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Children's cultures of consumption: An interpretive study

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Abstract

Whilst children are given serious attention by marketers, little is actually known about what it means to be a child consumer today. Traditionally, research with children has been conducted using an adult-centric, developmental perspective, namely that of scientific consumer socialization. Although scientific consumer socialization has yielded positive contributions to understanding children as consumers there remain important questions which the traditional paradigm has not answered. As we shall see throughout this thesis, the net result is that the social sciences generally, and consumer behaviour specifically, have not fully grasped what consumption means to the children themselves. Rather, current knowledge is based on adult understandings of childhood consumption through the application of adult frameworks. Therefore, this thesis proposes an alternative complementary paradigm to studying children as consumers. By adopting the child-centric perspective of childhood studies (from sociology), and bringing this framework into the field of consumer behaviour, this study contributes to promoting interdisciplinary perspectives on childhood consumption. Childhood studies considers children to be active social agents who contribute to the production of culture rather than passively absorbing it through the process of socialization. Therefore, childhood studies is grounded in an approach which places greater emphasis on the meanings that *children* (rather than adults) attribute to their life worlds.

In order to analyse and explore children's consumption, a cultural framework has been developed for this study. Focusing on culture provides an opportunity to understand how children go about constructing/attributing meaning to consumption. Children's cultures of consumption are therefore, understood to consist of the entire set of consumption beliefs, values and behaviours of children. Four composite dimensions of children's cultures of consumption were identified from the findings of this study as well as previous research. These dimensions are consumption rituals, symbols, power and identity and, it is argued here, are (some of) the basic ingredients of children's cultures of consumption. In addition, the connections between the ingredients have been explored in order to understand their interrelationships.

Thus, to explore children's cultures of consumption, ethnographic research was conducted in two schools and one nursery in central Scotland. Three age groups (ranging from 3-11) with children from both deprived and affluent backgrounds were studied, spending a total of one year in the field. The findings provide important insight into the meanings that children attribute to consumption through an analysis of consumption symbols, rituals, power and identity. Further analysis revealed five child consumer segments which highlight how children's consumption concerns change with time and place. These segments present children as protected, resisting, communicative, gendered and independent child consumers.

Finally certain key principles of children's cultures of consumption were identified. From these key principles it clearly emerged that children from a very young age, use consumption to communicate and relate to others. In doing so, children are much more competent consumers than previous research would have it. Yet children do not passively reproduce cultures of consumption but are active in constructing their own meanings. They shape and construct the meaning of consumption to fit in with their cultures and creatively do so within the time, places and spaces they move in. The findings further reveal that central to children's cultures of consumption is their continuous determination to gain control and independence from adults – which, as the reader will see, has immense impact on children's consumption behaviour and the meanings that the children attribute to consumption.

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Chapter One: An introduction to children's cultures of consumption

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the study and contextualise it in terms of current understanding of children's cultures of consumption¹. The chapter commences with a background to the topic where children as consumers in Western society are discussed. This is followed by an overview of the traditional paradigm to researching childhood consumption, which indicates a current lack of knowledge about children as consumers. Subsequently, the key terms of this thesis are clarified and defined. Next the paradigm for this thesis is introduced along with a discussion concerning its application in the context of children's cultures of consumption. This is followed by an outline of the aim, objectives and research proposition. Once the overall topic and direction of the thesis have been presented the methodology is discussed. Subsequently, the contribution to knowledge made by this thesis is explained on a theoretical, methodological and practical level. Finally, an overview of the remainder chapters is provided.

1.1 Background to topic

Everyday life for children in the Western world is heavily dominated by consumption, which means that children have great impact on the economy. In the UK, the market for toys and children's clothing is worth £7.3 billion (Intel, 2006). Furthermore, children (aged 7-10) spend, rather than save, much of their pocket money – in total £0.4 billion annually (Intel, 2004). This figure does not include gifts, money given to children for specific items or daily household goods purchased for children. Therefore, since they are in direct or indirect control of large sums of money on an annual basis, children are recognised by marketers as deserving serious attention.

Notwithstanding the direct spending by children, marketers now regard children as significant consumers from three angles. Firstly, children have a major influence on household expenditure; secondly, they are consumers in their own right and finally, their future adult status and, therefore, consumption potential is considerable. However, other groups, most notably parents, welfare/protectionist organisations, psychologists,

¹ In the phrase, "children's cultures of consumption" the term *children* has been used instead of *childhood* for three reasons: Firstly, childhood is singular whilst there are in fact many childhoods (Cook, 2005; Qvortrup, 1994). Secondly, from an historical point of view, the term *childhood* represents a shifting set of ideas (Aries, 1986) depending on which moment in history one examines. Thirdly, and most importantly, *childhood* as a term signifies a life stage. *Children*, on the other hand, directs the focus towards children as human beings and groups of consumers.

educationalists and the like, have adopted a much more critical and moral perspective on the matter (Cook, 2005). Some of the ethical issues put forward by such groups include that marketing encourages materialism in children, children become obese by being exposed to advertising of unhealthy foods, marketing reproduces stereotypes (e.g. gender) and is implicated in eating disorders amongst young people. This has led to a range of conflicting discourses surrounding children as consumers. Although there are variations, generally speaking, discourse on children and consumption can be categorised into two types: on the one hand children are viewed as *powerful*, fickle and savvy consumers and on the other hand as *powerless* victims who are manipulated and misled. Such inconsistencies in academic discourses, public debates and general opinion, it is argued here, are partly centred on one explanation: research and subsequently discourse are grounded in adult-centred (hereafter referred to as *adult-centric*) ideas of what it means to be a child consumer. In other words, knowledge produced is based on adult ideas of the world, using adult methods and interpreted through adult frameworks.

To date, research with children as consumers has been almost exclusively located within the *scientific consumer socialization* approach. Scientific consumer socialization has made important contributions to understanding children's consumer learning and their cognitive abilities as consumers, yet it is clear that there are many questions concerning childhood consumption yet unanswered. Consequently, despite decades of research, there is still much to be learnt about children as consumers: a view supported by John (1999a: 205) who claimed that there are "...significant gaps in our conceptualisation and understanding of exactly what role social environment and experiences play in scientific consumer socialization". It follows that this thesis can contribute to bridging the gap in knowledge in this important area.

To do so, an alternative complementary child-centred (hereafter referred to as *child-centric*) paradigm will be adopted to further understanding on children's consumer behaviour. Such a child-centric paradigm is intended to shed light on this important topic from another *angle* rather than being a *replacement* of the scientific consumer socialization paradigm, within which the overwhelming majority of current research is located. Very briefly, a paradigm is a worldview, or a set of basic assumptions, which researchers have about the subject nature (in this case children) they are studying. Consequently, within science a paradigm guides researchers in their pursuit of knowledge (the notion of paradigm is further explored in Chapter Two).

For this particular study, a child-centric paradigm to researching children will be applied from outwith the field of marketing. This child-centric paradigm is that of *childhood studies* which is rooted in sociology and anthropology. In adopting such alternative complementary perspectives from other fields of study this thesis is multidisciplinary in nature. Thus the approach is part of a paradigm shift within marketing, which has seen a range of multidisciplinary studies over recent years (Belk, 1995). This is most notable within the field of consumer behaviour where disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and social psychology are widely applied in research. Having presented the background to the topic, an overview of the dominant paradigm for studying children as consumers is now provided.

1.2 Scientific consumer socialization: The dominant paradigm

In the 1970s, research with children as consumers emerged as a response to public debates and public policy issues surrounding marketing to children (Roedder et. al., 1978). Consequently, children were placed on the consumer behaviour agenda, which has resulted in a range of studies over the past forty years. By far the majority of these studies have been anchored in the scientific consumer socialization paradigm.

Briefly, scientific consumer socialization can be defined as the "...processes by which young people acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their effective functioning as consumers..." (Ward, 1974: 2). Essentially, therefore, scientific consumer socialization theory seeks to explain how people learn to become consumers in a given culture or society. Since the focus is on consumption-related learning, thinking, rationalising and recognizing, scientific consumer socialization is mainly rooted in developmental psychology and to some extent in learning theories (Gunter & Furham, 1998; Roedder et. al., 1978). This stream of research has provided an important base of knowledge concerning children's understanding of consumption. For instance, valuable insight has been provided into children's abilities to understand the persuasive nature of advertising (John, 1999b), the extent to which children recognise/rely on brands (e.g. Bahn, 1986; Hite & Hite, 1995) and the development of consumer knowledge in children (John & Whitney, 1986). However, since the central concern is that of children's consumer *development*, scarcely any attention has been paid to how children *experience* and *interpret* consumption in their daily lives. Rather the focus of scientific consumer socialization is on examining children's consumer knowledge, abilities,

competencies and understanding of consumption issues, mainly from a quantitative perspective. As a general criticism of this stream of research Buckingham (2000: 155) has argued that:

“...it may make little sense to ask whether children understand the difference between television programmes and advertisements, or whether they are able to identify the persuasive intentions of advertising in isolation. We need to consider much broader questions about their experience of consumer culture, and their place within it.”

In other words, there is a need for complimentary multidisciplinary research which addresses the issues which scientific consumer socialization does not. This is not to suggest that scientific consumer socialization is without merit – merely that children as consumers have been studied within one particular stream of research. Thus, producing research that provides insight into what children know, understand and are capable of, does not necessarily say much about how children consume. Consequently, very little is known about how children experience and relate to the world of consumption.

Traditionally, scientific consumer socialization has been associated with the positivist paradigm². Positivism³ is a tradition which is concerned with generating proof and prediction of the phenomena being researched. Consequently, the emphasis is on generating universally applicable laws (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Whilst common features amongst children must not be ignored, this thesis suggests that it is problematic to search for a “universal child” - ready to be discovered through research. According to Bartholomew and O’Donohoe (2003: 434), the dominance of the positivist standpoint has resulted in certain limitations within consumer socialization theory, as in the following quote:

“...the prevalence of effects perspectives and linear-sequential models of influences...has led to positivistic, quantitative research presenting children as passive receivers of advertising”

² It is important to point out that there are variations of scientific consumer socialization, which occupy different positions on the subjective-objective dichotomy. Such variations of scientific consumer socialization research are important to acknowledge. However, for the purpose of positioning the argument in this thesis the type of scientific consumer socialization discussed throughout this thesis falls more towards the objective end of the continuum.

³ Solomon (1994) has provided a succinct overview of the perspectives within consumer behaviour stating that: “...research orientations [within consumer behaviour] can roughly be divided into two approaches. The *positivist perspective*, which currently dominates the field, emphasizes the objectivity of science and the consumer as rational decision maker. The *interpretivist perspective*, in contrast, stresses the subjective meaning of the consumer’s individual experience and the idea that any behaviour is subject to multiple interpretations rather than one single explanation” (38, emphasis as in original).

In essence, Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003) argue that research with children as consumers has been conducted using a top-down, or adult-imposed, approach. Thus, the main overriding feature of scientific consumer socialization research is that it is *adult-centric*⁴. That is to say, theory development has been grounded in adult frameworks leading to views of children's consumption experiences, which is confined to one particular mode of thinking. As a result, children's realities are researched, interpreted and understood from an adult, rather than child's point of view. Furthermore, research with children has failed to address the asymmetrical power relationship that exists between children and adults - a fundamental characteristic of child-adult relationships which cannot be ignored. Thus, to further knowledge about children's consumption experiences, it is essential that unequal power relationships are recognized as a critical issue during all stages of the research process.

Whilst scientific consumer socialization has unquestionably furthered knowledge in consumer research, it has, nevertheless, left a gap in the literature on children's consumer behaviour and a narrow view of what children "do" with consumption. In response to calls for more complimentary, multidisciplinary and inter-paradigmatic approaches to marketing in general, and consumer research particularly; this thesis will explore consumption in childhood from an interpretive *child-centric* perspective. Interpretivism (see also footnote 2 on previous page) represents a family of approaches which attempt to understand the meaning human beings attribute to their life experiences. A child-centric perspective aims to understand how children *themselves* view and make sense of consumption. This entails seeking *children's* meanings and interpretations – rather than adults'. Essentially, studying children from a child-centric perspective involves seeing children as competent social actors, which in turn has implications for the entire research process – not least the research methods.

Within most fields, including marketing, it is clear that children as consumers have not fully been studied from an interpretive child-centric perspective⁵. Therefore, this thesis will bring a child-centric paradigm into the field of marketing as a complimentary approach to studying children and consumption.

⁴ The presence of adult-centrism is a wide-spread general feature of scientific consumer socialization (and even some interpretive studies) and not, as such, particular to certain strands of research within this field.

⁵ A few isolated studies within consumer behaviour have adopted a child-centric perspective e.g. Banister and Booth (2005); Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003).

1.2.1 The emergence of new paradigms within consumer behaviour

Over the past two decades, a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1970) has been evident within the social sciences, including marketing, where interpretive inquiry, as a complimentary perspective to the dominant positivist paradigm, is now well established (Belk, 1995; Denzin, 2001). As interpretive inquiry poses very different research questions, it produces data that can shed light on phenomena previously unexplored. This requires an acknowledgement that not all phenomena *can* be measured, quantified, predicted or explained. Strangely though, the paradigm shift evident in marketing (and the wider social sciences) has been practically ignored in studies with children. This view is substantiated by Banister and Booth (2005: 159) in the following quote:

“Through inspection [of recent studies] it becomes clear that disciplines such as sociology, health research and cultural studies have moved further than marketing in this direction [towards child-centric research].”

Outside the marketing discipline, the traditional view of children is now being challenged by a complimentary paradigm. As a result, significant changes⁶ are evident in a number of studies with children. This alternative complimentary paradigm, collectively known as childhood studies⁷, has for some time argued for the importance of child-centric approaches to studying children. As a perspective, childhood studies⁸ has criticised scientific socialization theory for failing to take account of children’s active role in the process of socialization. Instead, the focus of childhood studies is to explore and analyse children by examining their *cultures*. Consequently, to explore children as consumers from within the childhood studies paradigm entails an examination of their consumption cultures – that is to say, *children’s cultures of consumption*. In doing so, this thesis will bring childhood studies into the field of consumer behaviour, as a complimentary paradigm to scientific consumer socialization. Prior to moving on to examining the paradigm of childhood studies an overview/definition is provided of the notion of children’s cultures of consumption.

⁶ It should be pointed out that these changes are evident within certain groups of researchers. For large parts of e.g. developmental psychology these changes have gone unnoticed (Hogan, 2005)

⁷ This paradigm is variously known as the sociology of childhood, the new social studies of childhood and childhood studies. For the purpose of this thesis the term childhood studies will be used as e.g. sociology of childhood suggests that only sociologists make up this new approach to childhood. Rather the field consists of researchers from sociology, anthropology, education, social psychology, social policy and others.

