert' and therefore have no influence. Also, the voice of the 'public' the 'we' that all these authors refer to is rarely quoted, it is spoken for. This is particularly telling, given the emotive language and tribalism conveyed through the language of 'we' 'our' etc. The experts speak for our common concerns and provide the solutions for us. The public is a mass without voice and therefore, like children, without agency. I was particularly surprised in the case of the House of Commons debate, where future legislation is being decided, that politicians use their personal experience as facts rather than using any kind of information gathered from children, their parents or the public. For example: 'I have a few qualifications that entitle me to speak on the subject. My first qualification is as a parent' (House of Commons debate, p.6). The absence of any factual support to claims within the debate allows for a more emotive discourse to appear.

A sinister cocktail of junk food, marketing, over-competitive schooling and electronic entertainment is poisoning childhood, a powerful lobby of academics and children's experts says today. In a letter to The Daily Telegraph, 110 teachers, psychologists, children's authors and other experts call on the Government to act to prevent the death of childhood' (*Daily Telegraph*, p.1)

In these texts, childhood itself is constructed through an emotive language particularly focused on nostalgia, something about which it is appropriate to feel passionate about, and something that should remain unchanging. As Jenks has outlined, the childhood community is perceived as stable, despite the fact that we have all been part of it, and its membership is always changing; 'we need children as the sustainable, reliable, trustworthy now outmoded treasury of social sentiments that they have come to represent.' (Jenks, 1996, p.108). These materials support this expectation that we should feel nostalgic for the childhood we have lost and its culture is something passed on from generation to generation. 'Throughout history…village of childhood….previous generations…don't seem to play as much as they used to…..a children's culture' (Palmer, 2007, p.227, p.228). The fact it is, 'being invaded' (ibid p.243) is unacceptable, a, 'loss of childhood is underway' (*Watching, Wanting and Wellbeing* Report, p.2). And words such as. 'safeguard' (*Consumer International* Website, p.1), 'protection' (*Which?* Campaign, p.1), 'monitor and limit' (Palmer, 2007, p.245) are often used to substantiate the role adults should play in keeping childhood separate and private as a definite space, in time as well as physically.

One phrase that I think particularly interesting is 'toxic childhood' (ibid, title page). Used initially by Sue Palmer, but then quoted in the House of Commons debate, the National Consumer Council website, and now in itself shorthand for the problems with childhood (as my opening quote to this thesis shows) this phrase has moved from a colourful metaphor to a definition of the state of childhood today. This seems to me to tie in with the argument posited by Walkerdine (1997) that by linking children to naturalness we sustain a regime of truth about the 'natural child'. It also links to the

often used analogy of childhood as a utopian 'garden' (for example, Kline, 1993). By

calling the current state of childhood 'toxic' Palmer et al are implying it is a place that

has been infected by something modern/scientific and that before it was clean and

natural. Toxic is manmade – just like marketing, and childhood is a tangible place that

is being impure. This example of how a description can become a 'truth' shows how

through the intertextuality of texts referring to others, a particular discursive knowledge

can be created, that of children as innocent to be kept in childhood away from the

external evil influence of marketing.

<u>Marketing as Other</u>

> Junk food makers are actively targeting kids as consumers and often in ways
> parents aren't aware of……Television advertising is only part of the problem.
> Marketers work hard to make junk foods seem like an ordinary part of our kids'
> lives, promoting them widely, including on TV, in magazines, on billboards and
> on the internet. (*Which?* Campaign)

I would now like to focus on the way marketing is constructed negatively as 'other', and

often in a contradictory fashion and how dividing practices are used to position

marketing as negative versus the positive of a marketing-free childhood. The first way

this is created is through language describing marketing as a homogenous force, there

is no distinction between marketing agencies and clients, companies, people in

marketing or types of marketing – it is all corralled into 'marketing'. 'Stop the

marketing' (*Consumer International* website, p.1). By giving no information about

marketing we are left with no knowledge of it and so it becomes easier to think of it as a

'force' rather than groups of individuals. To exacerbate this, none of the material

analysed allow for marketing to have a say – there are no marketing experts quoted or

referred to. In the same way that children are not asked their opinion, marketing

practitioners are given no opportunity to defend their actions, or explain them. It seems

that again, by taking away their voice, marketing is made powerless. It is particularly

noticeable that whilst facts about marketing are given in terms of dollars, market share

and other statistics, those arguing against it tend to use personal anecdotes, colourful

metaphors and emotive language. The distinction between uncaring business and

emotional defenders of children is highlighted.

However at the same time, by contradiction, marketing is rendered powerful, inhuman

even, 'relentless', (House of Commons Debate, p.2) a, 'marketing maelstrom' (Palmer,

2007, p.230). It is seen as too big to resist, a force too strong for the individual parent

or expert to combat. 'Regulations don't do enough to protect children '(*Which*?

Campaign, p.1), 'Parents are powerless' (Palmer, 2007, p.240) the focus on its force

also suggests it is out of control, as if even those within it couldn't stop it. This lack of

control, versus the control parents and experts have over what is right acts as another

dividing definition, and portrays marketing as needing to be stopped while we still can.

Marketing is 'irresponsible' (*Which?* Campaign, p.6), whilst parents are naturally

responsible. Marketing is immoral, 'children defined by their worth not by any moral

standards' (Palmer, 2007, p.240), society is moral. The texts accentuate this by

providing only one solution – to stop marketing – to gain control over this unnatural

force.

Another way that marketing is set apart is by portraying it as big, versus the small, in

terms of the financial power it wields over the individual parent trying to combat it:

> For every $1 the World Health Organisation spends on trying to improve the
> nutrition of the world's population, $500 is spent by the food industry in
> promoting processed food (*Consumer International* website, p.3).

This dividing practice is supported by metaphors of warfare through each article I have

reviewed. Words such as, 'targeted, aggressive, sophisticated targeting, fight back,

tactics, relentlessly, bombardment, explosion, psychological weapons, collateral effect,

offensive and squarely in their sights' are just some of the phrases used to create a

sense that marketing is the enemy and we are at war. 'Lurks an army of anonymous manipulators' (Palmer, 2007, p.228). Marketing is not seen as a social action of our society, part of our economic structure and culture, instead it is portrayed as an outside force and it is us versus them. And, just as with a wartime enemy, marketing is given the personality of evil, 'those who would manipulate their children's minds' (ibid, p.244).

To support this construct, the marketing industry is often referred to as devious, trying to affect our children without us noticing, and using all the, 'precisely targeted…refined by scientific methods…honed by child psychologists….bombardment' (ibid, p.231), 'at its disposal to undermine their (Parents) efforts' (*Consumer International* website, p.4). Marketing is talked about in terms of an unseen enemy, whose objectives are not known to the rest of us through language such as, 'motives behind' (Family and Parenting Institution website, p.2) 'tricks' (*Which?* Campaign, p.8), and 'lure' (House of Commons debate, p.2).

In addition to marketing as the enemy, it is also referred to negatively with different analogies: as a drug, 'peddling' (House of Commons Debate, p.6), 'creating dependence on the particular brand they are pushing' (Palmer, 2007, p.233); a religion, 'initiate them as early as possible into the cult of the brand' (ibid, p.232); a plague 'consumer culture spreads across the globe, money will eventually become the new currency of love' (ibid, p.241) and a paedophile, 'lure children, entice'(House of Commons Debate, p.45) even, 'groom young consumers' (Palmer, 2007, p.231) all leading to what Palmer claims as, 'the collateral effects (of marketing) are also worrying – when children dressed up like dockside tarts throng the streets, its scarcely surprising that paedophilia thrives' (ibid, p.235). These metaphors all help to create a dividing practice where marketing is linked to many evils, and therefore evil itself, and so positions those that are against marketing as morally justified.

<u>Children and Marketing – 'An Unholy Alliance' (Palmer, 2007, p.239)</u>

> By openly encouraging and validating the subversive side of childhood, marketers are unleashing forces it's becoming increasingly difficult to control. (ibid, p.239)

As I have outlined, the corpus of texts I have scrutinised create what a child is, or should be – innocent, childlike, protected in their childhood as a definite state. Marketing is portrayed as the enemy, trying to break into this childhood. However when children and marketing combine, a new subject is constructed and it is this I will now focus on.

As we have seen, children are portrayed as inherently innocent, but also a different species to the rest of us, prone to wildness and emotion. Whereas adults are rational and capable of understanding marketing intent, children are perceived as irrational. If parental influence is replaced with marketing influence, children are constructed as out of control. 'We will pay a heavy price in terms of aggravation and arguments, tears and tantrums' (Family and Parenting Institution website, p.2). The connotation is that children cannot cope with marketing, and as a result it is bad for them, a binary logic of normal/healthy child or abnormal/unhealthy (marketing influenced) child. Again a dividing practice to represent children and marketing as other.

This concern over the effects of marketing on children is added to when children are used as a metaphor for the future of humanity, and therefore a threat to all our future. 'Putting ... children's future at risk' (*Which?* Campaign, p.4). This creates another binary logic – support children and their future or support marketing, it is not possible to do both. 'We cannot put the health of the advertising industry before the health of our children' (House of Commons Debate, p.3).

A third dividing practice that is created between us (caring adults) and them (marketing and children) is through the suggestion that marketing is subverting children and causing children to then challenge the status quo. Through its:

> encouragement for breaking parental rules, encouraging an ironic, adult-mocking, anti-authority attitude...to drive a wedge between them and the adults in their lives….The messages that marketing feeds daily to our children now amount to a gradual, oh-so-ironic subversion of civilised values. (Palmer, 2007, p.238).

It could be argued that this, 'decivilising effect' (ibid, p.239) is caused because children are given knowledge through marketing which is not acceptable. As we have seen in the earlier chapter on childhood, knowledge is for adults and not for children. This assumption that adults have the right idea (or knowledge) about marketing and in particular marketing to children but children do not and should not, plays out the same construction of children as victims, which is as it should be, protected through restricting access to knowledge. To allow children to exercise power through consumption is to allow them to resist the traditional childhood constraints.

In fact, the mixture of the child as a product of the home and innocent and yet the kid as consumer, and so independent, creates an ambiguity. As Livingstone suggests:

> We are witnessing contradictory trends – both towards the autonomy of children, domestic democracy and individualization of childhood and towards increased regulation and risk management of children by adults. (Livingstone, 1998, p.64).

The proposition is that this cause for anxiety in adults requires some kind of disciplinary regulation – to reduce the child back down into the confines of childhood. This argument follows the same ideas as Erica Carter where she looks at the German housewife as a privatized domestic labourer and yet at the same time a public citizen through her consumption (Carter, 1997). Carter argues that the female needs to be

reasserted (i.e. the private housewife) and the male repressed (i.e. the public citizen) in the same way through disciplinary regulation. Using this theory, in the case of children, as consumers they are subject to too much 'pressure' and are too adult and independent, and so should be placed safely back in childhood, as children, and dependent.

The binary logic created by this is that children are both savvy and a threat (consumers) or innocent – there is no other choice for their relationship with marketing. Their negotiation with different products, marketing techniques and products, based on their varying understanding, social and cultural background, education and age is all ignored. In addition, caring adults are either there to nurture and protect children, or to give them free access to the dangers of adulthood (consumerism), again there is no other position.

I think the phrase 'pester power' is particularly interesting in this context. This phrase is used pervasively when children and marketing are talked about, in many of the articles I analysed and 'pester power' is now an accepted description of when children want something bought for them[5]. 'Pester' implies an irritation no more, but it does suggest annoyance rather than any kind of acceptance or compromise. In the House of Commons Debate phrases such as 'we are sick of pester power' are used frequently and as examples of the impact of advertising:

> A lot of the pestering comes from children themselves. I can well recall collecting my children from primary school and being pestered to allow them to go into the sweet shop next door but one. (Angela Watkinson in House of Commons Debate, p.24)

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[5] See Buckingham (2004), Chapter 8, which summarises research on pester power and considers its social implications.

The 'pester' makes it seem acceptable to dislike this voice from children. However the 'power' part is the real contentious issue. The suggestion is that children with any kind of power are a problem for their parents, a difficulty. By using this phrase it positions those against 'pester power' as against something annoying, not against children having any kind of power, and that makes it more acceptable. However the outcome is the same, take it away and ensure children have no agency.

In the House of Commons debate, there are some voices against this discourse. They focus on parents as the solution instead and try to avoid the government as responsible – for example Phillip David talks of the 'triumph for the nanny state' (House of Commons Debate, p.17) whilst Mr Vaizey calls it 'a sledgehammer being used to crack a nut' (ibid, p.21). Some support parents as the source of control over children, such as Mr Chope; 'the more we undermine responsible parenthood by measures such as this bill, the less responsible parenthood there will be' (ibid, p.30). Therefore the counter discourse is suggesting that power lies within the family, supporting parents as the minders of children. This is still, then, constructing children as without agency, and supporting their surveillance and control within the boundaries of childhood, and at the same time is also supporting the regime of truth about marketing, that it is inappropriate and cannot be expected to negotiate with or benefit children. Any voices that are not supportive of the bill focus on looking for more information before making a decision – not against the overall discourse but more reticent – for example Miss Kirkbride asks for, 'some science' (House of Commons Debate, p.4) to back up the bill, to see if the current ban has had an effect. Mr Forster also believes not enough evidence has been gathered and Margaret Hodge suggests that further research is required to ensure the solution is not too simplistic.

This reliance on research, or science as the way to make the decision is interesting and leads me to consider something which the Foucauldian discourse analysis model

does not allow for, but which I think is pertinent to a Foucauldian perspective on power

and knowledge; the expert and their use of science and facts to control discourses.

The Expert Discourse

> None may enter into a discourse on a specific subject unless he was satisfied
> certain conditions or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so (Foucault,
> 1971, p.1)

In *Discourse on Language* (ibid) Foucault discusses how discourse is controlled by

three rules. Firstly, the internal rules where, 'discourse exercise its own control' (ibid

p.1) ; secondly, the author as an unifying principle that controls discourse and thirdly,

the rarefaction among speaking subjects where only a few may speak on certain

subjects.   It is this privileging of certain voices that I would like to focus on first. I

would suggest that only 'experts' are allowed to speak about children and they are able

to do this through a reliance on science in their communication to the public. These

experts have a diverse range of qualifications for speaking about children and

marketing, and different ways of talking about them, and conveying their opinion, and

yet I would argue these disparate voices combine to create a particular type of

discourse – the expert discourse.

As Cook, Pieri and Robbins explain in their article on expert perceptions of the

discourse of GM food (2004), when experts attempt to communicate with non-experts

(the public) a binary logic is displayed and certain assumptions (or truths) are revealed.

Using their analysis as a start point, I have reviewed the various texts and their writers

to see if their argument holds in this instance. I should note one key difference, which

is that Cook et al focussed on interviews with scientists who were deemed expert in the

field of GM foods, whilst I have used articles and books on different subjects by people

from different academic and experience backgrounds. However, the similarities still appear.

Firstly, Cook, Pieri and Robbins discuss the homogenization of experts as all with the same level of knowledge and the same opinion. In my study this is also the case. For example, in the letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, from, 'professionals and academics' (*The Daily Telegraph* letter, p.1) the type of employment of the 120 signatories ranges from academics to celebrities, authors to teachers and of course Sue Palmer, the instigator of the letter. All these people are put together as 'expert' whatever their knowledge on the subject – which of course we do not know. Another example is in the *Which*? Campaign where a range of celebrities are cited as supporters of the campaign and their sound bite on the subject aired, such as; 'it (advertising junk food) isn't acceptable and I don't think my children – or anyone else's children – should be exploited in this way. Emma Thompson' (*Which?* Campaign p.24). They have no real qualification for being quoted, except as parents, but they are used as further support for the arguments posited.

Another interesting aspect is that the authors of many of the arguments are not given. The *Which?* Campaign, The *Consumer International* website and the Family and Parenting Institution do not reveal the author of their opinions, they speak for the whole organisations. Again one opinion and one homogenous knowledge.

To add to this, I would like to use Kristeva definition of intertextuality to highlight another way the experts form a cohesive construction of children and marketing and this becomes the only way of talking about these subjects. Kristeva suggests that the process of moving from one sign system to another, the transposition leads to the, 'destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one' (Kristeva in Moi, 1986). By referring to each other's findings and opinions, the experts give each other

credibility, and then their own argument seems supported since they have quoted another expert. For example, the Family and Parenting Institute refer to the National Consumer Council report, '*Watching Wanting and Wellbeing'*. This report in turn refers to the *Which?* Campaign. Sue Palmer's book on Toxic Childhood changes from one teacher's personal perspective to the key factual writing and the well-source for the outcry and opinion that follows, simply by the fact it is quoted and referred to so often – her standing as expert is increased every time the phrase 'toxic childhood' is used, or every time one of her anecdotes or 'facts' is used. The book acts as the catalyst for the experts to write to the *Daily Telegraph*, this letter leads the *Daily Telegraph* to start a campaign to 'save childhood' and this is then perceived as a viable campaign, and assumed to be based on real evidence and expert knowledge. Sue Palmer is then asked to address the Tory Conference, writes for the *Daily Telegraph* and her phrase 'toxic childhood' becomes the shorthand for the entire issue. Her voice and those of the experts that ally themselves with her becomes privileged, on the assumption that they know more and should be allowed to speak for children.

In Foucauldian terms, these experts then use hierarchical observation and demoscopy to exercise disciplinary power in relation to the reader, and the children they are observing. As Carter argues market research can act as an active agent in the formation of power relations (Carter, 1997). She shows that since the consumer is unaware of the use of their answers to market research questions, they cannot know how the conclusions were drawn; they are reduced to numbers in scientific documentations. The same can be argued for children. For example in the *Watching, Wanting and Wellbeing*' report written by academics for the National Consumer Council, the responses from children and their parents are reduced to pages of tables and comparisons. The authors hold the knowledge, and use models such as Goldberg Youth Materialism scale as their tools, the subjects are homogenized and the conclusions are upheld based on these 'facts'. Statistics like these are used

pervasively by all the experts, '73% of Pakistani children claim to love TV adverts' *Consumer International* Website, p.3), or claims, based on facts, the details of which we are not party to ' commercial interests can have an especially negative impact on poorer families' (Family and Parenting Institution website , p.3). It could be argued that the experts need to make their argument user-friendly so we can understand their point, but this assumption is itself creating a division between the expert, who is in possession of knowledge and understands this, and the public who cannot be expected to understand, as if the public are somehow lesser as a result. This lack of understanding also translates as an shortcoming by the public, as the letter to the *Daily Telegraph* shows, 'largely due to a lack of understanding on the part of both politicians and the general public' (*Daily Telegraph* letter, p.1) – the implication is that the lack of understanding by the public is the real risk, and the solution put forward by the experts is not necessarily more education but instead the public's agreement to stop marketing, perhaps they don't need to know the argument behind it. The experts decide on the best solution and in doing so talk in terms of 'we' and 'our children' 'our society' and therefore speak for us all, including the children.

This can be seen as similar to Foucault's perception of the doctor in *The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century* (Foucault, 1977). He suggests that the doctor became privileged and as result took responsibility for the individual's health away from them:

> The doctor becomes the great advisor and expert, if not in the art of governing, at least in that of observing, correcting, and improving the social 'body' and maintaining it in a permanent state of health (Foucault in Rabinow, 1991, p.284)

In the same way these experts are telling us what needs to be done for our children, the parents can relinquish responsibility, and so power, to the expert instead. They will know what is best. The celebrity can tell us what to do, just as much as the physician.

I would like to draw on one other point made by Cook, Pieri and Robbins when they discuss the binary logic displayed between the expert and the non-expert. The expert is not seen as a person (and therefore part of the public) but as separate. By dividing the experts out, this allows experts to be perceived as thinking (versus the feeling, and therefore vulnerable to manipulation, public), as rational (versus the irrational public) and active (versus the passive public), because they hold the knowledge and choose how this should be used. The same can be seen in the work I have surveyed. Whilst the expert calls on 'us all', and talk of 'we' they are clearly positioning themselves as other/better. For example, in the *Which?* Campaign, whilst claiming, 'we're letting the country's kids down' (*Which?* Campaign website, p.1) what they are really saying is 'you are'. The *Which?* authors tell us the, 'food marketing tricks', they know what the threat is, and what should be done; 'companies need to clean up their act and stop marketing unhealthy foods to children', (*Which?* Campaign website, p.5), they are not manipulated by marketing, and they are actively working towards that goal through judging which companies they, 'like' (ibid, p.13) and which, 'we didn't like' (ibid, p.13) in terms of their marketing to children. The very fact that the experts tell us what should be done constructs them as superior, they can influence government policy because they are the ones holding the knowledge, society should just support their decision. As Foucault describes it this 'rarefaction among speaking subjects' (Foucault, 1971 p.1) allows them to control discourse and allow certain areas of discourse to become 'forbidden territory' (ibid p.1). Only those seemingly qualified to speak on a subject can do so.

However, the expert discourses I have studied use emotive terms frequently to make their point, so I wonder if they could really be considered rational in the way Cook et al describe? They may talk in terms of statistics and facts to appear rational, but their rhetoric is quite irrational in places, particularly when talking about the 'evil' marketing,

and the 'innocent' children. Sue Palmer for example, often falls into colourful and

emotive metaphors to make her point, 'ripe for the picking….mass

brainwashing…cloying schmaltziness…callous, anti-authority…destroying' (Palmer,

2007). I believe that when talking of children, it is part of the regime of truth that adults

cannot help but get emotional, however rational an expert they may be, simply because

the anxiety that surrounds children and protecting them is the, 'preoccupation with

prevention' (Jackson and Scott, 1999, p.64).

Within this specific focus on expert discourse I have not included the House of

Commons Debate. Those discussing the issue do not hold themselves up as experts,

although their personal opinion is validated as relevant and important, as if personal

experience counts as scientific knowledge, instead they defer to the 'experts' such as

the *Which?* Campaign and other studies to support their argument. It is interesting to

note then that by referring to these people they once again bolster the idea that they

are the 'experts' their facts are the only ones to be considered and they can speak for

all children, and all parents.

In conclusion, despite the diversity of the texts I have scrutinised, these experts all

produce very similar constructions of children and of marketing to children, and this

reduces the availability of what is 'sayable'. By making this the only option, they

attempt to close down the opportunity for children to act in any way other than victim,

and for marketing to offer any kind of negotiation or positive benefits; their power is

limited by the cohesiveness of the discourses about them.

Keeping Children in Childhood - Reinforcing Social Practices and Institutions

> It's easy to blame parents and society for this problem, but in the end packaging with cartoon characters, pop stars and the promise of a toy alongside their breakfast cereal is always going to seem attractive to children. It is time food companies took responsibility for their marketing strategies. (Raymond Blanc on *Which?* Campaign website, p.25)

Using Foucault's reasoning it can be seen that knowledge about children and their relationship with marketing is not a set object but instead a process, which evolves through, and is inseparable from, the various discourses about it. By looking at what is 'sayable' we can determine how the relationship between these two can be understood by the reader – what options we are given for our perception of both children and marketing as subjects and in turn this helps to reveal what action orientation we are left with, what opportunities for action are opened up or closed down and how we are 'expected' to feel (our subjectivity) and which practices and institutions are therefore deemed legitimate – for us to consent to and support. How our social life is regulated, organised and administered and the structures that exercise this power are bound up with the discourses within society, the discourses are a productive force. I therefore would now like to consider what is achieved by the texts I have analysed in terms of their influence on certain social practices: that of childhood as an institution and also the state as responsible for public health.

Unsurprisingly, the documents I have looked at support the status quo. As Foucault suggests, the dominant discourse will always privilege existing power relations and social structures. Therefore the institution of childhood as a discreet and manageable structure is reinforced as are the methods of disciplinary power to support it – namely surveillance, dividing practices, the control over information, normalization and the use of the examination.

Throughout this corpus of texts the experts call for more surveillance over children, both in terms of hierarchical observation by scientists to find out more about how they are influenced, but also a direct surveillance by parents and educators to ensure they are not subject to marketing influence. This surveillance acts not only to control children but to ensure their access to knowledge is reduced. On the assumption that children are less than adult, not capable, a call for containing them within the safety of childhood is deemed acceptable. Within those boundaries knowledge should be provided by adults, so that knowledge of how to be a consumer, how to relate to marketing and brands is not required. Also within these boundaries normalization is expected to ensure that all children are standardized and classified as child, behaving within expected parameters. The definition of childhood remains a holding place for everyone under the age of 16.

The disciplinary method of dividing practices is also shown within the discourses and supports the practice of retaining children as other, a homogenized group within childhood. As I have outlined, by constructing children as different, even evil if aligned with marketing, the overriding 'truth' is that they should be treated as a separate group, their health controlled to ensure they do not become a threat to our future through the consumption of junk food, or by becoming consumers too young. Adults are consumers, children are not.

A further way that the institution of childhood is maintained is through the use of 'examination'. By examination I am using the ideas Foucault puts forward when he discusses the examination as part of disciplinary power in 'The Means of Correct Training' in *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1975). Foucault proposes that:

> The success of disciplinary power derives no doubt from the use of simple instruments: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it – the examination. (Foucault in Rabinow, 1991, p.188).

Foucault sees the examination as a ritual used to qualify, classify and to punish, and made up of three elements, namely visibility, documentation and cases. In this instance, children are the subject on whom we focus. Using Foucault's definition:

> Disciplinary power… exercises through its invisibility, at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. (Ibid, p.199).

As we have seen, children are subject to market research, academic research, educational study and of course surveillance by their parents, all of which are shown to be acceptable through the discourses about them. They are visible as a whole and yet at the same time the various methods of controlling them are less visible.

Secondly, children are subject to documentation. Foucault describes this as placing 'individuals in a field of surveillance that also situates them in a network of writing: it engages them in a whole mass of documents that capture and fix them' (Ibid, p.201). Through describing the individual and analysing them and also through comparing them, they are measured and treated as an object, and when this is written down, those studies become set as definite. In the case of childhood, the information about children is reduced through models and statistics to a set of generalised characteristics, which are then used in literature to describe children as a 'population' rather than being treated as individuals with different responses and requirements. The child is a subject, as Foucault suggests, through the information kept about them.

Finally, the examination requires 'cases', where real lives are turned into a description which is written down. This description becomes 'a means of control and a method of domination' (Ibid, p.203). As we have seen, many of the experts use colourful examples, and references to anecdotal evidence about children to support their arguments. In addition, often those talking about children, in particular in the House of

Commons Debate, talk about their own child; 'On the basis of seeing my own child and those of parents who I know, it is clear to me that pester power definitely applies to toys' (Julie Kirkbride in House of Commons Debate, Column 1585). A real person becomes an example, a case and these cases all collate to form an image of childhood and a specific social practice.

The State as Responsible

> How can things improve? Regulations don't do enough to protect children – it's time for the Government to take action (*Which?* Campaign website, p.1).

A key institution that is supported is that of the government as responsible for the health of the nation. I believe that Foucault's discussion on noso-politics in the eighteenth century is still valid today. As a precursor to his theory on bio-politics, Foucault discusses the 'emergence of the health and physical well-being of the population in general as one of the essential objectives of political power' (Foucault in Rabinow, 1991, p.277). He believes that the population's health is directly relevant to economic management, and as a result is perceived as needing management. In my analysis I have shown how the experts who supposedly speak for the nation, call on the government to ban advertising to children, to help manage the junk food 'epidemic' and restore the health of the nation's children. State intervention into the eating habits of children is deemed acceptable, and necessary. A bill has been petitioned to make marketing junk food to children illegal, primarily to avoid the health implications of junk-fed children. The state is required to control commerce in an effort to maintain good health.

However, as Foucault argues, noso-politics does not just reside with the state. Other groups are also involved: religious groups, charitable and benevolent associations, learned societies, all relating to the state. Again, this is reflected in the situation today.

Some of the materials I have appraised have come from such groups, for example, the Family and Parenting Institute. And in the same way that Foucault sees them as 'organs of surveillance' (Ibid, p.274) so they carry out research and study over children for their own sake (In the case of the Family and Parenting Institute, they have, 'been involved with the writing of the Compass report: *The Commercialisation of Childhood'* (Family and Parenting Institute website, p.1) as well as writing a response to the document produced by David Buckingham for the government using their position as 'the UK's leading centre of expertise in families and the upbringing of children' (Family and Parenting Institute website, p.2) to gain credibility.

Foucault describes the doctor as becoming 'the great advisor and expert, if not in the art of governing at least in that of observing, directing and improving the social 'body' and maintaining it in a permanent state of health' (Foucault in Rabinow, 1991, p.284). As I have already discussed, it would seem that now the 'expert' has replaced the doctor as responsible for our children's health and mental wellbeing. In fact medical practitioners are starkly absent from the group of expert discourses I have investigated. Even in the letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, whilst a few of the signatories are doctors, they are not in the majority; celebrities and social scientists are the new physicians it would appear, they have the 'surplus of power' that used to belong to the doctor, but now allows them to speak for the public and decide what is best for children.