⁸ Childhood studies stands for “the field of childhood studies” and is, therefore, used with a singular verb throughout the thesis.

1.3 Defining children's cultures of consumption

A perusal of the literature reveals that there is no clear understanding or definition of children's cultures of consumption – a feature which is symptomatic of the lack of research in this area. Therefore, to arrive at a definition of children's cultures of consumption, it is worth examining certain key terms first, starting with culture generally, followed by consumption specifically. Once these key terms are explained, children's cultures of consumption can be defined.

With regard to the concept of culture, there are many ideas of what constitutes culture, depending greatly on theoretical background. McCracken (1988: xi), for instance, understands culture to be "...the ideas and activities with which we construe and construct our world". Haralambos and Holborn (2004: 791), on the other hand, argued that the most common understanding of the term culture (for sociologists) is that culture is the total way of life of its members and "...the collection of ideas and habits which they learn, share and transmit from generation to generation". Therefore, drawing on these definitions, culture, for the purpose of this thesis, is understood to be: *The shared symbols, values, activities and concerns through which people interpret and construct their worlds.*

In the definition *values* refer to deep-seated beliefs, *activities* refer to behaviour (how values are played out on a day-to-day basis) and *concerns* refer to matters which people believe to be of importance i.e. things they think about/are occupied by. The definition further makes reference to the fact that these values, activities and concerns are shared. In other words, whilst everyone within a culture is unique, there are shared assumptions of how the world can be understood. The latter part of the definition is concerned with how people make sense of and "make" culture (i.e. *interpret* and *construct*). This is important because culture is here viewed as a dynamic entity to which people (including children) actively contribute. This means that people are not merely passive recipients of culturally transmitted norms.

Now that culture has, very briefly, been examined, the second key concept; consumption, will be discussed. Consumption is here understood to include the processes through which consumer goods and services are created, produced, purchased and used (McCracken, 1988). In this sense, social processes are present in consumption

and vice versa (Solomon, 1983); consequently, culture and consumption are inextricably linked.

An inspection of the literature revealed that there are certain key factors which are privileged in consumer culture research (and which emerged throughout the fieldwork), namely, rituals (e.g. Rook, 1985), symbols (e.g. Elliott, 1994), power (e.g. Schouten and McAlexander, 1995) and identity (e.g. Belk, 1988). These key factors are essentially expressions of culture through which values, activities and concerns can be interpreted. Following this overview of the key concepts, children's cultures of consumption can now, for the purpose of this thesis, be defined as:

The individual and shared set of values, behaviour and concerns through which children interpret and construct consumption. These consumption values, behaviours and attitudes become visible through various significant cultural expressions - most particularly symbols, rituals, power and identities.

In other words, by examining symbols, rituals, power and identities it becomes possible to gain sight of and understand children's consumption values, behaviour and concerns. Consumption, therefore, can be understood as an important everyday activity for children in the context of their groups and consumer society. Nevertheless, children's cultures of consumption are not understood as existing separate from and independently of adult culture; however, children's consumption interactions within peer cultures are of particular interest – as we shall see throughout this thesis.

Of further importance in the definition is the understanding that children actively interpret and construct consumption. Thus not only does consumption shape children's cultures, but children's cultures shape consumption. Here children are considered to be active social agents who continuously negotiate the meanings they attribute to consumer goods. However, at the same time their lives are firmly embedded in social structures. Therefore, the question is not only what role consumption plays in children's everyday interactions with others, but also how children negotiate meanings within the given structures that are a reality of their lives. Lastly, in the definition, the cultural expressions (rituals, symbols, power and identity), as key components of culture, are identified. Essentially, these form the basic ingredients through which children produce their cultures of consumption. Having defined the key terms of the thesis, there follows an examination of the childhood studies paradigm, within which this study is positioned.

1.4 Childhood studies as an alternative paradigm

For some time, the social sciences⁹ have been increasingly criticised from various corners (by authors who are often collectively referred to as childhood studies) for either ignoring children altogether or adopting an adult-centric developmental perspective in research with children (e.g. Corsaro & Rizzo, 1988; Hill & Tisdall, 1997; Mayall, 2002; Prout & James, 1990). This argument is substantiated by Russell and Tyler (2002: 622) who indicated that the critical debates associated with traditional research with children are not confined to consumer behaviour:

“Recent debates about childhood within sociology seem, in a similar vein to those located in marketing and consumer studies literature, to have been shaped largely by a ‘developmental’ ontology.”

Therefore, since consumer behaviour has adopted approaches from the wider social sciences it too has been subjected to similar critique (Banister & Booth, 2005). Interestingly, it has been argued in the literature that those who are most informed about children as consumers are often marketing practitioners (Boden et. al., 2004; Zelizer, 2002). Therefore, it would appear that academic knowledge, at least in some cases, lags behind the experiences of those practising marketing to children.

Childhood studies has now become an established paradigm to studying children. Furthermore, it has gained the attention of various fields of study e.g. sociology of consumption (Boden et. al., 2004; Martens et. al., 2004), media studies (Buckingham, 2000) and consumer behaviour (Banister & Booth, 2005). At the heart of this paradigm is the idea that children are studied from a child-centric perspective. Children are considered to be active participants in the process of socialization, continuously shaping and moulding their own consumption experiences. Consequently, children are not viewed as passive recipients of consumer culture but active social agents – albeit whose lives are nevertheless influenced by the wider structures in society.

According to childhood studies, the key to knowing children is to call into question the taken-for-granted assumption of what it means to be a child. This means being open to new ways of thinking about children. Therefore, to further understanding of children from alternative angles requires a different approach; one where adults attempt to access

⁹ The social sciences primarily referred to here are sociology, developmental psychology, anthropology, education and cultural studies.

children's cultures – to the extent that this is indeed possible for an adult (Corsaro, 1992). This has important implications for the research approach due to the unequal power relationship between adults and children. It is argued here that such power relationships are the most significant barriers researchers face when conducting research with children. Therefore, methods should be applied which can help reduce these power barriers – and thus gain valuable insight into children's lives. As a result, by adopting the framework of childhood studies and exploring the social context¹⁰ of childhood, it then becomes possible for consumer researchers to further understanding of what consumption means to children. Now that an overview of the paradigm for this thesis has been presented the aims, objectives and research proposition will be addressed.

1.5 Aim, objectives and research proposition

So far, the thesis has been contextualised in terms of the extant literature on children as consumers. Furthermore, childhood studies as an alternative framework for this thesis has been outlined and children's cultures of consumption defined. Following the presentation of the argument of this thesis, the aim and objectives are outlined below.

Overall aim¹¹

Prior to presenting the overall aim, it is worth pointing out the significant expressions in children's cultures of consumption, namely rituals, symbols, power and identity – as already introduced in previously. These were identified through an iterative process of analysing the extant literature and the data and, subsequently revisiting the aim and objectives. A cultural expression is here understood to be a vehicle of making visible – or manifesting one's values, beliefs or behaviour. It follows, that to explore expressions of culture may reveal more than direct questioning on values, concerns and beliefs.

¹⁰ A context is here understood as "...a culturally and historically situated place and time, a specific here and now" (Graue & Walsh, 1998). Therefore, this amounts to studying children in their everyday lives rather than abstracting them from it.

¹¹Formulating and refining the overall aim has greatly been assisted by writing papers for publication and participating in conferences:

Hayfield, E., Davis, J. and Marsden, D. (2006) "Constructing identities in children's cultures of consumption", *Fróðskaparrit* (Scientific Writings), 54, 71 – 95. Faroe University Press.

Hayfield, E. (2005) "Rituals in children's cultures of consumption". Paper presented at Childhoods conference, Oslo, Norway.

Hayfield, E. (2005) "Børn og brúk" (Children and consumption). In: Sigurðardóttir, T. (ed.). *Modernaðar teoretikarar* (Modern theorists). Faroe Islands: Faroe University Press. 49 – 61.

Hayfield, E. (2002) "Childhood consumer socialization". Paper presented at European Academy of Marketing Conference (doctoral colloquium), Braga, Portugal.

Since they are integral to children's cultures, the cultural expressions have been incorporated into the overall aim:

To study children's cultures of consumption using a child-centric approach to establish how consumption manifests itself in children's everyday lives. The thesis will focus on exploring children's consumption values, behaviour and attitudes and how these are expressed through children's cultural symbols, rituals, power processes and identities.

Objective one

To explore children's cultures of consumption through the structural features of age, sex and socioeconomic background.

This thesis is grounded in the belief that children are active constructors of culture. Nevertheless, it is clear that certain structural features influence children's experiences of consumption. Three of the most significant features are those noted in Objective one. Therefore, the study will encompass children of different ages, sex and socioeconomic background.

Objective two

To examine children's cultures of consumption through the cultural expressions of symbols, rituals, power and identity.

The study will address which consumption rituals and symbols feature in children's cultures and the meaning children attribute to them. Furthermore, the importance of power processes on children's consumption will be explored. Finally, the study will examine how children construct their identities through consumption.

Objective three

To apply and evaluate the usefulness of ethnography as a methodology for the study of children and consumption.

Ethnography involves being situated in the field for extended periods of time studying and observing the everyday life of, in this case, children. It has been advocated by authors from childhood studies as a highly suitable methodology for studying children. However, rarely if ever, has it been used in the study of children as consumers. One of the most potent factors with ethnographic work with children is the opportunity for researchers to address, and to some extent work round, the asymmetrical power relationship between adults and children. This will be addressed in more detail in the methodology (Chapter Four).

Objective four

To extend knowledge of children as consumers and outline the implications for practice including marketers, social policy makers and other groups involved with children.

On a daily basis, adults (parents, teachers, carers, those involved in social policy and law making institutions) take decisions on behalf of children. However, as a consequence of inadequate knowledge about children, such decisions may be based on misunderstandings of what is in the best interest of children. Therefore, this thesis has importance on a practical level and will contribute to some of the conflicting discourses on children as consumers and the extent to which they need protection in matters of consumption.

Research proposition

So far the argument has been presented that not enough is known about children and consumption. Therefore, the objectives have been designed to explore and extend knowledge in the area. This means being open to discovery and not having rigid or fixed ideas of what will or will not be found. Thus a research proposition can be constructed which can provide some indication of what the researcher expects to find. Unlike a proposition, research hypotheses are typically designed to confirm or reject certain fixed or “closed” theoretical questions (Kuzel, 1999) – often associated with the traditional scientific consumer socialization paradigm. As childhood studies is grounded primarily in an interpretive view of childhood, it would be inappropriate for this study to construct a research hypothesis. Consequently, a research proposition has been outlined and is presented below. This study expects to find that:

- Children are not passive recipients of consumption meanings but are competent interpreters who negotiate and construct their own meanings in their cultures.
- Gender, age and socioeconomic background will have some impact on how children consume and the meanings they attribute to consumption.
- As a two-way process consumption meanings will influence/be influenced by expressions of culture. In other words, expressions such as the symbols children consider to be important, the rituals they enact, the power relationships between children/adults and children/children as well as their identities are factors which can influence consumption as well as be influenced by consumption.
- Children use consumer goods in many diverse ways. Sometimes, in some situations, consumption is expected to be highly significant whereas in other

contexts consumer goods, and their associated status, are less important or even irrelevant.

1.6 Methodology

In adult-centric research one of the key features is to remain objective and record children's understanding of consumption as a detached, neutral observer. Furthermore, such research tends to study children as individuals and not enough studies have attempted to explore what goes on in the spaces *between* children. In many cases, children have found themselves placed in unfamiliar situations with adults they do not know and removed from their friends – which *can* make children (especially younger children) feel they are being punished. In the process, children have responded to the “teacherly” research questions posed by researchers, which have correct and incorrect answers – treating these as learning situations (Buckingham, 2000). It follows that the data generated from such research does not adequately address the meanings that children attribute to their life worlds.

One issue of concern is that, in some previous studies children have not acted as their own informants, but parents have answered questions on their behalf (Mayall, 1996). Furthermore, many children have been excluded from research e.g. due to vocal (in)competencies or belonging to minority social groups based on ethnicity, low socioeconomic status, disability and so on. Arguably such adult-centric studies of children do not gain a full picture of children and their consumption concerns. On the other hand, by adopting a child-centric standpoint and assuming that children are competent social actors, leads to a different approach to the methods employed.

To explore a phenomenon with little existing knowledge, calls for a methodology that enables researchers to produce contextual findings, rather than generalizations (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Evidently, there is still much to be learnt about children and consumption. By implication therefore, this study is exploratory in nature. This thesis will aid conceptualisation on the topic and help define/analyse the range of meanings that *children* attribute to consumption. Thus, the perspective of this study is interpretive in nature and places children at the heart of the research process. Therefore, and most importantly, the central requirement for this thesis is that the methodology adopted is child-centric.

To conduct child-centric research, it has been contended by several authors (e.g. James et. al., 2001; Rizzo et. al., 1992), that ethnography is a central qualitative methodology within the childhood studies perspective. Ethnography is essentially a methodology of which the main feature is the search for patterns within everyday life and involves “...the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in peoples’ lives for an extended period of time...” (Hammersly & Atkinson (1997:1) watching, listening and asking questions. Therefore, ethnography as a methodology enables researchers to adopt a child-centric approach within the setting of the child, in her/his world.

This thesis will use ethnography to study children and consumption in social settings. By becoming immersed in children’s every day lives, in nurseries, schools and home visits, it is possible to gain sight of the complex consumption interactions children have in their worlds. One of the key barriers to knowing children is the unequal power relationship between adults and children – as touched upon previously. The longitudinal nature of ethnography enables researchers to build relationships of trust with the children and, therefore, break down some of these barriers. It follows that ethnography can prove highly useful in the study of children as consumers.

There is much work still to be done to further understanding of children’s cultures of consumption; however, the largest gaps remain in younger age groups. Therefore, the study will concentrate on consumption prior to adolescence. In qualitative research, sample sizes are typically small to enable the collection of rich and deep data (Kuzel, 1999). Consequently, the sample consists of children of different age groups drawn from two different geographical areas in central Scotland. The age groups are pre-school (ages 3-5), primary two/three (ages 6-8) and primary six (ages 10-11)¹².

Using three age groups means that variations between age groups can be explored. The two geographical areas were chosen due to the relative difference in levels of affluence and therefore, represent different socioeconomic backgrounds. It is conceivable that variations in background may impact on the meanings that children from each of the two areas attribute to consumption.

¹² To aid reader-friendliness the school classes will hereafter be referred to as either primary 2 (3 or 6) or P2 (P3 or P6) rather than spelling out two (three or six).