Foucault focuses on how the family itself becomes a target for medical focus and good health as the 'reciprocal duty of parents and children'. (Ibid, p.281). The parents are morally responsible for their children's health during the phase of childhood. What becomes apparent from my study of the current discourses is that this is not necessarily the case today. Parents are not positioned as responsible, the state is. Parents are not given a privileged voice, nor are they blamed for the current problems of childhood obesity. Marketing is the enemy; responsible for the ill health of children,

and the state providing legislation is the solution. It seems surprising that the institution of family is not supported and upheld. However neither is it ridiculed or proposed as redundant. It is just not placed within these texts. Parents are perceived as passive and without agency, even unaware of the threat to their children.   Even when the experts speak for parents, they assume there is little they can do. For example the *Daily Telegraph* letter suggests a 'sensible first step' (*Daily Telegraph* letter, p.1) would be to 'encourage parents and policy makers to start talking about ways of improving children's well-being' (ibid, p.1), but then goes on to say: 'this issue should be central to public policy making in coming decades' (ibid, p.1). Parents are invited to talk but only alongside government, who ultimately should take control of the issue. The same is true for the Family and Parenting Institute. Whilst they speak on behalf of parents, they see their role is to 'be involved with a campaign to acknowledge the commercialisation of childhood' (Family and Parenting Institute website, p.1) and specifically produce information to allow the Government to make policy. The family is no longer held responsible for the health of children.

Finally, as an institution, marketing is also reduced to being controlled by the government. There is no credence given for education or negotiation about marketing to children, nor self-regulation. Marketing is constructed as illogical, uncontrollable and an evil force, solely responsible for junk food consumption and therefore the ill health of children, and as such should be stopped by the government. As a moral panic needing resolution, giving control to the government over marketing junk food is the solution. How this would work within the overall economic and social practices of a consumer society is not considered by the experts as part of their discussions.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have drawn out some of the 'truths' constructed by discourses about children, childhood and marketing. Such 'truths' support institutions and practices, such as government intervention; and help define the legitimate and the illegitimate, for example the marketing industry. These texts are productive in terms of what they make 'sayable', the common sense notions they propose about children and how they should be treated, and their use of other discourses and shorthands to create a version of marketing that is the enemy and to be stopped. By viewing them with a Foucauldian perspective I have revealed that the disciplinary practices that he suggests are present. Children are positioned as other through dividing practices, to be kept under surveillance and controlled to maintain them as 'docile bodies'. Their childhood is to be protected as a structure through normalization, examination and by using science as a tool to make children an object of enquiry. Marketing is put in the role of the outside force, without agency but again through dividing practices clearly positioned as against the status quo and morality.

They have also revealed something about the experts that write them. How by using a binary logic the authors put themselves apart from the general public, in a privileged position, able to voice their opinions and influence government policy supposedly on our behalf.

As I have discussed in Chapter Two, the current moral panic about junk food complicates discourses around children and consumption and has rendered children as without any agency, the government with the responsibility to intervene, and those institutions that support this way of thinking (education, family) as the right way to manage; whilst the experts who have highlighted the concerns as the elite to be

listened to and not contested. Within these experts there seems to me to be a 'moral entrepreneur'. This term, proposed by Becker in his book *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (Becker, 1963) describes a person who takes the initiative to crusade for a rule that would right a society evil. This person takes the initiative to start a 'moral crusade'. As Goode and Ben-Yehuda (2010) articulate, 'the moral entrepreneur creates the crusade: no entrepreneur, no crusade' (ibid, p.26). They also tease out the difference between a moral crusade and a moral panic. A panic represents widespread ongoing public concern, whereas a crusade is a consciously created campaign led by the moral entrepreneur and their agenda. In the case of junk food advertising to children, I would suggest that the moral panic was already underway when Sue Palmer (the moral entrepreneur in this case) 'recognized an incipient panic and jumped on a bandwagon that was already in motion' (ibid, p126).

Her book *Toxic Childhood: How the modern world is damaging our kids and what we can do about it* (Palmer, 2007) and its follow up *Detoxing Childhood – What parents need to know to raise happy successful children* (Palmer, 2008) have been successful, she was asked to speak at the Conservative Party Conference, is conferred with as a leading expert and writes for various broadsheets.   She has made her own moral crusade about 'toxic childhood' encompass the moral panic about junk food. This has led her to become what Becker calls 'a professional rule creator' (Becker, 1963, p.147), the go-to person by the government and media to resolve the problems of our toxic children.

Some of the other experts have not joined her crusade on 'toxic childhood' but instead used the overarching moral panic about junk food advertising to reinforce their own position. For example, '*Which?*' have taken the opportunity to position themselves as the champion for consumer rights. The politician who called for the bill to ban junk food advertisements to children (Nigel Griffiths) has potentially furthered his career, and

profile through it. It does make me wonder if the scale of the supposed problem and the lack of counter discourse allowed have been more orchestrated to ensure their own furtherment?   I don't believe that all the expert texts I have analysed are produced by moral entrepreneurs however. Nairn and Ormond's report is an academic study of the issue rather than a call to arms. However, any discourse that supports the moral panic adds momentum to it. Certainly as Critcher points out, in a moral panic public opinion is not relevant, this is a contrived discourse guessed and portrayed by the press and elite. As he suggests 'elite opinion, interacting with claims makers, constructs concerns and consensus' (Critcher, 2003, p.150).

I think this 'contrived discourse' (ibid, p.150) is an important point and why looking at the discourses as part of a moral panic is relevant. By revealing the complications within the authorship of the discourses – I can question the power negotiations of who is allowed to write about the subject and what they say.

To add to this, Thompson (1998) suggests that moral panics are the most extreme form of social problem definition and as such will affect the legal framework of moral regulation and social control, requiring confirmation of the moral and ideological boundaries of society and ideally (if it is a 'successful' moral panic) some kind of ideological closure. This model of a moral panic leading to changes in regulation and control, perhaps even the law, echoes the way calls for a ban in advertising have led to the writing of a bill for House of Commons debate and the government's continuing support of Ofcom's ban on junk food advertising to children. The legal system supported by the government is part of the framework creating and maintaining a type of power, and if a moral panic requires some kind of closure, and at the same time demands power relations to shift, then in this case the discourses' closure seems to be an end of marketing junk food to children and the power relations shift would be in the direction of government and experts, away from parents and children.

The fact that the discourses I focus on leave little space for public opinion also links into theories on moral panics, namely that support from the public is a 'bonus not a necessity' (ibid, p.137). The visible version of public opinion, through the press and other voices (such as *Which*?) is used by politicians when they debate the issue, even though it is not a reflection of a reality, just a construction. Not only are children's opinions assumed but also their parents and society as a whole.

As I have discussed in this chapter, children and the place where they supposedly exist, childhood, are seen as at risk from adults marketing to them, and this fear allows discourses to proclaim the need to defend them and their innocence and then, of course, intervene to protect them. What I think is interesting is that this particular moral panic calls for more regulation and surveillance of children, for their own sake. At heart the only resolution to it would be for all advertising to children to be banned (probably not just junk food) and children to remain outside consumer culture, and therefore adult culture, safely locked away in childhood. The key discourse - that children are vulnerable and at threat and at the same time are part of the threat (for our future) that threads through all the materials I have examined could be linked to any moral panic about children. In this case the marketing industry are the deviants to be controlled and childhood remains constructed through the discourses about it as well as the legal and moral frameworks that are reinforced from the moral panic on their behalf.

Of course, these are just a few examples, chosen for their focus on marketing to children, and represent a tiny proportion of the multitude of documents on this subject. In addition, I am not suggesting that these discourses are the only influence on how children, childhood and marketing are perceived and constructed. As Jean Carabine caveats her discourse analysis about unmarried motherhood in the nineteenth century:

> We should not think of discourses as 'all powerful' and individuals as submissive recipients of discourse. Instead, we should think of discourses as constantly being contested and challenged and therefore not necessarily always omnipotent. (Carabine, in Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001, p.273).

The concerns around children and childhood are more long lasting than a single moral panic, the reason for fearing for children may change, but as these materials have confirmed, our society has a particular regime of truth around them which needs to be constantly reaffirmed to secure the moral boundaries around them and to keep the rhetoric about childhood, that it is always under threat and vulnerable, closed.

In the next chapter I look at what could be deemed the opposing side of the argument, the views of those marketing toys and their discourses circulating around child and childhood.

Chapter Four

Marketing discourses: Selling imagination and play at the British Toy and Hobby Association Annual Toy Fair

Introduction

In my second field of scrutiny I consider how those that sell to children construct childhood and the 'child' via an analysis of the British Toy and Hobbies Association (BTHA) Toy Fair 2014 that I attended.   As discussed in Chapter Two, this event provided me with a different corpus of materials from those used in Chapter Three. The research involved observation and analysis of visual as well as written texts. These texts combined produce the marketing assemblage for the Fair: the way those selling the toys communicate with the attendees, in the hopes of convincing them to buy. These included the stands themselves (both images and words), Point of Sale leaflets, magazines, and the industry website and information leaflets.

The chapter begins with my impressions of the exhibition: I look at what Foucault refers to as the 'internal discourse' (Foucault, 1978, p.310) and the overall homogeneity of the various stands. I then consider an overriding absence, of children themselves. The irony of a palace of toys, full of brand new, colourful products, yet without one single person to use them – no children – was very striking, raising questions about why this might be and, in Foucauldian terms, what this might suggest. I then go on to look at the key discourses in evidence at the exhibition. Firstly, the use of 'imagination' and 'play' by the marketers as another way of describing consumption, but also to define children and the 'work' of childhood. I then go on to look at the toys themselves, relying on Barthes (1984) in particular, to consider what the toys can tell us about how

childhood is constructed as part of a hegemonic discourse. Here I focus on what it means to be a child, and an adult, and also how toys are used as part the 'noso-politics' of society, thus allowing the toy industry to act as 'doctor', with consumerism as a medical solution to all a child's developmental needs. I also consider the framing of consumption at the exhibition, exploring how those promoting their merchandise on the stands and those organising the exhibition, attempt to deal with the moral issue of the 'child as innocent' versus 'consumerism as profane' (Cook, 2001). What emerges from these observations and analysis is a notion of consumerism as empowering and something to be celebrated. Manifest in several ways, as I discuss, the bottom line is that consuming is good for children.

The BTHA Toy Fair 2014 – 'Internal Discourses'

Fig 1.   View from entrance

Fig 2. View from balcony

When working in marketing, I attended my fair share of exhibitions selling products,

including the BTHA Toy Fair (back in the 90's) but I admit that attending with my mind

focussed on Foucault rather than on networking and marketing, was a very different

experience.   I felt like an intruder, not actually there to buy or sell, but instead taking a

critical step back.   However this vantage point did allow me to question the

homogeneity of the stands; they were all colourful, cheerful, and new, with a marketing

person in a suit standing ready to answer questions with a bundle of paperwork to hand. Each stand had the brand name clearly defined, a selection of their product (toys or games), some pictures of children (which I analyse below), a space for the visitor to walk around and a marketing person to answer questions. (See figs 1, and 2). This is all culturally familiar to marketing people – whatever the product, the same general stand layout is followed.

But looking behind these literal 'façades' a deeper 'internal discourse' becomes clear. By internal discourse I refer to the way Foucault describes secondary schools of the eighteenth century in *The Repressive Hypothesis* (1978). In his example, he is considering how the sexuality of children is not talked about in these institutions, yet at the same time everything within the secondary school is arranged with sex in mind, in 'a perpetual state of alert' (ibid, p.309). As Foucault describes: 'one only has to glance over the architectural layout, the rules of discipline, and their whole internal organization: the question of sex was a constant preoccupation' (Ibid p.310). He is suggesting that all these aspects were based on an assumption that children were sexualised, but that that sexuality had to be restrained and silenced. To do this the secondary schools created an 'internal discourse of the institution – the one it employed to address itself, and which circulated among those who made it function'. (ibid p.310).

Taking up this idea in relation to the BTHA Toy Fair, it is possible to suggest that the different companies set up their stands to market their goods based on a set of rules, maybe not consciously, but common to all within this particular geographical space, at this particular time. The institution in this case is the exhibition and everything is set out to at once *not* talk about children, consumption and money, and yet be precisely preoccupied with that. Pertinently too the companies manage to show pictures of children and talk about children as part of a pro-consumerism discourse, without

actually mentioning either children or money: I did not find a single reference to price on any of the stands in the exhibition.

The toy companies with stands set themselves up as an institution, separated from the visitor in several ways. Firstly, the 'exhibitors' divide themselves physically from the visitor. On arrival, the visitor has a different badge to the 'exhibitors' who are already in place. They have their own coffee lounge marked 'Private', a physical space just for them. All this constructs them as part of an exclusive group, who have knowledge (of price and other matters) versus the visitor who has no knowledge. In addition, they set themselves up as 'expert' versus the visitor as the 'non-expert'. Using statistics and marketing terms to support them, they are positioned to answer the visitor's questions, almost like a teacher. They stand ready with a sheaf of papers full of information to back up their brand claims. With price not shown anywhere, this is a knowledge the exhibitor only shares with the visitor at their discretion. As Foucault would describe, money is a 'constant preoccupation' and yet invisible and silent.

There is also a hierarchy between exhibitors. Space at an exhibition costs different amounts for different positions. Centre stage, in front of the entry doors, for example, will be much more expensive than way back in the corner with no thoroughfare. This gives the 'big' names such as Disney, who also take up more space, greater visibility, and thus power, than the smaller companies. Some companies had also set up a reception desk with only those invited allowed to go into the closed space behind where their products were on view. So for the visitor not on the guest list, both products and prices remained hidden. This quiet wielding of power positions the visitor as a subordinate. (See fig 3).

Fig 3. Lego stand entrance

Another interesting aspect is the homogeneity of the stands. Everyone follows the

same 'rules'. They have the same sort of pictures, the same layout, and the same sort

of words on their walls, as the images in this chapter show. What is sayable remains

consistent, with every exhibitor following the 'internal discourse' of the institution. The

BTHA Toy Fair organisers have detailed guidelines/rules on how a stand should look,

and exhibitors must provide a 'design of their stand for approval as outlined in *Toy Fair*

2014 Rules, regulations and additional information. This also covers how high the

stand can be, what it should look like, colour of carpet, use of lights etc. In addition, 'All stand designs will be checked by the stand vetting company 'Abraxys' in accordance with the Toy Fair rules. It is at the organiser's discretion to pass alternative stand designs' (ibid). The resulting homogeneity means that every company accepts the overriding discourse: to sell toys for children without mentioning money. They don't mention price to allow them to negotiate deals with different toy sellers, but for a visitor it gives a definite sense of being kept in the dark.

Fig 4: Little Helper stand

The Absent/Visible Child

The BTHA Toy Fair then, is all about selling toys to children for money, and yet at the same time without saying so. More strange, however, is the absence of children. A cathedral to worship toys and yet without a congregation is how it felt. I have a seven year old boy and a four year old girl, and as I walked from toy to toy to toy I could only imagine how excited they would be if they could be there. The layout of every stand is as if in a toy shop with the toys at child's height, ready to play with. But according to the rules, no child over 5 is allowed to attend. On the day I attended I didn't see any under 5's either. As the website guidance on attendance states: 'Please be aware of the policy regarding children – under 5's are permitted when accompanied and supervised by a responsible adult, 5-15 years are not' (BTHA website). I appreciate this is probably to stop touching, playing and other childlike behaviour at a professional event but the absence was striking. Nevertheless the 'internal discourse' does proliferate images of children (see figs, 4 and 5), though a commercially created version of a child, constantly smiling, clean, white and middle class. A sentimental creation to suit the marketing needs of the companies, they smile happily in photographs but are allowed no voice or choice. Children are silenced. In Foucauldian terms, this silence allows the toy companies to exercise power by deciding what is said about them and by whom. Indeed, as Foucault suggests in relation to sexuality:

> Not any less was said about it, on the contrary. But things were said in a different way, it was different people who said them from different points of view, and in order to obtain different results. (Foucault, 1978, p.309).

In the case of the toy industry, 'image-children' endorse their products to demonstrate that children do want them and the industry is speaking to them. As Dan Cook (2001), discussing the sentimentalization of the child in the face of the demands of the market, posits there is a tension between the child (sacred) and the marketplace focussed on

money (profane). To deal with this, the market attempts a compromise. He suggests that the industry deals with moral approbation in two ways: by positioning commodities as beneficial and functional to children and by portraying children as 'naturally' desiring these goods. Through being a subject who wants these things. I would argue that by only deploying images of children, the BTHA Toy Fair discourse also acts in this way rendering the child as a symbolic endorsement for consumerism.

Fig 5. Disney Stand

Foucault's concept of the 'normalizing gaze' in *Discipline and Punish* (1991), which, 'makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish' (ibid, p.197) is useful here. He suggests that this gaze 'establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them' (ibid, p.197). At the BTHA Toy Fair children are invisible, and therefore without power, but at the same time staged, constructed children are visible subjects. As Foucault articulates: 'In discipline it is the subjects who have to be seen, their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them.' (ibid, p.199). In addition, by allowing children only to be visible in photographs where they are all happy, enjoying consuming goods, they are homogenised reduced to a single childhood of consumerism; they are also mute and enclosed in a web of discourse constructed by the marketing industry. Foucault refers to this normalising of a group of people as a form of disciplinary power, as a means of control and a method of domination to create 'docile bodies'. I would argue that by silencing children and positioning them in this way the exhibitors are enabled to construct discourses and knowledges, unhindered.

In the visual material, children were homogenised - white, happy and, unexpectedly, largely alone. There were very few images of a parent/adult with the child, and very few images of more than one child together. The majority showed either a girl or a boy, playing with their toy. The child alone perhaps also suggests that consumption replaces relating to people. In fact one company goes so far as to claim the toy as 'your real best friend '(see fig 6).

Fig 6. Zoomer stand

This solitude is suggestive. Are multiple children together somehow out of control, a tribe that adults seek to manage? By placing a child alone, they are put in a position of a subject to be looked at individually and yet the picture represents all children who will play with that toy. All children are homogenised as Foucault would put it into a single case, another means of control. In addition, by featuring in a picture, the child is also silenced. They are given no opportunity to speak at the BTHA Toy Fair, just their

smiling faces seemingly endorsing playing with commercial products. As such they are highly 'visible'. As Foucault describes, 'disciplinary power…is exercised through its invisibility, at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility' (1991, p.199). The child is the subject who is to be seen.

Anne Higonnet's study of the historical representation of children in the visual arts is pertinent here. She describes how:

> Photographs of children that appeal to a large consumer audience have to simultaneously accomplish two contradictory goals. They have to make children look physically charming but not intentionally. They have to provide child bodies to their audience without making these bodies enticing or even available….Basically successful commercial photographs have to make children seem there and yet not there. (Higonnet, 1998, p.77)

Children are visible and yet individually invisible at the same time.

One other interesting absence is the word 'child' or 'childhood'. Not only at the exhibition itself but in the literature on offer there. In the various magazines the word 'child' was rarely used. Instead a marketing language prevailed, terms such as 'market', 'fans', 'demographic', 'business', 'property', 'target group', 'consumers', 'areas', 'sales', 'market share', 'space', 'customer', 'incremental business', and category'. Such language allows the magazines to talk about selling to children but in a way that makes the process appear both expert and business-like. Children are reduced to a single 'market' category, a type rather than a collection of different, embodied individuals. As Foucault would suggest they are reduced by categorisation and normalisation to docile bodies, defined in marketing terms only. Again, this provides evidence of an 'internal discourse' at work.

In this way those marketing the toys avoid the moral issue of selling to children. An excerpt from *Toy News* magazine, in which toy stores report on the year ahead,

highlights how marketing language allows companies to say things which otherwise would be problematic. They reduce the child buying their goods (or their parents and family buying the goods for them) to a series of statistics and to a demographic which in a Foucauldian sense allows them to be classified and subjected to an exercise of power. This process is at work in the lead article of a key trade publication, *Trade News* (see Fig 7 below).

Fig 7: 'Toy trade bullish about 2014' (from, Toy News January/February 2014

www.toynews-online.biz

ToyNews

No. 147 ● January/February 2

Retail ● Licensing ● Pre-School ● Marketin

33 Toy Titans
We shine the spotlight on some of the most influential bosses in the trade

49 30 Under 30
Discover the stars of the future – from PR and marketing to sales execs and journalists

64 Trumped up
Winning Moves reveals the secret to success for the Top Trumps brand and what's next

75 Quarter masters
We take a look at wh to expect from this year in licensing - quarter by quarter

Toy trade bullish about 2014

Over 80 per cent of independent and multiple stores tell ToyNews they feel confident about the year ahe

By Billy Langsworthy

THE VAST majority of toy retailers are optimistic about business in 2014.

In our annual retail survey, 81.25 per cent of stores told *ToyNews* that they are confident about the health of their business heading into this year.

Stores cited their quality customer service, the rise of in-store events and strong product lines as reasons to be cheerful.

"We've got our own line of products on the way, so we're confident," one store told *ToyNews*, while another said: "There is competition in our area with Smyths and The Entertainer, but we will always win on service, so it should be a good year."

Our findings back up those of The National Institute of Economic and Social Research, which forecasts UK growth will increase to two per cent this year following 1.4 per cent in 2013.

81.25%
Confident about 2014

50%
Say business was better in 2013 than 2012

68.75%
Saw Christmas sales better or the same as 2012

13.75%
Say online is the biggest challenge they face

In addition, 50 per cent of toy shops said that business had been better in 2013 than in 2012, thanks to highlights including Furby, LEGO, Minecraft and Magic the Gathering.

Most retailers surveyed also told *ToyNews* that 2014 looks like being a good year as they are

coming off the back of a successful festive period.

The British Retail Consortium's latest numbers state that UK High Street stores have suffered their biggest drop in shopper numbers for more than a year thanks to what was a slow start to the festive retail season.

However, the toy sector appears to have bucked this particular trend, as despite the report of a 3.4 per cent annual drop in footfall from September to November 2013, 68.75 per cent of retailers said that their Christmas takings were better, or the same, as in 2012.

One store said: "We di Christmas club which re helped", while another offered: "It's been gettin better and better as Christmas gets closer".

While our survey show much optimism in the to space, (most retailers to us they are happy with their own job when aske for their dream role in th industry), 11.25 per cen stores said they were no confident about busines moving into this year.

Major challenges cit included online competition, the bills running a toy shop and finding new and excitin products to fill the shelv

"Internet competition growing, as well as the multiples slashing their prices," said one store manager.

Meanwhile, product w the return of Tamagotch Minecraft and *The LEGO Movie* look likely to be highlights of 2014.

The opening line of the article reads: 'The vast majority of toy retailers are optimistic about business in 2014', with the first paragraph talking in terms of 'business' – the selling of toys to children in exchange for money. 'Business' as a shorthand continues throughout, for example, 'they [stores] are confident about the health of their business'. This gives business a sort of humanity, with a health to be maintained. 'Business' is then described as 'better in 2013 than in 2012' as if it were a patient. The article goes on to talk about 'in store events' again avoiding mentioning what this really is – children (and their parents) being enticed into a toy shop, to spend money. Discussing Christmas the article points to a 'successful festive period', i.e. lots of parents spent lots of money on their children. Again the industry distances itself from children relying on commercial terms such as 'footfall' and 'Christmas takings'.

By talking in their own language the toy industry not only avoids actually mentioning children, but also position itself as 'expert', expert in selling consumer goods to children and their parents – but they are careful not to say this. As T&P's slogan puts it, 'helping everyone to sell more' (*T&P*). The focus on statistics in large circles on the page (see fig 7) reflects this expert, reductionist approach. Children are replaced by numbers. In a different field, Cook, Pieri and Robbins analyse and discuss how scientists are privileged and gain authority as experts, in such a way that the public is defined as non-expert and potentially irrational. A similar binary logic is used by the toy industry. If marketers are experts in their own language of footfall, segments etc., children and their parents are the passive, emotional public who can't be expected to understand or engage with this 'scientific' language. In addition such 'expertise' allows the toy industry to speak with one voice, all with a similar level of knowledge and viewpoint to strengthen their power. This dividing practice of expert versus non-expert is another Foucauldian disciplinary discourse which reduces children and parents to the subjection of the toy industry's discourse.

Expert Discourses

Extrapolating the idea of an expert discourse further, an interesting example is the

Child Product Safety Guide. Produced by the European Child Safety Alliance, and not

paid for or aligned with the toy manufacturers, it provides advice on the dangers of

everyday objects for children, such as cots, pushchairs, toys, highchairs and other

'potentially dangerous products' (Ibid front cover). Each section follows the same

format. In the section on 'high chairs' (See Appendix 3), the page includes a picture of

a happy child in a high chair accompanied by several different sections. Firstly, a

highly emotive example of how things can go wrong: 'In 2009 a 15 month old baby in

Israel managed to stand up.in her highchair…….upon standing she lost her balance

and fell to the floor, hitting her head' (Ibid p.38). Then a section on 'Why can high

chairs pose a problem?' full of 'scientific' statistics such as, 'annually in the EU

Member States approximately 7,700 injuries to children 0-4 years of age involving high

chairs are serious enough to require a visit to the emergency department' (ibid, p.38).

This is followed by 'How can high chairs be dangerous for children?' with more

statistics and 'cases'. (ibid p.39). Finally, 'How to use high chairs safely', a section

providing expert advice.

This positioning of the brochure's author as expert, aware of dangers, is backed up by

statistics and helps to differentiate the toy industry as both expert and caring from mere

parents innocent of the dangers to their child and thus in need of education and

guidance. This example reflects again Foucault's discussion on 'cases' to turn 'real

lives' into a description as 'a means of control and a method of domination'. (Foucault,

1991, p.203). Such an example also serves to support the idea that the health of

children and their wellbeing is the responsibility of the toy industry, thereby in some

ways subjecting child and parent to its management. This expands the toy industry's

reach beyond just selling consumer goods, justifying Its expert attention to observe,

change and allegedly improve the physical wellbeing of their target market, children.

But it is not just the physical wellbeing of the child that the toy manufacturers are

striving to take responsibility for; they also position themselves as responsible for the

emotional and intellectual development of children, through play.

Play and Imagination – The Work of the Child

Fig 8. Big Jigs Stand

One of the words often used in the marketing literature at the toy fair was 'imagination'. (See fig 8 above and fig 9 below.). Many of the toys were promoted as helping children to imagine, or to use their imagination, posing the question of what exactly this imagination, seemingly so aspirational for children, is. It appeared to be something all children have, but which just needs working at.

Fig 9. Coiled Spring Games
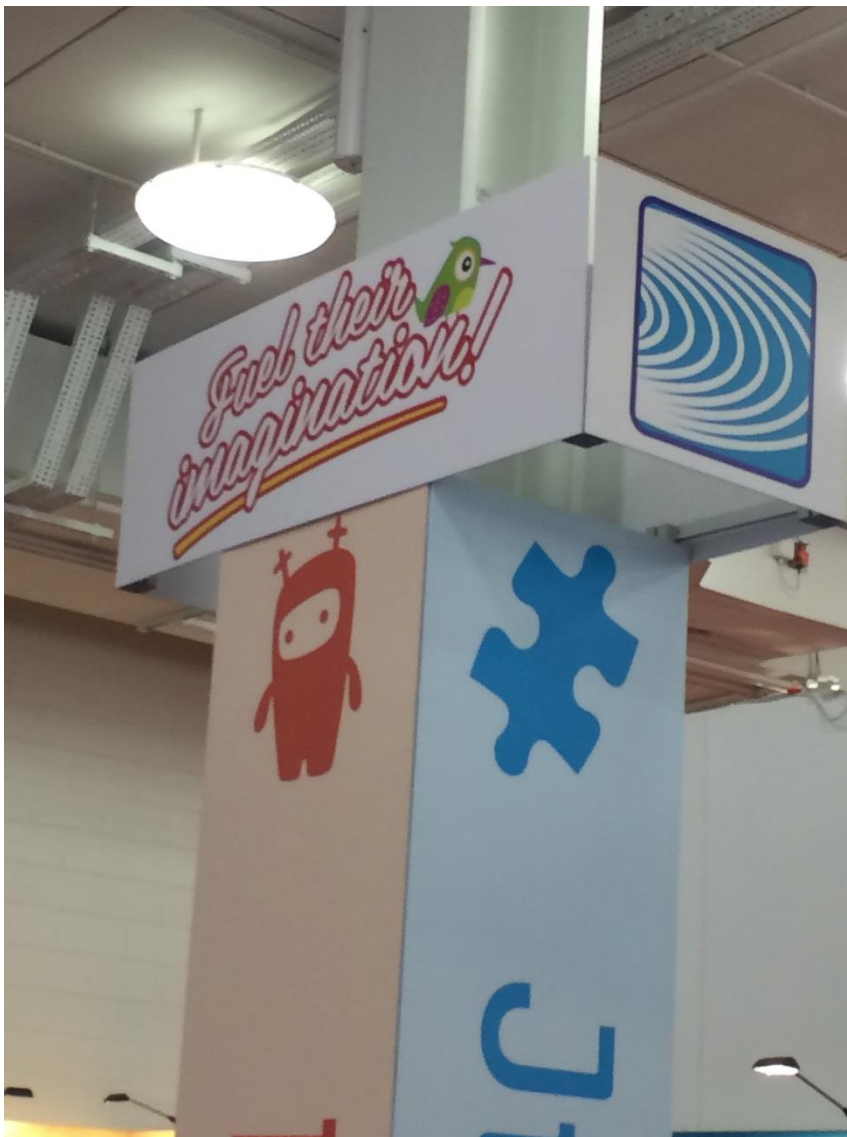
Imagination, or words such as dreams, inspiration (see fig 10 below) are used in

slogans as inherent to toys, and also as figure 9 shows as a natural part of children, as

part of their health, to be 'fuelled'.

Fig 10. Funko Toys.

This focus on imagination led me to wonder why should this attribute be aligned with

children so often? Machin and Messenger Davies (2003) also question what

imagination is and why it should be particular to children. They review various

academic theories on imagination and conclude 'the arguments rest on a common-

sense assumption of both the fragility of children and on the fact that fantasy and

imagination are naturally their most appropriate realm of operation' (ibid p.109). They

go on to argue that representations of children as having an imagination serves to set

them apart as not adult. (See fig 11 below for an example of this distancing). Children

have developing minds that need nurturing whereas adults' mature minds do not. This

implies that children have different abilities to adults and yet need to develop their

imagination to become fully adult. Fantasy and imagination are deemed good for

children, and whilst children are supposed to have an imagination it is not to be taken

for granted, it 'must be fed, protected and nurtured' (ibid p.110). Machin and

Messenger Davies go on to argue that adults need and like fantasy too, and that the

basic mode of human thought is narrative, via imagination. Therefore they suggest that

this distinction of child versus adult imagination is misplaced.

Fig 11. Worlds Apart stand

However, in Foucauldian terms, the 'truth' is that children have imagination and adults

do not, and yet at the same time this imagination needs working on to become adult.

The toy industry uses this developmental requirement to help sell their toys, through

linking consumption to furthering a child's imagination. There are no adults in the

pictures of children playing, this is a child's realm. Once again, through a dividing

practice of imaginative versus not imaginative, children are placed as 'other'.

Imagination also implicitly suggests innocence and freedom and an absence of

boundaries and restraint. As Machin and Messenger Davies argue there is a public

discourse about the naturalness of the child's imagination which 'is wrapped up with the idea of the vulnerable, developing mind (ibid, p.106). Childhood innocence is 'blended' (Ibid, p.106) with childhood imagination. To support this alleged need to develop imagination, many toy companies use play as something *required* of children, and in a sense 'the *work* of children'. (See fig 12 and 13). Play is part of their correct, natural, healthy development to adulthood or, as the BTHA says in its *Report and Accounts,* 'to promote play as not only fun, and an integral part of childhood, but also its importance for healthy child development' (*Report and Accounts p.*1).

Fig 12. Halilit Toy stand

Fig 13. Kids at Play stand

Several academics have studied the role of play as a feature of children's lives,

including Rousseau in 1762 who offered a romantic view of play as part of childhood.

Mead (1934) suggested that children need the 'work' of play and games to try on roles

and develop a sense of self, versus others; and the cognitive constructivists such as

Vygotsky (1966) and Piaget (1972) argued that play was an opportunity for children to

practice and consolidate their newly emerging skills as part of their development. I do

not propose to delve deeply into the debates around play as a cultural tool or even, as Freud would suggest, as a way of revealing the inner world of a child's psyche, but consider instead why play is so tied up with children and why a regime of truth posits that children *should* play. As Kehily argues, 'debates about the purpose and significance of children's play reflect ideological struggles about the nature and status of childhood itself.' (2003, p.10). The very fact that play is studied as part of children's culture (as pioneered by the Opies in the 50s) sets up a discourse of children as different. Whilst some have attempted to question whether play is necessary to child development (see, for example, Lillard et al, 2013), by focusing on whether it helps children develop or is just for fun, such a line of discussion supports the regime of truth that play is indeed part of childhood.   Even in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), play is considered under, 'The right to play and enjoy culture and art in safety' (http;//www.savethe children.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/chid-rights/un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child Accessed 6.5.14) Play therefore is accepted as integral to childhood. The Toy Industry relies on this and builds on it to suggest that play is *only* possible through consuming toys (see figs 12 and 13).

Two leaflets from the Toy Fair, 'The *Value of Play* and *Aggressive Play* (See Appendix 3) demonstrate well how the Toy industry articulates play as consumerism – the toy as commodity. These leaflets form part of an initiative by the National Toy Council which is 'concerned with child welfare and promoting a sensible attitude towards toys and play'. The leaflets claim, 'Play is an essential part of growing up' and goes on to describe how it helps children develop and learn. Using Piaget's age and stage approach the *Value of Play* leaflet explains what different children, from infants through to toddlers and 10 year olds should be playing with, and how. In each case the leaflet lists the skills and educational improvements children will learn from playing with toys. On the back of each leaflet are listed skills, alongside a list of toys. Promoting play as necessary, it even goes so far as to claim: 'The value of play, its importance for human

survival, is that it allows for the creation of imaginary worlds and the enactment of fantasy roles without having to bring them about'.   Again these leaflets position the toy industry as expert, telling parents how their children should be playing; they also support the idea that play is for children and not for adults. In this way children are constructed as 'other', as child-like but at the same time as developing towards adulthood through play. As a commercial institution the toy manufacturers make the assumption that buying toys and play are yoked together; no alternative is suggested. This allows consumption to be accepted and celebrated as 'good' for children and part of childhood. Playing teaches and makes children happy, but as Cook points out: 'children's play, however creative it may appear, remains intertwined with the material manifestations of capital and commerce, that is the commodities themselves' (2001, p.82). Commerce is embedded in play for children, but the toy industry can emphasise play so that the issue of the profane – money – does not have to be mentioned.

It is interesting to note that the children in the images are all showing such delight whilst playing with their new toy (see for example figs 5 and 13). As Gary Cross describes 'the consuming child came to represent desire in its purest form a delight in things that was neither marred by disappointment nor by obsession' (Cross, 2002, p.444). The advertisements rely on the adults pleasure through spending on their child, and the child's supposed 'wondrous innocence' (ibid, p. 444) to overcome their concerns around consumerism.

This brings the discussion to toys themselves.

Toys as Discourse

> All the toys one commonly sees are essentially a microcosm of the adult world (Barthes, 1984, p.2)

If Foucault's concept of discourse constructs and defines certain objects of knowledge, then toys provide an interesting example of how a discourse can suggest certain truths in tangible form. Barthes, in his article on French toys, posits this when he discusses how toys, 'literally' (ibid, p.2) set out the adult world for a child and show them what is acceptable and what is not. Living in a certain historical moment such a view may seem normal, but taking a Foucauldian step back one can question what makes certain cultural beliefs allowable, what do they help sustain? For example, why are weapons (guns, crossbows, water pistols, targets, all available at the BTHA Toy Fair) considered part of western culture? Why are such toys invoking violence and war part of the adult social world? Why are there dolls that cry, wet themselves, snore, need feeding and so on? Are they there for little girls to practice on, as Barthes puts it: 'to condition her to her future role as mother' (ibid p.3)? Gender differences are certainly supported by toys: boys play with guns, girls with dolls, and toys seem to be geared to 'helping' children identify as one or the other. Toys reflect what adults deem acceptable and their views of what children should be working towards. As Barthes describes in relation to French toys, they 'always mean something, and this something is always entirely socialized, constituted by the myths or the techniques of modern adult life: the Army, Broadcasting, the Post Office, Medicine, School etc.' (ibid p.3). All these miniatures of adult social life were present at the BTHA Toy Fair (even the institution of consumption) (see fig 4) all offering a hegemonic discourse of what adults do and implicitly what children should want to do. Interestingly this reflects a particularly dated and nostalgic view of adult jobs, policeman, housewife etc. There were no more modern roles shown, or blending of gender in those roles. One example (see fig 14)

where a boy is involved in cooking (he wears the blue hat!) he is shown as serving while the girl eats, so the connotation is of a professional chef.

For the target audience, parents, these toys supposedly offer educational value. Children can learn while they play, a feature inherent in all toys at the fair. Everything should be fun, but educational at the same time. This proposition by the toy industry allows them to offer commercial items to children under the guise of helping them learn and for parents, this renders consumerism more acceptable: it is good for their child. This seems to represent a truce – so long as the toy teaches (even if it is how to behave in a social world), then it is acceptable. There were many examples of toys being promoted for their educational value, (see figs 14 and 15). Not least many companies had names like 'Oxford Games' and 'Cambridge Games', relying on the connotation of esteemed seats of university learning to portray their toys as of high educational value (See fig 16).

Fig 14. Science and Play stand

Fig 15. Leap Frog stand

Fig 16. University Games stand

Ellen Seiter suggests there are many tactics used by toy advertisers to target parents

often related to Barthes' idea of a miniature adult culture: 'toys are promoted to show

that children will have fun, get ahead in life, achieve in school, be active, amuse

themselves and grow up to resemble their parents.'(1995 p. 50). For parents the idea

that their child will become like them through practicing on toys is perhaps enticing, and

the notion that toys will not only create happiness but teach skills, posits an acceptable

consumable.   As Seiter puts it, 'toys incite in parents strong feelings that are a tangle of nostalgia, and generational and class values' (ibid p.193). In this way a hegemonic discourse of how adults should behave, what jobs are aspirational (scientist, doctor) is articulated through the toys on offer.

Such a hegemony, however, has costs. Barthes argues toys lack flexibility for a child's play. Often imitations of adult items, work benches, costumes etc. they only allow the child to use them, not to create. He believes that toys that provide the child with an opportunity to make their own thing are rare. Interestingly, at the BTHA Toy Fair, even Lego, which might be deemed a creative toy, gives instructions on how to make an item: characters are ready made, and in this particular year (2014), all tied up with the Lego Movie. A child could make something of their own with the bricks, but it is suggested and promoted that they build what was in the movie, they follow the adult-created script.   Once again the idea of knowledge as an adult preserve but which children should copy it in order to become adult, is affirmed.

Toys can be seen then as a material embodiment of a consumerist discourse. As with play, the marketing and toy industries promote toys as commodities whose purchase is a 'good thing'. In this way it bypasses moral and ethical concerns: children are (little) people with desires, they have a right to consume toys; toys are beneficial to children. Proposing that toys allows children to make sense of the adult world, by playing at doctors, dressing up.as a firefighter, the toy industry suggests these products are resources to help the child define themselves, and to learn.   As one manufacturer characterises their brands, they are 'Little Driver, Little Cook, and Little Shopper'. Further, by consuming, with the parent's consent/agreement, the child's cultural world is being structured for the future. Their 'taste' (in Bourdieu's terms, habitus) is being formed through what they play with and how. In a similar way Judy Attfield (1996) conceptualises that toys are dynamic. They are transformed from a commodity to part

of material culture when children start to play with them. 'Thus toys become the vehicles for play through which different aspects of the world can be encountered', (Attfield, in Kirkham (ed) 1996, p.81). However as she goes on to argue in her analysis of Barbie and Action Man, whilst children can subvert the meanings given to toys by the manufacturers they can only work within a certain repertoire. According to Attfield, Barbie is a highly gendered object, however a child plays with her, so that at some level a feminine adult world is still being reproduced.

Consuming as Empowering

The visual imagery and written materials from the BTHA Toy Fair discursively construct the consumption of toys as empowering for children. As a way to help children create their own identity and learn about the cultural world. As Cook explains, for the toy industry, this 'learning' resolves the tension between the 'sentimental' child to be protected and the more independent/'desiring' child, and thereby legitimises selling toys to them. A child's agency is tied up with their consumption. Through interacting with the material world they are 'giving the child status of a full person; legitimate, individualised, self-contained consumers' (2004, p.3). This empowerment through consumption is, of course, limited. As Shankar et al describe (2006), it is a taken for granted assumption that consumer choice leads to consumer empowerment which benefits the consumer. But they argue from a Foucauldian perspective that it is not simply a question of power being taken from the producers and given to the consumers, since power is not something that can be given, or taken. Power is tied up within disciplinary discourses of knowledge in relation to consumption and production. In the case of the former it offers 'choice' but 'is also disciplining and potentially paralyzing' (ibid p. 1014). The authors go on to suggest that marketing discourses are at once disciplinary technologies and technologies of the self. For example, through marketing practices such as segmentation and targeting, consumers are surveyed and

categorized into groups, a process which as Foucault describes, is a form of normalization. However at the same time, through branding, a consumer can work on their identity through consumption, if in constrained ways. These are then, 'two sides of the same coin' (ibid, p.1020). In the case of the BTHA Toy Fair, it is very clear from the documentation that those marketing these toys had a very clear demographic they were targeting, and children falling into a particular target market were homogenised as one type. But at the same time children were offered an opportunity to work on their own identity (via their parent) in terms of the toys offering role playing, dressing up and so on even if constrained by the limits of the toy.

One further aspect of the consumerist discourse is the idea of consumption as nurturing children. As I have already described, many toys are marketed as educational and as part of a child's play which will supposedly contribute to making them happy and so help emotional wellbeing. One rather disturbing example of how a toy manufacturer positions itself as providing happiness is the slogan 'Toys that don't break their promises' (WOW toy stand). The inference is that parents and friends cannot be relied on but consumption can! According to this discourse, if children are to be emotionally fulfilled, they need to consume toys. Happiness as a requirement of childhood can be seen to be part of the noso-politics that Foucault describes (see Chapter Three above). Foucault points to how the health and well-being of children becomes subject to a political and economic management requiring investment to ensure children are managed 'correctly' through medicalization. In contemporary society, since well-being equals happiness, the state and institutions dealing with children and parents are all focusing on and managing this 'well-being'. Integral to this process is play with toys. The toy industry also positions itself as such an institution, concerned for the well-being of children. It assumes responsibility for making children happy, teaching them and allowing them to mature. As already touched on, the National Toy Council set up an initiative, 'MakeTime2Play', to make sure children

played enough. As they put it they are 'concerned with child welfare and promoting a

sensible attitude towards toys and play' (*The Value of Play* leaflet). Several groups

including the 'national press, academics, retailers and toy safety experts' (ibid) are

tasked by the toy manufacturers with giving guidance to parents to help their child play,

as 'through play children hasten their own development while they learn about the

world around them' (ibid). This initiative is promoted on the BTHA Toy Fair website as

well as literature such as the *Child Product Safety Guide* being available at Olympia on

the stand dedicated to 'working to protect our children'. (See fig 18 – the child even

has a hard hat on!) The Toy industry has taken it upon itself to manage how children

play, as they see it, for the children's own good. In addition, literature such as the *Child

Product Safety Guide* offers management of children and their wellbeing, by ensuring

they are 'safe'. Echoing 'managing' practices in the eighteenth century, the health of

children becomes a site for the exercise of power where different apparatuses ensure

children are surveyed and managed for the good of their health and wellbeing.

Fig 18. BTHA stand

The deployment of the word 'our' in the literature from the BTHA Toy Fair is also

interesting, suggesting a collaborative (if sometimes competitive) endeavour in this

project and a shared ownership of children: the child once again rendered as

possession. The Toy industry also uses scientific research to support the

medicalization analogy and to suggest their expert knowledge. In the *Value of Play*,

the *Understanding Aggressive Play* leaflet and the *Child Product Safety Guide* statistics

often back up claims: 'Studies in Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the USA all report that about 60-80% of boys and about one-third of girls sometimes played with aggressive toys at home' (*Understanding Aggressive Play* leaflet).

It is pertinent that in his discussion on noso-politics, Foucault suggests that certain groups act as, 'organs of surveillance' (1988, p.274) for the state so that multiple institutions exercise collective disciplinary techniques over those whose health they supposedly care for. In the case of the toy industry they mobilise parents to help children play in an appropriate, 'healthy' and safe way. As a result, the toy industry sets itself up as the doctor of our time, with power over those in need of care; it is the expert allowed to observe and improve the child's experience.

Given this adopted role, finally I consider how childhood is constructed at the BTHA Toy Fair and the ways boys and girls are divided within it.

Childhood, Boys and Girls

Fig 19. Kids Only Toys Stand

Whilst references about childhood in the literature available at the BTHA Toy Fair were absent, whether written or visual, childhood as a place/space was constructed via stall posters and within the literature provided on the stalls. As figure 19 (above) suggests, the toy manufacturers clearly support childhood as a separate place from adulthood, a

place for children only. This difference is key to their practice of selling toys. As we have already seen, toys help children play and develop their imagination but education is needed to nurture this 'growth'. For example, one promotional slogan read, 'planting ideas, growing minds', another stand referred to 'brain development' (Magformers stand) invoking childhood as a time for maturing intelligence, whilst others relied on nostalgia (perhaps for their own childhood?) with claims such as 'timeless toys' (Timeless Toys and Collectables stand). Again the construction of childhood in the promotional rhetoric spatially separates children from adults: in their own space, where toys are expected and part of their development. What was also surprising, if not shocking in 2014, was how deeply gendered this space was in which boys and girls are completely separated. (See figs 20 and 21).

Fig 20. Tidlo Toys stand

Fig 21. Little Helper stand

In her review of the advertising of toys in the 1950''s and 1960's Seiter (1995) notes the

way the boy is active and the girl passive, or doing male and female gender roles.

Sixty years on at the BTHA Toy Fair 'role play toys' stand, the images show a boy

riding a fire truck, using his work bench (fig 20) and in fig 21 a girl doing the housework

(happily of course). Their gender roles are clearly defined with the boy outside the

home, the girl domesticated. The images of the 'ride-ons' are also gender

differentiated showing a boy engaged in a real-life activity such as being a policeman, whilst girls dress in feminine pink and adopt the fantasy aspiration of being princesses and fairies (Little Tikes stand). Even the style of some of the imagery was paying homage to 50's ads (see fig 19): the lady of the house with her hair tied back, in a retro dress. The dividing practice of girls versus boys remains. It was completely clear as I walked around the exhibition space which toys were specifically for girls, which for boys: the colour scheme, the typeface, and usually (just in case there was any doubt) the slogans. Companies with names such as 'Butterfly Belles' and 'Big Pink Bubble' (unsurprisingly) had completely feminised stands. One striking example, fig 22, shows a stand for 'A Girl for all Time' selling toys that would seem at home in a Jane Austen novel!

Fig 22. A Girl For All Time stand

This stand portrays girls as feminine, creative, imaginative but completely passive,

unchanging as a child through time (hence the title, 'A girl for all time'), even on her

knees on the front of one leaflet. I am sure the girl reading in one of the images is not

meant with any irony (The brand sells 'thrilling novels' as well as dolls and diaries).

The girls in the pictures are either photographed dressed up like miniature adults or

drawn as if portraits. They are positioned as consumers and yet objects, hardly active

agents of their own culture. The same dividing practice was clear in the 'dressing-up' stands. Outfits were clearly marked for girls and boys where the headings are 'boys will be boys', 'historical and pretty as a princess' as fig 23 shows.

Fig 23. Dress Up America stand

As mini-adults children are being shown their sex does signify a difference. There are some exceptions but they almost seem to support the dividing practice in their overt

effort to break it. For example, fig 24 below shows construction toys that even girls can play with! It is interesting that they feel the need to say this. More generally, however, the reason for the girls' exclusion is not clear. Nor why boys are excluded from feminine occupations, for example why a boy couldn't read 'thrilling novels' from the 'A Girl for all Time' stand shown in fig 23?[6]

<u>Fig 24. Trigo stand</u>

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[6] For more discussion on gender and toy consumption, see Ellen Seiter's *Sold Separately: Children and Parents in Consumer Culture* (1995) and Erica Rand's *Barbie Queer Accessories* (1995)

Conclusion

This chapter has considered how children are constructed by the marketing industry, through a specific example – the BTHA Toy Fair 2014. By using Foucault's concept of 'internal discourses' I have shown that the toy industry has its own agenda, namely selling toys to children for money but without ever being explicit about this. Children are its focus but are subsumed by terms such as 'market' and 'segment', thus distancing the emotive subject of children from the financial objectives of the toy manufacturers. As part of this internal discourse I have discussed the striking absence of children at the BTHA Toy Fair itself and in all its literature. Yet invisible children are re- visibilised through the toy stands' imagery of the happy child, subject-ed to what Foucault would describe as a normalising gaze. Two key ideas that the BTHA Toy Fair relied on, imagination and play have also been questioned. Why they are deemed the 'work' of children and why children are expected to develop.an imagination through play as part of their 'natural' progress towards adulthood. By looking at the toys themselves I have also highlighted the association between playing with bought toys and 'happiness' as a central element of this consumerism discourse. I have addressed how the Toy Industry renders this normal, along with their own positioning as expert and carer for children: it is the industry which decides what children need for their own protection and development.

Throughout this chapter I have returned to the silencing and reduction of all children to a single mass. It might be argued that the Toy Industry and the experts described in Chapter Three (above) deploy/construct different discourses but with a similar outcome: positioning the child as confined in childhood and to be silenced.

I will pick up these ideas later in my conclusion. But as a counterbalance the next two chapters give space to a group of children. How do they talk about themselves, their toys, and their play? How do they work on their identities within the constraints posed by the normalising discourses I have discussed in the last two chapters?

Chapter Five

Children's Focus Groups: Creating a collaborative conversation

Introduction

This chapter and Chapter Six explore my research with children. A counterpoint to the Foucauldian discourse analysis of the anti-marketing corpus of texts in Chapter Three and the marketing communications from the BTHA Toy Fair 2014 in Chapter Four, the objective of this research was to try to ascertain how children talked about marketing and consumption, paying attention to other topics they might cover in the course of their conversations. As explained in Chapter Two, it was problematic deciding how best to allow children to do this without overly influencing them with my agenda or constricting their ability to talk about what interested them. The focus groups method I finally chose allowed the children to digress from the topic of conversation as much as they liked. This freedom also gave me an opportunity to observe *how* children talk as well as what they talk about. This turned out to be a thoroughly enjoyable experience, and with unexpected results.   To give a sense of this experience I focus in this chapter on the recordings, teasing out what is interesting in the dialogue itself, allowing it to stand alone. Drawing attention to the children's conversations is important, lest I be accused of concentrating on talk that supports my arguments and using quotes without paying due heed to the context of this information. Given that I am trying to highlight how children and their culture are constructed and constricted by discourse, it is necessary to grant some space to what some children themselves say and attempt to convey the spirit of their conversations without looking for 'hidden' meanings. I am trying to be led by the discussion itself, not extracting quotes to support particular points, so this chapter offers an impressionistic insight.

Firstly, I look at the way the children talk, their excitement and positive approach to a discussion characterised by their vitality and humour. I also attempt to reflect their style of talking: not following logical paths of discussion but instead jumping around (literally in some cases) and drawing on references from many media and sources, such as television, school topics, parents, each other, computer games; in this way creating their own cultural repertoires which bond them as a group apart from adults.

Secondly, I consider how the children use tactics such as humour and secrets in creating their own way of talking and I draw on Coates (1996) idea of the 'collaborative floor' as well as Levi-Strauss' theory of the 'bricoleur' (1962) to suggest that children's appropriation of cultural references creates a dynamic 'bricolage' conversation. This style of talking and borrowing provides, in my analogy, bricks for their collaborative building of a wall. Thus enabling a collective exercise of power and support for their own distinctive culture.

Thirdly, I engage with their particularly animated responses when looking at brands, drawing on Anne Dyson's notion of 'textual toys' (2003) – symbolic materials, taken from media and daily life which children find useful for play. The quality of their responses may have been due to the visual stimulation used in the session but as I will go on to suggest, children use brands not just as a short hand for consumption, or identity, but also as a source of entertainment, in just the same way they regard cartoons, TV personalities, sport and so on.

Compared to the last two chapters, drawing together the material from these focus groups was much more complex and challenging. Whereas with written texts I could choose the material based on its topic and content, children in the focus groups followed their own path. This made carrying out a traditional Foucauldian discourse analysis as proposed by Willig (2001) impossible: the talk was too far reaching and

fragmented for that. Instead I have tried to capture the children's exuberance and their butterfly-like conversational exchanges.

First Impressions: Exuberance and Energy

Girls Excerpt

Line 640: Teacher: What would you choose if it was your birthday?

Kiera: Ooh, a New Look voucher!

Abby: Yeah, that's what I'm getting from my Nan.

Kate: What I want for my birthday *is* New Look!

Teacher: You want New Look?

Kate: Yeah

Teacher: So is New Look a good place to shop?

Kate: Yes!

Abby: Yeah!

Kiera: Clothes!

Kate: Clothes, it's top like, because it's got really cool clothes

Jessica: Popular clothes

Keira: It's got everything that's in the fashion

Teacher: She says popular, so popular is good, is it?

Jessica: Yes

Abby: Yeah

Teacher: So lots of girls go there?

Line 658: Kiera: Oh, so many people! Nobody goes … people don't go to Peacocks QS anymore.

The overriding sense that I gained from sitting in on the focus groups was the sheer animation and dynamism of the children. They had been let out of usual lessons to do something new and their attitude was not to question, worry or be reticent, but instead to launch into a new way of talking with cheerfulness and energy. They were used to

giving 'right' answers to specific questions, so being asked to talk about something without finding a definite answer could have daunted them, instead they seemed to really enjoy the freedom this gave them. I don't want to appear patronising when I say this, quite the opposite. It makes me feel embarrassed to be an adult who would be cynical and voice reservations if I were given the same task. The children were happy to discuss any question and became so animated in their discussion that they often jumped up and down, clutching each other, shouting and laughing. When I listen to the tapes again, it seems they are laughing throughout. This joie de vivre reflects the lack of inhibitions the children showed when saying what they thought, and in particular what they felt about consumption. They experience no guilt in describing exactly what they wanted, what they would buy if they had the money, how they enjoy shopping and what they love and hate.

These high spirits make it hard to see this dialogue as a formal text to be analysed. The children are just enjoying themselves, chatting about things that they take pleasure in; yet I am analysing their talk, making assumptions based on their exchanges. Whilst the children were aware that I was recording them, they did not have an opportunity to reflect, change, temper or delete their words. Perhaps this is always the case with spoken texts. But I feel a caveat is necessary: that each inference or assumption I make, is without the child's approval or knowledge.

First Impressions: Laughter and Secrets

Boys Excerpt

Line 626: Teacher: So what is it about deodorant? Why do you want to smell good?

Jack: Because we want the girls to come………

Joshua: Yeah!

Line 629: All: <Laughter>

Throughout these focus groups the children are laughing and smiling. However it was particularly noticeable that on certain occasions the whole group would laugh together and for some time. Looking at when this happened it seems that laughter is not just about enjoyment for the children but also about a shared complicity. Their laughter is knowing and at the teacher's (and my) expense. For example, when the teacher asks the boys who their role model is, the answer is 'Gordon Ramsay[7]'(line 208). This is a surprise to the teacher and his response causes all the boys to laugh hysterically. The same thing happens when the teacher asks the girls who their role model is. This time the answer 'Selena Gomez'[8] (line 564) means nothing to the teacher and he looks confused. The girls laugh for a while about this. I would suggest that the children are using laughter as a means to show their own (and the teacher's lack) of knowledge of their culture. He is not 'in' on their conversation and this makes them laugh at him together. There are several other examples of this sort of excluding. When the boys are discussing what is cool, both guns and kites are mentioned. The teacher than asks, confused, 'Guns and Kites, that's cool?' (Line 298). Again the boys laugh at him for not understanding what this means. The girls do the same when talking about one of their dads calling Gogos 'Wobbly marbles' (line 423); his lack of knowledge is a source of great enjoyment.

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[7] Gordon Ramsay is a celebrity chef in the UK and US, known for his swearing.
[8] Selena Gomez is an American actress and singer.

Laughter is not just about including the children and excluding the teacher. It also occurs when the children talk about something they find slightly embarrassing and/or not allowed or meant to know about, for example, sex. As when the boys discuss aftershave:

<u>Boys Excerpt</u>

Line 600: Ben: Did he get; like surrounded by girls and they jumped on him or something!

Line 601: All: Laughter, animal noises.