The data was collected over the period of one year, spending three to four full days per week in the setting. The data has been analysed on an ongoing basis – whilst in the field, and after having left the field - the whole time building on the data, revisiting themes and developing an increasingly comprehensive picture of consumption in children's cultures. To aid the process of analysis, the software package Nvivo has been employed. This will be expanded on in the Methodology Chapter.

1.7 Contribution of study

The topic of this thesis is timely and important for the field of consumer behaviour. Since there is a lack of understanding of children generally and children as consumers specifically, this thesis will contribute not only to the field of consumer behaviour but to the wider social sciences. Furthermore, the contribution of this study will be on a theoretical, methodological and practical level.

Theory: Children as consumers have been widely studied in various disciplines using the traditional scientific consumer socialization approach. However, to date, the issue of children and consumption has rarely been addressed using a child-centric perspective. Too much emphasis has been on quantifying children's abilities in respect of consumption, leading to a relatively narrow understanding of children and consumption within consumer research. This thesis adopts an approach with different and complimentary underpinnings compared to the scientific consumer socialization paradigm. Therefore, it poses different questions and considers alternative angles. Consequently, light will be shed on some issues previously unexplored.

Method: From the outset, the research will concentrate on understanding consumption through children's eyes. Previously, research methods have been much influenced by traditional views about children's role in society and their cognitive shortcomings. More recently, a limited number of researchers have advocated for the use of ethnographic methodology to overcome some of the gaps that exist in our understanding of children. Therefore, ethnography will be brought into the domain of children's cultures of consumption and its usefulness as a methodology for studying children will be evaluated.

Practice: Since there are large gaps in our understanding of children, it follows that decisions that affect children are being made without an appropriate knowledge base. Therefore, the research will contribute to current understanding of children for policy makers and society as a whole. Furthermore, to explore consumption as a significant factor in children's cultures, will provide vital information about the role consumption plays in everyday interactions children have with others (children, as well as adults). Such information can prove of significance for those interested in marketing to children, social policy, sociology of consumption, child psychology, education and similar fields.

1.8 Overview of thesis

In this section, the remainder of the thesis is outlined.

Chapter Two: Paradigms of child consumers: Scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies

The literature review has been structured into two chapters. The first chapter introduces the notion of paradigm and subsequently analyses two paradigms for studying children as consumers. The first one, scientific consumer socialization, is well established whilst childhood studies represents a complimentary paradigm for understanding childhood consumption. To provide the reader with a clear overview, the two paradigms are compared and contrasted at a philosophical, theoretical, methodological and practical level.

Chapter Three: Children's cultures of consumption

The second literature review chapter places children in the context of cultures of consumption. To understand children's cultures of consumption, it is argued, it is necessary to understand the means by which children express their culture i.e. through symbols, rituals, power and identity. Each of these expressions of culture are discussed individually and related to consumer behaviour and childhood studies literature.

Chapter Four: Methodology

In this chapter, ethnography as a methodology is introduced and its usefulness as a methodology to study children discussed. Subsequently, ethnography is compared to the methods associated with scientific consumer socialization, thereby presenting various differences between the two approaches. This is followed by an overview of the sample,

methods, ethical concerns and data analysis surrounding the study providing the reader with a clear understanding of the methodological process of this thesis.

Chapter Five: Findings

This chapter is structured into three sections. The first section presents findings pertaining to each of the four cultural expressions (rituals, symbols, power and identity). From the analysis a further layer of analysis emerged which represents five child consumer segments. These are the protected child consumer, the resistant child consumer, the communicative child consumer, the gendered child consumer and lastly the independent developing child consumer. The final section of the findings chapter identifies overriding key principles of children's cultures of consumption.

Chapter Six: Discussion

Mirroring the structure of Chapter Five the findings are discussed in light of previous research and some considerations are offered to what these findings might mean. The chapter examines the findings and relates these to the traditional scientific consumer socialization framework as well as research from within the paradigm of childhood studies.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and recommendations

The final chapter provides a review of the key arguments of the study and revisits the aim and objectives. The chapter, and thesis, is brought to a conclusion by suggesting future areas of research.

Chapter Two: Paradigms of child consumers: Scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies

Before delving into a discussion of the research concerning children as consumers it is worth pointing out that the literature review has been divided into two separate chapters. This first chapter is a review of the extant literature pertaining to two varying theoretical approaches to studying consumption amongst children, namely scientific consumer socialization (the traditional theory) and childhood studies (the complimentary theory proposed for this thesis). These two perspectives will be compared and contrasted enabling the reader to gain a clear overview of both approaches to studying children's cultures of consumption. It is evident that scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies advocate quite different strategies for understanding childhood consumption. Therefore, in order to clearly illuminate these differences this chapter is structured into a discussion concerning the philosophical, theoretical, methodological and practical aspects of both paradigms.

In the second review chapter (Chapter Three) the conceptual framework for this thesis is developed. Drawing on a wide range of consumption studies, from various fields, the focus here is turned towards certain key issues with respect to consumption and culture. In doing so, the chapter demonstrates how consumption in children's cultures can be understood through the application of the theory of childhood studies. Having explained the structure of the following two chapters, we return to the current chapter and commence with a brief introduction to the paradigm concept.

2.1 The concept of paradigm

In their pursuit for knowledge researchers bring with them certain basic assumptions about the subject matter they are studying. Such basic assumptions are referred to as paradigms (Solomon et. al., 2002). Kuhn (1962), in his book *The structure of scientific revolutions*, introduced the notion of paradigms into the philosophy of science¹³. Whilst Kuhn's (1962) discussion concerned paradigms within the natural sciences, the term has

¹³ Others have discussed the notion of paradigms before Kuhn (1962); however, these have not had the same impact on the field of philosophy of science.

now become commonplace in the social sciences as well (e.g. Belk, 1995; Lincoln and Guba, 2003).

A paradigm, Kuhn (1962) argued, constitutes an overarching framework, a shared world view, which guides and defines how scientists go about their research. Therefore, a paradigm constitutes a basic set of assumptions and a shared set of values which have profound implications for the structures, ideas, rules and boundaries within research. Thus it follows, that a paradigm is necessarily manifested in ontology, epistemology, theory, methodology and practice.

Within his writings Kuhn (1962) placed great emphasis on the idea of the *paradigm shift*, which constitute moments when one dominant world-view is challenged by another. Such a shift has been evident both within the social sciences and within consumer research for some years now (Belk, 1994). This has manifested itself in the move towards a greater acceptance, and use of, complementary conceptual frameworks, and qualitative methodologies, in contrast to quantitative/experimental research, which are the methodologies associated with the traditional dominant paradigm – also referred to as positivism (Belk, 1994). Thus, by examining consumption from more than one angle (qualitative as well as quantitative) provides a richer understanding of consumer behaviour.

Childhood studies, the paradigm for this thesis, emerged out of debates within the social sciences which called for a more humanistic, interpretive approach to researching children. Thus, within the social sciences, and most notably sociology, childhood studies represents a paradigm shift – a complimentary approach to understanding children. To present the reader with some background to this paradigm shift we turn to an introduction to the scientific consumer socialization paradigm and subsequently, the childhood studies paradigm.

2.2 The scientific consumer socialization paradigm

Although research with children and consumption dates backs further, it is predominantly over the past thirty years that the field has become firmly established - alongside children's ever increasing participation in the market place. Research on

children's consumer behaviour has seen a range of studies examining various aspects¹⁴ of scientific consumer socialization¹⁵ and produced a vast array of findings. These findings have made important contributions to our understanding of children as consumers. They have commonly been applied in social policy making (e.g. during legislative processes concerning the impact of advertising on children) and widely used in the field of marketing. Yet, the scientific stream of thought is not without critique, as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter and has resulted in an adult-centric approach to studying children and consumption.

Whilst it is must be stressed that there are important variations in research with children as consumers, the overriding perspective has been/still is anchored in an adult-centric paradigm. In other words, adult frameworks have been imposed on child research, generally, and within consumer research specifically. This has resulted in interpretations of children's cultures through adult-tinted lenses rather than greater emphasis being placed on examining consumption through children's *own* eyes. Consequently, the results generated from scientific consumer socialization research have produced a somewhat one-dimensional (adult) view of what it means to be a child consumer. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage various complementary views of child consumption, which together can shed light on this important issue from various angles.

2.3 Childhood studies as a new paradigm

In the 1970s a small number of writers, especially in sociology, increasingly voiced their criticism of the traditional scientific approach to children's social development – socialization (Hill & Tisdall, 1997). There was considered to be a pressing need to re-examine understanding of children and their lives. Dreitzel (1973: 5), in the introduction to a collection of essays, stated that:

“...it is my hope to illustrate and illuminate a certain shift in the use of theoretical models and research procedures which has emerged since the middle of the sixties in this field: a new tendency to see socialization as an interaction

¹⁴ These areas include children's knowledge and understanding of advertising, the persuasive intent of advertising, product and brand knowledge, shopping skills and knowledge, consumer decision making strategies and the social aspects of consumption (John, 1999a).

¹⁵ Consumer socialization takes place throughout the entire lifespan; nevertheless the development of consumer skills is most concentrated and intensive during childhood. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis the term consumer socialization refers to consumer development in childhood.

process which involves the child as an active partner, rather than as a process of unilateral manipulation of the child”

In addition, Denzin (1971), who conducted ethnographic research with children, claimed that children are vastly underestimated in terms of their abilities to reason and interact with their environment. Subsequently, an increasing amount of research taking this approach to the study of childhood (e.g. Corsaro & Rizzo, 1988; Mandell, 1994; Waksler, 1994) has been published. Despite some criticism of the scientific socialization paradigm these voices did not gain strength until the late 1980s, hand in hand with the increased acceptance of the qualitative research paradigm (Prout & James, 1990). Therefore, childhood studies arose from the debate within the social sciences, which emphasised how children had either been studied from an adult-centric perspective or overlooked altogether in research (Martens et. al., 2004; Mayall, 1996).

Prout and James (1997) described childhood studies as a new yet “emergent” paradigm, as this approach to understanding/researching children was not considered a complete theory. This has had implications for the research conducted within the childhood studies paradigm as one weakness is that it lacks more comprehensive theories of childhood. Whether childhood studies still is an emergent paradigm, is a matter for debate. Nevertheless, one can argue that this does not really present a problem because “...one of the main problems with the dominant [scientific] framework was that it could be passed off as complete” (Lee, 2001b: 51). That is to say, it has been applied in research without serious questions concerning its applicability. Therefore, childhood studies presents a complementary approach, which is evident at every level of research. Prior to discussing the ontological, epistemological, theoretical, methodological and practical levels of scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies, Table 2.1 (loosely/partly based on Hill & Tisdall, 1997; Mayall, 1996; Prout & James, 1990) provides an overview of the two approaches. See overleaf.

Table 2.1 Scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies: An evaluation/ comparison of two complementary approaches to studying children

Scientific consumer socialization (adult-centric paradigm)	Childhood studies (child-centric paradigm)
<i>Childhood is biologically driven (cognitive developmental view): Focus is on children's cognitive development and their stage(age)-based understanding/ processing of consumption-related information/stimuli.</i>	<i>Childhood is a social construction: Focus is on culture which has to some extent been to the detriment of incorporating other angles such as personal differences and developmental factors.</i>
<i>Emphasises structural features such as class, gender and ethnicity as variables: Such variables tend to be relegated to background.</i>	<i>Childhood can never be separated from variables such as class, gender and ethnicity: Focus on children's agency and contribution to culture - sometimes to the detriment of a proper analysis of these variables.</i>
<i>Children's consumer behaviour studied as consumer development: Focus on development means that childhood is treated too much as a process of becoming adult.</i>	<i>Childhood and children's social relationships and cultures studied in their own right: Focus is on children's lives in the present.</i>
<i>Children viewed as dependents and asymmetrical power relationship between adults and children not analysed: Focus in research lies in scientific process to the neglect of redressing power issues.</i>	<i>Children are a group which has low status and low power in society: Focus is on reducing power asymmetries during research in order to gain deep insight into children's life worlds.</i>
<i>Children are frequently viewed as incompetent and irrational. Theory has generated preconceived ideas of children's cognitive abilities at different stages of development. This can lead to valuable data from younger children (who are perceived to be less developed) being overlooked.</i>	<i>Children's positive competencies emphasised. Focus is on gaining sight of complex interactions between children.</i>
<i>Children are relatively passive recipients of cultural transmission.</i>	<i>Children are active participants in the socialization process.</i>
<i>Seeks to create generalisations applicable to all children. Focus on generalisation can lead to diversities being ignored/ overlooked.</i>	<i>Emphasises diversity of childhood without ignoring commonalities. Focus on diversity can lead to commonalities being ignored/ overlooked.</i>
<i>Uses methodologies which ultimately keep the researcher objective and at a distance.</i>	<i>Uses methodologies which enable researchers to get close to children in their own worlds</i>
<i>Attention paid to construction of sample.</i>	<i>Frequently, failed to pay adequate attention to sample.</i>
<i>Outside in: Focus is on exploring children's consumption through adult eyes using theoretical frameworks which address childhood as a process of development.</i>	<i>Inside out: Focus is on understanding children's consumption from within. Therefore, the meanings sought are those of the children themselves.</i>
<i>Children are generally researched through interviews, experiments and surveys. Focus is on individual child development.</i>	<i>Children's cultures are studied. Focus is on children in groups in social contexts.</i>

It is evident from Table 2.1 that the basic underpinnings of the two paradigms differ. Whilst both aim to further knowledge of children they represent rather different perspectives to understanding childhood consumption. That is to say, they are complementary in the sense that light is shed on children's consumption, but from rather diverse angles. At the same time both approaches have benefits and drawbacks – as has been highlighted throughout the table. To expand on the underpinnings of these two paradigms a discussion will now follow, starting with the ontology.

2.4 Ontology

Ontology is the branch of philosophy which is concerned with the nature of existence and being. Thus ontology seeks to determine at a most basic level what exists within our world. Consequently, ontology represents a natural and logical starting point to the discussion of scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies. Therefore, for research with children this poses questions concerning the nature of children's existence in relation to adult existence. In other words, what *are* children, or indeed *are* children? The answer to these questions has unequivocal consequences for how researchers aim to “know” children. The discussion now moves on to address the ontology of the two paradigms addressed in this thesis, starting firstly with scientific consumer socialization.

2.4.1 Ontology of scientific consumer socialization

Derived from general socialization theory (Ward, 1974), scientific consumer socialization is overwhelmingly influenced by cognitive developmental and social learning theory (Roedder et. al., 1978). General socialization theory, has for some time, been challenged as it, arguably, does not provide a comprehensive enough understanding of children's lives (Prout & James, 1997). As a result, there has been a move towards a more child-focused research approach in several of the social science disciplines. Yet surprisingly, research in the field of consumer behaviour has appeared to somewhat lag behind this movement with only a few exceptions (e.g. Banister & Booth, 2005; Bartholomew & O'Donohoe, 2003; Buckingham, 2000; Ritson & Elliott, 1999).

There have been positive moves within scientific consumer socialization toward research which is modified to gain more insight into children's everyday lives e.g. with the use of more qualitative studies (see Section 2.7.1 for a further discussion). However, it is clear

that, the adult-centric approach employed in scientific consumer socialization studies prevails. In other words, there is still too much focus on children as incomplete, immature and incompetent consumers. This has proved to have considerable consequences for children's ontological status in the academic literature as well as in practice. In their critique of the traditional approach to studying children's consumer behaviour, Banister & Booth (2005) emphasised the importance of employing child-centric methods. Whilst such an argument is consistent with this thesis, it is essential that child-centrism starts at an ontological level. That way the entire research process changes and child-centrism becomes a natural component of the methods employed.

Ontologically, scientific consumer socialization theory has treated children as unfinished products - in process of becoming adults, as incomplete versions of adults. Therefore, to speak of children and adults as almost separate beings, as the theory of scientific consumer socialization seems to indicate, suggests that children, upon becoming adults, pass from one ontological order to another, more superior order – namely adulthood (Mackay, 1973). Such discourses are widespread throughout society and by no means restricted to scientific consumer socialization theory. Consequently, from the outset, children are ascribed a marginal and inferior status in comparison to adults, which has profound implications for children's status as consuming beings – an argument substantiated by Archard (1993: 2, emphasis as in original):

*“Humans **become** knowledgeable reasoners; and childhood being a stage in the developmental process whose end is adulthood, children would seem to be imperfect, incomplete versions of their adult selves”*

It follows that the basic understanding prevailing in scientific consumer socialization theory of what children “are” has resulted in rather generalised statements about childhood and consumption. Such statements tend to be manifested as broad views which directly link children's consumption to either environmental variables (social learning) or cognitive development. Yet, by analysing environmental variables/ cognitive development, it is evident that as a field, scientific consumer socialization has made significant contributions to our understanding of the key influences on children's consumer development and furthermore, how children's cognitive abilities affect their interpretation of marketing.

Nevertheless, scientific consumer socialization represents an ontological perspective which implies there can be a child “nature” and those that fall short of the natural child

are somewhat “deviants”. Therefore, as scientific consumer socialization theory suggests, the often portrayed unknowing, incapable and immature child consumer is essentially a belief about the nature of children that some within the field still hold.

2.4.2 Ontology of childhood studies

Authors critiquing the scientific socialization paradigm have argued that it implicitly or explicitly views children as human becomings rather than human beings (Balen et. al., 2006). In this sense, children have been defined in relation to adults, i.e. in terms of what they are not. In the context of scientific consumer socialization therefore, the basic viewpoint is that children are consumers “in training”. It was such modes of thinking which Mackay (1973: 29) challenged when he contended that to

“...suggest theoretically that there are adults and children is to imply that to pass from one state to the other is to pass from one ontological order to another”.

Later Lee (2001: 46) put forward a similar argument stating that:

The dominant framework (traditional socialization paradigm) is persuasive in its ability to give order and meaning to relationships between adults and children...[and] turns children and adults into quite distinct types of human being; denies the possibility of any other view of the adult/child relation; and makes it very hard to see children for what they are...”

If such ontological orders apply in social life, communication between adults and children becomes very difficult as children are understood to possess very different interpretive abilities. It is worth pointing out that to suggest children are ontologically the same as adults does not imply that children may not be *different* from adults. More significantly, to *question* the very idea that childhood and adulthood are two separate ontological states may prove uncomfortable for adults who have traditionally held legitimate power over children. Consequently, to shed doubt over the taken-for-granted assumption that power and age (at least with regard to children’s age) are intimately linked, implies a serious challenge to adult authority (Qvortrup, 1994).

A key feature of the complementary childhood paradigm is that childhood is *not* considered to be a mere precursor to adulthood. It further emphasises the importance of viewing children as social actors and active contributors to culture. However, in

(over)privileging culture, childhood studies can also be criticised for failing to take account of developmental factors and individual differences (e.g. the impact of personality of consumption interpretation), which cannot be ignored as important features of childhood. Nevertheless, at an ontological level, children are seen by childhood studies as constituting a group in society worth studying in its own right. This is somewhat different to the separate ontological status of children and adults associated with scientific consumer socialization. As a result, there are fundamental implications for the study of childhood as a whole range of issues (consumption for instance) previously ignored, become areas worthy of investigation. Essentially therefore, childhood studies presents some changes to the research agenda, which will be addressed later on.

2.4.3 Summary

It is clear that at an ontological level the two approaches present some varying understandings concerning the nature of children. Considering that scientific consumer socialization is a forward-looking ontology of children, the areas which are of prime importance are cognitive consumer development and consumer learning as these relate to the process of children becoming adult consumers. In contrast, childhood studies places prominence on children as competent interpreters of the social world and explores how they construct and reconstruct their cultures. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the present tense of children's lives, yet it can be argued that developmental factors are not adequately explored. Having addressed ontology in the context of scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies the following section discusses the epistemology of these two paradigms.

2.5 Epistemology

Epistemology is of key concern in science since it involves the nature of knowledge i.e. how knowledge is generated, learnt or acquired. Therefore, building theory must be based on some idea of what knowledge is and how such knowledge can be produced. Considering the ontological underpinnings of scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies, the epistemological stance taken to how children learn, know and create their realities is approached quite differently when comparing the two paradigms.

This section starts off by discussing the epistemology of scientific consumer socialization and is subsequently, followed by that of childhood studies.

2.5.1 Epistemology of scientific consumer socialization

The prevailing epistemologies within consumer behaviour and therefore, scientific consumer socialization are objectivism and constructivism (Corsaro, 1992; Marsden & Littler, 1996). It is argued here that these philosophies of knowledge are in many respects quite diverse from the child-centric approach for several reasons. Objectivism, as an epistemology is concerned with recording a pre-existing reality through rigorous testing and avoiding contamination of data (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). This means that researchers generate knowledge on children's consumer learning/development by being relatively detached from research subjects. Therefore, from an objectivist account, it becomes rather difficult to explore cultures of consumption through children's *own* eyes. Thus, it is adult-centric in nature. Consequently, the philosophy which objectivism is based on can, paradoxically actually *prevent* researchers from knowing children (at least the social worlds of children), as illustrated in the following quote:

“Therefore, any research following from such a model [scientific socialization] cannot attend to the everyday world of children, or their skills in interaction and world-view...” (James et. al., 2001: 25)

Constructivism, on the other hand, moves some way towards acknowledging agency and does not view children merely as passive objects. Constructivism (which much of the cognitive development literature is based on) takes into account the role of environment throughout the process of socialization. Nevertheless, constructivism, some have argued, is still individualistic in nature (Corsaro, 1992). That is to say, it does not adequately consider how children actively construct their peer cultures. Children as consumers are rarely studied in groups but as individuals through experimental research, surveys and interviews. Furthermore, children do not always act as their own informants with parents reporting on their behalf instead (Mayall, 1996). As a result, few consumer researchers have entered the worlds of children to understand consumer socialization as a collective process.

At the same time, constructivism is firmly focused on children as beings-in-process and, therefore, the end result (becoming adults) is of importance in research, rather than the

present meanings that children attribute to consumption and their lived experience as consumers. This assumption of the developmental model, Archard (1993: 33) named "teleology". In other words, childhood is teleological in the sense that it implies an end or a *telos*, the end being adulthood. It should be noted that to study developmental features of childhood is a valid, valuable and necessary angle. However, the problem is that children almost *exclusively* have been studied from this angle. On a more general level, critics of the developmental approach have called for childhood to be considered an integral, structural part of society (Hill & Tisdall, 1997). Such a view would change children from being studied as consumers "in training" to being interesting as consumers in their own right, here and now – in the present.

Another critique of scientific consumer socialization is the reductionistic approach, evident in many studies employing its perspective. Through the isolation and study of specific variables/influences, scientific consumer socialization does not adequately take into consideration the multitude of factors, people and contexts shaping children's consumption meanings. This view is supported by Zelizer (2002: 379) who argued that:

“Once we examine social lives from children's own vantage points, we discover an extensive range of economic activity significantly differentiated by setting and social relation”.

Therefore, it is evident that Zelizer (2002) is arguing for a more holistic approach to studying children, which takes account of the complex facets of life which contribute to children's cultures of consumption.

Another weak point of the traditional paradigm has been that scientific consumer socialization is deterministic. In other words, children's consumer behaviour is considered to be either a result of natural, cognitive development (biological determinism) or external learned influences (environmental determinism). Subsequently, all too often, law-like predictions are constructed based on scientific evidence.

With regard to biological determinism - scientific consumer socialization has viewed the category of child as passing through a series of stages driven by nature. Therefore, a universal child was considered to exist – one that could respond to a Westernised idea of what it means to develop cognitively (Archard, 1993). Studies employing learning theory, as the other dominant idea in scientific consumer socialization, have examined various influences on scientific consumer socialization (e.g. parental influence (Carlson

& ,1988)). However, on the whole, features such as gender, ethnicity, family background and so on have been relegated to a "backdrop" variable along with culture in general (Archard, 1993). Therefore, the socially constructed nature of childhood itself and children's everyday lives has been overlooked.

2.5.2 Epistemology of childhood studies

Epistemologically, the central feature of childhood studies is of childhood as a socially constructed phenomenon¹⁶, changing across space and time (Aries, 1986). In other words, childhood is not “natural” but shaped through social and cultural discourses and the structures of any given time. Therefore, features such as age, gender, ethnicity and sibling status are considered to be social constructs that have implications for meaning and context (Hill & Tisdall, 1997). However, despite the fact that biological/cognitive immaturity may be considered a universal feature of childhood (Prout and James, 1997), childhood studies has not adequately addressed these issues. This means that childhood is neither a product reducible to biological/cognitive explanations alone nor can it be explained purely through the learning experiences of children.

The childhood studies paradigm acknowledges that children are active agents of their own development, but are nevertheless subject to certain structural constraints – most notably the lack of power children hold in society. Being active social agents means that children are not passive recipients of culture, but contribute to their own socialization. This applies to children and consumption as well. For instance in their study Dotson and Hyatt (2000) found that children as young as nine years old had as much knowledge of advertising slogans as their parents, also in product groupings aimed at adults. However, in order to identify these processes in children’s lives calls for research which adopts a child-centric gaze. Therefore, the childhood studies approach is as much about how childhood is perceived as it is about the methodology adopted – although the two are inextricably linked.

It follows that to further the understanding of childhood from a child-centric perspective, means that children cannot be abstracted as individuals from their social worlds. Neither

¹⁶ In the field of childhood studies authors agree that childhood is a socially constructed phenomenon. However, this does not imply that all authors from this paradigm subscribe to social constructionism. Nevertheless, the rejection of objectivism as an epistemology is a common element throughout the childhood studies literature.

can structural features be relegated to backdrop variables. To date, consumer researchers have made few attempts to understand childhood through children's own eyes. In contrast, childhood studies adopts a bottom-up holistic approach where researchers attempt to interpret *child* meanings rather than adult meanings.

Whilst it is indisputable that children have less life experience than adults, many studies have found that children have been underestimated by the scientific socialization paradigm (Bruner & Haste, 1987; Corsaro, 1997). In one study, for instance, Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003) found that children (aged 10-12) had a rich and critical understanding of advertising. They were active interpreters of advertising meaning. Moreover, the children enjoyed demonstrating their interpretive competencies of adverts. Furthermore, they used their advertising knowledge as a means of displaying social power and control amongst peers.

It follows that to provide an additional angle through which to understand childhood consumption a complementary approach is necessary. One of the key issues in childhood studies is to emphasise the complexities of children's cultures, thereby drawing attention to the diversities within childhood. This means that children are recognized as a non-homogenous social group in society. Nevertheless, one must be wary not to overemphasise diversity to the extent that important commonalities are overlooked, arguably, a weakness of childhood studies research to date (Qvortrup, 1994). Clearly, children's lives take place within the structures of time, socioeconomics, geographical spaces and so on. Therefore, diversity aside, there are often key features of children's lives which are similar. These arguments concerning diversity and commonality are part of the agency/structure debate, where childhood studies has been criticised for over-privileging agency (Qvortrup, 1994).

2.5.3 Summary

It has been argued that the traditional approach to studying consumption in childhood has analysed consumer socialization as a relatively passive process through which children internalise culture. Despite many arguing that children contribute to their own consumer socialization, the general tendency has been an overemphasis on children as learners and adults as teachers (Thorne, 1993). Therefore, socialization in general is a forward-looking approach, which is grounded in the idea that children are sites of

investment (Lee, 2001b) which must be controlled, shaped and moulded. It is important to recognize the importance of scientific consumer socialization as a forward-looking paradigm; however, this must not be done to the detriment of understanding the present tense of children's lives. Therefore, the paradigm of childhood studies, has attempted to counter this by acknowledging children's role as social actors who are competent and active contributors to culture – features of childhood one can only glimpse through child-centric research.

2.6 Theory

Being an established paradigm, theory generation within scientific consumer socialization is more encompassing than within childhood studies. However, being an interdisciplinary perspective, a range of theories inform and guide childhood studies researchers – sometimes even in different directions. Yet there are certain philosophical underpinnings (as in Table 2.1), which function as the glue that holds the paradigm together. This section will evaluate the theories of these two paradigms, starting firstly with scientific consumer socialization.

2.6.1 Scientific consumer socialization theories

While socialization research in fields such as psychology, sociology and education have applied a wider range of models, there are particular theories that have been overwhelmingly favoured in scientific consumer socialization research. Naturally, the approach to theory differs and there are several variations on a theme. That is to say, not all research from this paradigm can be generalized to one mode of thinking. Indeed there are several studies which have attempted to incorporate children's social meanings into research. However, for discussion purposes, scientific consumer socialization research can be categorized into two overarching theories: social learning and cognitive development (Faber & O'Guinn, 1988). These theories will now be discussed in turn, starting with the cognitive developmental model.

Cognitive development has its origins in child psychology, most notably the work of Piaget (Moschis, 1987). From this perspective, consumer researchers are interested in mental processes such as the thinking abilities and understanding of consumption in

children. One such study is that of John and Whitney (1986) who studied the structuring of consumer memory structures in children. Their findings indicated that

“...older children use more sophisticated processing skills and strategies than younger children as they acquire additional information and accumulate more experience in the marketplace”. (406)

Whilst such information is unquestionably valuable there is a need for more research which provides insight into the social dimension of consumption. Although Piaget acknowledged the importance of social interaction in development, this approach emphasises the role of nature in child development as cognitive development is viewed as a “wired-in” fixed process, which is biologically driven (Archard, 1993; Rogers, 2000).