They seem to be using laughter to cover up their embarrassment but also the fact that they are knowing about the opposite sex. The girls also use laughter when discussing boys:

<u>Girls Excerpt</u>

Line 50: Kate: Zac Efron, he's cute

Kiera: He's cute

Jessica: He's alright, yeah

Abby: He's awesome

Kiera: He has really cute eyes……so day-dreamy

Line 55: All: Laughter.

They laugh partly to show they all agree, but partly at the embarrassment of the teacher learning this information.

The Dynamic of Bricks and Bricolage

Girls Excerpt

Line 37: Teacher: Celebrities, OK. Who are you into at the moment then?

All   Zac Efron[9]

Teacher: OK. Go on …

Jessica: I saw [IA][10]

Abby: I'm into lots of different things. I'm not into like one certain person.

 All: Laughter

Kiera: I do like other groups like Chas from the Monkeys.

Abby: Corbin Bleu

Kate: Corbin Bleu

Teacher: Who?

Abby: Out of High School Musical.

Teacher: So tell me about these people then, why are you into them?

Kate: Zac Efron, he's cute

Kiera: He's cute

Jessica: He's alright, yeah.

Abby: He's awesome

Kiera: He has really cute eyes … so day-dreamy.

<Laughter>

Abby: And he's one of the main characters in High School Musical.

Kiera: One, Two and Three!

Teacher:OK

Kiera: And he's in 17 Again as well if that means …

Abby: And he's in 17 Again

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[9] Zac Efron is an American actor and singer, who was the lead in the movie High School Musical.
[10] IA – Inaudible section

Kiera: I just said 17 Again!

Kate: And he's been in Love Film

Teacher: How do you know all this stuff about him?

Kiera: 'cause he …

Abby: Kiera …

Kiera: We love him so much! We follow him everywhere.

Abby: That's [IA]

Kate: Yeah!

Jessica: Yeah!

Teacher: OK. How do you *really* know about him?

Abby: 'cause we have … well we just know about him.

Kiera: Because of adverts and that.

Abby: Adverts and things out of … we just know so much about him from High School Musical, magazine and we've got the … books and …

Teacher: And were you always into him or were you into someone else before him?

Kiera: No …

Line 78: Abby: We like … no … we like other people but mostly we like Zac Efron, yeah.

A noticeable facet of their conversation in this extract (and many others), was the way the children built on each other's ideas, references and jokes. They finished each other's sentences, paused to allow others to fill in the gap, and often had conversations with each child adding the odd word. It feels as if each contribution is a 'brick' and the dialogue builds up creatively in the construction of a wall, which is their shared conversation. This act of 'cultural' building through a shared style of talking is a means of separating themselves from adults. I use this analogy of 'bricks' because it seems to me that it ties in with the way children are talked about by others. As I summarise in Chapter One, many of those who consider childhood 'at risk' use imagery to suggest childhood is a discreet space needing to be enclosed and protected, by adults: a wall

around the 'garden' of innocence. It is thus ironic that children take control, building their own inner wall to delineate where *they* want childhood to end. To do this they each provide a brick to construct the wall collaboratively.

The individual bricks of their answers only work when they are put together. Alone each child's input makes little sense, but the final wall constructed is agreed on by the group and communicated to the teacher. The extract where each girl adds her own adjective to describe Zac Efron (see line 50-54 above) reveals their need to all play a part in affirming that for them he is 'cool'. Their shared icon is confirmed by them all – they all say 'Zac Efron' together (line 38).

This cultural wall is secure only if all the bricks are in place, the children are reliant on each other for what can be said about tastes, views, who is 'cool', even what counts as funny. As the above excerpt shows, the girls in particular often use 'we' to show they agree. If someone says something at odds with the general consensus, they quickly back down or change their words to fit in again. When a child says the 'right' thing, providing an acceptable brick, this is often quickly affirmed by another in the group. All the children have to agree before they move on. Though there is often debate over a decision they all have to conform to an agreed attitude as a basis for further ideas and conversation. This can then be built on or referred back to. For example, the girls have previously decided that the film '17 Again' is cool so it is a safe thing to mention later on that they all like it. Yet when it is revealed that some of them haven't seen the film, they quickly switch to another 'safe' film to talk about, 'Bride Wars' which is again quickly affirmed as acceptable, each of them adding a positive brick about it. This collaborative way of talking is referred to by Coates. She argues that: 'This emphasis on the connection between speakers makes the collaborative floor a powerful way of doing friendship' (Coates in Givon, 1997, p.73). Coates builds on Carole Edelsky's (1981) proposal that there are two kinds of 'floor' in looking at conversational

organisation. The first is the single floor where one speaker talks at a time, but they take turns. The collaborative floor is when all participants talk simultaneously. Coates believes that a collaborative floor is more informal and 'involves shorter turns than single floors, much more overlapping speech, more repetition, and more joking and teasing' (Coates in Givon, 1997, p.70). She suggests that this allows those involved to achieve a joint accomplishment. In her examples the women friends use their conversation to build social relations through the shared space of the conversation.

Coates is talking about adult women, but how friendship is produced by their conversation seems to hold true for the girls too. What is said becomes a group voice rather than a sequence of individual voices: the girls use the collaborative floor to support their social relations and emphasise their shared culture. Similarly Davies (2003), in her analysis of a group of girls talking, demonstrates how the girls cemented social loyalties through their discussion and used anecdotes to show membership of this female culture. To add to this, in my research the girls also relied on a soap opera style of narrative, describing emotions and quoting the characters (albeit themselves!). They tend to keep on topic much more and their discussion forms a more cohesive whole based on all their input.

In contrast the boys have a much more random and quick fire style of talking. It isn't exactly aggressive, but they don't pause to allow each other to finish, they shout over each other, physically hit each other to get their excitement across and overall reveal a more excitable and confusing dialogue. This difference is reflected in Davies's research too. She found that the boys talked very differently and used sexist language and stereotypes as a sort of macho discourse, which helped them to avoid self-revelation. In addition, Davies suggests that boys used 'emblems' from popular culture such as cartoon impersonations, football teams, beer brands and sex channels. 'These carefully chosen emblems were often used in competitive ways to accentuate

familiarity with macho motifs; the wrong choices always attracted derision' (Davies, 2003, p.128). These findings seem to match my own – the conversational 'wall' I describe is competitive, especially for the boys.

However my analogy of building a wall is imperfect. It implies something stationary and methodical. In fact the conversation style is far more fluid, dynamic, creative and chaotic. The participants talk fast and think fast without pausing for contemplation or worry over their response. They boys in particular talk in such a way it is hard to follow their train of thought. They often talk against each other about different things, somehow managing to hear each other at the same time in order to carry on the other person's conversation. In the following excerpt Jack is talking about a film about puppies, Joshua is talking about 'SpongeBob' (a cartoon character) and Ryan is talking about computer games. Each child is happy to abruptly end their train of conversation in order to jump into the next topic. They all move on to a discussion about a new computer game, 'Call of Duty', but again one is trying to explain where he plays it, one is talking about how much it costs, and another is talking about where they saw it advertised:

<u>Boys Excerpt</u>

Line 39: Jack: There's this TV programme that I really like, it's called … it's about training puppies to be movie stars. <Laughs>

Teacher: Training puppies to be movie stars, OK.

<Laughter>

Ryan: I've seen that.

Joshua: I've only saw one of them.

Jack: The puppies were all like….. I liked this bit …

Joshua: <Laughs> SpongeBob.

Teacher: SpongeBob. Yep, you're into SpongeBob. Have you been into SpongeBob for ages and ages, 'cause that's been going quite a few years hasn't it, SpongeBob?

Joshua: Yes. I've been watching it since seven

Jack: I've never liked that.

Teacher: You don't like SpongeBob?

Jack: No

Ryan: … and erm, well games I'm really into, there's this game I've got on Xbox which …

Jack: Call of Duty

Ryan: No. You know the new games on there…

Jack: 007?

Ryan: Yeah, I've got that.

Jack: Oh, I saw you playing that. Saw you playing that.

Ryan: No, not the one on the PlayStation, it's …

Jack: Yeah, I've seen you playing that.

Ryan: No, I'm getting that.

Ben: I've got it.

Joshua: You have to try … you have to smack the [IA]

Ben: I've got it.

C [IA]

Teacher: Where did you hear about Call of Duty from then?

Joshua: Erm … it's on TV and everything.

Teacher: Oh right, OK.

Jack: I mostly play it around my cousin's.

Teacher: And so did you see it on TV and think 'I wanna get that, I've gotta get that'?

Ben: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: I was going to buy it, but it was £30, I thought … I haven't got that kind of money. <Laughs>

Line 78: Joshua: Wait 'til it goes down! <Laughs> You'll have to wait.

The jumping around between topics, but following a path that is obviously clear to all of them (if not to me the listener) seems less about building than the acts of a 'bricoleur'. Coined by Claude Levi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1962), he suggested that a bricoleur (unlike an engineer who is restricted to certain tools and materials) creatively makes do with 'whatever is at hand' (ibid p.2). I would suggest that the children are bricoleurs in their conversation. They jump from topic to topic, borrowing phrases and then moving on in what seems haphazard order, but which makes sense to them. They use references that in Levi-Strauss' terms 'may come in handy' (ibid p.3): a seemingly random selection of cultural references are bound together to create a fresh context, a new meaning. The following exchange is an example of how their train of thought and conversation moves quickly and seamlessly from topic to topic, in an unruly way but which makes perfect sense to them; they are after all used to their conversation style:

Girls Excerpt

Line 549: Teacher: So who's cool in school, or do you not have views on that?

Abby: Jessie

Teacher: Jessica's cool, OK. So if Jessica got into something, would that interest you?

Jessica: I dunno.

M: You don't know. If Jessica said, 'I've got a new Tamagotchi, Paige, why don't you get it as well, and then we can play together,' would that …

Jessica: Or if I said, 'Scoobies [IA]'

Teacher: Oh Scoobies, yeah.

Kiera: Scoobydoobydoo, where are you?

Abby: If they had like new things like you could bring Scoobies or bring loads of …

Kiera: I do stuff what she does, 'cause she's like my role model.

Teacher: She's your role model?

Kiera: Yes

Teacher: Oh right. So who's your role model then?

Jessica: Selena Gomez.

<Laughter>

Teacher: That's another name being thrown in – who's Selena Gomez? Is she a Wimbledon champion or something?

Abby: She's out of the Place

Kiera: The Waverly Place

Teacher: What's the Waverly Place, is it like a TV programme?

Abby: It's like these three kids, there's Justin, Alex and Matt, and they're wizards and …

Kate: There's three kids, Justin, Alex and Matt …

Abby: … and they're wizards and Alex is so cool. She wears like really cool things and she's really lazy, yeah? She's just real cool.

Teacher: OK, what makes it cool.

Kiera: It's sort of like different to other programmes that we watch 'cause they're wizards and she like has her best friend, 'cause …

Abby: Parker

Kiera: Parker

Teacher: What age are the children in that?

Abby: About sixteen?

Kiera: Sixteen, fifteen and …

Kate: Seventeen?

Teacher: Would it be cool if they were your age, or would it be better if they were your age?

Kiera: Better if they were my age.

Teacher: You'd prefer it if they were your age, would you?

Kiera: Yes, my mum's favourite is Footballer, well it's not really Footballer, it's about [IA] and has the same birthday as my mum, and 'cause they're celebrating her birthday tomorrow he's going to be … said, 'Who's birthday is it going to be tomorrow, Madison?' and Madison says, 'Mummy's!' He says no, [IA]

Teacher: Is that why he's your mum's favourite?

Kiera: No

Jessica: Paige's uncle has the same birthday as me.

Abby: Freaky!

Jessica: And Mollie's mum's birthday is the day before mine.

Line 599: Kate: And … my baby sister's the same as Kelly's.

In just a few moments the girls draw on a range of different cultural references, ideas and decisions, moving from who is cool at school (they agree Jessica) to 'Scoobies' (a type of toy that was a craze) to 'Scoobydoo' (the cartoon), to 'Selena Gomez' (celebrity) to 'Waverly Place'(TV show) to the plot of this show, to the age of the children in the show, then onto someone's mum's favourite footballer, to birthdays. The girls talk over each other, interrupt each other, and pause to let others talk or finish their sentence (see line 571). But overall they have given a group answer; they have described and shared the various cultural references. This use of previous conversations mixed with popular cultural 'toys' is a bricolage: they borrow previously unconnected references to form a new meaning created by their shared voice. But to pin down further, their style of conversation suggests a dynamic bricolage – it is an ever changing and evolving mix.

A bricolage conversation is also manifest in their borrowed styles of talking. For example, when offering anecdotes they talk in the style of someone describing the plot from a film or TV show, using quotes and describing emotions to make their story more exciting, as in this extract:

Girls Excerpt

Line 317: Kiera: it's like Suzanne ….. still brings her Gogos in and she expects us to bring them in as well. It's like we get bored of it but she's still interested so she brings them in and she says, 'Oh, you didn't bring your Gogos?' and everybody like puts them away and she got sort of annoyed because … we didn't bring ours, so we can't like do swaps and play about with them and whatever.

This bricolage conversation is particularly noticeable in the girls' talk. They often lapse into a 'TV soap style' to describe an event, borrowing a mode of narrating and quotes their peers will all understand and appreciate:

<u>Girls Excerpt</u>

Line: 407: Jessica: Four-Corner-Eight or Forty-Forty, and they were saying, 'Oh, I'm playing with my Gogos, sorry, can we play it another time …' And then I'm like … but then they'd keep playing with them and I thought like I'm fed up, I'm just going to buy them.

This narrating skill is something that Anne Dyson highlights in her study of a group of children in San Francisco (2003). She discusses how children use language as a cultural resource, positing that children, 'borrow voices from close-at-hand people and technology, including television, video and radio. They build local child cultures by appropriating…textual material from any available cultural repositories.' (Dyson, 2003, p.4). The children in her study use a wide range of 'textual toys' to 'forge connections with each other' (ibid, p.30), including conversations, TV shows and material objects, to make their own language and a self-defined social space. In addition, Dyson also believes that children use these cultural resources as a way of, stretching, reconfiguring and rearticulating their resources' (ibid, p.5) to help create their own social space. Her theory of textual toys and the 'transporting and transforming material across symbolic and social borders' (ibid, p.18) builds in particular on Bahktin's dialogic theory, where new elements are introduced to create new words and genre forms. Dyson argues that everything is recontextualised or borrowed or revoiced to allow the children to 'differentiate and expand their knowledge about symbolic systems, social practices, and the ideologically complex world' (Dyson, 2003, p.15). This mixing and borrowing of seemingly unconnected cultural signs, to produce a new and specific

meaning known only to a particular group of children is as vibrant in Sussex as in San

Francisco. For example, when the boys are deciding what is cool:

Boys Excerpt

Line 203: Teacher: I'm just thinking if there's any other things – what about celebrities?

Jack: Daniel Craig.

Teacher: Daniel Craig, is he cool, is he?

Ben: Yes he is.

C: [IA]

Ben: Gordon Ramsey

<Laughter>

Teacher: Tell me why Gordon Ramsey is cool, tell me about that.

C: [IA]

Ryan: 'cause he swears.

Teacher: Does everyone think Gordon Ramsey is cool? I didn't know you knew who Gordon Ramsey was.

Jack: He's the [IA], he's the chef.

Joshua: He's alright.

Jack: I prefer that Marco guy, he's better.

Ben: Marco?

Teacher: Marco-Pierre White. So what makes him cool? Is cooking cool then?

Jack: I just like watching TV shows, but I [IA]

Joshua: That's what I do

Jack: [IA] not on Thursdays [IA]

Teacher: So cooking's cool?

Jack: Yeah, cooking's cool, I cook [IA]

Joshua: The only thing I don't like about cooking is you get burned.

Ben: I tried to cook a pancake …

Joshua: I cooked a pancake and I tried to flip it and it got stuck on the ceiling when I tried to flip it up.

<Laughter>

Jack: [IA]'s done that.

Line 233: Ryan: Yeah, apparently she threw it and it got stuck to her ceiling on her lamp.

Here the children borrow adult celebrities, chefs, (who I doubt are aiming at this audience for their fan base) and decide which ones are cool enough to be used in conversation. Ramsey is chosen, of course, because he swears. In this way celebrity chefs as textual toys help define 'cool'.

Another instance of appropriating language is when the children talk about 'connecting'. This relates to playing on the 'DS', as one of the girls explains, 'Yeah 'cause I had Super Mario Brothers on DS, he loves connecting with me on that (Girls, line 217). The other children are all nodding; they understand what this means. In fact the whole discussion about computer games, with the girls as well as the boys, is full of knowledge and facts that mean something to the other children but little to me as an adult.

Another good example of the mobilising of textual toys is when they boys discuss the various types of cards they collect:

Boys Excerpt

Line 413: Ryan: Pokémon cards … no, Pokémon's not, it's just that no one in our school …

Jack: Shoot Out.

Teacher: What's Shoot Out?

Ben: Match Attacks.

Ryan: Match Attacks.

Jack: No! Shoot Out!

Teacher: Why's that then?

Joshua: You can't get Shoot Out anymore.

Jack: I know, but …

Teacher: So why are they not collected anymore?

Joshua: I dunno, I think it's 'cause like in year 3 and 4 we had a couple of things … like Liam Bendy took a couple of the really good ones.

Ben: Oh yeah. Like Shining [IA]

Joshua: Yeah. That was in year 3 there were Shoot Outs, and now only eight really good ones and he took two of them off Michael Mallin so …

Ryan: So he's got …

Joshua: And then Michael Mallin got a little upset and [IA]

Jack: And then Pokémon cards went out of fashion 'cause didn't Liam take a whole batch of those.

Joshua: Yeah, and Jamie Bowles lost his whole collection.

Ben: Yes, he had about fifty Pokémon cards and they just vanished.

Joshua: All shineys.

Jack: And I lost a couple of my really good ones as well.

Teacher: Do you think they'll come back in again, like when the football season starts do you think the football cards will come back in again?

Jack: Probably

Joshua: Yeah [IA]

Teacher: Will you want to buy them again?

Line 442: Jack: Probably. Well I'm not 'cause I reckon they're a waste of money. It's just collecting pieces of cardboard.

The children are mobilising the number of cards they have, and their knowledge of how to use them, as a method of positioning themselves within the social hierarchy of their peer group.

This taking and re-using of cultural resources for their play is echoed by Evaldsson and Corsaro (1998) who describe how most theory on children's play and games conceptualises their development through play, which suggests that play is purely to allow children to learn how to become adults. Countering this approach, they choose to look at how the children 'appropriate' cultural resources. As they put it, 'appropriation is a stronger notion than active participation. It implies to take over and make one's own' (ibid p. 379). They posit that this is a collective action by children and allows them to 'transform' and 'extend' the cultural tools they have used. This would seem a step further on from Dyson's description of textual toys. Children don't just borrow cultural resources they make them their own, arguably a more active exercising of power.

The children's discussion about 'dare bands' was another good example of them drawing on something culturally unconnected to children but, as Dyson puts it, 'reconfiguring' to suit their own social group. These are ordinary coloured elastic bands but the children have changed their meaning, calling them 'dare bands'. As Kiera says, if an adult wore one 'that would just be freaky!'(Girls, line 478). Depending on the colour of the band, if you break one, you have to do a certain dare. This does not just take place at the school I visited. According to the children and their teacher; other schools had joined in this craze too. The children are deploying elastic bands as a 'style' but also a method of communication, a way of interacting with each other. Appropriating the bands and establishing distinctive meanings, the girls' knowledge of the dares sets them apart from adults:

Girls Excerpt

Line 376: Jessica: Dare bands but everybody calls them Jazz Bands.

Teacher: Right, OK, I'm learning something here, OK, Dare Bands, yeah, OK.

Did you know about these?

Paige: No … we just [IA]

Teacher: Apparently they have a name.

Jessica: It comes with a leaflet and it says the colour, if you break it you have to do these like really scary dares.

Teacher: So they sell these in town, do they?

Jessica: Yeah, in the market.

Paige: Indoor market.

Teacher: And do they break easily? Or do people break them on purpose.

Paige: These are broken …

Jessica: No…

Abby: Some people do … on purpose

Paige: Do it on purpose…

Line 391: Abby: to do the dare, 'because they think it's funny. It's a bit …

The children are then brought back to the topic again by their teacher:

Line 437: Teacher: So how long do you think this craze is going to last, for these dare bands?

Abby: I think they're actually going to last quite a while.

Kiera: About a year?

Abby: 'cause of how popular they are.

Jessica: Year-and-a-half

Teacher: So you think about a year or a year-and-a-half.

Abby: Especially when you go in secondary.

Kiera: Because Oaklands is such a big school and everybody's into them there, I think that … the more and more they get into them, the more and more we'll get into 'em, 'cause Oaklands is a really popular school.

Teacher: OK. So when you go to secondary school you think these bands will be in?

Abby: Yeah

Kiera: Yeah

Teacher: Do you think … I don't know, like when you're 16 and stuff, do you think you'll still be into the bands …

Kiera: Yeah

Abby: Yeah

Teacher: Or do you think there'll be something else?

Jessica: You know Megan Morgan, in year 6?

Kiera: Mhm

Jessica: Her friend Millie and Mille's sister, she's 16 and she's got them.

Teacher: So you think it's going to last quite a while, or it's just that a large age group likes them?

Kiera: I think everybody likes them.

Abby: Except people my age and my mum's age.

Teacher: What age do you think you stop…

Kiera: It's probably when you're just an adult.

Kate: No, I don't

Kiera: 25

Kate: No, I think … I don't know

Abby: I'd stop at eighteen.

Line 468: Jessica: Seventeen or eighteen

This appropriation and cultural restyling of objects across symbolic boundaries marks children's agency, in the same way that subcultures create a distinctive style through bricolage (see for example Hebdige's 1979 study of Punks). The elastic bands are a method of visual communication through which to 'fit in' and bind the group, and separate them from 'adults' for whom such bands are meaningless.

The use of diverse 'bricks' to set up these dynamic bricolage conversations is not only a way of talking for the children, but also a means of supporting their social group culturally through common knowledge and understanding. For example, when the

boys talk about TV they like, they move between shows and celebrities quickly and without pause or reason. They jump between topics, offer different points but all end up agreeing:

<u>Boys Excerpt</u>

Line 168: Teacher: Have you guys got into Big Brother then, 'cause that's just started, hasn't it?

Ben: Yeah

Teacher: Is that popular at the moment?

Jack: Yeah

Ben: My mum doesn't like Big Brother.

Joshua: I'm not allowed to watch it downstairs 'cause I've got my telly in my room and …

Ben: And also she doesn't like [IA], Britain's Got Talent or …

Joshua: She doesn't like loads of stuff.

[IA]

Teacher: So do you like Britain's Got Talent?

Ben: Yeah, but I don't get it to watch it 'cause my mum doesn't like it.

Jack: I like Big Brother.

Joshua: [IA] Britain's Got Talent.

Ben: I have to watch East Enders nearly every night.

Jack: What about Susan Baldwin?

Joshua: I wanted Diversity to win.

Jack: So did I! I thought that Susan Baldwin was going to win 'cause she was a good singer.

Joshua: I've got [IA] but then she gave up Britain's Got Talent.

Jack: She didn't give it up … she …

Teacher: Isn't there some locals around here that were on that?

Jack: Oh, what on X Factor?

Teacher: Was it X Factor or Britain's …

Jack: They're the ones like, they walk really fast when they see me and [IA]

Teacher: Are they cool, are they? Is that cool, having like TV stars in ???

Jack: Yeah, they're OK but they're [IA]

Joshua: My mum said someone was on the X Factor that lives near us … and erm …

Ben: My sister was enjoying X Factor when she was [IA] age.

Jack: On Britain's Got Talent and America's Got Talent you can be any age, 'cause there was a four-year-old that went on.

Teacher: Everyone will be on it – you'll get a chance ,won't you – you'll get a turn.

Jack: Did you see that one with the parrot, the magic person?

Joshua: Oh yeah, that one.

Line 202C: Ben: Oh yeah.

The boys refer to a range of popular TV to show their knowledge, forge their connection with each other and therefore reaffirm their social group.

Of course this mobilisation of 'textual toys' is not always intentional. It seems that the children sometimes refer to a phrase or item to overtly demonstrate their knowledge and social affiliation, but it can also be unintentional with information dropped in almost unconsciously – such as when the boys discuss MacDonald's and one of them starts singing the jingle.

Another illustration of how children use other media and references to consolidate togetherness is when the girls start talking for the second time about the film High School Musical, jumping back to this particular film but on this occasion through its karaoke game. Again they use an anecdotal style to show they are all 'in the know' and involved with the film – it is part of the group's 'language' and 'style'. This consolidation, through referring back to previous discussion, enables the girls to shore up a cultural 'wall' around what they like (in this case anything to do with High School

Musical, be it the actors, the films or the games). They also reminisce about their

shared memories of playing the game, such storytelling further helping to build their

commonality:

Girls Excerpt

Line 260: **Jessica**:   For Christmas I bought Series 2 Apartment Pets and it's really good because I saw it on this advertising thing, and I looked on the back of the box and it looked really good, so I bought that for Christmas and my mum got me the High School Musical 3 game for Christmas, and on the High School Musical 3 one, 'cause on the DS you can plug in headphones, I plugged in my headphones and I listened to High School Musical 3 music, 'cause you could … it's already on there. When you plug in you can unlock things.

Paige: … for my birthday I had that microphone thing and you can sing along.

Abby: Oh yeah, High School Musical 3, it's on the Wii, it's this …

Kiera: It's High School Musical Karaoke.

Abby: I did High School Musical 2 at yours, didn't I?

Keira: Oh yeah!

Abby: That was [IA]

Keira: At Jessie's birthday party …

Jessica: When I was ten …

Keira: Me, her, Mellie and Sophie, 'cause she has a Wii we were playing High School Musical 3 Singing Star.

Jessica: Singing along.

Kiera: It was really funny, 'cause I kept messing up the words, didn't I? <Laughs>

Line 279: Jessica: Yeah

Performing and Pleasing

Another pertinent aspect of the groups was the relationship between the teacher and

the children. This opportunity to talk out of lessons was new for the children, a break

from the usual classroom conventions and something they seemed to really enjoy.

However it didn't come easily for them at times. Shifts in how they talked reveal

something of the different 'voices' adopted for different occasions. Drawing on Elizabeth Frazer's term adopted in her analysis of teenage girls' talk, this could be referred to as a change in their 'discourse register'. (1987, p.420). She describes how people's talk can shift 'registers' even in one conversation as the 'constraints of what is sayable' about a particular topic change. Everyone she suggests has a 'multiplicity of discourse registers available to use'. (ibid p.422). In the case of the children they manifest what can be called their 'school voices' – how they are usually allowed to talk in class, and a little of their 'private voices' – how they talk to each other (but only in the context of the school environment, for example there is no swearing which I suspect in private there would be). However, I would suggest a further 'performing' register – how they talk when they are 'publicly' on show, as in these focus groups. In the latter context, they are competitive in their need to be the one who gets a laugh, or the one who earns approval for their comments. I am not convinced that their views are really their own, or that they would voice the same opinions at home or in a smaller group with no teacher present. As Frazer posits, different discourse registers can be ideologically contradictory and whilst I believe this would be the case for the children, if their private conversations could be heard; during the focus groups they keep to three aligned ways of talking: school voices, more informal school voices and performing voices.

A particularly noticeable moment in the groups when their 'voices' change, is when the teacher takes control of the conversation in order to get the children to look at the white board where some brand logos are displayed. The purpose was to see if they recognized any. The boys shift from a boisterous style of talking, back to a more sedate, question and answer style:

Boys Excerpt

Line 689: Teacher: Let's have a quick look at these then.

The boys immediately aim to please:

Line 690: Joshua: Oooh, Waitrose!

Jack: Apple Mac [IA] thingy, that is so cool.

Ryan: Guinness!

Teacher: Do you know all these then?

Line 696: Jack: Yeah, [IA], MacDonald's, Guinness, Tesco's …

However fairly quickly the boys revert back to their relaxed, physical way of talking that has been used through most of the interviews, so much so that the teacher has to ask them to sit down again:

Line 704: Teacher: Actually boys, do you want to go in here, just because it's recording what you're saying so otherwise we won't be able to hear you. Sit yourselves down, it's all right, it's just so that it can get you on the recording.

I am suggesting then that the way the children talk in these recordings is not how they would talk without a teacher or recording equipment in the room. Instead I think they are 'performing' to some extent, albeit unknowingly. Obviously I have not spied on them in the playground or at home to substantiate this. But it seems that they are more high spirited and loquacious than they might be if not for the special nature of the discussion and the fact that they are being recorded.