Despite wide-spread criticism of Piaget’s theory (McIlveen & Gross, 1998), consumer research has continued to follow the general idea associated with the traditional cognitive developmental model. Yet, increasingly studies have emerged which go some way to including the role of consumption experience in product understanding amongst children (e.g. Achenreiner and John, 2003). This is consistent with Page and Ridgeway (2001) who found that children’s consumer environments (i.e. types of stores, products and services offered in the child’s immediate environment) had a profound impact on consumption patterns. Thus, it is clear that that scientific consumer socialization has moved towards incorporating a wider set of dimensions into research.

Nevertheless, it has been pointed out on many occasions that developmental theory, in fact, has vastly underestimated children’s capabilities (Bartholomew & O’Donohoe, 2003; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Hill & Tisdall, 1997). From this perspective, the key feature of scientific consumer socialization is that children’s consumer development takes place in a series of stages¹⁷ where children necessarily pass through one stage in order reach the next stage. The net result of this theory is a fixed linear model which does not deal with differences between children but assumes a universal model applicable to all children in all places.

When examining the scientific consumer socialization literature the types of themes which emerge include brand attitudes/perceptions (Bahn, 1986; Henke, 1995; Pecheux &

¹⁷ John (1999a) names these stages the *perceptual stage* (3-7 years), the *analytic stage* (7-11 years) and the *reflective stage* (11-16 years).

Derbaix, 1999), learning of brand names/logos (Fischer et. al., 1991; Macklin, 1996), and understanding of advertising (John, 1999b). Such themes have shed some light on how children learn about consumption. Yet, the themes are both utilitarian and goal-orientated and represent only one dimension of childhood consumption. Although such issues are of importance, these are adult-centric concerns that have arisen from the dominant conception of childhood – as a time of dependency, incompetency and protection.

Naturally, it would not make sense to deny that children are more vulnerable and immature than adults. However, through this approach there lacks a glimpse of the active, socially agentic child that researchers have so frequently found when detaching themselves from adult-centric standpoints (Bartholomew & O’Donohoe, 2003; Corsaro, 1992; James, 1993; Mayall, 2002; Ritson & Elliott, 1999 to name but a few). As a result the field of consumer behaviour knows little about what consumer goods mean to children in their cultures, a point of view shared by Martens (2005: 353):

“...Six years after Joel Best called upon child consumption researchers to do what they do best, and that is to research children – at play, at home navigating domestic material culture or in the market place perusing merchandise and spending pocket money, there is still precious little research around that does what he suggested.”

Social learning theories, the second dominant influence in scientific consumer socialization, stress the influence of nature. The types of issues which these studies have investigated include parental style/communication with children (Carlson & Grossbart, 1988; Mangleburg et. al., 1999; Moschis, 1985), the influence of reference groups/role models on purchases (Feltham, 1998; Martin & Bush, 2000) and media exposure effects on brand knowledge (Dotson & Hyatt, 2000; Hite & Hite, 1995).

Learning theories within scientific consumer socialization range from behaviourist accounts (children as blank slates) to those which recognise that children develop in the context of complex social environments (Rogers, 2000). That is to say, the extent to which children’s agency is acknowledged varies in different learning theories. Yet despite such variations children are essentially rendered rather passive recipients of culture. Therefore, scientific consumer socialization, from a learning theory perspective, can be challenged on some of the same issues as developmental theory. Furthermore, (as is the case with developmental theory) a range of studies have been conducted using

white, middle-class children as the norm to produce generalizations concerning the transmission of consumption abilities. Consequently, children are seen as being shaped by the environment as they develop. It follows, therefore, that agents of socialization are considered to be of particular importance (e.g. parents, siblings, peers, school and media). In accordance with the scientific tradition, these are variables which can be manipulated to influence the final outcome - the fully-fledged adult consumer.

2.6.2 Childhood studies theories

The main tenets of the childhood studies paradigm were presented in Table 2.1. These key features have become a theoretical foundation for those thinking from the childhood studies perspective. From the outset, scholars from childhood studies have subscribed to the view that childhood is a socially constructed phenomenon. Consequently, authors within childhood studies agree on social constructionism as an umbrella term. However, because childhood studies represents an approach to understanding children which is continuously developing and evolving, theories of childhood (within childhood studies) are still in their infancy (James et. al., 2001).

Nevertheless, upon consultation of the literature, it soon becomes apparent that research within this interdisciplinary paradigm draws on a range of well-established theoretical schools. These include postmodernism (Jenks, 2000), poststructuralism (Davis, 2000), feminism (Mayall, 2002), anthropology (James, 1996), symbolic interactionism (Musolf, 1996) and interpretivism (Corsaro, 1992). Within these theoretical schools there are typically key elements of social life – or “ingredients” – that are privileged over others. For instance, feminism and poststructuralism privilege power relationships, anthropology focuses on rituals in communities, whilst symbolic interactionism, interpretivism and anthropology are interested in cultural symbols. Moreover, all of these theoretical schools have concentrated on identity; albeit postmodernism, in particular, has directed attention toward identity as a key concept through which to research culture.

The net result is that these theoretical schools have set the research agenda in terms of childhood studies. From the literature it is clear that the themes/topics covered and the associated methodologies adopted by researchers can be traced back to the theoretical

schools. The absence of studies exploring consumption in children's cultures, however, is obvious.

Childhood studies is thus an incomplete, underdeveloped body of knowledge and has yet to propose comprehensive theories as such, which is also a weakness of childhood studies. However, this is undoubtedly a familiar feature of frameworks which are in progress/process. Nevertheless, there have been ongoing attempts to consolidate the growing body of literature in the field and present suggestions for more comprehensive frameworks (e.g. Corsaro, 1997; James et. al., 2001; James & James, 2004; Mayall, 2002).

2.6.3 Summary

It is clear that scientific consumer socialization theory is well established and therefore, constitutes a vast amount of research. Whilst the main theories of the paradigm encompass different views of how to conduct research with children these theories constitute a top-down approach and are thus not grounded in children's life-worlds. Childhood studies, on the other hand, is very much an evolving theory which is in need of bringing together much of the knowledge generated over the past decades. Yet, at the core of childhood studies is the need to see children as participants of cultures who actively contribute to their own consumer socialization.

2.7 Methodology

Now that the philosophical underpinnings and theories of scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies have been mapped out, it is appropriate to address their associated methodologies. These two paradigms advocate rather diverse methodologies, scientific consumer socialization more quantitative in nature and childhood studies more qualitative in nature. However, there are other fundamental differences in the two approaches to studying children as consumers, as will become evident in the two following sections, starting off with scientific consumer socialization.

2.7.1 Scientific consumer socialization methodology

It is difficult to separate the methodologies of scientific consumer socialization from its overarching philosophy and theoretical foundations. Therefore, adult-centric ideas of what childhood is and how children develop have influenced how children have been studied as consumers. Since scientific consumer socialization draws heavily on cognitive and behavioural psychology (which have traditionally modelled themselves on the methods employed in the natural sciences), research within this paradigm is frequently of a quantitative nature e.g. surveys and experiments (Belk, 1995). Such research is necessary and valuable, however "...much research done in the context of schooling has ignored aspects of children and childhood that cannot be quantified" (Graue & Walsh, 1998: xv).

Nevertheless, there are some studies within consumer behaviour which have used alternative methods in an attempt to get closer to children. For instance, in a study of children's fashion brand preferences, Hogg et. al. (1998) used both projective techniques (a collage exercise) to understand children's (aged 7-10) fashion brand preferences. Whilst the children were constructing their collages the groups discussed various issues pertaining to the brand images they chose – these discussions were recorded on tape enabling the researchers to gain some understanding of the children's thoughts on the issue. In another study, which investigated children's perceptions of material possessions, Chan (2006) used drawing as a core method of enabling children (aged 6-12) to express themselves. In a similar vein, Yuen (2004) used drawings as part of focus group sessions. Adopting such methods to understand children's perspectives has several benefits. For example, language/verbal challenges can be overcome. Furthermore, children are able to express themselves using a medium which many may feel more comfortable with (it is more akin to their everyday lives than e.g. questionnaires).

In yet another study of children (aged 10-12) Bartholomew and O'Donohoe (2003) used a range of qualitative techniques such as photo diaries, individual and friendship interviews as well as an exercise where children created an ad for a soft drink. This study is significant as it the children themselves were allowed to set the agenda through the use of a photo diary and during interviews. Thus Bartholomew and O'Donohoe

(2003) were able to understand the concerns the children themselves had – rather than adults imposing their world view onto the life worlds of the children.

The above studies demonstrate that there is indeed a move towards a greater use of alternative methods of understanding consumption among children. However, most of these (along with other examples in consumer behaviour) still are not child-centric in nature. In other words, child-centrism does not start at an ontological level and therefore, issues such as power relationships between adults and children are not adequately analysed. Following a review of recent qualitative child studies within marketing Banister and Booth (2003: 162) stated that: "...again we would encourage attempts to reduce the gap between researcher and child in order that children can feel more confident about making their views heard." Therefore, whilst moves within consumer behaviour towards the use of more child-centric methodologies are clear, this thesis will demonstrate how child-centrism is built into every level of research with children – right through from ontology to the methods employed. Having reviewed some qualitative child studies within scientific consumer socialization certain methodological challenges within this paradigm are raised next.

One of the most significant methodological challenges facing those studying children is the power and authority disparity between adults and children (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Children are used to being told to respect and obey adults; furthermore, in school settings they are taught there is a right and wrong answer to adult questioning. It follows that a critical concern of childhood researchers is how they as adults interact and communicate with children. This ensures children report more accurately on what they know and feel, rather than how they believe they *should* respond – thereby increasing the truth value of the data. Therefore, this critique is not so much a matter of quantitative or qualitative methodology. Rather the emphasis here is on the attitude to how researchers can learn how children interpret their life worlds i.e. using a bottom-up rather than top-down approach. To do this, there is a need to analyse the disparate power relationships between adults and children in order for researchers (as adults) to further understanding of child consumers.

The extent to which the field of scientific consumer socialization has addressed and reflected on these issues can be questioned. It is even doubtful to what extent it is possible to reduce power asymmetries in several of the methods employed in scientific consumer socialization studies. For instance, surveys and experiments frequently involve

a researcher-subject relationship which is detached and objective. Therefore, the very philosophy of scientific consumer socialization can prevent researchers, in some cases, from understanding consumption from within children's cultures.

One of the drawbacks with scientific consumer socialization methodology is the failure to truly *listen* to children. Neglecting to think outside adult experiences has led to a preoccupation with measuring capabilities, knowledge and influences in childhood consumption. Consequently, adult meanings are read into children's interactions and therefore, their voices have not been heard (Banister & Booth, 2005). Rather adults *presume* to know what it must be like to be a child since everyone once was a child.

An issue which has been touched upon previously, is the consumer developmental factors that scientific consumer socialization has chosen to measure. The drawbacks of focusing exclusively on competencies and consumer learning have been highlighted, thereby detracting from the issues that can shed light on what it means to be a child consumer – namely situated actions and interactions. The methods used (experiments, individual interviews, questionnaires and so on) in scientific consumer socialization research are unfamiliar occurrences in children's lives, and therefore, the knowledge they produce may not reflect childhood consumption realities.

It can be tempting to assume that merely by adopting different methods consumer researchers will understand consumption through children's eyes – in reality of course, this is not the case. The adult gaze is always seen through "...multiple layers of experience, theirs [children's] and ours, and multiple layers of theory..." (Graue & Walsh, 1998: 37). However, the challenge and responsibility of researchers is to take every step possible to gaze through children's lenses.

Therefore, the critical first step to breaking down barriers to understanding children as consumers means putting aside preconceived ideas of consumer development. To do this requires a range of methodological issues to be considered. For instance, power relationships between children and adults, methods of gaining consent from children, duration spent in the field, the role researchers adopt (*vis-à-vis* children) in the field, and specific methods employed in collecting and interpreting data (addressed in more detail in Chapter Five, Methodology). To date, the literature reveals that these have hardly ever been seriously addressed.

2.7.2 Childhood studies methodology

To enable consumer researchers to understand the social context of consumption and explore what takes place in-between children, it is necessary to use complementary methodologies. Such methodologies are typically qualitative in nature since they enable researchers to address a whole host of issues not readily quantitatively measurable (Graue and Walsh, 1998). Rather than researching children as lonely individuals, the focus must turn to children as a social group (Ingleby, 1986). For it remains a fact of life that children are social beings who do not exist in isolation but function alongside many significant others. The childhood studies paradigm advocates that in order to adopt a child-centric approach, it is essential that researchers get close to children and create opportunities to witness their cultures in the making. Yet, in their attempt to obtain such closeness to children, researchers from within childhood studies have sometimes failed to adequately include adults (as necessary parts of children's lives) into data. Therefore, this thesis will try to overcome this by incorporating adults into the research.

It has been argued that for too long adults have acted as children's informants rather than giving children a voice for themselves (Mayall, 1996). From a childhood studies perspective it is essential that researchers make it possible for children to act as their own informants. Therefore, barriers to understanding children, e.g. communication barriers and the asymmetrical power relationship between adults and children, are issues which must be considered/reflected upon by the researcher. The fact that some groups of children do not have the same verbal abilities as adults, that some are mentally and physically challenged along with other reasons which present researchers with difficulties, are inadequate excuses to ignore and marginalize children. In short, research with children as consumers must not be restricted to white, middleclass children; rather, it should be inclusive and ensure that different voices are heard.

Authors within childhood studies have long advocated the use of ethnography (ethnography is explained in further detail in Chapter Five, Methodology) as a central methodology¹⁸ within the field (Jenks, 2000; Lee, 2001b) since it presents researchers with opportunities to study children's cultures in context over a period of time. Furthermore, in laying out what Prout and James (1997: 8) termed the key features of the childhood studies paradigm, they claimed that:

¹⁸ Although ethnography is considered a central methodology it is not considered to be the *only* useful methodology in studying children from the perspective of childhood studies.

“Ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood. It allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research.”

Although ethnography is not unknown in consumer behaviour, it has hardly ever been applied in the study of children’s consumption – although notable exceptions exist (e.g. Ritson & Elliott, 1999 conducted an ethnographic study on the social uses of advertising amongst teenagers). The paradigm of childhood studies, therefore, allows researchers to study the meanings that children attribute to consumption. That is to say, the unit of measurement is not ability, numbers, cognition or rationality. Rather, measurement from a childhood studies perspective is more qualitative in nature and emphasises the process, meaning and context of children’s consumption (measurement is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, Methodology).

As has been touched upon previously, one of the key issues in childhood studies in general and with regard to methodology specifically, is the unequal power relationship between adults and children. Power is a key issue because children are essentially a low status, low power group in society. Consequently, adopting a child-centric methodology is simply impossible without addressing power relationships in the field. Such asymmetries can be reduced during fieldwork and childhood studies researchers have at their disposal a range of techniques to achieve this (these will be elaborated upon in Chapter Five, Methodology). Therefore, to conduct child-centric research, it is important that detailed attention is paid to issues surrounding power which tends to be ignored in research with children (Mauthner, 1997; Thomas & O’Kane, 1998).

2.7.3 Summary

Not surprisingly, some of the traditional differences between interpretive and scientific research are evident in the methodologies of the two paradigms. These include differences in the nature of data (qualitative/quantitative) and the proximity to those being researched (objectivity/subjectivity). However, one of the key issues that emerges when comparing the two methodologies is the firm emphasis childhood studies place on addressing the power imbalance between children and adults.

2.8 Practice

Ultimately, theories pertaining to children as consumers become evident in practice whether it is in marketing to children or through the voices of protectionist groups and official policies. In this vein Gittens (1998: xvi) argued that: “Discourses, meanings and beliefs do not float aimlessly in air. They are used to justify, rationalise and implement behaviours, policies and legislation”. Thus, academic discourses about childhood consumption are manifested in everyday understandings of the nature of children as consumers. Consequently, a natural progression from the philosophical, theoretical and methodological levels of the two paradigms is to examine what these mean in practice.

2.8.1 Practical implications of scientific consumer socialization approach

Public opinion concerning children as consumers has, in many respects, become shaped by ideas of morality and controversy. On the one hand politicians, parents, teachers etc. generate laws, rules and regulations in accordance with discourses of the powerless, unknowing, incapable child. Such discourses are constructed by academics in the social sciences e.g. scientific consumer socialization. The marketing profession, on the other hand, considers the idea of the active and powerful child consumer a moral justification for targeting children directly in their marketing tactics (Cook, 2005). Therefore, it would appear that marketing professionals are further ahead than some academics in their thinking of children as consumers. That is to say, marketers regard children as powerful, fickle and discerning consumers (Buckingham, 2003; Lindstrom, 2003).

As a consequence of these conflicting discourses surrounding marketing to children there are certain ethical issues (e.g. links between advertising of junk food and child obesity as well as children’s persistent demands for products, so-called “pester power”), which continue to be debated in the public sphere (Preston, 2004). Evidently, such concerns about children’s participation in consumer culture are grounded in much more basic ideologies of childhood (Buckingham, 2000), i.e. children as innocent, to be controlled and protected. Such ideologies, it is argued here, form part of the adult-centric perspective of children. Therefore, one can assume that more research into children’s everyday experiences of consumption, from a child-centric perspective, can contribute to such contradictory understandings of child consumers.

Despite the difference in discourses on children as consumers, there are many domains of life in which scientific consumer socialization theory is evident in practice. This means that the continuous concerns pertaining to children's lack of understanding of advertising, their manipulation and increased materialism have contributed to public debates. For instance, in several countries (e.g. Sweden) stringent laws have been introduced banning television advertising aimed at children. Furthermore, parents and adults alike feel considerable unease when observing consumer values in children (Kline, 1993); yet they forget that everyday life is always embedded in consumer society (Seiter, 1993). Therefore, to shield children from consumption may be unrealistic and mistaken, especially when founded on research evidence which only highlights child consumption from one mode of thinking.

In the marketing of products, particularly "educational" toys, aimed at children, the main categories of age competencies and gender are defining characteristics used to segment the child market. Whilst it is acknowledged that children strongly identify with age and gender, the question remains whether this may be exaggerated through the marketing of consumer goods. Toys are frequently aimed at developing certain age-based skills. Furthermore, the marketing industry clearly communicates to children which items are for boys and which are for girls. Many consumer goods are therefore, strongly gender polarised in terms of colours (e.g. pink for girls and blue for boys) and gender roles (e.g. grooming, mothering and household toys for girls and combat, fighting and action toys for boys). The net result is that stereotypes are being heavily reinforced by the marketing profession vis-à-vis children, a point supported by Seiter (1993: 208) who argued that:

"Its [Toys "R" Us] aisles are a spatial representation of the rules and boundaries of childhood socialization, marking what types of play are appropriate for different children, based on cost (income), gender and age."

Therefore, it is evident that children are strongly categorised throughout many spheres in life and consumer goods are no exception.

2.8.2 Practical implications of childhood studies approach

The practical implications of theory deriving from childhood studies are important. In the first place one of the goals of research from a child-centric perspective is to further

knowledge on what it means to *children* to be a child. Consequently, the field of consumer behaviour can learn more about how children themselves experience consumption. Capturing the *process* of consumption, and consequently the diversity and fluidity of meanings that children attribute to consumer goods, will provide researchers, social policy makers and practitioners alike with a greater understanding of the role of consumption in children's lives.

Secondly, and more specifically, the rigid division of "good" (educational) toys and "bad" (e.g. fad) toys can be called into question. Such stereotyping and clear-cut classifications are based on scientific thinking which has carved clear boundaries of fit and unfit toys – in terms of children's general development and consumer learning specifically (Seiter, 1993). This is due to the fact that by failing to acknowledge agency and interaction as central to meaning construction, the assumption is that "...meaning resides in toys and other artefacts, only to be injected into the user" (Best, 1998: 206). Furthermore, additional boundaries have been constructed using features such as age and gender as guiding factors in suitable and unsuitable consumer goods (Best, 1998).

Thirdly, research within the childhood studies paradigm aims to give children a voice – one that has been all but absent in research with children as consumers. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12)¹⁹ explicitly states that children have a right to have a voice and be heard on matters that affect them. To date, this has not been practised in consumer behaviour research. Furthermore, by emphasising children's competencies (rather than *incompetencies*), their social agency and their potential contributory role to consumer culture, children can be given the opportunity to be active participants in micro and macro cultures rather than being marginalized – which tends to be the case.

2.8.3 Summary

Discourses of children as consumers indicate that children are variously viewed as fickle, competent and discerning consumers and on the other hand, as powerless victims who are misled and manipulated. Nevertheless, it is clear that much marketing to children is grounded in scientific consumer socialization theory, e.g. through age-based

¹⁹ Article 12 (part 1) States 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 maturity of the child. (www.unicef.org)

skills toys. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt complimentary perspectives such as childhood studies to further understanding of children's cultures of consumption. This will provide marketers, social policy makers and society as a whole, insight into an important dimension of childhood consumption, which is not currently available.

2.9 Conclusion

This first chapter of the literature review has presented an overview of the scientific consumer socialization approach to studying children as consumers, and mapped out a complimentary framework – that of childhood studies. It has been argued, that scientific consumer socialization should not be the only approach to studying children as consumers, as there are questions concerning children's consumption experiences which cannot be answered within the theory. Therefore, childhood studies presents a departure from merely focusing on children's consumer learning/development, towards attempting to understand what consumption means in children's life worlds.

For years, consumer researchers have overlooked the fact that children often have different, yet sophisticated ways of relating to others, which may be a result of adopting adult-centric frameworks in research with children. Importantly, childhood studies authors advocate for a move towards researching children as a social group worthy of study in their own right – not just as consumers in the making. Overall, it is clear that childhood studies presents a complimentary view of childhood, one which has implications for research on a philosophical, theoretical, methodological and practical level.

Having compared and contrasted two quite different paradigms the following chapter will focus on key consumption issues through which children's cultures of consumption will be explored.

Chapter Three: Children's cultures of consumption – literature review

Following the review of the literature on scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies, this second literature review chapter will present an integrated framework for the study of children's cultures of consumption. The chapter commences by revisiting the key issues in the two fields of scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies. This is followed by a presentation of the cultural expressions, which have already been touched upon in the introductory chapter. These cultural expressions are cultural features, which are privileged by the theoretical schools that childhood studies draws on (see also Section 2.6.2). These key features, named here *expressions of culture* are vehicles through which culture is manifested – or becomes visible. Subsequently, the cultural expressions; rituals, symbols, power and identity, are in turn defined, analysed and related to the thesis.

3.1 Scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies

In the previous chapters it has been argued that, to date, children have been studied within the positivist paradigm of scientific consumer socialization. This research has focused on the transmission of consumer cultural learning. In this sense, transmission is taken to be a relatively passive process whereby children internalise culture from generation to generation. Furthermore, as has already been highlighted, the central feature of past research with children (including scientific consumer socialization research) is that it is adult-centric. Such top-down approaches are symptomatic of the taken-for-granted assumptions of adult power over children.

Having said that, it is clear that scientific consumer socialization studies have made important contributions to our understanding of children's knowledge and understanding of marketing generally and advertising specifically. As children are undoubtedly more vulnerable than adults it follows, that it is sometimes necessary to legislate or construct rules concerning marketing aimed at children. Yet, despite a vast range of studies in the field of scientific consumer socialization, one must still admit that a) very little is known about children's cultures of consumption and b) having even some idea of children's consumer abilities may say little about how children interpret consumption. This argument is substantiated by Corsaro (1997: 114) who argued that

“...although studies of children’s consumer culture tell us a great deal about children’s preferences and their roles in consumer decisions, they only rarely and very narrowly explore children’s actual use, refinement, and transformation of symbolic and material goods within peer cultures” (Corsaro, 1997: 114).

Therefore, although the complementary qualitative paradigm has been established for some time now in consumer behaviour (Denzin, 2001), a vast area concerning children as consumers has been ignored – neglected by academics in marketing and indeed the wider social sciences. As a result, childhood studies has emerged as a response to the critique of traditional research with children. From this perspective children are viewed as active and dynamic contributors to culture. Therefore, in this thesis culture will be privileged as a lens through which children’s consumption can be explored/analysed.

Privileging culture over macro structural issues (e.g. economics, the law) as a means of studying children’s cultures of consumption entails that insight can be gained into children’s everyday lives. Furthermore, since consumption is a cultural phenomenon, it makes little sense to separate consumption from culture (McCracken, 1988). This view is echoed by Slater (2002: 8) who stated that consumption “...is always and everywhere a cultural process”. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will focus on the cultural processes of consumption. However, whilst we shall concentrate on interactions amongst children (and adults), it must be recognized that structure is ever present. Children’s lives are always impacted by the wider structures imposed on them by those who hold power; namely adults. Yet, for the purpose of this thesis the focus will be on micro consumption cultures in order to catch a glimpse of children’s life worlds. It follows that childhood studies, as a child-centric theory, will make an important contribution by presenting a different angle from which children’s cultures of consumption can be studied - from children’s own perspective.

3.2 The cultural expressions

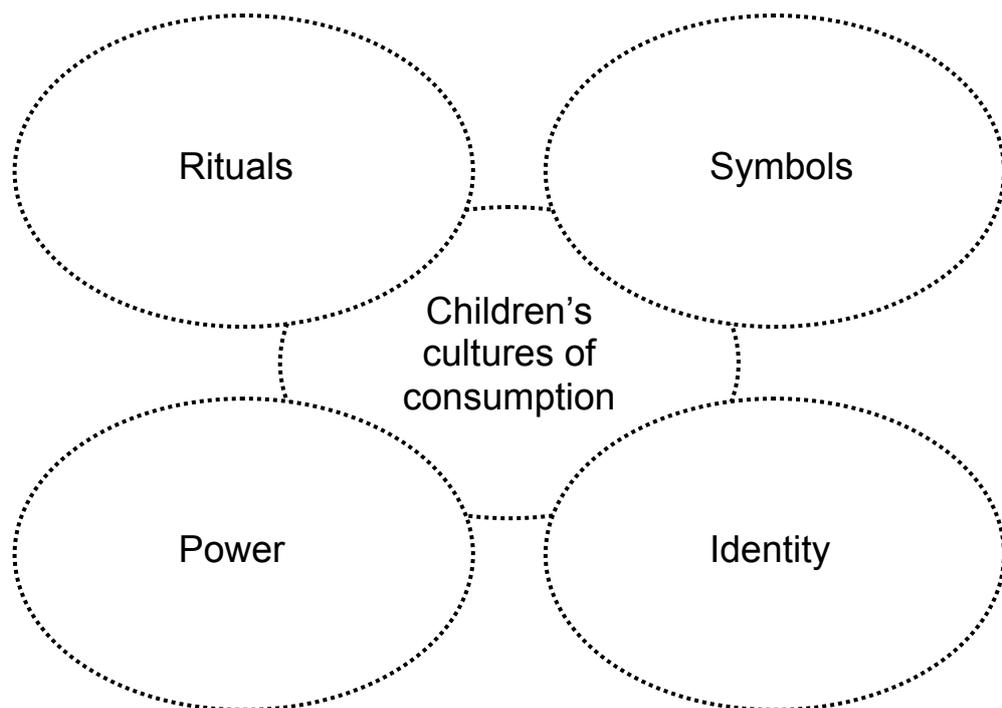
It has been argued that people have a tendency to take culture for granted and are generally unaware of its existence (Haralambos & Holborn, 1990). If this is the case, then it can be problematic to question children, especially younger children, directly about their consumption values, ideas and concerns as these are frequently implicit and difficult to articulate. Instead, exploring cultural expressions may provide more valuable insight into children’s consumption. Essentially, these cultural expressions function as

some of the basic ingredients of culture. In other words, cultural expressions are channels through which cultural values become visible, (sometimes) physical, and are manifested through significant activities and artefacts from everyday life.

It is clear that attempts to present culture visually are, at best, oversimplifications. However, the reader can gain some idea of how expressions of culture relate to, intersect and interact with each other. Whilst there are many channels through which culture becomes visible, the expressions of culture which clearly emerged from the literature and the data are rituals, symbols, power and identity. These expressions evolved through a process of moving back and forth between the extant literature and the data.

The net, which is illustrated in Figure 3.1, depicts the expressions of culture almost as if they were separate entities. Yet, in reality, cultural ingredients cannot be treated as distinct “chunks”; therefore, the net does not reflect the complex nature of how cultural expressions operate, overlap and are interlinked. Nevertheless, for the purpose of conveying the general idea, the expressions of culture (rituals, symbols, power and identity) have been illustrated below.

Figure 3.1 The net of cultural expressions



The net is made up of four expressions of culture. These are not arbitrary expressions but ones which are highly significant, both in terms of culture in general and consumption specifically and which have been used in consumer research previously (discussed in more detail throughout this chapter). The expressions are essentially the channels through which the values, beliefs and concerns of children become visible.