Conclusion

In this initial exploration of the recorded discussions I have drawn out some ideas having purchase on the particular style of the children's conversation. It seemed useful to allow the children's conversation its own space, in order to convey this. The aspects I would highlight are the children's adoption of a 'collaborative floor' with each child contributing to the exchange and their talk as a dynamic bricolage in which the

elements are provided by what Dyson refers to as 'textual toys' – everyday cultural resources. Clearly, the children collectively re-appropriate these using them as bricks to build an inclusive cultural wall keeping adults at bay. In the next chapter I build on these ideas to consider other aspects of the children's conversations.

Chapter Six

Children's Focus Groups: Working on collective and individual identities

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the tensions for the children between individual 'technologies of the self' and their collective negotiation with 'technologies of power'. I consider the significance of 'jouissance' and terms such as 'cool' in establishing their individual and collective identity. I also draw on Bourdieu (1984) and his theory of taste to consider the way consumption is implicated in both their construction of identity but also of resistance to adults. Integrally here I also consider the 'dividing practices' mobilised in their conversations marking who and what they are not (girls/boys, older/younger) and their reliance on a 'normalising' discourse to help them construct yet another subject they are not – the adult. I suggest this 'identity work' is contradictory in that individual children attempt to demonstrate their uniqueness and at the same time their similarity to other children. At the heart of the chapter is the issue of whether children are influenced by marketing, as those focused on in Chapter Three fear, or whether marketing provides children with useful resources – the 'textual toys' to be reclaimed in creative acts of bricolage for their own distinctive culture.

Linked to this issue, it could be argued that children are two sorts of subjects – the subject/object of authority, a group organised in specific ways through law, education and parental control, and the more 'active' subject, individuals who negotiate an identity and what it means to be a child within these discursive constraints. As Lupton posits, subjectivity:

> is produced both through the techniques of governmental self-formation produced by external authorities and agencies and through the practices of ethical self-formation by which individuals come to know themselves and give meaning to their experiences' (1995, p.303).

I thus consider whether, as Lupton argues, children can create their own identity through negotiation with 'more powerful adult, social actors' (Lupton, 1999, p.91) and to some extent subvert the subject positions constructed by 'technologies of power'. In this context I also draw in a limited way on De Certeau's term 'tactics' as a means for the weak (in this case children) 'to turn to their own ends forces alien to them' (De Certeau, 2011 p.ix).

I start by engaging with an issue described in Chapter Five, the children's irrepressibility when talking about consumption. Here the term 'jouissance' is particularly useful in perhaps suggesting a form of resistance.

<u>Jouissance</u>

As the following excerpt shows the girls became very animated in their love for New Look[11], they were physically jumping up and down as they spoke and becoming increasingly giggly. Later on in the same conversation they loop back to discuss New

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[11] A high street fashion chain store in their local town.

Look again, and at this point their voices become very high pitched and excited and again they start to jump up and down:

<u>Girls Excerpt</u>

Line 668: Abby: It's like it's all colourful … if it's in the fashion it's luminous clothes and it's colourful

Jessica: Bright colours!

Kiera: Bright colours!

Abby: And big, bold colours, and in New Look they have really cool stuff like luminous nail varnish, and luminous eyeliner and luminous clothes and everything and shoes.

Teacher: Where have you seen people wearing all this luminous stuff then?

Kiera: Just round the town

Abby: Round the town and in New Look

Kiera: When I was going round the coast, all we ever did was go to New Look, we spent about …

Abby: About an hour, and hour and a half.

Kiera: No, we spent … we spent like two hours in New Look.

Kate: I really like luminous colours; I've got some luminous pink shoes.

Abby: <Gasps> Ooooooh!

Line 680: Kiera: How come you have the shoes you want!

This exchange about shopping is particularly interesting, given how some academics and 'experts' discuss consumption, i.e. as something to be concerned about because it is a negative influence on children (see Chapter Three). For these girls consumption was fun, even talking about it was enjoyable for them. There was no guilt or concern evident in their discussions. Perhaps this is why adults find the partnership between children and consumption so problematic: it is the passion, or jouissance with which children indulge in it that feels wrong to adults, almost as if their exuberance is unhealthy and out of control.

For both Lacan and Foucault the characteristic of jouissance is its excessive character; as a result it will always be fleeting, intense, overwhelming and in relation to children, problematic. Firstly because this excess is regarded as something they should not be able to feel, and secondly because it is engulfing and cannot easily be controlled. As I discuss in Chapter One, children are constructed as safely contained in childhood and any lapse of this is forbidden. In addition, the children's jouissance also suggests that by consuming or even talking about consuming, they can be gratified: the children are transgressing a key boundary defining allowed behaviour in childhood.

This idea is touched on by Steinberg and Kincheloe when they discuss the toy industry 'using the production of pleasure as its ultimate weapon' (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2004, p.11) and creating 'hedonistic children' (ibid, p.31). If it is unclear in their description how children might demonstrate their hedonism, the children's behaviour in these focus groups, manifesting so much enjoyment and excitement, could be construed as evidence for this. Kenway and Bullen also refer to the pleasure children gain from consumption and the concerns this raises:

> children's consumer culture, and the 'indiscriminate' pleasures children take in it, are regarded as abject by many adults because they contradict adult ideas about what is 'proper' in regard to children. This is intensified somewhat by the quasi-erotic and transgressive connotations of jouissance. (Kenway and Bullen, 2001, p.70).

For the children this jouissance is sometimes particularly knowing in its excessiveness. They are aware that adults regard it as inappropriate to be so passionate about shopping, money and consumption, and so enjoy it all the more, perhaps as a form of 'rebellion'. A good example of this is evident when the focus groups are shown the MacDonald's logo to see if they recognise it and whether it appeals:

Girls Excerpt

Line 839: Teacher: So these brands here, which ones are cool?

Kate: MacDonald's

Abby: Wii

Teacher: What makes MacDonald's cool

Kate: 'cause their food's lovely! <Laughs>

Teacher: It's the food. What, it's healthy, it's tasty, it has …

Kate: No, it's not healthy!

Kiera: It's not healthy, no.

Abby: It's healthy.

Teacher: You say it's healthy, you say it's not healthy?

Abby: It's a little bit, 'cause it has like little bits of vegetables in it.

Kate: 'cause you can have loads of fat in it though …

Kiera: mm

Abby: And that's what makes it so lovely!

Kiera: Yeah

Teacher: You said MacDonald's is cool. So is it the healthy food makes it cool, or is it just the taste of the food …

Kate: It's the taste

Jessica: It's the taste

Abby: The taste

Kiera: The taste, it tastes absolutely gorgeous

Teacher: And when you in, what do you go in and buy?

Abby: Chicken MacSandwichs

Kiera: Chicken Sandwich with no mayonnaise

Line 864: Kate: Chicken sandwich, no mayo, and a banana milkshake with no chicken in it

The girls are animated in their talk about eating MacDonald's in part because it is unhealthy and therefore something their parents will probably disapprove of. They enjoy this knowing naughtiness.

Another instance of the children's jouissance is when the boys talk about guns. Again, their excitement may be partly because they know this is not something appropriate for them; they are not legally allowed guns and adults, including their teacher, may well disapprove of them. They use guns as their answer several times in the interview and always with great alacrity, jumping up and down, shouting and even at one point hitting each other to make their point:

Boys Excerpt

Line 291: **Teacher**: So what about things that are cool, objects that are cool, toys that are cool? What makes them cool?

Joshua: Guns!

Ben: Kites.

Ryan: Is Rubik's Cube cool.

Jack: Silence!

Line 297: Joshua: Guns!

After deciding guns are cool, the boys go on to discuss them later on in the conversation in the context of their favourite shop – KWG:

Boys Excerpt:

Line 1069: Teacher: Ben, have you got a favourite shop?

Ben: A favourite shop? Erm … erm …

Ryan: Somerfield?

Jack: A shoe shop?

Ryan: Waitrose!

Teacher: Joshua, favourite shop?

Joshua: Erm … [IA]

Ryan: Oh no, no, KWG!

[IA]

Teacher: Why?

Joshua: erm… erm … Diary of a Wimpy Kid.

Teacher: Diary of a 1p Kid?

Joshua: *Wimpy* kid!

Teacher: Wimpy Kid? Diary of a Wimpy Kid?

Ben: 'Please don't hurt me!'

Jack: KWG is a gun store.

Teacher: Ah!

Jack: 'cause he goes 'Bam' and …

Ryan: But when I need more cartridges my dad gives me a ten pound note and you get 40 cartridges for a ten pound note.

Teacher: They let you buy those in the shop, do they?

Ryan: No, you need a licence, but…

Jack: You need to be an adult.

Ryan: You even need a licence for an air rifle, 'cause I bought an air rifle in this shop, it fires [IA], and I went up there and he went, 'Do you have a licence?' I went, 'No!'

Teacher: And they wouldn't let you in to sell you any more things?

Ryan: No, they're not … then I walked out the shop and then put it back, and then … 'cause my dad was in there, and then … I put it back and then my dad picked it up and …

Ben: And bought it?

<Laughter>

Line 1102: Ryan: And they said, 'Do you have a licence for it?' 'Yes!'

And then again, when asked what they would buy with £100:

Line 1103: Ryan :A gun!

Jack: I would [IA] box!

Joshua: Shot gun!

Line 1108: Teacher: Guns?

The children's 'excessive' reactions and apparent jouissance suggests they are testing their power by talking with enthusiasm about what they know is transgressive, in this case guns. The children seem to be pushing against the adult-built boundaries of childhood: they are talking about what are meant to be adult subjects for conversation and what is definitely not part of the construct of the natural, innocent child. As I have outlined in Chapter Five, they use collaborative construction to build a wall which allows action in a 'space' beyond that in which adults assume them to be located. This can be construed as what Foucault would term a 'strategy of resistance'. He argues that subjectivity is a discursive production, not fixed but in negotiation with the regimes of power and knowledge. Another useful purchase on thinking about how the children push against regulatory discourses is feminist theory drawing on Foucault. As Jana Sawicki (1991) summarises, adopting Foucault's analysis of disciplinary technologies exercised in relation to women allows for an approach which emphasises anti-essentialist and historically contingent subjectivities. Extrapolating that children are also a minority, subordinated group, they use their jouissance partly to resist but also to form their own, collective identity as definitely not adult through 'technologies of the self'.

The children's discussion of 'cool' develops further how 'technologies of the self' come up against 'technologies of power'.

Taste and Cool

One word that was used a lot in the interviews was 'cool' both by the teacher and the children. The children may well have been led in their use of the word by their teacher, but it is of value to consider how the children engage with a 'cool' discourse, particularly in relation to taste. In *An Analysis of the concept of cool and its marketing implications* Nancarrow and Nancarrow (2002) explore the root of 'cool' in relation to Bourdieu and cultural capital, suggesting that whilst it is an overused phrase it acts as an important shorthand. They suggest that whilst, 'as a word it [cool] might seem to have become almost meaningless: as a concept it has considerable power' (ibid, p.312)

For the children if something or somewhere is defined as 'cool' then it has cultural capital. For example, New Look, a local clothes shop, is the place to buy things, because in a way everything from that shop has cultural capital. A girl can't make a fashion mistake and not be cool so long as she buys her clothes from that particular shop. And conversely to buy from Peacocks[12] or QS[13] would be a cultural error for which a girl would be demoted or culturally frowned upon within the group:

Girls Excerpt

Abby: Clothes, it's top like, because it's got really cool clothes

Kate: Popular clothes

Abby: It's got everything that's in the fashion

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[12] High Street fashion chain store known for being cheap
[13] 'Quality Seconds' a cheap outlet clothes chain store

Teacher: She says popular, so popular is good, is it?

Kiera: Yes

Kate: Yeah

Teacher: So lots of girls go there?

Abby: Oh, so many people! Nobody goes … people don't go to Peacocks or QS anymore.

Teacher: Why don't you go to Peacocks and QS anymore?

Line 661: Abby: Because they haven't really got anything that's in fashion. When you look at things, it's just babyish really…

 Different places, toys, clothes, films and games move in and out of favour. Cool (which is their aspiration) one day, not the next. The children seem to borrow their taste from each other, particularly the taste leader, the child who has the 'right' taste and is followed in their likes and dislikes. In each group this taste leader was obvious: from the outset, they were the most definite in their opinion, with the others then following them.   In the manner outlined in the previous chapter, the children act as bricoleurs deciding what elements combine to make someone (or themselves) cool, picking up and discarding elements from their various points of reference. For example, when the boys discuss computer games there is some debate about Xbox versus PlayStation and which is better. Jack, who leads their decisions has an Xbox and gives various reasons why it is better:

Boys Excerpt:

Line 707: Jack: I've got an X-box and a Wii 'cause my dad's friend was selling an X … 'cause I sold my PlayStation and about 50 games to buy an X-box 'cause … 'cause my dad's mate was selling an X-box with a few controllers, a charger, a memory card and two games, no four games, [IA]

Ben: Weeeeeeeee…

Ryan: What were they?

Jack: [IA]

Teacher: So what made you really want to have that X-box and get rid all of that PlayStation stuff?

Jack: The graphics and the memory

Teacher: How did you know it was going to be better, how did you know it was going to be worth it?

Jack: Because my friend's got a Xbox and my cousins.

Ryan: A 360 or an [IA]

Jack: Yeah, that's the new Xbox, I don' think that's … that might just be like the tier 3.

Ben: I think that might just be [IA]

Ryan: The ??? is rubbish.

Teacher: How did you know these things? How did you know … I've never heard of the Xbox 720! Where did you find that from?

Jack: [IA] the Xbox 720 comes out [IA]

Teacher: So is there a PlayStation 4 as well coming?

Ryan: I don't know, but …

Ben: It's coming soon, it's coming in September apparently.

Jack: The thing is, Xbox is the reason you buy it is the KDXB Elite, like £240, but the PlayStation 3 was about £400 when it was new.

Ryan: Yeah, but that's [IA]

Joshua: No, but Jack, there's nothing different, OK, it's got BlueRay and you can get … there's free BlueRay, all you need's an internet connection for live, but …

Ben: I don't know, I've got wireless with a laptop.

Line 739: Joshua: I broke my laptop [IA]

They then discuss Xbox against Wii and again Jack, the taste leader leads them to agree that Xbox is the best. The other boys raise objections and voice their own ideas but in the end they agree that Xbox is the best. The Xbox then becomes part of their 'cool' culture (at least for a time):

Boys Excerpt

Line 750: **Joshua**: Wii, it's really interactive.

Ben: Oh yeah

Ryan: I don't reckon.

Jack: [IA] got an Xbox 350 Elite, so yeah.

Ryan: I don't reckon Wii is all that good because I've got one, I've played with it like mad for a couple of days and then I didn't play it for like a month.

Line 756: Jack: Xboxes are amazing

The girls also rely on their taste leaders to help form their decision on what is cool or in their case, not 'babyish':

Girls Excerpt

Line 1079: **Abby**: If somebody bought me something and it was *really* babyish, like Barbies, I would …

Paige: I've got a Barbie!

Abby: That is *so* babyish.

Jessica: If somebody bought me some [IA] I'd keep it for a while, 'cause I don't want to like …

Teacher: You've got Barbies, how do you feel about this…

Paige: No, I've got like Barbies and their accessories and clothes and stuff, but I don't play with them anymore.

Kiera: So can't you sell them?

Teacher: So what's wrong with Barbies?

Line 1091: Abby: They're babyish.

Paige, who still has Barbies is careful to explain that she doesn't play with them anymore to ensure her place is secure within the group. The girls use dolls and the boy use computers as a way of showing what is cool (read acceptable) in their social group. In the terms discussed in the previous chapter, talking about these choices and

arriving at a settlement on what is 'cool', the children construct their cultural space collaboratively.

Another element of 'cool' helps the groups further create their own values. 'Boring' is their shorthand for something that is out of favour and not cool, not part of their culture. As counterpoint to their fast-paced conversation, the jouissance and dynamic bricolage of conversation, being boring or 'the same' is not acceptable, it is a way of excluding certain things/people from their shared culture:

Girls Excerpt

Line 291: **Teacher**: What makes something go out then?

Jessica: Well, it just gets boring really.

Kiera: Yeah

Abby: You just keep playing it and playing it and then all of a sudden … somebody gets bored and then …

Jessica: I like [IA]

Line 297: Kiera: Or their friends or the other person gets bored…

Or in another part of the discussion:

Line 903:**Abby**: Babies clothes, that's boring.

Teacher: Babies aren't cool, right?

Abby: Boring

Line 906: Kiera: It's got nothing cool! It's just like boooooooring!

They boys show a similar attitude, with 'boring' as their short hand for not 'cool':

<u>Boys Excerpt</u>

Line 300: Teacher: OK, let me say some names to you. Tamagotchi, is that cool?

Jack: No!

Ryan: No!

Joshua: No

Teacher: Why not.

Ryan: They're boring!

Teacher: So how come something that used to be cool, why is it not cool anymore?

Line 307: Jack: Because they're out of fashion.

And then again:

Line 354: Teacher: So how do things go out of fashion?

[IA]

Jack: Because people just can't be bothered and they think it's just boring now because there's new things out what they like and they're just jumping on the others and the new stuff.

Teacher: So they play with it too much and they get bored of it?

Line 360: Jack: Yeah

This collective effort in deciding what is in fashion and what is not, reflects Bourdieu's theory of taste. He argues that taste is not down to the individual alone, but socially structured. Interestingly, Bourdieu believes that childhood is a stage where taste becomes embodied to reflect social position.   In *Distinction* (1986) he proposes that there are three types of capital; cultural which shows knowledge of high culture and education, economic capital (wealth) and social capital (who you know). The individual has an unconscious acceptance of their place based on these capitals, a 'sense of one's place' (ibid, p.141). For children, as they acquire cultural capital they begin to

show their taste, which in turn shows their place in society. In my research, the children's use of 'cool' is part of their cultural capital and reflects their taste in Bourdieu's terms.

Similar in their adoption of the categories of cool and boring, yet it is interesting how different the boys and girls are in their terms of reference. The girls do talk about computer games but TV shows and films feature more as their shared cultural references. The boys do talk about Gogos but don't mention dare bands at all. Differences between them are manifest in other ways too, including in their 'dividing practices'. Working on their 'way of being' (Foucault, 1998, p.16) within the constraints of the technologies of power, children use dividing practices such as gender and age, to substantiate and validate some of the 'regimes of truth' about them as children. Some of the latter seem to be accepted by the children and some resisted.

Dividing Practices

The disciplinary discourse of gender differences permeating society is also strongly evident in the children's talk. For example, the boys use 'girly' as a derogatory term to imply something is not cool:

Boys Excerpt

Line 307: Teacher: So how come something that used to be cool, why is it not cool anymore?

Jack: Because they're out of fashion.

Ben: They're all girlish now.

Ryan: Not really.

Ben: I lost mine.

Ryan: Not really, 'cause how come …

Jack: If you think about it …

Joshua: I stand on mine.

Ryan: If it was red, how can it be girly? There's not many girls like red, so … it's not exactly girly.

Line 317: Ben: OK, maybe if you look in an Argos catalogue and you look up Tamagotchi and you'll see it in the *girls'* bit!

In contrast, girls use 'boyish' as a positive trait in a game or brand. For example when talking about a new computer game:

Girls Excerpt

Line 224: Jessica: When you look at the advert it's more … it looks more like a boy's game.

Abby: Boyish. Boyish game.

Jessica: But when you play it, it's actually sort of like …

Teacher: Did that make it look interesting, it was a boy's game?

Kate: Yeah

Teacher: So you like boyish games?

Line 230 : Jessica: Yeah, I like sort of like adventure games and that.

Gender lines are clearly delineated too, in the discussion of brands, for example New Look is used by both sexes as an example of a female brand. The girls choose it as their favourite place when talking about birthdays and what they want. Kiera says 'Ooh a New Look voucher' (Girls Focus Group, line 641) whilst Kate says 'What I want for my birthday is New Look!' (Girls Focus Group, line 643). They all agree it is *the* place to shop. The two friends talk fondly of how they spent 'like two hours in New Look!' (Girls Focus Group, line 677). In contrast, the boys choose New Look as an example of what is specifically for girls 'New Look is girls! '(Boys Focus Group, line 935) and add 'I've only been in there twice, luckily' (Boys Focus Group, line 936). This use of shopping as a social activity for girls, but to be avoided by boys, seems to bear out the findings of

Russell and Tyler (2002) in their examination of girls shopping. They found that girls find pleasure and power in shopping in a 'girly' way: it was enabling in their construction of femininity. (Albeit, of course being feminine and doing 'girly' things also constrains girls.) Thus if boys see being girly as something to be avoided and a lesser state of being (trailing behind any 'cool' trend) and girls see it as something to aspire to, both groups accept femininity as closely associated with shopping. (See also Boden et al on gender and consumption practices 2004).

Gender roles are articulated not only in *what* the children say, but also *how* they say it. As I have discussed above (Chapter Five), the girls tended to demonstrate social loyalties in their conversation, using anecdotes to show and affirm their membership of this feminine culture. Conversely, the boys rely on a 'macho' discourse to show they are boys. For example when talking about what makes someone cool, they choose as a deciding factor, 'the way they react when they get hurt' (Boys Focus Group, line 238). They agree that Joshua is cool because 'he thinks he's tough' (Boys Focus Group line, 248). This 'macho' discourse unites them even though it is divisive; the boys are often derisory to each other and there is much laughter at each other's expense:

Boys Excerpt

Line 626: Teacher: So what is it about deodorant? Why do you want to smell good?

Ryan: Because we want the girls to come …

Ben: Yeah!

<Laughter>

Jack: Yeah, but these three have had no luck!

Ben: Oh no, I have!!

Davies et al (2000) discuss how laughing, by boys in particular, is a type of social and cultural currency. Being funny and finding things funny is part of their identity. At one point, when they have been calling one of them cool, the others start to mimic him as if to bring him back down:

Boys Excerpt

Line 645: **Ben**: Cooool!

Jack: You don't look cool if you start walking like …

Teacher: OK …

Ryan: <Laughs> If you're walking around like this …

Line 649: <Laughter>

As I discussed in Chapter Five, what doesn't come across in the transcripts of the groups is how much more physical the boys were – constantly jumping up and down, hitting each other, moving on their chairs, never staying still. The girls were more contained and calm, more aware of being 'sensible', although even their natural exuberance sometimes came through. It seems that a gender-as-different discourse is enacted not just through language but through actions too.

However, despite the clear construction of masculine and feminine through what and how things were said, one domain seemed exempt; the two sexes agree on computers and computer games as the most important social activity, along with crazes. They declare X Box is the best gaming platform and that 'Call of Duty' is the best game. Computer games seem to be a particular social activity for the children in these focus groups with talking about them as important as playing them. They are also a source of child-specific knowledge and taste. This alignment of brand taste is interesting and seems to contradict much academic writing on children's consumption. For example,

Otnes et al in their analysis of brand requests from children (1995), found their desires to be very gender specific. The girls wanted Barbie, the boys Ninja Turtles. But as with all assumptions about children gendering is not so straightforward. As with being an adult, the children choose when to be 'girly' or 'boyish' and when not to. Clearly when talking about computer games the girls do not feel the need to emphasise their femininity. Similarly with crazes. With the exception of dare bands, which the boys did not mention (but this doesn't necessarily mean they were not buying them) no craze mentioned was specifically for girls or boys. Everyone seems as involved in Gogos or Diablos[14], with gender less important than being part of the community of children all of whom are involved.

The second dividing practice that the children themselves seemed to support was that of age and stage. For example, within all the focus groups I found repeated references to children as clearly age-defined. The children saw themselves neither as adults nor as 'babies'. They clearly felt that age was an important facet of their identity and to be seen as younger was not acceptable or fashionable (i.e. desirable): 'Because they haven't really got anything that's in fashion. When you look at things, it's just babyish really' (line 660, Girls Focus Group). The children often referred to other children by the year of school they were in, as if this was part of their shorthand for describing them. 'Kai in year three. He brought one in' (Boys Focus Group, line 378), 'You know Megan Morgan in year 6? (Girls Focus group, line 455).   This focus on age as a factor of childhood seems to reflect the Piagetian discourse found in many academic commentaries about children (see Chapter Two) as well as by the marketing industry (see Chapter Four) and the experts (Chapter Three). As Foucault might argue, this discourse is integral to disciplinary techniques, (with school, for example, exercising power through dividing children by age, if no longer by gender!). It is perhaps not

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[14] Diablos are a toy, similar to yo-yos

surprising, then, that children take on the significance of this dividing practice. As James (1998) suggests, the process of ageing for children is bound to discreet categories based on the physical body alone which defines and controls the social body and constructs the 'truth' that children can be studied in a developmental psychology context: there are definite developmental stages in the process of becoming adult.

However, whilst the children seemed to accept the age and stage discourse, they did not aspire to becoming adult, or see themselves as lesser or potential victims, as posited in adult discourses. Instead of seeing themselves in the process of becoming adult, the children resisted this, preferring to be children and seeing adulthood as uncool. When talking about those older than them, there was no sign of envy or eagerness to become older: 'you stop playing when you're that age' (Girls Focus Group, line 475).   And when mentioning adults their tone is often derisory. For example when the girls are talking about following a trend:

Girls Excerpt

Line 765 : Abby: I would probably do it, but if everyone was saying like, 'Oh god, you look ridiculous' then I'll probably like stop doing it.

Kiera: Yeah

Jessica: At the moment I'd laugh

Teacher: What if your parents said, 'You look ridiculous'?

Line 770 : Jessica: Well yeah, but they're adults! Nobody cares what adults think!

The children also define adulthood as when things cease being cool, for example, dare bands:

Girls Excerpt

Line 460: Abby: I think everybody likes them.

Kiera: Except people my mum's age.

Teacher: What age do you think you stop…

Line 463 C: Kate: It's probably when you're just an adult.

In addition, the children use the knowledge they hold as a way of showing they are not adult and that adults are the lesser ones. When they are discussing Gogos (the last craze) Kate says 'my dad calls them wobbly marbles ' (Girls Focus Group, Line 423) and this causes laughter in the group. When asked, 'Did that put you off buying them?' by the teacher (Girls Focus Group, line 425), she replies 'No…cause ever since I started buying them, he suddenly couldn't know what they were, when I bought them and he saw them he started calling them Wobbly marbles' (Girls Focus Group, line 426) and again this causes laughter. The children have a knowledge about something adults don't understand and this makes them feel superior.

The children also use taste as a way of claiming their childishness as desirable because they can wear things that adults shouldn't. For example, when discussing dare bands, the girls are asked 'What age do you think you should stop? '(Girls Focus Group, line 462). They reply 25, 18 and 'I think that I'd be a bit too old to wear them at that age' (Girls Focus Group, line 474) and when asked if the teacher could wear them and be cool, the reply is 'No, that would just be freaky!' (Girls Focus Group, line 478) and much laughter. The boys in particular also mark their difference from adults with distinctly childish humour that suggest a resistance to being grown up. When talking about buying deodorant they are happy to trade insults: 'His mum smells! (Boys Focus Group, Line 569) and make animal sounds, while jumping up and down, (Boys Focus Group, Line 601) to make their point and in part to shock the teacher. Thus in the dividing practices between adult and child, the child does not perceive her/himself as the lesser being. In one instance the girls are talking about laptops and whilst they accept they would be good to own when they are older, they are clear they don't want

one yet. They are aware what constitutes adult culture but are in no hurry to align

themselves with it:

<u>Girls Excerpt</u>

Line 634: Abby: My dad's got a laptop, but me and my brother Joshua are like
        allowed to go on it, and … actually when my dad got it, me and Joshua went,
        'Oh, that's so cool' and everything, and he said, 'By the time you're about
        fifteen, you'll be wanting one.' <Laughs>

Teacher: So you don't want one now, at the moment?

Line 639: Abby: No

This does not mean that it is as simple as not wanting to be adult – instead I would

suggest that the children choose when they want to be adult-like and when they want

to be child-like. Davies, Buckingham and Kelley (2000) make a similar argument when

looking at children's tastes. They suggest that 'children are choosing to identify with

and to occupy some 'adult' subject positions rather than others, while at the same time

avowedly retaining aspects of 'childishness'. (ibid, p.9).   They continue that it is,

'through their expression of taste that children lay claim to, and attribute meaning to

their preferred social identities' (ibid, p.10). Of course they point out that children are

not able to choose from an infinite variety. They are constrained within certain subject

positions, but are able to decide by engaging in identity work when they are adult-ish

and when they are child-ish. In my groups the boys act adult when talking about

wearing deodorant but then quickly revert to a more playful, childish tone and start

being physical again:

<u>Boys Excerpt</u>

Line 582:**Ryan**: I use Lynx erm …

Joshua: I use Lynx and [IA]

Jack: I use Lynx, sometimes I use Rightguard, and when I go out somewhere special
        I nick some of my dad's aftershave.

<Laughter>

Teacher: OK. So how do you choose which ones suit you – were you in the supermarket smelling them?

Ryan: Yeah, no, the thing what made me buy Lynx is I got this really nice that one that I had … it was … dunno…. Then getting this Lynx bodywash, I thought what's the deodorant going to be like and it was really nice, and then I started buying it and …

Jack: No! But then when I started using Rightguard for a bit because there was this Lynx-wise thing and I saw it in the newspaper and it smelt, it was really strong, it started making me cough! And I saw this thing in the newspaper, this boy died of using it. So I stopped using it.

Ben: Because it smelt too much!

Jack: No

Ben: Did he get like surrounded by girls and they jumped on him or something!

<Laughter, animal noises …>

Line 602: Jack: 'Get away from me!'

Consumption choices by the children also seem to support the dividing practice of 'not adult'. Consumption is integral to their identity but also, I would suggest, a means to subvert adult norms, as in the case of the boys choosing guns as something they would like to buy, not the preferred choice a parent would want them to make. In this way as Boden et al (2004) propose, consumption can contribute to a subversion of control within the parent-child relationship. However it is worth pointing out that when given a screen full of logos the children found it hard to decide what was for adults what was for children and what was for both. Of course there is not a right/wrong answer to this, which I think was challenging for them given that usually they are expected to give definite answers, but their confusion perhaps also reflects a blurring of their more usual perception: a clear-cut divide between adult and child:

Boys Excerpt

Line 861: Jack: Honda is for grownups. MacDonald's is kids.

Ryan: No, because MacDonald's is for [IA]

Jack: No, MacDonald's is really kids!

Ryan: No, it's …

[IA]

Ben: MacDonald's is small, because they don't give you much!

Teacher: We're not sure about MacDonald's so we'll put it moving up and down …

<Laughter>

Teacher: Coca-Cola?

Jack: That's kids.

Ryan: No, middle.

Joshua: Middle

Ben: Middle

Teacher: Middle?

Jack: No, 'cause …

Teacher: Know what H&M is?

Jack: Erm … clothes shop.

Teacher: Clothes shop.

Jack: That's for adults.

Ryan: No, middle, middle …

Ben: Who would go…

Ryan: Is that a men's clothes shop?

Teacher: H&M, men's and women's, children's …

Ryan: Put it in the middle.

Ben: Middle

Joshua: Middle

Jack: No, no, that's children!

Ryan: No, not really

Ben: No, it's [IA]

Ryan: Move it up and down.

Line 892C: Joshua: No, it's not Jack, because … that's not the point.

A further dividing practice that separates the current generation from previous and subsequent generations is the take-up of crazes. The children accept crazes as fast moving and that what is in fashion now, will soon be out of fashion. They think carefully about how long a craze should last:

Boys Excerpt

Line 521: **Teacher**: How long would a toy or game stay popular?

Ryan: About … mm three months.

Ben: Three months.

Jack: Two months

Teacher: Two months?

Ben: Two-and-a-half to five months.

Jack: No …

Joshua: No, I reckon …

Jack: Depends what it is.

Joshua: No, I reckon a month and a half, 'cause Gogos barely stayed in for a month.

Line 531: Ben: Those were awesome

A craze's popularity rests on each child showing their cultural capital through their knowledge, about when the particular toy/game/card is in fashion and when it is no longer cool. For example, Gogos, where the discussion centres on how many you have, and which ones:

Boys Excerpt

Line 451: Jack: If they bring out another like … another series of Gogos, 'cause they've got 1, 2 and 3, if they get like 4, 5 and 6 I would buy them.

Teacher: What do they change about them when they get the new ones?

Jack: It's just new ones.

Joshua: It's a new name or …

Ryan: Yeah, but the thing is they get…

Jack: Some of them get rare ones.

Joshua: Not really. Not really.

Teacher: So if you've got one of the really, really rare Gogos, how would that make you feel?

Ben: Really good.

Ryan: Really happy! I got Crowbar [IA]

Teacher: And would you tell everyone in school about it?

Ben: No, I'd keep quiet, just in case like …

Ryan: They know and then they might come and try and get it.

Teacher: So you wouldn't want to go round say to everyone, you wouldn't like think, 'I've got this – look, I'm brilliant, I've got this!'?

Ben: No, they might [IA]

Line 472: Jack: The thing is with Gogos, they're exactly the … some of them have got the same effects, 'cause I've gone on the 75 one with its arms like that, and that was in series 2, and I got one in series 3 with its arms just like that, so they're just changing the faces so there's not actually much difference about them.

The ability to make such fine differentiations allow this particular group of children to perceive themselves as different from older children when they were the same age – each craze supplies a different form of cultural capital. They also need to demonstrate that they know when something is no longer in fashion, and therefore not for their generation anymore:

Girls Excerpt

Line 289: Abby: It's just going out. Like Diablos, they went out.

Kiera: And now they're coming back in.

Teacher: What makes something go out then?

Abby: Well, it just gets boring really.

Kiera: Yeah

Abby: You just keep playing it and playing it and then all of a sudden … somebody gets bored and then …

Paige: I like [13:37 IA]

Abby: Or their friends or the other person gets bored…

Teacher: So do you think Gogos will come back in again like in a year's time, like diablos?

Kiera: Yeah

Line 301: Abby: I think I might sell my Gogos on Ebay to make some money.

As Buckingham and Sefton Green (2003) discuss in their research on Pokémon as a craze, it is important for each new generation of children to mark themselves as different from previous generations by 'discovering' cultural practices that can be claimed as their own. Childhood as a community is constantly shifting, and the children within it are aware of this, and work to bolster their difference from other 'childhoods'. This emphasis on difference goes against the grain of most non-academic, social discussions around children, where authors choose to see childhood as a stationary place, with unchanging culture. Children resist this notion through this reliance on crazes. Who decides what the next craze is uncertain, but everyone remembers who started it and how it became popular:

Boys Excerpt

Line 369: Teacher: There's adverts for lots of things, so how does one item suddenly … you know, 'cause I'm at   school and then suddenly everybody's bringing in one

particular toy. There are adverts for lots of things on telly so what makes some things …

Jack: It always starts with one person, who got this thing …

Ryan: Like with Gogos.

Jack: … one person comes in and says, 'Oh that's cool, I want one…' and then he comes back with one and then it spreads around.

Teacher: So who started the Gogos.

Jack: Kai in year 3. He brought one in.

Ryan: And then Adam came in, and then [IA]

Jack: And then Joshua … and then …

Joshua: No, it wasn't me. Then it was [IA]

Jack: [IA] and then Joshua, then me. I was probably the latest.

Ben: No, I was!

Jack: Oh yeah, yeah.

Ben: I've only just started.

Teacher: So when they first started bringing those in, what did you feel what you saw them?

Jack: At first I thought they were boring…

Joshua: I really wanted one.

Jack: …and after a while I just sat there watching and I thought …I don't want [IA]

Line 392: Joshua: When I found out it was a game sort of thing I got caught.

Considering how crazes start, Hansen and Hansen (2005) suggest that early adopters (or innovators) are often the opinion leaders as well. The findings here also reflect this – once someone brings a new craze into school, they become cool by default, to be followed. And conversely, if someone persists in a craze when it is no longer in fashion, then they are noticed and labelled as not cool and therefore not in the children's community, as the excerpt below highlights:

Line 317: Jessica: It's like Suzanne still brings her Gogos in and she expects us to bring them in as well. It's like we get bored of it but she's still interested so she brings them in and she says, 'Oh, you didn't bring your Gogos?' and everybody like puts them away and she got sort of annoyed because … we didn't bring ours, so we can't like do swaps and play about with them and whatever.

The children discuss younger children taking over a craze:

Girls Excerpt

Line 703: **Kiera:**   It could just go out of fashion.

Teacher: It could just go out of fashion?

Abby: I think I could just get bored with it.

Teacher: How does that happen?

Abby: Just 'cause it does.

Teacher: Would you want to see your baby sister wearing it?

Jessica: Yes!

Line 711: Abby: Yes, I'd like that.

These exchanges quite clearly point to childhood culture being specific to a particular age group, in a particular place. The children use their taste to show they are part of the same social group and specifically not younger, or not adult. They rely on a shared acceptance of what is 'cool' to do this, as well as cultural capital in terms of what they know about as well as what they like. They children rely on their leaders to indicate to the group what their taste should be.

Normalisation

But if crazes are a means of differentiation, they also 'normalise'. Foucault suggests that society adopts a 'range of degrees of normality indicating membership of a homogeneous social body, but also playing a part in classification, hierarchization, and

the distribution of rank' (Foucault in Rabinow, 1991, p.196). In the case of these children, they want to be part of the group; nobody wants to be different. Wanting to be 'fashionable' (as with crazes) can in fact be translated as wanting to be 'normal'. Once the criteria for what it means to be a child are accepted by the group, these are then used as a measure by which all are judged and anyone who does not meet the criteria is judged 'abnormal'. The girls even admit that if painting your ears green was 'in' then they would do it:

Girls Excerpt

Line 738: Teacher: What would you think about if you didn't have them [Gogos] at all? What would be your opinion of them?

Paige: What if I had them and …

Teacher: Like everybody had them, but there were a few children in the class who just didn't bother?

Abby: They'd be weird!

Kiera: I wouldn't care.

Jessica: Like some people in our class, they don't have Gogos, and we don't say like, 'Oh, you can't … I'm never going to speak to you again because you don't have Gogos'. I mean that's like [32:00 IA] I wouldn't call them names or anything.

Abby: I think if I didn't have something that was in fashion …

Kiera: And I did!

Abby: And it's a thing [32:14 IA]

Kiera: <Gasps>

Abby: And everybody had it, I would feel left out, and I'd get … and I'd think that people would think that I'm uncool and everything.

Teacher: What about if the new fashion was you had to sail around painting your ears green.

Kiera: Oh no!

Jessica: No, I wouldn't do that.

Teacher: But if everybody did it?

Abby: Well I would …

Paige: I would.

Teacher: If everybody painted their ears green, would it tempt you?

Abby: I would be tempted.

Paige: I would probably do it, but if everyone was saying like, 'Oh god, you look ridiculous' then I'll probably like stop doing it.

Line 767 Abby: Yeah

To the girls and boys it all depends on who brings something in. Only if it is the right (read popular) person will a craze then start:

Girls Excerpt

Line 522: Teacher: What about if all the kids in …suddenly were into version 5 Tamagotchi? Would that make a difference?

Abby: I think … yeah, probably. A little bit of a difference. I think if the others did get a load of, did get into it, then one person in year six [IA] and then a load of other people would get them, [IA]

Teacher: Does it matter who in year six got them? Can you think of some children in year six, yeah, if she had that or he had that, I would want it …

Jessica: A popular person

Teacher: Who are some popular people in year six?

Abby: Jasmine, Sophie, Chanelle, Joanna, Kaylie

Kiera: Jack Browning

Abby: Jack Browning

Teacher: OK, what makes them popular?

Line 535: Abby: Well they're generally cool

In addition, each child attempts to show they are part of the group but a hierarchy is established according to how quickly they joined the craze:

Boys Excerpt

Line 373: Jack: It always starts with one person, who got this thing …

Ryan: Like with Gogos.

Jack: … one person comes in and says, 'Oh that's cool, I want one…' and then he comes back with one and then it spreads around.

Teacher: So who started the Gogos.

Jack: Kai in year 3. He brought one in.

Ryan: And then Adam came in, and then [IA]

Jack: And then Joshua … and then …

Joshua: No, it wasn't me. Then it was [IA]

Jack: [IA] and then Joshua, then me. I was probably the latest.

Ben: No, I was!

Jack: Oh yeah, yeah

However at the same time as 'subjecting' themselves to this 'normalisation' the children are also trying to exercise their individuality, where being 'unique' or 'different' and showing your own identity through what you wear, what you like, and who you like, is expected and important.   Foucault considers this part of the 'power of normalization' (Foucault in Rabinow, 1991, p.196). As he suggests: 'In a sense, the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties, and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another' (ibid p.196). By attempting to exercise an individuality, the children are really reasserting that they are part of the whole but also subjecting themselves to judgement or evaluation.

Girls Excerpt

Line 784: Jessica: And there's these shoes that I really, really love, and like [IA] looks like they've got paint splashes on them, different colours, and they're really cool…

Kiera: They're in New Look actually.

Abby: Yeah

Teacher: What's makes them better than Combos?

Line 790: Jessica: Well, 'cause everybody's just wearing them and they're just like really comfy, they're cool…

This excerpt highlights that that whilst trying to be individual Jessica also reveals that others are wearing the same shoes; they are cool. Clothes become an easy and clear way of showing individual identity but at the same time being part of an in crowd who wear the same things.

Konig (2008) suggests that clothes are a 'medium of self-presentation and therefore social position' (ibid, p.228). For children, Konig sees clothing as empowering in that by deciding what is not suitable for their age (a knowledge children share) they can differentiate themselves from a younger (or older) age group. Once parents allow a child to determine their own appearance, she argues that they then need to indicate their uniqueness and individuality, through their taste choices. However, this is not achieved alone but by interaction with peers and parents, influenced by marketing, class position and availability of money. As the girls focus group reveal, what clothes are worn (and from where) is important in setting them apart from being babyish, enabling them to be part of the group as well as establishing their 'individual' identity.

This constant tension between wanting to be the same, and wanting to be an individual colours much of the discussion. When a child makes a statement that is not 'right' they instantly back down. For example when the boys are asked who is cool, Jack says

Henry. However later on when the others have denied this, he changes his mind (line 662):

Boys Excerpt

Line 650: Teacher: Are there any older children you can think of that are cool? Children that used to go to the school, children when you were younger?

Ben: Jamie's brother.

Jack: Henry

Teacher: He's cool, is he?

Joshua: He's not cool!!

Jack: He thinks he is.

Joshua: No

Ben: He's naughty!

Jack: No, not really.

Ben: But he thinks he is. Apparently he goes round [IA]

Joshua: Yeah, he does. He cut this tree down in the hedge. I don't think he's really cool, to be honest.

Line 663 Jack: He thinks he is.

 In both groups the leader chooses what is 'in fashion', not just in terms of clothes and consumption, but in terms of what is 'sayable' and the others follow. It seems that the children want to be in the tribe of 'current childhood' and follow the rituals and secrets that make their tribe discreet and stable but at the same time want to be seen as, and to feel, an individual, with independent thought and identity.[15]   The children use their

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[15] I don't want to suggest that children are a tribe, implying they can be studied from an anthropological perspective as different and apart, (as others studying children have done, for example Opie (1959). As James and Prout (1997) propose, putting children in any particular theoretical position, be it tribal child, minority group child, social structural child or socially constructed child, is problematic. It would be more useful to consider children in terms of Maffesoli's (1996) neo-tribalism, as an emotional community, distinguished by its shared lifestyle and taste as part of their everyday life.

discussions on clothes and taste as a way of showing at one and the same time that

they are 'normal' and that they are 'individual'. The two are not mutually exclusive. As

Foucault outlines:

> It is easy to understand how the power of the norm functions within a system of
> formal equality, since within a homogeneity that is the rule, the norm introduces,
> as a useful imperative and as a result of measurement, all the shading of
> individual differences' (Foucault in Rabinow, 1991, p.197).

This exercise of power (like the 'examination' he goes on to discuss) is both overt and

subtle.

Consumption

One discourse that the children seem to enact without question is that of consumption.

They do not perceive this as an adult's domain which children should be excluded

from; they don't even raise the issue of whether or not children should be able to go

shopping, buy goods or talk about them. Consumption (shopping) is an everyday

activity; they are knowledgeable and interested (even passionate) in purchasing and

discuss it frequently. In fact I might go so far as to suggest that children

wholeheartedly reproduce this discursive regime of truth – that instant gratification is

available through consumption. This is revealed when asked how they would spend

£100. The girls and boys have no qualms about it, immediately listing all the things they

would like (and are 'selfishly' reluctant to spend on gifts for others!). They become

extremely animated and happy as they imagine what they could buy:

Girls Excerpt

Line 989: Teacher: OK, if you had £10 and £100 what would you go and buy?

Abby: For my birthday I got £100, and erm … I went out on my ninth birthday and I got
another £75 from my whole family, so I had all £175 to spend. So I went out to

Crawley and got some clothes, I bought some lunch, I bought some new shoes and I bought some … a new book and … I just got mostly clothes and shoes.

Teacher: What would you do, Paige , with that £100?

Paige: I'd go to Crawley Mall.

Teacher: Go to Crawley Mall, and what would you do with it?

Paige: I'd spend it.

Teacher: On?

Abby: Millie's Cookies!

Paige: No, things!

Teacher: Things like…

Paige: Clothes, shoes, stuff for my bedroom

Abby: And I'd get a little something, and when I say little I mean absolutely tiny something, for my brothers.

Teacher: Ah, that's nice.

Abby: Like a crumb!

<Laughter>

Teacher: Jessica, what would you do with £100?

Jessica: I dunno, 'cause I always … like if I went to like the town or Crawley Mall or something, I would probably like … if I saw something I'd buy it, I wouldn't like have all my money and I would just buy it all on Gogos sort of thing, 'cause I spent it all on packets of Gogos and then I saw something like …

Kiera: You really wanted …

Jessica: Yeah, like a top or something, then I'd be like, 'Oh, I just spent all that money!' So I'd look at it and then look around everywhere and then come back to it.

Kiera: That's what my mum says. My mum says if you spot something …

Jessica: And you really want it …

Line 1023: Kiera: Yeah, she was saying … she said, 'Just in case you want something else, have a look around it and then if you can't find anything, come back to the thing

Nevertheless, despite their excitement in talking about spending money and shopping,

the girls do also reveal a 'mature' approach to consumption. They discuss how it is

best to look around before buying so you don't regret your purchase (see Lines 1018 to 1023 above). I will return to this tension between a complete acceptance of 'consumerism' and the 'careful appreciation of money' below.

How children talk about going shopping as a normal, everyday activity is interesting. The discussion about where they shop and when, again helps them to clearly place themselves in a social group – everybody goes to the same shop. Additionally in declaring where they shop, the children reveal their 'taste'. At the same time the act of going shopping marks their agency: an independence from parents:

Boys Excerpt

Line 106: **Teacher**: And where do you choose to go when you went up town – what would be a place to go?

Jack: Cinema.

Ryan: I'd go everywhere really.

Teacher: Any particular shops?

Ryan: Wilkinson's to get pick-n-mix.

Line 112: Teacher: Wilkinson's to get pick-n-mix. All right.

Another key 'use' of talking about consuming is to demonstrate knowledge. In particular for the boys, and especially their 'leader', practically every reference to shopping is accompanied by price tags, and a very clear understanding of how much different things cost. The following excerpts are from the 'leader', Jack:

Boys Excerpt

Line 732: Jack: The thing is, Xbox is the reason you buy it is the KDXB Elite, like £240, but the PlayStation 3 was about £400 when it was new.

Line 769: Jack: I don't know. There are other drinks I like as well, like there's this energy drink called Relentless and I only get it rarely 'cause it's £1.17 and … <pause> and I'm not allowed Red Bull because it's an adult's drink.

It would appear that the relative merits of different products are not as important as knowing their prices. Displaying this type of knowledge, rather than about the brand, a child is demonstrating their cultural capital and may thereby gain (or affirm in this case) their symbolic capital in the form of leadership. This is indicated again when the boys discuss different computer game consoles:

Boys Excerpt

Line 1037 Ryan: I would just go straight to Argos and get an Xbox 360

Jack: Yeah, that's not enough. You have to have over £200.

Ryan: No you don't.

Joshua: You need at least £148.

Line 1041: Jack: But you had £600. [IA]

But in discussing shopping children also open up their relationship with parents/adults. Sometimes they refer to their parents as co-consumers and sometimes as consumers with more experience:

Girls Excerpt

Line 1017: **Jessica**: Yeah, like a top or something, then I'd be like, 'Oh, I just spent all that money!' So I'd look at it and then look around everywhere and then come back to it.

Kiera: That's what my mum says. My mum says if you spot something …

Jessica: And you really want it …

Line 1023: Kiera: Yeah, she was saying … she said, 'Just in case you want something else, have a look around it and then if you can't find anything, come back to the thing …'

This mixture of acceptance of parents as more knowledgeable and more experienced consumers is one 'position' the children adopt. However, when they talk about their own crazes, then parents are not seen as experts but as incompetent or to be challenged:

<u>Boys Excerpt</u>

Line 620C: Jack: My dad never uses Lynx, he says it smells cheap.

[IA]

Ben: That's good!

Line 623: Teacher: That's good, smelling cheap?

The boys choose Lynx precisely because it is not popular with their Dads – it becomes a point of difference.

In relation to some types of consumption adults can be listened to, for others the adult's lack of knowledge may play a part in making the toy/deodorant popular. I would not go as far as Boden et al who suggest that

> Children's consumption choices have long been viewed as strategy of resistance to adult norms and as a subversion of control within the parent-child relationship (Boden et al, 2004, p.10).

Instead I would suggest that when talking about goods and whether their parents approve or understand their choices, the children are less resisting (this feels too strong) than 'not accepting' adults know best. This 'tension' is integral to their relationship with parents and an upshot of the situation where a technology of self confronts technologies of power.

One further issue that the children engage with is that of the 'new': something that is not known to everybody but has a value just by its newness:

Boys Excerpt

Line 320: **Joshua**: Objects that are cool – I like those new MicroSpirit bags. I've only got the old one and it's really blearg!

Teacher: What's wrong with the old one then? Why do you want the new one and not the old one?

Joshua: 'cause the new one's got more like … places to put your stuff in. It's easier to carry around.

Jack: It's [IA] on your back now.

Teacher: And where did you find out about that bag?

Joshua: Argos catalogue

Teacher: So you just went through and found it?

Jack: I want to get the new DSI.

Ryan: Do you?

Line 332: **Joshua:** That's what I want. It's like two-hundred quid!

Here it is not the price or the quality of the product, just the fact that it is new that gives it cultural value. But new is not the only important aspect to the children:

Boys Excerpt

Line 481: **Ben**: And Abby has got about 150-something.

Line 482: **Jack**: And Mollie's got 125, and that's about 40% of them.

This focus on ownership is also a form of cultural capital and as a part of identity is accepted by the groups. It also plays to their need to display knowledge, place themselves in a hierarchy and be subject to the evaluation posited by the Foucauldian 'exam'. The product itself is not relevant, just how many they have compared to each other. In this way they try to 'fit in', an issue which runs through all the conversations about consumption. Peer pressure is manifest in the revelations of *how much* of

something a popular child has, and *what* children say they want to buy (whether they actually want these things I cannot be sure about). For example:

Girls Excerpt

Line 230: Teacher: So do you like shooting games, and all those …

Paige: Yeah! I love [IA]

Kiera: Eyes.

Abby: I love mystery games, 'cause my mum bought …

Kiera: I like some of those.

Jessica: On my DS I've got like these special cards and you have like, it's got like this chip in it

Kiera: It's not perfect, it's not that good.

Abby: And she downloads games onto it, and I've got 24 games onto it.

Paige: I haven't got DS.

Teacher: You haven't got DS?

Paige: No, but I'm getting it for my birthday this year.

Kiera: I've got 32 games on it.

Jessica: I've got 44 games in that one card.

Abby: And I've got three …

Jessica: My favourite game on there is Animal Crossing.

Line 248: Abby: I love that.

As this excerpt shows, the girls in particular rely on being led by their friends to guide their decisions. Talking about what to buy is as important as actually buying in forming their social group. Their taste is socially constructed through their discussion as well as by what they own and of course how many they own relative to each other:

<u>Girls Excerpt</u>

Line 1054: **Teacher:** Do you talk to your friends about what you want to buy next?

All: Yeah, yes

Teacher: Do you just phone them up and have a chat, or chat in the playground?

Kiera: Chat in the playground

Abby: Playground

Kiera: We just say how much they want it.

Teacher: Does it matter what your friends think?

Line 1061: Kiera: If they said it was really rubbish, I'd chase after them. [IA]

For children then, talk about consumption is neither entirely empowering nor something beyond their understanding or control. This is pertinent given the positions adopted by many spectators and academics discussing children and consumption. As Cook (2005) suggests it is not useful to consider children as either exploited or empowered. Instead they are socially constructed, in part through consumption. Tufte (2004) also suggests that children are neither competent nor vulnerable and that it is too simplistic to try and label them as one or the other.

But from the exchanges in the focus groups it would seem that these children, at least, do not perceive themselves in these ways anyway: they talk about consumption as an everyday activity but not in a way that portrays them as victims. Having said that, they are still unsure what a brand is; they are not as knowledgeable as they believe themselves to be. As Kenway and Bullen articulate: 'It (consumer culture) empowers and disempowers, legitimates and deligitimates, reveals and conceals' (Kenway & Bullen, 2001, p.153). The latter suggest that consumption therefore is 'not just harmful as critical theorists suggest or just benign as semiotic democracy theorists imply – but both at once '(ibid, p.153). Slater puts it succinctly in his study of consumer culture:

> Individuals must, by force of circumstances, choose, construct, maintain, interpret, negotiate, display who they are to be or be seen as, using a bewildering variety of material and symbolic resources. (Slater, 1997, p.84).

For children, consuming is just one 'tool' in their identity work, or as I have suggested in Chapter Five, a textual toy to be used in a variety of ways.

Resistances and Tactics

The children in these focus groups have shown themselves to be working across discourses to construct their own identity and beliefs in relation to childhood. As I have already touched on in my discussion of jouissance and other technologies of the self, one of the strategies children adopt is 'resistance'. For Foucault power and resistance are inextricably bound together: 'Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, *this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to powe*r' (Foucault, 1978, p.95 my emphasis).

Here I consider some further ways the children 'resist' and operate within certain discourses. Perhaps resist is too strong in this context, I am not suggesting that the children are actively working against discourses, more that they are straining against, or refusing to accept. In her analysis of 'kets' Allison James discusses how children consume junk sweets as a 'creative process' (James, in Jenkins, H (ed) 1998, p .394). She argues how, through eating food that is deemed bad for them by adults, and 'confusing the adult order, children create for themselves considerable room for movement within the limits imposed upon them by adult society' (Ibid, p.395). This idea of 'room for movement' seems more apt than something as strong as 'resistance'. De Certeau's use of 'tactics' (De Certeau, 2011, p.ix) seems pertinent here too. The children are, in his terms, on the look-out for opportunities to seize. They can work against the strategies of adult institutions such as school and government by using everyday practices such as talking or shopping as 'ways' of operating' (ibid p.ix).

These are not in themselves subversive but they do have a symbolic value, they are an expression of a creative defence.

The children 'move' against the classification (to use a Foucauldian term) of the 'natural child' the 'innocent' child. They are always keen to show their knowledge of brands, prices, shops and so on. Knowledge to them is important, as is their place within society. For example when the conversation for the boys gets onto drinking they are keen to show they understand about alcohol in an adult way:

Boys Excerpt

Line 787: Joshua: My favourite three is Guinness, Xbox and … erm …

Ryan: I'd add Guinness to mine actually.

Jack: PSP

Teacher: OK. So Guinness, Xbox, and what was the other one, PSP?

Jack: Yeah

Teacher: So tell me about Guinness then, why that's cool?

Ryan: I love it, isn't it?

Teacher: Have you tried it?

Ryan: Yes.

Teacher: And … do you know what Guinness is?

Ryan: Yeah, alcohol!

Jack: Beer

Teacher: Beer, right OK.

Joshua: And I don't want to get into this conversation!

Teacher: It's alright, you're not going to get into trouble, but have you tried it?

Ryan: Yeah

Teacher: And did mum or dad say, 'Right, yeah, you can have a little taste of this'?

Ryan: No, I did it 'cause my dad said, 'Hold my drink while I go and get something' so I held it and I just had a little sip.

Teacher: The thing with Guinness though, you'll leave a great big mark and he'll know, he'll go, 'Hang on a moment,' there'll be a great big …

Line 808: Ryan: I know, because it's got white froth on it.

The boys know that they should not drink alcohol, even though they are talking to their teacher, they cannot refrain from showing their knowledge of Guinness, a knowledge that some might think they shouldn't have.

In the children's talk, marketing and brands are not seen as a threat. They do not portray consumption as a danger, or something they don't understand or are afraid of. Instead the children discuss consumption, and their knowledge of it to show that they are adult-like and, at the same time, capable of making their own decisions. Consumption is one area where these children demonstrate that they can disagree with their parents and make their own decisions. Hence their glee when the dad doesn't understand what 'Gogos' are and calls them 'wobbly marbles'. The children have a product they all value and want, and adults don't even get the name right. In addition the children know the product is inherently pointless, but this just adds to its appeal. It's something their parents *just don't understand* and therefore can be used as a 'tactic' by the children.