The centre of the net represents the fusion of all the expressions of culture – in this case; rituals, symbols, power and identity. Thus, it is argued here, that the cultural expressions represent important vehicles for understanding the centre of the net. In other words, it is through these expressions that this thesis will explore the centre ring i.e. children's cultures of consumption. Naturally, children do not interact in their peer cultures in isolation from parents, family, school, media etc. Therefore, children's interactions with others are firmly embedded within the expressions of culture.

In interpretive consumer research, much focus has been on single expressions of culture. These have included symbols (e.g. Elliott, 1994; 1999; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Levy, 1959; Mick, 1986.), rituals (e.g. Rook, 1985; McCracken, 1986; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991), power (e.g. Schouten & McAlexander, 1995) and identity (e.g. Belk, 1988; Gabriel & Lang, 2002; Kjeldgaard, 2003; Lamont & Molnar, 2001). However, only in isolated cases have these expressions been explored in children and not in relation to one another, as a whole.

The remaining part of the literature review is structured into sections that address the cultural expressions in turn. Each section is structured such that a definition and analysis of the particular expression is provided. Furthermore, the literature pertinent to each of these expressions is reviewed, drawing on childhood studies, scientific consumer socialization and other bodies of knowledge.

3.3 Rituals

In the section that follows, rituals as a significant expression of culture will be discussed. Although the concept of ritual is difficult to define, the literature on rituals will be examined to provide an understanding of what rituals are. This is followed by a review of the literature pertaining to rituals in the field of consumer behaviour and, subsequently, within the field of childhood studies.

3.3.1 What is a ritual in the context of children's cultures of consumption?

Traditionally, rituals have been closely associated with religion and similar fields of study (Collins, 1998), which has led to a rather narrow perspective of rituals – especially in view of the variety of rituals that are observable in everyday life. Only recently have authors outside religion and anthropology acknowledged the importance of rituals in other spheres of life. Nevertheless, it is argued here that rituals can function as important cultural scripts in understanding, interpreting and constructing cultures of consumption. This view is confirmed by Tetreault and Kleine (1990: 31):

“Ritual as construct offers great potential for interpreting many aspects of consumption phenomena...[and]...offers rich insights into the real, experiential lives of consumers and the types of symbolic meanings that they invest in the use of consumer products”

In other words, by examining rituals in children's cultures of consumption, marketers can further understanding of children as consumers. Whilst it may be difficult to establish the specific meaning of the term ritual, which has a range of uses (Collins, 1998), a definition is provided by Rook (1985: 282), who suggested that ritual is:

“...a type of expressive, symbolic activity constructed of multiple behaviors that occur in a fixed, episodic sequence, and that tend to be repeated over time. Ritual behaviour is dramatically scripted and acted out and is performed with formality, seriousness and inner intensity”.

One of the key characteristics Rook draws attention to in the definition, is of rituals as being expressive and symbolic. Thus, rituals can reveal a great deal about the underlying values that participants hold. It is clear from the quote that rituals are characterised as having a fixed sequence which is adhered to, with varying degree, depending on the event. For instance, the sequence of a funeral is likely to be relatively fixed and more rigidly scripted than that of a child's birthday party (Rook, 1985). This says something about the extent to which the ritual is formalized.

Rituals are commonly associated with an audience i.e. acted-out in public (Gainer, 1995), however, increasing attention has been paid to so-called private rituals i.e. those performed privately without the presence of others. One example of a private ritual is

that of personal grooming. This is considered by many to be an important ritual in the context of consumption (McCracken, 1986).

Upon perusing the literature on rituals, it is soon clear that there is disagreement as to what constitutes a ritual. Hendry (1999) suggested that in order to determine if behaviour is ritualized one indicator is to observe people's reactions when other actors neglect to follow ritual scripts. For example, if a child refuses to accept a gift, the giver would in all likelihood find this rude, unusual or odd (at least in UK culture). In this case, because the child did not follow the set script, Hendry would argue that gift-giving/receiving in Western cultures is ritualised behaviour. This may be a simple method of determining what ritual behaviour is, and what it is not. However, it fails to provide an in-depth explanation of what rituals really are.

Whilst it is common to see the terms ritual and routine used almost interchangeably, some authors have gone to great length to explain the difference between rituals and routines/habits (e.g. Denham, 2003; Rook, 1985; Tetreault & Kleine, 1990). The problem with this, is that it is very difficult to determine when behaviour transcends the boundary from being routine to ritual. Furthermore, certain acts may be ritual for some people and for others merely routine. Whilst a distinction between ritual and routine is valuable, it may be less useful to talk of behaviour as being *either* ritual or *not*, but more important to define rituals along a spectrum. In other words, behaviour can be conceptualised as being to a greater or lesser extent ritualized. This is precisely the point made by Grimes (2004: 27) who has offered a significant contribution to the study of rituals. Grimes defined ritual as:

“the general idea of actions characterized by a certain ‘family’ of qualities²⁰, for instance, that they are performed, formalized, patterned, condensed, and so on. No one or two of these qualities is definitive. Therefore, ritual is not ‘digital’, that is on or off. Rather, all behaviour is ritualized – some of it more, some of it less. The degree of ritualization increases as the number and intensity of these and other behavioural qualities increase.”

The most interesting element offered by Grimes (2004) in the above passage is the idea that behaviour is not, as such, a matter of being either ritual or not but rather a question of degree. However, some behaviour is more ritualized than other. Therefore, for this

²⁰ Grimes (1990) referred to various behavioural qualities in rituals. Some of these, or all may be present to a greater or lesser extent. The behavioural qualities are: Rituals are performed or enacted, they are formalised, repetitive, patterned or standardised in some way, symbolic, meaningful or serious and traditional.

study it is expected that a range of rituals will be identified – although the intensity with which rituals are performed, the scripted nature of rituals, their formality, the extent to which they are performed publicly, and the type of symbolic behaviour involved, is likely to vary.

Despite the scripted nature of rituals even large-scale public rituals have been found to vary. For instance, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) argued that Thanksgiving Day celebrations were considered to represent a cultural universal, that is, they are considered to be the same for all. Nevertheless, in their study of Thanksgiving, Wallendorf and Arnold (1991) found that the ritual scripts various families followed were, in fact, not the same. Therefore, even mass-celebrated rituals which are seen to represent some type of cultural universal are, in reality, performed very differently. For this thesis it means that consumer behaviour in children can be ritualized, yet differences in ritual performance may be evident amongst children.

3.3.2 Rituals and consumer behaviour

In consumer behaviour the study of rituals has become an increasingly important area of research (e.g. Belk, 1979; McKechnie & Tynan, 2006; McCracken, 1986; Otnes & Scott, 1996; Ritson & Elliott, 1999; Rook, 1984; Tetreault & Kleine, 1990; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). However, to date, there remains little understanding of ritual consumer behaviour generally and in children's cultures of consumption specifically. Rituals are highly significant and often taken-for-granted aspects of children's everyday lives. Therefore, it is argued that ritual behaviour becomes most observable when scripts are broken. The manner in which consumer goods are used, the meaning attributed to these and the participation in consumption events are all features of consumer behaviour that are highly ritualised (Rook, 1985). Furthermore, rituals are commonly considered to have an artefactual element (Rook, 1985) i.e. some type of material good. That said, verbal rituals (e.g. greetings) are an important form of ritual as well (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996; Hendry, 1999).

This is of great significance for consumer behaviour as goods frequently play an integral part in rituals. Examples of goods used in rituals include clothing, greeting cards, gifts, food and so on. The implications for children's cultures of consumption cannot be understated when considering important ritualistic events in the Western world such as

Easter, birthdays and Christmas. Therefore, prior to further discussing consumption rituals, a distinction will be made between two families of rituals. These are 1) consumption rituals and 2) rituals which have consumption implications.

Consumption rituals are rituals which are based on the consumption process, such as gift-giving. Here the ritual *itself* is some form of consumption. In other words, these are the ritual characteristics of consumer behaviour. However, there are some rituals which may not be consumption rituals in themselves but hold strong consumption implications. In this case, consumer goods are used as essential ingredients when acting out the ritual. For instance, for a graduation ceremony, the graduating students may wear a cap and to symbolise their achievement. The distinction between these two families of rituals is important to point out; however, both are considered to be significant when exploring children's cultures of consumption.

McCracken (1988) identified four types of consumption rituals which he named: grooming rituals, divestment rituals, exchange rituals and possession rituals. These rituals, he argued, are vehicles for transferring cultural meaning from consumer goods to individuals. In other words, people use rituals to extract meaning from consumer goods.

Grooming rituals

The act of grooming may be considered habitual; however, grooming behaviour has been conceived as being highly ritualised (Hope, 1980; Rook, 1985; Rook & Levy, 1999). In many cultures the consumption of grooming products plays an important role in how the body is displayed, maintained and used as a social communicator (Rook, 1985; Rook & Levy, 1999). It is conceivable that when children start to become aware of the social communication surrounding the body, personal grooming becomes significant. Therefore, it is important to explore the meanings children attribute to personal grooming.

Grooming is frequently associated with everyday personal grooming; however, the grooming ritual can be extended to encompass the grooming of possessions (McCracken, 1988). Toys and other favourite possessions can be cared for in a ritualistic manner in order to continuously transfer meaning from the good to the individual (McCracken, 1988). This type of behaviour is likely to be found amongst children as they often have a close relationship with toys and other belongings.

Divestment rituals

Divestment rituals are associated with extracting personal meaning from goods. This may occur when an individual is passing on, selling or giving away an important item. It is essentially a process of emptying the item of its personal meaning. Another type of divestment ritual takes place upon acquiring an item which has had a previous owner. The item is ritually emptied of the meanings associated with the previous owner. This may involve cleaning the item or in some way changing the item to endow it with new meanings.

Possession rituals

Possession rituals involve "...cleaning, discussing, comparing, reflecting, showing off, and even photographing..." possessions (McCracken, 1988: 85). Children are very keen to talk about their favourite things (Kline, 1993) and one can imagine that possession rituals are highly significant in children's cultures. In their cultures children are creative about appropriating and establishing meaning in material objects (Corsaro, 1997). Therefore, when receiving e.g. a new toy the child may explore "what it can do", compare it to other toys, take it to school to show others, discuss its qualities with peers and let others try out the new item.

Exchange rituals

One of the main types of exchange rituals is that of gift-giving which serves an important role in most societies (Hendry, 1999). Gift exchange can involve giving to others and may even encompass self-gifts (Solomon et. al., 1999) such as treating oneself. In the United Kingdom the main gift-giving/receiving events for children are likely to be Christmas and birthdays. Surprisingly, there are few studies pertaining to these important rituals in the field of consumer behaviour although there are notable exceptions. For instance McKechnie and Tynan (2006) conducted a study on the social meanings of Christmas. Yet despite the centrality of children in the Christmas ritual, they remain all but absent from the study.

Other studies have examined the myth surrounding Santa Claus and children's gift requests (e.g. O'Cass & Clarke, 2002; Otnes et. al., 1994). Otnes et. al. (1994) conducted a study with children examining the role of wish lists at Christmas. The analysis of several hundred Christmas letters to Santa Claus confirmed the dominance of brands in children's cultures of consumption. The findings indicated that over fifty percent of gift requests on wish lists were for specific brands.

Belk (1979) distinguished between four functions of gift-giving. Firstly, gift-giving is a form of communication. As a form of symbolic communication, gift-giving carries important messages from the giver to the recipient concerning the nature of their relationship. Dittmar (1992: 98) likened gift-giving to the “imposition of an identity”. In this sense, people announce how they feel about somebody and how they want to be viewed by others. Secondly, gift-giving is a form of social exchange, which can establish, nurture and define relationships. Thirdly, gift-giving can be seen as a form of economic exchange, which is linked to the idea of gift-giving as being a reciprocal activity. However, the ritual of gift-giving to children may involve a different type of exchange relationship in comparison to adults. Essentially, children do not have the power over economic resources in the same way an adult does. Therefore, it is conceivable that gift-giving by adults to children is an asymmetrical exchange relationship in that it may not involve the same expectations of receiving a gift from the child. Lastly, gift-giving can function as a socializer. In this sense, gift-giving to children is considered to have an important impact on children’s socialization. Belk (1979) argued that gifts can serve as powerful influencers for how children construct their identities and the development of values surrounding materialism, gift-giving, education, ownership and so on.

Marketing and the creation of rituals

One area worth briefly touching upon is that of ritualizing, which Grimes (1990: 3) referred to as “...the activity of deliberately cultivating rites”. This is a similar claim to Collins (1998) who argued that today people are essentially free to construct their own rituals. For marketing, this means that new rituals can be created and marketed. One such example is that of Valentines Day.

Otnes and Scott (1996) conducted a study of the manner in which advertising can influence ritual behaviour. They found that the tradition of the man giving a diamond ring upon the request for marriage was in fact a ritual created through advertising by DeBeers - a company that sells diamond rings. However, as Otnes and Scott (1996) emphasised, meaning-creation through advertising (and other cultural institutions) is not a simple one-way process imposed by the marketing machine. Rather the process is bi-directional where people are active participants in the construction of meaning. In other words: “...advertising is just one of the message systems that can shape rituals in postmodern cultures” (35). These findings are similar to those of Ritson and Elliott

(1999), who conducted a study on the social uses of advertising amongst teenagers. They found that meaning was extracted from adverts and formed the basis for ritual interactions amongst teenagers in the playground.

3.3.3 Rituals and childhood studies

The study of rituals in children's cultures is an area that has not only been neglected in consumer behaviour but in research generally. However, a limited number of studies have included children in ritual research. Examples include family rituals (Denham, 2003; Grieshaber, 1997; Wollen & Bennett, 1984) and rituals as compulsive behaviour in children i.e. abnormal development (Evans et. al., 2002). In the field of childhood studies too little effort has been devoted to understanding rituals in children's cultures. Nevertheless, the issue has been briefly touched upon by some authors whilst a few studies have directly addressed the rituals children engage in during play (e.g. Corsaro, 1997; Opie & Opie, 1994; Thorne, 1993).

One particular example of rituals in children's cultures is the so-called ritual of pollution, which has been observed in many areas of the world (Corsaro, 1997). These are rituals where certain individuals/groups or even items are considered to being "polluted" or "contagious". This kind of behaviour is commonly associated with gender conflict as boys may treat female possessions as being polluted (i.e. they are disgusted and refrain from touching these items) since these may feel threatening towards their male gender identity (Corsaro, 1997). Such rituals can, therefore, be seen as rejecting/being disgusted with the meaning that girls have invested in their possessions. Another example of a type of ritual in children's cultures is that of the swapping ritual in the "underground economy", which Thorne (1993: 20) observed in the school setting. This involved the regular swapping of personal items.