McDonald's offers a further interesting site of contestation or contradiction. Given the current concerns over children's health and in particular their eating habits, the children's discussion of fast food reveals a definite resistance to adult and state concerns. They all talk about how much they love McDonald's, with recognition of it as not healthy seeming to be part of the appeal. Awareness that their parents do not approve only makes the food more desirable: when the boys discuss McDonald's they

grow very animated and excited. The girls' talk makes much of the taste of McDonald's food:

Girls Excerpt

Teacher: What makes MacDonald's cool

Kate: 'cause their food's lovely! <Laughs>

Teacher: It's the food. What, it's healthy, it's tasty, it has …

Kate: No, it's not healthy!

Kiera: It's not healthy, no.

Abby: It's healthy.

Teacher: You say it's healthy, you say it's not healthy?

Abby: It's a little bit, 'cause it has like little bits of vegetables in it.

Kate: 'cause you can have loads of fat in it though …

Kiera: mm

Abby: And that's what makes it so lovely!

Kiera: Yeah

Teacher: You said MacDonald's is cool. So is it the healthy food makes it cool, or is it just the taste of the food …

Kate: It's the taste

Jessica: It's the taste

Abby: The taste

Kiera: The taste, it tastes absolutely gorgeous

Teacher: And when you in, what do you go in and buy?

Abby: Chicken MacSandwichs

Kiera: Chicken Sandwich with no mayonnaise

Line 864: Kate: Chicken sandwich, no mayo, and a banana milkshake with no chicken in it

Teacher: You both don't like mayo. You don't like the taste of mayo?

Kiera: No

Kate: No

Kiera: No, I don't like it. I just don't like it.

Teacher: Jessica, what would you go for when you go in there?

Line 870: Jessica: Erm … nuggets or a burger.

However their choice of McDonald's is telling. As Kincheloe (2004) suggests, it is the 'sameness' of McDonald's that children like. It is a safe thing to like because everyone knows it and can refer to its menu. Its strong brand and global reach means they can use it as a shortcut to show their commonality. At the same time McDonald's is known for being unhealthy, and the children's love of it reveals again their resistance to the preferences of those in authority. However whilst they do use 'tactics' such as this to creatively work within structures of power and their strategies, I was surprised by the overall acceptance of adult power, whether that of parents or teachers. The children seem to expect to be guided by adults and largely adhere to their rules and parameters, without questioning them. For example, in the focus groups the children did not argue about participating or about the questions they were asked; they just followed their teacher's instructions.

<u>In Reverse</u>

In 'The History of Sexuality Vol. 1, (1978) Foucault suggests that:

> The appearance in nineteenth-century psychiatry, jurisprudence, and literature of a whole series of discourses on the species and subspecies of homosexuality, inversion, pederasty, and 'psychic hermaphroditism' made possible a strong advance of social controls into this area of 'perversity'. This process also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified (ibid p.101).

Trying to control homosexuality, by giving it a definition also helped to give it a voice. Similarly, I would argue the control of children allows them a voice. For example the children accept they are 'other', 'not adult' but instead of 'adult' being something they

aspire to, they show it as something they don't wish to be; they demonstrate no ambition to be older.

Their talk about being childish is one manifestation of a 'reverse discourse'. If a dominant discourse positions children as powerless victims and something children try to grow out of, children see childishness as something enjoyable and to be relished:

Boys Excerpt

Line 1043:Teacher : So Ben, what would you do if you had £100. How would you make your mind up about what you'd spend it on?

Ben: I would spend *everything …*

[IA]

Ryan: I would spend it on … <pause> … cheese!

<Laughter>

Ben: I would get a trained shark!

Line 1050: Teacher: You'd get a trained shark?

However as a counterpoint to this childish exchange, when the boys discuss computer games they switch to adult speech. This seems to be a serious matter for them and so their conversation becomes very mature:

Boys Excerpt

Teacher: So is there a PlayStation 4 as well coming?

Ryan: I don't know, but …

Ben: It's coming soon, it's coming in September apparently.

Jack: The thing is, Xbox is the reason you buy it is the KDXB Elite, like £240, but the PlayStation 3 was about £400 when it was new.

Ryan: Yeah, but that's [IA]

Joshua: No, but Jack, there's nothing different, OK, it's got BlueRay and you can get … there's free BlueRay, all you need's an internet connection for live, but …

Ben: I don't know, I've got wireless with a laptop.

Line 739: Joshua: I broke my laptop [IA]

The children pick and choose when to 'act' adult and when to 'act' childish. They attempt to control when to adopt different subject positions, evidencing their agency and resistance to discourses of childhood as confining, a set place where children are 'other' (and not adult). This is something that Davies et al (2000) talk about in relation to television and taste. They suggest that 'children are choosing to identify with and to occupy some 'adult' subject positions rather than others, while at the same time avowedly retaining aspects of 'childishness' (ibid p.10). I would argue that this is a creative 'tactic' on the part of children.

Conclusion

This chapter has touched on several themes related to 'technologies of the self' and how children create their own identity and their identity as a group. Through a reliance on discourses such as a cool discourse, consumerist discourse and a normalisation discourse the children work within the constraints of power networks to create their own culture. I have shown how these discourses help to create the child as subject but at the same time each child as an individual is working on their own identity. The children form a collective exercise of power through their way of talking, their uncontainability and their passionate relationship with consuming which I have suggested could be considered a form of jouissance and acts as a way of resisting those discourses about them. To help in their identity work, the children also rely on cultural capital to help reflect their social position as what they are not, (adult, younger) as much as what they are based on their taste collectively and individually.

The focus groups also offer up some interesting ideas around the way the children use dividing practices and 'reverse' discourses to set up what they are not - adult.   At the same time, they reveal knowledge about consumption which positions them as adult. I have argued that this resisting of some adult discourses about them whilst accepting others – sometimes they want to be childish, sometimes they do not – reveals a manoeuvrability and is something they work on as individuals and a group.   The children use routine practices such as consuming, and talking as a site of creative and tactical resistance. As Foucault summarises this relationship between power and the individual in a similarly positive way:

> We are not trapped. We are always in this kind of situation. It means that we always have possibilities, there are always possibilities of changing the situation. We cannot jump outside the situation, and there is no point where you are free from power relations. But you can always change it. (Foucault, 1997, p.167)

Conclusion

As I hope this thesis has illustrated, nothing about childhood is clear cut. Different definitions abound, from childhood as a life space in which a community exists, to childhood as a complex ideology created and negotiated in relation to a hegemonic adult culture. Common sense notions of what it means to be a child, whether innocent or savvy are pervasive and, as I have foregrounded, reductive. This thesis contributes to current understandings of childhood and children, reconceptualising the 'truths' about children as innocent, and childhood as a particular space and place. It has highlighted that children are constrained by interpretative frames and that in order to better understand them and their culture we have to acknowledge how they are formed within and rub against particular discursive regimes. The primary research across two disparate domains – expert knowledge and marketing – is of particular value in opening up how children are homogenised by supposedly opposing discourses; whereas talking to children reveals their agency as they perform identity work – individual and group – within/against these same discourses.

I started this thesis with some questions about children: why are they so often spoken about in an emotional way, why are fears about them being constantly voiced, and why are they nearly always spoken *for*? In the contemporary climate of anxieties over 'toxic childhood' and fears for the health of children in the UK, these questions seemed of particular significance. In 2016 they still resonate.[16]

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[16] For example; Sue Palmer has launched a new campaign, named 'Upstart' focusing on changing the age children go to school to help stop the 'erosion of crucial time to play' (*Upstart*, to be published June 2016). Current concerns over childhood obesity have also led to a nationwide call for a Sugar Tax (Telegraph 19.2.16).

My objective for this thesis was to consider children's talk in the context of the views of those I have called the 'experts' on the one hand, and the toy marketing industry on the other: two groups fighting on behalf of, and over, the child/childhood. It is this drawing together of three disparate texts to focus on a group of children as active producers of their identity, within a complex network of social, cultural and legal influences that provides my original contribution to knowledge. To do this I have utilised Foucault's genealogical approach which allowed me to focus on this particular historical moment by considering discourses in terms of power, subject/ion and knowledge, and in this way turning a Foucauldian spotlight onto taken for granted assumptions about children and childhood.

Foucault offered many other useful theoretical ideas throughout my thesis. Here I highlight some that I found particularly valuable. His ideas on the 'internal discourse' helped me to think about the toy industry's focus on children and consumption through the example of the BTHA Toy Fair which, at the same time, invisibilised money and children themselves. The 'internal discourse' allows the stand holders to promote consumption and construct children as images to suit their own agenda. Further, Foucault's discussion of children and sex suggested to me that children and consumption could be seen in a similar light: that is, focussed on as an object of concern by others, but themselves unable to talk about this concern. Without Foucault's consideration of the way government becomes responsible for the health of the nation – what he calls noso-politics – I would also have been unlikely to focus on the experts' attempt to make children's health the government's sole responsibility, or the way both the experts and the marketers at the BTHA Toy Fair attempt to act as the 'doctor of our time'. Foucault's theorisation enabled me to question why the government is empowered in this way and to reflect on the expectations by and support from other institutions and discourses that it should be. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Foucault's ideas on the technologies of the self facilitated my analysis of

the way the children talked together constantly negotiating and working on individual and group identity. This provided a constructive stance for my own ideas, considering discourses as constricting but not all encompassing; the children framed in childhood but having alternative strategies.

Linked to my use of Foucault as a springboard for my own theoretical approach, methodologically I chose also to use Foucauldian discourse analysis. I did not follow the suggested 'lists' of how to do this (such as Parker (1992) and Willig (2001)), but then, as I have already suggested, Foucault probably wouldn't have either; indeed, he did not suggest such a method of analysis himself, rather it has been used in his name. However, this approach did allow me to take very disparate texts to tease out discursive commonalities between the 'oppositional' groups and to overlay these onto my findings from the children's talk. Certain truths were clearly revealed by this methodology – such as the child as other whatever the origin of the text.

Turning to my findings, the experts and the marketers from the toy industry, whilst having different agendas, different styles of talking and mobilising different materials, actually end up creating a single notion: the child as less than adult, the child as 'other'. They both suggest that children are different according to age and should be categorised, and divided, on this fault line which also links to how they envisage their consumer socialization. They also hold to the idea that 'childhood' should be retained to keep children separate from adult culture. Despite their often diverging claims, whether of the child as a savvy and critical consumer, or as an innocent and immature consumer, both rely on certain emotional truths and knowledges about children and consumerism. Both sides support certain institutions such as the government as ultimately responsible for children (because they are 'our' future). Both also claim to be doing everything for the sake of the children, but ultimately both place children as subject (and object) in the homogenous space of 'childhood'.

Through my focus on Sue Palmer in particular I reveal how her ideas influence other 'experts' such that, in turn, these 'truths' are relied upon by those deciding laws and regulation in relation to children and advertising. I consider her a moral entrepreneur who started a crusade against 'Toxic Childhood' – her term – now a shorthand for all that is deemed wrong with childhood today. Her latest crusade is 'Upstart' – opposing children starting school before the age of seven – and spelt out in her forthcoming eponymous publication (June 2016) in which, once again she argues for a change in legislation. Importantly, as I have emphasised in the thesis, Palmer repeatedly refers to the innocence of children which as academics such as Renold (2005) and Faulkner (2013) have shown, is a pervasive and ever-present discourse in discussions of childhood. Through my analysis of texts produced by Palmer and other experts I show how this discourse is reductive and generates an emotional rhetoric positioning children as the responsibility, and possession of wider society.

Adopting a different approach, the marketers from the BTHA Toy Fair also set themselves up as experts (versus parents as non-experts). My analysis of their texts and materials demonstrates that marketing discourses firstly celebrate play as the work of the child, and secondly invoke the imagination as inherent but needing to be developed, both relying on toys (and therefore consumption) to be fully realised in the child. I had not previously considered why imagination is so tied up with children – something it is believed they should have and thus to be encouraged. In this light it was interesting to tease out how parents are 'sold' toys to support a child's creative but also social development. In this discourse, again, the child is placed as other, to be matured into an adult but in this instance through their consumption of toys.

Perhaps the most striking idea to emerge from this study is the various and creative ways that the children I listened to worked together and individually on their identity. In

the children's focus groups, I was surprised to find that *the way* the children talked was as important as *what* they talked about. Because I chose to avoid assuming any definitive answers, I had the freedom to gain impressions from their talk rather than worrying about what they were specifically saying. This has enabled me to show that they have their own style of talking, which I term 'dynamic bricolage' in that the children act as bricoleurs taking cultural references and mixing them in new ways to form their own, inclusive, way of talking. To add to this, I suggest that the 'textual toys' they use become 'bricks' combined to build a 'wall' behind which the children position themselves, cheerfully, as not adult. I argue that children are constrained in childhood but attempt to negotiate within and against the constraints to establish a distinctive identity. Confident and secure in their collaboration on this 'identity project', they relish being children. This aspect of uncontainability, which I have encapsulated through the term 'jouissance', well illustrates why adults so often find children's relationship with consumption problematic. Uncontainability also suggests children as transgressive, not knowingly resisting adult constructs of childhood and children, but nevertheless establishing an elasticity at the boundaries of childhood.

This thesis contributes both theoretically and empirically to a number of inter related themes and does, I hope, contribute to what has now become known as Childhood Studies. It focuses on the child as an active producer of their own culture, within a complex network of social, cultural and legal influences and dynamics. However, in a move to interrogate certain understandings of childhood, it utilises a Foucauldian approach to challenge the usefulness of considering children as a separate anthropological group, which only serves to construct them as other, and to highlight the significance of discourses in the exercise of power in relation to children.

Through primary research with a group of children, this thesis supports the work of Buckingham (2007) and his belief that children should be considered complex social

actors. In line with his argument in *The Material Child: Growing Up in Consumer Culture* (2011) it proposes that children are not innocent and outside consumerism, nor are they independent, savvy consumers fully aware of how to engage with the commercial world. Instead they are co-consumers with each other and with their parents. Through its use of Foucault's technologies of the self, this thesis shows that children are creating their own identity and using consumption as a creative part of this exercise. This finding helps to tease out the complicated role of consumption in a child's cultural and social sphere.

However, this leads to an issue I found problematic in my thesis – the child's voice. As Alldred (1998) argues, it is unhelpful to privilege what children say over others' talk, debate and comment. But as adults we often treat children as a separate group, whose talk we 'translate' to explain what *they* mean. In this thesis, children have been given the opportunity to talk about issues that relate to them, but I have attempted to be as critical in my analysis of their response as of the other texts I engage with. In terms of this methodology, I have followed a more cultural studies approach, encouraged by Buckingham, as a productive way of researching children. I believe this is one of the strengths of my research. By not seeking definite answers but instead providing a more impressionistic view, the results from the focus groups were more inventive and diverse than if I had set questions to be answered. Many of the ideas such as jouissance, and dynamic bricolage were a product of just letting the children talk.

I am glad the research turned out this way as I struggled ethically with the best way to hear from children since I was not completely comfortable with using focus groups as texts: the children were not given the opportunity to hear back what they said or input on the 'findings' from their research. It would be challenging but fascinating to allow children more involvement, building on the immersive, ethnographic approach shown by Chin (2001) and Pugh (2009). For example, to take them to the BTHA Toy Fair and

ask them what they think about the images of children, the lack of children in attendance and so on. Or am I becoming overly idealistic? The group I chose, from a semi-rural town, near Brighton, meant that my findings are more relevant to a particular group of children with access to only a few shops. It would be interesting to contrast this with a group of children from a city to see if their relationships with each other and with shopping are similar or more complicated/sophisticated.

Other issues with my methodology are also worth commenting on. Using a Foucauldian discourse analysis for example did have limitations. Whist it allowed many productive ideas to emerge, I realised in the course of the research that I would have to use the analysis template as a start point and draw on other ideas. This more eclectic approach allowed the concept of bricolage to emerge as a productive one. Further, adopting Bourdieu's ideas about 'taste' gave me new insight into how the children relied on the shorthand 'cool' to help in their identity work. Barthes provided a useful study of toys (1972) which I developed to consider why the toy industry creates certain types of toys and how these form part of an overall discourse of children as 'in development'.

It is worth noting too the uneven time frame over which this research project was carried out. I started the thesis nine years ago, the anti-marketing materials were collated in 2008, the focus groups were carried out the same year but I attended the BTHA Toy Fair in 2014. However, I would argue that there have been some benefits to this long duration. It has allowed me to reflect on my findings and further question my assumptions. It has helped me to be more aware of the complexity of researching children and to think through the ethical challenges of such academic research. I have certainly questioned my own position on children and consumption as the thesis has developed.

More practically there were issues about what it was possible to do in an 80,000 word thesis. The 'Toy Fair' chapter could usefully have been extended through interviews with those attending – both the marketers and the buyers to gain insight into their perspective on children and consumerism. It would have been useful too, to consider not only the specialist marketing trade press, but also national news media. The latter tends to draw on already circulating discourses but inflect them in distinctive and sometimes impactful ways. Another important group missing from this research is parents. Researching their views as co-consumers, as well as the gatekeepers between children and consumption, would provide a further corpus of fascinating texts. I would also have liked to explore further the gender differences revealed at the BTHA Toy Fair and in the focus groups to consider how a child's gendered identity is formed through toys, clothes and the way shopping is talked about.

At the level of scholarship, this research contributes to debates in cultural studies concerning the role of consumption in identity work, it also offers something to those engaging in critical marketing studies as it provides an 'inside' view of a particular industry and how they form their own internal discourse.   But potentially the ideas raised have resonance too for parents, charities working with children and policy makers. For example, the value of letting children talk but learning how to listen and hear what they are saying, and additionally recognising the complex relationship between children and consumption as part of a child's cultural and social world. This thesis has gone some way to showing that when provided with more opportunity to talk, a group of children can be exuberant and resilient and happily reveal much about their culture and their shared and individual identities.

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Appendix 1

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of:

Palmer, S (2007) *Toxic Childhood. How the Modern World is damaging our children and what we can do about it.* London, Orion.

Chapter 8: The Word on the Street.

CHLDREN AS OBJECT

Stage 1: Objects (Discursive Constructs):

ACTUAL WORDS USED   CONVEYIING

P227

Development	Not finished
Parents	often linked to
Village of	old values
Previous generations	timeless and unchanging
Private	protected

P228

Culture of childhood	set
Very young	all young
Throughout history	unchanging nature of childhood
Don't seem to play as much as they used to	nostalgia for childhood

P229

Addicted	can't control actions
Protect from strangers	in danger from 'other'

P230

Adults able to make rational decisions. Children are not.	As different from adult. As incapable
Children today	all the same
Average	all the same
Not aware	innocent
Childish things	As opposed to adult
Unsophisticated	innocent

P231

Contemporary children	somehow different from other children

Unhappy because of parental absence .... suffering/reliant
Besiege parents .... at war with parents
Happy for a nanosecond .... emotionally immature/turmoil

P232

Want ever more stuff .... emotionally demanding/immature
Pester power .... annoying but with some power
Avid consumers .... easily controlled
As young as two .... All young
Tender age .... Vulnerable

P233

Sensitive .... not mature
Emotionally vulnerable .... need protection
Earnestly to protect their children .... in need of protection

P234

Strong evolutionary yearning .... Animals. Controlled not by brain
Learning to judge themselves .... influenced
Little girls have always wanted to be grown up .... unchanging young

P235

Tiniest of tots .... young/sweet
Premature sexualisation of little girls .... sexual but young
Children dressed up like dockside tarts .... asking for it
Scarcely surprising that paedophilia thrives .... under threat from 'other'
.... Paedophiles can't help it
Social attitudes to children have changed .... not children just attitudes
Subject to horrendous pressure .... under threat

P236

Body image paranoia .... in danger

P237

P238

Anti-authority attitudes .... against adults. Bad

P239

Always been a subversive, anti-authority children's culture .... unchanging
Which in many ways is healthy and a vital part of the 'real play' .... unthreatening
A children's culture .... acceptable
Difficult for parents or teachers to motivate children .... in need of guidance

P240

Prevailing pre-teen culture…	not children, teens and therefore bad
Is anti-effort, anti-authority and anti-academic	anti = negative. Rebellious
(parents) beset	children as aggressive
Reasonable desire to protect their offspring	biological
(parents) powerless to assert 'old fashioned values'	in danger

P241

Love for their children	owned
Children are apparently	not in charge
Next generation can look forward to a future based	
on superficial appearances,	
disrespect, hedonism and instant gratification.	Going to become bad, out of control

P242

P243

| Play and culture invaded | under attack/in danger |

P244

Toxic childhood syndrome	illness
Distractibility, impulsivity and self-obsession	not in control, bad
All children	all the same

P245

Monitor	controlled
Limit	under surveillance
Will eventually realise its not on	to be trained
Involve	as opposed to not involving usually in other decisions

Stage 2: Discourses

CHILDREN AS INHERENTLY WILD AND WITH MARKETING EFFECTS WILL BECOME MORE OUT OF CONTROL/UNTAMEABLE/SEXUAL. MARKETING AS A FORCE TAKING CHILDREN OUT OF ADULT/NORMALITY PARAMETERS IE AGAINST NORMALISATION

CHILDREN ARE SPOKEN OF AS HOMOGENOUS, DIFFERENT FROM ADULTS, NOT YET FINISHED (IE INCOMPLETE) INNOCENT (IE. NOT CAPABLE), UNDER THREAT, IN NEED OF PROTECTION (BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT DEVELOPED ENOUGH TO PROTECT THEMSELVES) AND IN NEED OF MONITORING/CONTROLLING FOR THEIR OWN GOOD(IE SURVEILLANCE AS METHOD OF POWER/CONTROL).   THEY ARE CAPABLE OF BEING THE ENEMY(DRAWING ON WARFARE DISCOURSES) _ IE PESTERING/BESETTING/ANTI- BECOMING THE WRONG SORT OF ADULTS IF NOT STOPPED. THEREFORE DISCIPLINARY POWER NECESSARY.

CHILDREN AS THE FUTURE, BUT HAVE NO AGENCY NOW.

CHILDREN AS INHERENTLY WILD AND THEREFORE A THREAT TO NORMALITY. HUMANISM.

CHILDREN AS A METAPHOR FOR CONCERNS OVER THE FUTURE AND CHANGE. CHANGE AS BAD.

PARENTS AND TEACHERS ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO SHOULD HAVE INFLUENCE OVER CHILDREN.

CHILDHOOD AND CHILDRENS CULTURE ARE SPOKEN OF AS UNCHANGING, PRIVATE BUT NOW UNDER ATTACK. AS SEPARATE AND DISCREET FROM ADULTHOOD, AS A PHASE, AS INNOCENT. CHILDHOOD AS SOMETHING THAT SHOULD BE KEPT SEPARATE WITH BOUNDARIES TO ENSURE IT IS NOT INVAGED AND TO PROTECT ITS INNOCENCE.

EDUCATION IS ABOUT CONFORMING AND ACCEPTING NOT CHALLENGING NORMS.

WE LIVE IN A RISK SOCIETY.

OTHER IS BAD, SEXUALITY OS BAD.

Stage 3: Action Orientation (ie what is gained from this object construction/who gains)

All children should be consolidated as one type
Responsibility of adults to manage children and their culture through discipline and surveillance
Children not able to manage their own lives.If not controlled children will become bad so should be seen as a threat.

Losing childhood innocence is unacceptable change so childhood should be kept separate.

If allowed to be subject to marketing children will become bad. Therefore marketing should be stopped.

Status Quo should be retained – change is bad. Family and Education as institutions should be continued.

Stage 4: Positionings

Adult(ie not child) threatened by changing children
Authority(teacher) to control and educate children
Parent (carer) to control and educate children
Anti marketing/concerned for future as the right perspective
If pro-marketing then the enemy
Expert – marketing gurus, sue palmer, parents, teachers (through anecdotal evidence)

Stage 5: Practice   (ways set up for legitimate behaviour)

To control children is responsible behaviour – supporting discipline and surveillance
To be anti-marketing is caring – supporting stopping marketing
Legitimate to think of marketing as the enemy to be beaten
Supports institution of parents/family over consumerism
To assume children are not capable and incomplete is caring and to want childhood as a discreet, protected place with fixed boundaries and control is right
To be a working mother is bad
Other is bad
Sexuality in children is bad
Education and the family are good.

Stage 6: Subjectivity

OK to hate/fear marketing
OK to fear children when grow up
OK to find children sexually attractive (if dress up that way!)
OK to want to keep children controlled in childhood

Power relations asserted through discourse:

Adults (Parents and teachers) over children and their access to information
Protection as method of asserting power
Surveillance and Control to reduce independence and power of children
Sociologists over information (as access to understanding children)
Sue Palmer using anecdotal evidence to support argument (therefore over reader as uninformed)
Nurture over nature
Normalisation as way of deploying power over children (to ensure they become the norm when adult)
Reduction of all children to one childhood without a voice as way reduce power of children.

Situations (Geaneology)
Children as less because not yet adult, not with rights (legal or financial)
Marketing as common discourse
TV and marketing considered similar evils for children
Children as innocent for many decades
Lyn et al as experts against marketing

Language used

Emotive eg; (in red in part 1)
Metaphors (in red in part 1 – war imagery)
Hearsay/anecdotes to be more emotive as first person
Repetition to play on insecurity of parents

What is missing

Voice of children
Voice of marketing/ Pro marketing discourse (marketing 'facts' used against it)
Examples of marketing helping children/consuming being fun/educational etc

Counter Discourse

Pro marketing cited but not given credence.

Links to other discourses
Statistics as evidence of truth
Examples as evidence of truth
US as same as UK
Warfare
Family
Morality
Childhood/Tradition/Nostalgia
Emotion as argument
Politics of Substitution (Jenkins 2000) for sake of children OK to have moral panic ie
Risk discourse.

MARKETING AS OBJECT

Stage 1: Objects (Discursive Constructs):

ACTUAL WORDS USED	CONVEYIING

P227

Highly insidious…influence	devious evil

P228

Control	power instead of adults
Lurks an army of anonymous manipulators	enemy, hidden, control without consent, faceless
Employed by big business	led by money. Overpowering
Capture the hearts and minds	enemy, war analogy
Powerful 'electronic villagers'	bigger
Huge impact on the culture of childhood	overwhelming
Devised	cunning
Often labelled 'educational'	lying
Devoted much time, money and energy	committed to their cause
Convincing	controlling

P229

Encourage to covet	leading astray
Bridges from one type of passive, sedentary Entertainment to another	making unhealthy
Sowing the same imagination-rotting, creativity dumbing whirlwind	out of control, distructive
these strangers	other (danger)
or the promoters behind them	hidden menace

P230

Manipulated	controlled without wish to be
Marketing agencies are not renowned	
For responsible behaviour	naughty (versus parents who are responsible)
Marketing maelstrom	out of control distruction
Marketers intent	malicious
Brainwashed	controlling
Aimed at	warfare
Perfect position to be taken	warfare
Devote massive budgets	bigger than parents

P231

Bombardment	warfare
Sophisticated marketing techniques aimed	bigger warfare
A more innocent age	ads in past were OK because unsophisticated, not fair have changed rules
Explosion of marketing aimed	out of control, warfare
Precisely targeted	warfare
Refined by scientific methods	cunning
Honed by child psychologies	changed sides
More pervasive and intrusive than ever	changed, evil
Change of pitch	changed rules without agreement
Target	warfare
Conveniently	waiting for opportunity
Groom young consumers	connotations of paedophilia
Offer happiness	unfair

P232

Recruited children	warfare
Pester power has become essential to marketing	tactic
Targeting the young	warfare
Sinister of all	evil/hidden
Initiate them as early as possible into the cult of the brand	religious brainwashing
Cut throat	dangerous
Ensnare	control, danger
Impressing	cheating
Ripe for the picking	bad

P233

Creating dependence on the particular brand they are pushing	drug connotations
Big business	bigger than parents
Complex mind games	manipulative
Quarry	hunter
Mass brainwashing	manipulation
Unlikely to be as savvy as adults armed	warfare
With multimillion pound budgets	bigger
Latest psychological weapons	warfare
You open up emotional vulnerabilities	manipulation (ad person quote)
Targeting children	warfare
Forces of worldwide marketing	bigger
Emphasis and encourage	controlling
Marketing forces	warfare

P234

Cloying schmalziness	unpleasant
Ideal for market exploitation	manipulation
Immensely important (brands)	powerful

Marketers spend fortunes	powerful
Offers most belonging most protection	replacing parent?
Weapon in their marketing armoury	warfare

P235

Feed this dream	manipulative
Nurture	replacing parent?
Limitless	out of control
Fashion victims	evil
Sexualisation of girls	making them sexual
Collateral effect	warfare

P236

Are overweight due to junk food marketing	full blame
Exploits…vulnerabilities	evil manipulation
Known among marketers	secrets

P237

Know that most parents disapprove	setting against parents
Ways round the law	illegal almost

P238

Reliance on brands	drugs
Rather callous, usual anti-authority	bad influence
Pandering to children's enthusiasm	manipulating
Encouragement for breaking parental rules	anti parents
Encouraging an ironic, adult-mocking, anti-authority attitude	against status quo + parents
drive a wedge between them and adults	against parents

P239

Marketing feeds	instead of parents
Oh-so-ironic subversion of civilised values	against status quo – uncivilised
Unholy alliance between children	against parents + wrong
and the forces of international marketing	too big
'advertising world view that your parents are creeps, teachers are weirdos and idiots, authority figures are laughable,	ie against status quo
nobody can really understand kids except the corporate sponsor'	stated not be marketing person
openly encouraging and validating the subversive side	bad influence
marketers are unleashing forces..difficult to control	out of control
decivilising effect	against status quo
destroying	evil

<u>P240</u>

Defined by their worth not by any moral standards	implied marketing amoral
Parents powerless to assert these 'old fashioned values'	anti status quo
Beset	warfare
Infant aspiration	wrong

<u>P241</u>

Perhaps as the consumer culture spreads across the globe	plague
Money will eventually become the new currency of love?	Replacing love
Main evangelists	religious
Increasing seek to make children stakeholders	including children
A future based on superficial appearances, disrespect, hedonism and instant gratification	all anti status quo

<u>P242</u>

<u>P243</u>

Invaded by consumerism	warfare
Subtly directed by the forces of mass marketing	warfare + devious
Undermine	against parents
Accepted route	ie wrong

<u>P244</u>

Aggressive consumer culture	bad
Toxic childhood syndrome	disease
Intractability, impulsivity and self-obsession	effects – all bad
Offensive against	warfare
Current excesses	too much
Marketing forces are reined in	as if out of control
Withstand	barrage attack
In thrall to big business	taken over
those who would manipulate their children's minds	evil controlling

<u>P245</u>

How marketers target people' hopes, fears and needs	warfare. Evil

<u>P246</u>

Limit exposure to consumer culture	as if disease

Stage 2: Discourses

MARKETING IS OTHER. IT IS THE ENEMY (HENCE WARFARE ANALOGIES). IT IS AN OUT OF CONTROL FORCE, BIGGER THAN WE CAN RESIST AND POWERFUL. IT IS TRYING TO REPLACE PARENTS AND ALLY WITH CHILDREN (WHO ARE NOT CAPABLE SO THIS IS NOT RIGHT). REFERENCES TO BEING A DRUG, A RELIGION, A PAEDOPHILE, A PLAGUE. MARKETING IS DEVIOUS AND MANIPULATIVE WORKING AGAINST THE STATUS QUO. MARKETING IS FACELESS AND SO HARD TO DEAL WITH BECAUSE NOT INDIVIDUALS JUST A MASS OF POWER.

Stage 3: Action Orientation (ie what is gained from this object construction)

Status Quo should be retained – change is bad.
The enemy (marketing) is bad(plague, drug etc)and should be stopped
Parents are in a fight with marketing, so ally yourself
This is a fight it will be hard to win as marketing has resources and is devious as is all big business
Marketing is out of control so in a way not responsible for its actions and also impossible to understand (or teach to children)
Marketing will lead to disintegration of moral standards

Stage 4: Positionings

Adult
Authority(teacher)
Parent (carer)
Anti marketing/concerned for future as the right perspective
If pro-marketing then the enemy

Stage 5: Practice

To be against marketing is responsible behaviour
To be anti-marketing is caring
Legitimate to think of marketing as the enemy to be beaten
Since marketing is out of control legitimate to not try to deal with it but avoid its influence instead
Since marketing is illogical, no point in educating, just avoid
Supports institution of parents/family over consumerism
To assume children are not capable is caring – supporting control/surveillance and boundaries for childhood

Stage 6: Subjectivity

OK to hate/fear marketing
OK to fear children when grow up if subject to marketing

Power relations asserted through discourse:

Marketing over government
Marketing over parents (allies itself with children)
Marketing over children
Marketing over all that is moral and normal

Appendix 2

Google Search results for 'marketing to children' downloaded on 21.7.2008

Web Images Maps News Shopping Mail more ▼   Sign in

Google

marketing to children 2008   Search   Advanced Search
Search: the web ○ pages from the UK   Preferences

Web   Results 1 - 10 of about 1,810,000 for marketing to children 2008. (0.17 seconds)

Tip: Save time by hitting the return key instead of clicking on
"search"

Ethical Corporation: BrandWatch - BrandWatch focus:
marketing to ...
24th-25th November 2008, London. Control's the key Marketing to
children is certainly something that needs to be carefully considered
and controlled, ...
www.ethicalcorp.com/content.asp?ContentID=6013 - 36k -

Ethical Corporation: Special Reports - Marketing
to children ...
The Practical Guide to Emissions Trading and Offsetting
2008: Everything you need to ..... Marketing to children – an
ethical predicament» [6 Mar 03] ...
www.ethicalcorp.com/content.asp?ContentID=5328 - 47k -

House of Commons Hansard Debates for 25 Apr 2008
(pt 0001)
25 Apr 2008 : Column 1588 children on reasonable consumption
are being fatally undermined by the relentless advertising and
marketing to their children of ...
www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/
pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080425/debtext/80425-0001.htm - 39k -

IAB UK : News : Marketing to children online
Sunday, 13 July 2008. IAB UK Home; /; News; /; Marketing to
children online. Find information on... Internet marketing, Affiliate
marketing ...
www.iabuk.net/en/1/marketingtochildrenonline05022008.mxs - 32k
-

Food Products (Marketing To Children) Bill
25 May 2008 ... April 2008. WHY WE NEED ROBUST FOOD MARKETING
RESTRICTIONS. One in three children in England are classified as either overweight or
obese ...
www.epolitix.com/latestnews/article-detail/newsarticle/food-products-marketing-to-children-
bill/ - 48k -

[PDF] Food Products (Marketing to Children) Bill
File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat - View as HTML
Products (Marketing to Children) Act 2008." 4. Short title, commencement and extent. (1)
This Act may be cited as the Food Products (Marketing to Children) ...
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmbills/019/2008019.pdf -

Consumers International - WCRD 2008
WCRD 2008. Marketing to children · Obesity · Unhealthy food · International codes ... (CI)
campaign to stop the marketing of unhealthy food to children. ...
www.consumersinternational.org/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=97050 - 22k -

Sponsored Links

New Marketing Concept
We Show You Opportunities How Your
Business Can Be More Succesful!
www.your-sales-machine.com

Marketing
Everything you need to be effective
at Marketing - Leading UK Expert
www.MarketingEssentials.co.uk

Successful Marketing Tips
Start Improving Your Internet Sales
With These Free Proven Strategies
www.MarketingTipsUk.com

Bright Marketing
- why should people buy from you?
Robert Craven tells all
www.bright-marketing.com

Children's Market Trends
Find Market Research Reports &
Analysis on Children Demographics
www.marketresearch.com

marketing communications
strategic and creative consultancy
integrated marketing solutions
www.guerilla-marketing.co.uk

http://www.google.co.uk/search?hl=en&q=marketing+to+children+2008&btnG=Sear...   21/07/2008

<u>Materials analysed for anti-marketing texts</u>

1. Consumers International Website discussion on World Consumer Rights Day
    and junk food advertising. Available from
    <u>www.consumersinternational.org/templates/internal</u> (accessed on on
    21.July.2008)

This organization is an independent global 'campaigning voice' for consumers, With
over 250 Member organisations in 120 countries

2. E Polotix.Com (2008) *Food Products (Marketing to Children Bill).* . Available
    from: <u>http://www.epolitix.com/latestnews/article-detail/newsarticle/food-</u>
    <u>products-marketing</u> (accessed 21 July 2008).

This document outlines the Marketing to Children Bill which is the subject of the debate
from 25 April 2008.

3. Family and Parenting Institute (2008) Assessing the impact of the commercial
    world on children's wellbeing. A response from the Family and Parenting
    Institute. Available from: <u>familyandparenting.org/item/document/1731</u>
    (Accessed on 21 July 2008)

This website is for an independent charity that 'exists to make the UK a better place
for families and children'. It works with charities, businesses and public services to offer
practical help to families.

4. Fenton, B (2006) '*Junk Culture 'is poisoning our children'* The Daily Telegraph, Tuesday September 12, 2006, front page.

This article was then supported by a letter to the Daily Telegraph from 110 teachers, psychologies, children's authors and other experts calling on the government to 'prevent the death of childhood' (see reference below under Palmer, S and further below for the article in full).

5. Great Britain, Communications Dept (2008) Transcript of House of Commons Debate, Friday 25 April, 2008: Orders of the Day: *Food Products (Marketing to Children) Bill.*

Transcript of the debate held in the House of Commons.

6. Nairn, A and Ormond, J (2007) '*Watching, wanting and wellbeing: exploring the links: a study of 9 to 13 year olds'*. London, National Consumer Council.

The National Consumer Council was an independent non-departmental public body and statutory consumer organisation in England, Wales, Scotland, and, for postal services, Northern Ireland. The authors of this research claimed it was the first in the UK to explore these issues.

7. Palmer, S (2006) *Toxic Childhood: How the Modern World is Damaging our Children and What We Can Do About It*. London, Orion Publishing.

8. Palmer et al (2006) *'Modern life leads to more depression among children'*, The Telegraph, 12 September (Online) Available at: http:/www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1528639/Modern-life-leads-to-more-depression-among-children. (Accessed 6 November 2008)

Sue Palmer is former primary headteacher in the Scottish Borders and is an independent writer and consultant on primary education, particularly literacy. The book *Toxic Childhood* became a 'best-seller' according to her publisher Orion Publishing.

9. Which? Campaigns (2008) About the Kids' food campaign. Available at: http:/www.which.co.uk/campaigns/kids-food/about –the-kids-food-campaign/index (Accessed on 5 October 2008)

Which is the largest consumer body in the UK, with over 617,000 members that subscribe to the magazine, and over 254,000 online subscribers. With no advertising, and no government or industry backing they claim to be completely independent.

Junk culture 'is poisoning our children'

Experts blame fast food, computer games and competitive schooling for rise in depression

By Ben Fenton

A SINISTER cocktail of junk food, marketing, over-competitive schooling and electronic entertainment is poisoning childhood, a powerful lobby of academics and children's experts says today.

In a letter to *The Daily Telegraph*, 110 teachers, psychologists, children's authors and other experts call on the Government to act to prevent the death of childhood.

They write: "We are deeply concerned at the escalating incidence of childhood depression and children's behavioural and developmental conditions."

The group, which includes Philip Pullman, the children's author, Jacqueline Wilson, the children's laureate, her predecessor Michael Morpurgo, Baroness Greenfield, the director of the Royal Institution, and Dr Penelope Leach, the child care expert, blames a failure by politicians and public alike to understand how children develop.

"Since children's brains are still developing, they cannot adjust ... to the effects of ever more rapid technological and cultural change," they write.

"They still need what developing human beings have always needed, including real food (as opposed to processed "junk"), real play (as opposed to sedentary, screen-based entertainment), first-hand experience of the world they live in and regular interaction with the real-life significant adults in their lives.

"They also need time. In a fast-moving, hyper-competitive culture, today's children are expected to cope with an ever-earlier start to formal schoolwork and an overly academic test-driven primary curriculum.

"They are pushed by market forces to act and dress like mini-adults and exposed via the electronic media to material which would have been considered unsuitable for children even in the very recent past."

The letter was circulated by Sue Palmer, a former head teacher and author of *Toxic Childhood,* and Dr Richard House, senior lecturer at the Research Centre for Therapeutic Education at Roehampton University.

Mrs Palmer said: "I have been thinking about this for a long time and I just decided something had to be done.

"It is like this giant elephant in all our living rooms, the fact that children's development is being drastically affected by the kind of world they are brought up in."

She cited research by Prof Michael Shayer at King's College, London, which showed that 11-year-olds measured in cognitive tests were "on average between two and three years behind where they were 15 years ago".

"I think that is shocking. We must make a public statement – a child's physical and psychological growth cannot be accelerated.

"It changes in biological time, not at electrical speed. Childhood is not a race."

The other signatories include Sir Jonathon Porritt, the environmental campaigner, Prof Tim Brighouse, the Commissioner for London Schools, and Sir Richard Bowlby, the president of the Centre for Child Mental Health.

Mr Morpurgo said: "We have so much anxiety about children, their protection, their care, their education, that this has developed into fear. There is a fear around children, both from schools and politicians, which has led to this target-driven education system.

"That has put children into an academic straitjacket from a very early age which restricts creativity and the enrichment of childhood."

He condemned the "virtual play" represented by electronic games and internet surfing.

"That is where children are getting their ideas from and I find it quite "toxic" and pretty scary for the future."

Jacqueline Wilson said: "We are not valuing childhood. I speak to children at book signings and they ask me how I go through the process of writing and I say, 'Oh you know, it's just like when you play imaginary games and you simply write it all down'.

"All I get is blank faces. I don't think children use their imaginations any more."

Baroness Greenfield is so concerned about the effect of technology on children she has set up an all-party group in the Lords to look into it.

The other members are three former education secretaries, Baroness Williams, Baroness Shephard and Baroness Morris.

Editorial Comment & Letters: Page 23

Camilla reme

The Duchess of Cornwall arriv Paul's Church in Knightsbridg celebrating the life of the tw

<u>The Daily Telegraph, Tuesday September 12, 2006, front page.</u>

Appendix 3

Samples from BTHA Toy Fair 2014

TOYS AND CHILDREN

Understanding 'Aggressive' Play

Play is exciting – it's fun and it stimulates imagination. It also teaches children social skills such as co-operation and self-control, something all parents are keen to see. Toys help develop mental and physical skills by stimulating and prolonging play. Mothers are sometimes shocked when their sons, or even their daughters – some as young as two years old – ask for a toy gun, an action figure or a video game featuring martial arts fighting. These toys are popular; the vast majority of boys and many girls have played with toy weapons at home.[1] These toys are also controversial.

Some parents worry about children playing aggressive games or playing with toy weapons. Others say that aggressive play and pretend fighting with toys are all part and parcel of children learning appropriate behaviour. The debate will no doubt go on[2]. Perhaps the following information will help you, as a parent, to make up your mind about what is best for your child.

Is it real or pretend?

Pretending to be aggressive is not the same as being aggressive. Aggressive behaviour is the intention to harm another person. Aggressive play includes make-believe fighting and rough-and-tumble, which has no intention to injure anyone. Play fighting requires a good deal of self-control and restraint of aggression, serving as practice for exercising self-control in more serious contexts. According to psychologist T. G. Power, "Professionals need to be careful not to equate play-fighting with serious fighting, and not to label a child as 'aggressive' simply because he or she prefers a particular kind of play. Given many children's interest and enjoyment in active, locomotor play, children

should be given numerous opportunities for this type of play as well. Such activities likely contribute to motor development, overall physical fitness, and possibly cognitive development".[3]

Aggressive toys or war toys are those that children use in play fighting and fantasy aggression. These include toys that resemble weapons and action figures. Contrary to popular belief, only a small minority of toys are action figures and toy weapons (6%) or video games with fighting themes (5%).[4]

Although elaborate efforts are sometimes made to prevent children from playing with toy weapons, nevertheless a sizeable percentage of boys and a surprising number of girls play with aggressive toys. Studies in Britain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the USA all report that about 60-80% of boys and about one-third of girls sometimes played with aggressive toys at home.[5]

According to the research, toy weapons and violent video games stimulate play fighting but have no effect on aggressive behaviour. There is no evidence linking aggressive toys to children's attitudes toward war or violence. For nearly all children who engage in it, aggressive play is exciting, active, and fun, full of fantasy and imagination.[6]

While adults may sometimes confuse real and pretend fighting, research shows that children as young as five are able to tell the difference between real aggression, which frightens them, and aggressive play, which they see as harmless fun.[7] Children's experience of actual aggression in the home has much more influence on them than a toy – however fond of the toy they may be.

The toy is an intermediary between the child and the world. It is the family environment far more than the toy that is the key factor in the

The Value of Play

Play is an essential part of growing up. Through play children hasten their own development while they learn about the world around them. This booklet has been produced by the National Toy Council to help you select the best toys for your child. The guidelines in this booklet are based on extensive research.

WHY PLAY IS IMPORTANT

Play is the way children learn. Children with access to a wide range of well-selected toys are more likely to be challenged and stimulated. Studies find that they reach higher levels of intellectual development, regardless of their sex, race or social class.

Toys that stimulate mental development are appropriate for the child's abilities, responsive to the child's movements, and provide feedback when manipulated. Whether playing alone or with others, quietly or with enthusiasm, play is the way children explore their world and create imaginary ones.

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

Even in reaching for a toy your baby develops early hand/eye co-ordination, strength, balance and agility. Activity centres, block letters, shape sorters and games will help your child learn many new skills. Toys and games that are used with playmates encourage sharing, co-operation and communication. Blocks and models will foster spatial play, whilst jigsaws, dominoes, puzzles and board games are for logical play. Balls and push/pull toys are used in physical play, and verbal play accompanies books and word games. Children use dolls, action figures, costumes and puppets for imaginary play. Research shows that through play children learn how to plan and solve problems. Play encourages them to develop language and communication skills, and to use imagination and creativity.

Playful children are happier, better adjusted, more cooperative, and more popular with their peers than those who play less. Children play longer when a wide variety of toys is available. It is not necessarily the most expensive toys that provide the greatest stimulation and enjoyment. It is better to have four or five different toys than one very expensive one.

AGES AND STAGES OF PLAY

Children differ enormously in their rate of growth and development, so toys should keep pace with children's changing needs and ability levels. As a parent, be sensitive to the interests, abilities and limitations of your children in deciding when they are ready for their first puzzle, book, bike or computer game. Here are some guidelines on the types of toys best suited for different stages of development.

INFANTS

A baby's first toys are important in teaching about size, shape, colour and texture. In one study, the availability of toys in infancy was strongly related to the child's IQ at the age of three! During the first year, an infant will respond to bright colours and gentle sounds. Musical toys and mobiles are ideal at this age. Babies find it difficult to co-ordinate their hand and eye at first so they learn about the shape and feel of objects with their mouths. As they gain control over their hand movements an activity mat is great for exploring textures and shapes.

TODDLERS

Half the waking hours of a typical 17-month old are devoted to play, so a variety of toys is essential. They will enjoy toys that move, like mobiles and rattles. Children begin to enjoy pretend play so toys that stimulate imagination, such as play sets, toy vehicles, soft toys and puppets, are also popular. Blocks will challenge their imagination and dexterity.

An active toddler will need toys for physical play; toys they can sit on or push and pull. Toys that respond to the child's movements will hold attention, important for reading. Children play for a longer period of time when there is a greater variety of toys available.

3-5 YEARS

Pretend play is the child's way of trying out new skills and growing interests. Puppets are a great way to develop language. As children gain confidence and social skills they enjoy play with other children. Role playing and fantasy games help their social and emotional development. Children like realistic toys that resemble people and everyday objects, such as dolls, action figures, tool sets and household items. They also like construction sets, painting, musical toys and cassette players.

Active play on swings, slides, climbing frames and toy vehicles encourages physical co-ordination and will help them to progress onto tricycles and bicycles. As they develop logic and are able to concentrate longer they are ready for games with rules like lotto, matching games and dominoes. Memory and imagination can be exercised with electronic toys, board games, and word games.
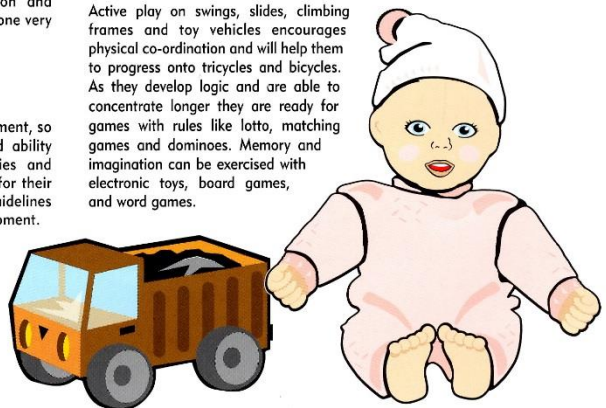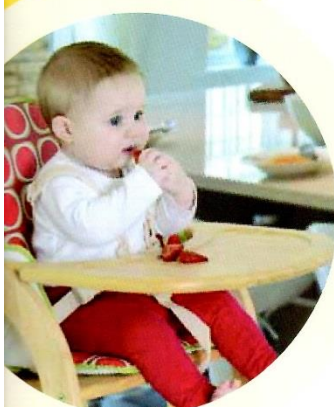
High Chairs

In 2009 a 15-month-old baby in Israel managed to stand up in her highchair while eating dinner as she was not strapped in tightly enough. Upon standing she lost her balance and fell to the floor, hitting her head.

Source: The National Center for Children's Safety and Health. BETEREM. Data from the Israel National Pediatric Injury and Safety Surveillance (NAPIS). 2013.

Why can high chairs pose a problem?
- Estimates using EU Injury Database (IDB) data indicate that annually in the EU 28 Member States approximately 7,700 injuries to children 0-4 years of age involving high chairs are serious enough to require a visit to the emergency department.
- During the period 2008- 2013, there were 43 RAPEX alerts related to high chairs from 13 different Member States. The risks identified were chemical risks of the surface material where children could place their mouths; choking risks due to detachable / breakable parts of the high chair in reach of the child; and fall risks due to a lack of stability of the high chair, non-compliant folding / locking mechanisms, lack of effectiveness of the restraint system or finger entrapment.[39]

How can high chairs be dangerous for children?
- High chairs are a fall hazard. The majority of the injuries related to high chairs result from falls that occur when restraining straps are not used or used properly and children are not closely supervised. Children can slip out of a high chair in an instant if not properly strapped in or if the strap between the legs is missing.
- The most severe cases, those resulting in death, have occurred when children slipped down under the tray and were strangled. Most often, these children were either unrestrained or were restrained only by a waist belt (i.e. strap between the legs was not used).
- An unstable high chair can tip over with the child in it. High chairs may tip leading to head injuries if an active child pushes off from a table or wall, stands up in the high chair, or rocks it back and forth. Tip overs can also occur when children try to climb on it.
- High chairs with sliding trays can result in injuries to fingers when they are caught when sliding the tray into place.

Why can children's high chairs be a problem?
- Check that the high chair conforms to European safety standard EN 14988-1:2006+A1:2012 – Children's high chairs.
- High chairs must have a waist strap and a strap that runs between the legs. If a high chair is without an integral five-point harness, have one fitted. When buying a separate harness check that it conforms to EN 13210.
- Since the restraining straps must be used every time a child is placed in the chair, look for straps that are easy to use and are independent of the tray. If the straps are difficult to use or take too much time to fasten, they are less likely to be used. A five point integral harness is the safest option.

[39]

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- Examine the straps to ensure that the waist belt has a buckle that cannot be fastened unless the crotch strap is also used.
- Check that the buckle, waist strap and the strap that runs between the legs will secure the child safely in place in the high chair and that the high chair is unlikely to tip over should the child start to rock the high chair or attempt to climb out of it.
- Select a high chair that has a wide base for stability and is heavyweight. The most stable high chairs have a wide metal or wooden frame; those made of only plastic are not recommended.
- Check that the tray locks securely and that caps or plugs on tubing are firmly attached and cannot be pulled off by a child.
- If buying a folding high chair, check that it has an effective locking device.
- Look for high chair designs with a post between where the child's legs will go. This will help prevent the child from slipping down and becoming trapped under the tray. Even with the post always use the safety strap.
- Do not use high chairs with wheels.

How to use high chairs safely:

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- Keep the high chair away from walls, doors, windows, blind cords, and appliances. Do not leave the child unsupervised in the high chair, even if safety belts are in use.
- The crotch strap alone will not be sufficient to hold the child securely. Without two straps (i.e. a waist strap and a crotch strap) children can stand in the chair seat and topple from the chair, or slide under the tray and strangle on the waist strap or when their heads become trapped between the tray and the chair seat.
- Make sure that all safety belts or straps on the high chair are adjusted to the size of the child and securely fastened and that the tray is properly secured. The tray should not be used as a restraining device in place of the straps.
- Check the condition of straps and their attachments often to make sure they are securely attached and work properly. Only safety straps keep the child from climbing out or sliding down and strangling.
- Make sure there are no sharp edges on the tray and check regularly to see that there are no loose nuts or other small parts. Do not use a chair if the plastic has split or if any foam is exposed.
- If the chair is foldable, keep children away from the chair while folding to prevent finger entrapment.
- Be sure that the locking device on a folding high chair is locked each time the chair is set up.
- Never allow a child to stand up in a high chair as this can cause tipping.
- If using a table mounted chair be aware that these chairs should not be used on glass or single pedestal tables and should not be attached over a tablecloth.
- Do not let a child climb into the high chair unassisted.
- Do not let older children climb on or hang off a high chair while a child is in it as this can result in a tip over.

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39 Prosafe. Joint Follow-up Market Surveillance Action on GPSD Products. Meeting No. 2. Child care articles-High Chairs. 26 June 2013.

Appendix 4

Ethics Committee Approval and School Approval

US
University of Sussex
School of Humanities

CERTIFICATE OF RESEARCH GOVERNANCE APPROVAL

Title of Project: *The role of brands in the contemporary culture of children*

Name(s) / Title(s) of Principal Investigator / Student Supervisor:

Sarah Johnston

Sponsor (where relevant): n/a

Project Contact Point: saz@antix.co.uk

Brief Description of Project:
 n/a

Issues raised and specific actions to be taken:

a) The consent form makes clear the child's right to withdraw.
b) The consent form includes a statement of intent to feedback the overall findings (in appropriate way) to the children participating.
c) The candidate checks with the school whether CRB clearance is required before classroom observation takes place.
d) References to Richard Black and SOCCUL on the consent forms should be replaced by Jenny Bourne Taylor and HUMS.
e) Correct the title for Janice Winship.

The project as set out the in the Request for Research Governance approval form **has been approved SUBJECT TO THE CORRECTIONS ABOVE.**

Expected start date of project: **January 2009**

If the <u>actual</u> project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the <u>expected</u> start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

Signature: _____   Date: 1 December 2008
Prof Jenny Bourne Taylor
Designated Officer

**The role of brands in the contemporary culture of children
CONSENT FORM – Mr Beyfus, Sheddingdean school.**

Participation

I, Mr Beyfus and the children in Class 5AJB, in year 5 have been invited to participate in a research project conducted by Sarah Johnston, DPhil Candidate in Media Studies at the University of Sussex (Brighton, UK). This research is conducted under the supervision of Janice Winship, from the Media Studies Department.

This research aims at finding out how children talk about brands, as part of their class discussion on 'persuasive language'. During this class discussion, Sarah Johnston will tape record the debate, but not enter into any dialogue with the children. Her presence will be explained by myself, the class teacher. I have discussed the lesson content with Sarah Johnston in advance, and am aware of the research context.

As part of this school's organisation, parents have already signed consent forms for their children to participate in research whilst in school. This research therefore requires no further consent from parents or children.
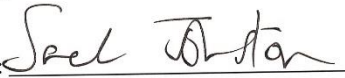
Confidentiality

The research will not mention my or any child's name nor any data that may lead to our identification. All data (including all written documents and audio recording) will be kept, locked, under Sarah's control. If I ask for a copy of the tape recording, or the analysis carried out based on the recording, it will be made available and I will be able to verify whether the information provided is a fair representation of the children's points of view. Sarah Johnston will feedback her overall findings to myself and the children participants.

Apart from the thesis, it is possible that the research findings may be cited in other projects (articles, chapters, books or conferences), but in all circumstances, appropriate measures will be taken to maintain anonymity and the confidentiality of the answers.

Ethics

This research project has been approved by the *HUMS Research Governance Committee* on 1 December 2008.

Student's Signature: _Sarah Johnston_   Date: 30·4·09

I, <u>Alex Beyfus,</u> hereby agree to participate in a class discussion on persuasive language, and to be tape-recorded by Sarah Johnston, I confirm that I understand the terms and conditions presented above.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: 30·4·09

** I have signed two copies of this consent form. I have retained one and returned the other to Sarah Johnston.

If I have any questions regarding this research, I may contact:
Sarah Johnston
HUMS
University of Sussex
s.g.johnston@sussex.ac.uk

If I wish to complain about ethical matters related to any aspect of the school's participation in this research or related to the research project itself, I may contact the Chair of the HUMS Research Governance Committee at the University of Sussex:

Jenny Bourne Taylor
Chair, School HUMS Research Governance Committee
University of Sussex

For further information, I may consult the following websites:

University of Sussex: www.sussex.ac.uk

Department of Media and Film, University of Sussex:
http://www.sussex.ac.uk/mediastudies/index.php