Therefore, in order to understand the values children hold, rituals constitute an important starting point which can go some way to furthering knowledge on consumption amongst children. However, as the literature has shown, it is vital that one acknowledges that child rituals may not necessarily be the same as adult rituals. Furthermore, they may vary greatly between children. It follows that a ritual must be defined by the children themselves through the language, behaviour or values they display in their cultures.

3.3.4 Conclusion

Contrary to other types of consumer behaviour, ritual behaviour is more rigid, more scripted and more intense. Therefore, one can assume that variations in how rituals are performed are less tolerated than in other types of consumer behaviour. Furthermore, the centrality of consumer goods in rituals has been highlighted. One can conclude that an understanding of rituals in children's cultures of consumption is important in order to further knowledge of children's consumer behaviour generally. Consequently, the research questions that emerged from this section of the literature review are:

- What types of rituals are evident in children's cultures?
- To what extent are consumer goods involved in these rituals?
- What is the significance of these rituals in children's cultures of consumption?

Having explored rituals in the context of consumption and related these to children's cultures the relevant literature to the second expression, symbols, will now be examined.

3.4 Symbols

This section commences by defining the concept of symbol in the context of consumption. This is followed by an examination of the literature on symbols in children's cultures of consumption structured around two streams of research, that of consumer behaviour and childhood studies.

3.4.1 What is a symbol in the context of children's cultures of consumption?

Consumer behaviourists have for some time now been concerned with the study of products as symbols. In the 1950s (e.g. Garner & Levy, 1959; Levy, 1955) research emerged that suggested products had more than a utilitarian value. In other words, there was an emerging acceptance that products hold meanings other than their basic functional values. Despite different approaches to studying symbolism, there seems to be a general consensus that a symbol stands for something over and above its most immediate meaning (Hendry, 1999). This means a symbol is an entity that signifies

another entity as e.g. pink represents femininity in the Western world. A more specific definition is provided by Levy (1959: 119) who defined a symbol as:

“...a general term for all instances where experience is mediated rather than direct; where an object, action, word, picture, or complex behaviour is understood to mean not only itself but also some other ideas or feelings”

Therefore, by looking beyond the material, utilitarian, functional aspects of consumer behaviour, it is possible to start understanding the social importance of goods in children's cultures. There is a general consensus in the field of consumer behaviour that the symbolic nature of consumption is highly significant (Solomon, 1983). However, it must be acknowledged that consumption symbolism is important in some contexts and less so in others (Ger et. al., 1999). In other words, it does not make sense to talk of symbolic consumption in cases where structural constraints actually prevent an individual from making a choice between alternatives. For instance those who are too young to hold a driving licence and who, at the same time, live in remote locations where buses are the only form of public transport, have little choice to signify meaning through their means of transport.

One of the fields where the study of symbols is well established is that of social anthropology. For some time these researchers have suggested that culture is constructed through symbols. Symbols are, therefore, a key cultural expression and provide vital insight to further understanding of culture. Although Sidney Levy started his writings on the symbolic nature of consumption some decades ago, it is only recently that more serious attention has been paid to this field of study (e.g. Belk et. al., 1984; Elliott, 1994; 1999; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Ger et. al., 1999; Hirschman, 1986; Ligas & Cotte, 1999; Mick, 1986; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Sirgy, 1982; Solomon, 1983). Other researchers have suggested consumption symbols are best understood through semiotic analysis (Mick, 1986). From this perspective, elements of culture, such as consumption, can be read as a language with a system of signs. However, the semiotics approach has been criticised on several fronts. Firstly, Elliott (1999: 112) argued that “...it has been realized that [semiotic analysis] leads to an infinite regress as one sign leads to another without there ever being anything ‘real’ outside the system”. Secondly, semiotics is essentially a theory that describes the system of signs, rather than asking *why* signs or symbols acquire the meaning they do (Slater, 2002).

Consequently, in order to understand children's cultures of consumption, it is necessary to explore how children use and interpret consumption symbols and how they engage in negotiations associated with such symbols. The symbols shared by a particular culture are integral to the process of communication and making sense of social relationships (Hendry, 1999). Furthermore, goods are integral symbols which make statements about "...the hierarchy of values to which their chooser subscribes" (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996: ix). One can therefore assume that children use their possessions as symbolic expressions of identity. However, despite a range of studies which have examined the social importance and the symbolic meaning of goods very little research in this area has been conducted with children – most especially younger children.

3.4.2 Symbols and consumer behaviour

In contrast to the study of rituals, children's consumption symbols have, to some extent, been researched within consumer behaviour. These studies have mostly employed a scientific consumer socialization perspective and focused on children's cognitive and social development to determine what children know and understand in relation to consumption symbols. Furthermore, some isolated studies have employed an interpretive perspective and examined the symbolic meaning of consumption in children's everyday lives. Both these streams of research will be examined next in order to establish current understanding of symbols in children's cultures of consumption.

Scientific consumer socialization

As was discussed in Chapter Two the scientific consumer socialization model is based primarily on cognitive and social development, which uses age as an important indicator of development. According to scientific consumer socialization theory, the ability in childhood to think symbolically increases with age. Towards the end of the *Analytic Stage* of development (ages 7-11) children are relatively competent at abstracting, and therefore have the ability to interpret consumption symbolism (John, 1999a).

Although isolated studies have examined pre-school aged children (i.e. younger than five), these tend to select "verbal" children (Derscheid et. al., 1996), thus excluding input from others or relying on parents, most notably mothers, as informants of children's consumer behaviour (e.g. Haynes et. al., 1993). Naturally, parents are valuable sources of information on their children; however, they can not and should not

replace children as informants. Rather it is the responsibility of researchers to design methods of collecting data from very young children.

Several studies have confirmed that children's ability to recognise brand symbols (Henke, 1995) and media characters placed on clothing (Derscheid et. al., 1996) increases with age. For instance, Hite and Hite (1995) found that children as young as two relied more on brands than on taste when judging peanut butter samples. Others have examined how children evaluate hypothetical brand extensions (Zhang & Sood, 2002). Yet others have examined children's brand perceptions (Bahn, 1986; Ross & Harradine, 2004) whilst Pecheux & Derbaix (1999) have designed a scale for measuring children's attitudes towards individual brands. It is clear, therefore, these studies focus on children's learning, abilities and understanding of consumption symbols.

In a quantitative study, Belk et. al. (1984) explored the development of consumption symbolism in two groups of children (mean age of 9.76 and 11.75). Four consumption items were used: jeans, bicycles, shoes and video games. The children were asked to make inferences about the owners of such products. These inferences were measured on scales indicating ten different attributes. The study found there to be a positive correlation between the strength of consumption-based stereotypes and age. Furthermore, the strength of consumption-based stereotypes was influenced by gender and social class. This is an important result as it indicates the diversity that can exist within groups of children and these are not necessarily purely linked to age. Therefore, children create and reproduce symbolic meanings attached to consumption based on other factors such as consumption experience and interaction with peers, the media, family, social background and so on.

More recent research (Achenreiner & John, 2003) has examined the meaning of brand names to children employing an approach which takes account of children's development *as well as* their experience of brands. The study was conducted with children aged eight to sixteen and found that children are able to recognise the consumption symbolism of jeans and trainers (i.e. understanding the meanings attached to certain brands) from around the age of eight. Contrary to previous research, Achenreiner and John (2003) emphasised age *and* brand experience as factors which shape the way children use consumption symbolism to make brand judgements.

However, this approach still does not take account of the multitude of ways that children use symbols. That is, children's use of and the meanings attached to consumer products depend on the child, the product and the context (Kleine & Kernan, 1991). Furthermore, research has shown that even very young children have been found to attribute symbolic meanings to things around them (Clark, 1999) – contrary to the findings of Achenreiner and John (2003). This is highlighted in the following quote:

“The domain of symbols, in children's lives, traverses many sociocultural meanings as well as personal meanings, both affective and cognitive. The allure of reductionism (to view a symbol as merely cognitive, or merely personally emotive, etc.) diminishes the inherently manifold, dense meaning of symbols.”
(Clark, 1999: 80)

This means that to further understanding on the multitude and complex meaning of symbols, researchers must move beyond the traditional adult-centric approach to studying consumption symbolism in children's cultures.

Interpretive research

The use of consumption symbols in children's cultures is inherently social and neither innate nor biological (Dittmar, 1992). In a similar vein, Solomon (1983: 321) pointed out that “symbols acquire their meaning through the socialization process that begins in childhood” where children draw on the media, family, friends and so on for cues on how to interpret various symbols. However, what is lacking here is the understanding that children negotiate, redefine, appropriate, reproduce and ultimately transform symbolic consumption meanings in their cultures.

It has been argued that a prerequisite for children's participation in consumer culture is that their interpretation of consumption symbols be relatively consistent with that of others (Solomon, 1983). Essentially, for a consumption symbol to have some validity as a symbol in that culture there must be some degree of consensus as to its meaning (Dittmar, 1992). Once the symbolic dimension of consumer goods is agreed upon, the meanings can be used as resources for the construction of identity (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). Other authors have taken the argument still further and suggested that adults generally (Fournier, 1998) and children specifically (Ji, 2002) develop actual relationships with brands, similar to those between people. Consequently, it is evident that research employing an interpretive perspective examines symbols from a different angle than within scientific consumer socialization.

Elliott (e.g. 1994; 1997; 1999; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998) has written extensively on the symbolic meaning of brands. In one study Elliott (1994) explored the symbolic meaning associated with various brands of trainers amongst groups of young people. They were asked to write down single-word free responses when presented with trainer brand logos. Overall, the main findings from the study indicated that age and gender matter in how brand symbols are interpreted. The 15-16 year old age group was found to have stronger and more positive brand associations than the older group of 19-24 year olds. In other words, the strength of brands as symbols (for trainers) reduced with age – at least between these two age groups. One possible explanation is that branded trainers become less significant as fashion items for the older group compared to the younger.

In the above study Elliott himself noted the potential shortcomings of relying on words (language) as indicators of meanings associated with brands. Language itself is a system of symbols, and words can themselves be subject to multiple interpretations or have multiple meanings. It is in these contexts that ethnography is a helpful methodology as it relies on other methods of data collection e.g. observation in addition to the use of language.

In *Sold Separately*, Seiter (1993) examined children's cultures in the context of marketing and advertising. These she viewed as institutions that instil meaning into toys, animated characters and so on. Children are known to want to feel that they belong (Derscheid et. al., 1996) by, for instance, owning the same objects as friends or the visible display of commitment to reference groups. Seiter (1993: 5) used the term "badge appeal" to describe how children display media figures and other brands on their clothing or carry popular possessions with them. In other words, the symbolic meaning of consumption objects demonstrates group membership and can enhance relative status amongst peers.

Looking at advertising from a slightly different angle, O'Donohoe (1997) found that the boundaries between various forms of communication are fluid, which in turn affects how young people experience advertising. In other words, advertising consists of a range of cultural references and uses symbols from other media forms such as art, television programmes, films and so on. Therefore, the reading and interpretation of much advertising assumes that audiences have prior cultural knowledge. One specific example of this was the use of a clay formed figure in the Lurpak adverts – originally from a

children's programme (O'Donohoe, 1997). It is conceivable, therefore, that the fluid nature of advertising means that children interpret advertising in diverse ways – possibly very different to what the advertiser intended.

In a later study, Ritson and Elliott (1999) used ethnographic methodology to research how teenagers used advertising as discourse in their cultures. The study found that advertising was an important source of meaning for the group. A range of advertising-related discourses were played-out in everyday interactions amongst the teenagers ranging from jingles, catchphrases or conversations about specific advertisements. One example Ritson and Elliott (1999) highlighted was when a new Tango advert was released. The Tango advert showed a large orange man slap a Tango drinker across the face. In the playground, this led to teenagers re-enacting the advert by slapping peers across the face. It is evident that symbols from advertisements are not merely adopted in the form of purchases but shaped and negotiated in children's cultures. Therefore, in the Tango example, a prior knowledge of the advert was necessary to interpret what was going on in playground. Therefore, in the context of their everyday lives at school, these teenagers constructed, appropriated and reproduced advertising symbols in their culture. This is in stark contrast with the idea that children passively internalise culture.

3.4.3 Symbols and childhood studies

Over the past few years a plethora of topics have been covered within childhood studies. Yet it is surprising that only a handful of studies have addressed consumption, in general, and consumption symbols, in particular, when considering the impact of marketing and consumer goods on children's everyday lives. Martens et. al. (2004) have pointed out that even major contributions to the field of childhood studies, such as *Constructing and reconstructing childhood* (James & Prout, 1997) contain little more than a passing mention of consumption.

There are, however, exceptions and a range of references to consumption within particular studies. As has been mentioned previously, in her study on gender play Thorne (1993) discussed how children traded items, creating a bartering economy as such. Furthermore, Valentine (2000) briefly addressed the nature of symbolism surrounding food consumption in schools whilst Corsaro (1997) has devoted a few pages to discussing material symbols and marketing to children in his book - *The sociology of*

childhood. However, a systematic examination of the meanings that children attribute to products, brands, advertising and consumption in general, is practically non-existent. A similar point is made by Martens et. al. (2004: 156) who stated that "...so far, little effort has been made in either the sociologies of childhood or consumption to theorise the relationship between them". Therefore, this gap in knowledge is not confined to the field of consumer behaviour, but extends to childhood studies.

3.4.4 Conclusion

It is clear from the literature that symbols in children's cultures of consumption have only narrowly been examined within consumer behaviour. That is, children's use of symbols has mainly been interpreted as a competency which is age-based. Therefore, when children reach a certain stage in their consumer development, scientific consumer socialization theory holds that they are able to understand symbolism. Within the interpretive literature, the symbolic nature of consumption is firmly established. However, only isolated studies have examined the symbolic nature of consumption in children. It follows, that much is still to be learnt about symbols as a significant cultural expression of consumption in childhood. Therefore, research questions arising from an examination of the literature on consumption symbols are as follows:

- What are the consumption symbols in children's cultures?
- How do children interpret, change and manipulate the meanings attributed to these symbols in their cultures?
- What is the significance of consumption symbols in children's cultures?

Having explored the literature on consumption symbols we now turn to an examination of the literature on the third expression of culture, namely power.

3.5 Power

Power is an issue which cannot be overlooked when discussing children. Therefore, power as an expression of culture presents an important angle on children's cultures of consumption. Undoubtedly, power is a complex term used in a variety of contexts, in a range of academic fields; however, for the purpose of this thesis the focus is on power in the context of childhood. This section commences by examining the power concept

itself. Subsequently, the literature on power in children's cultures of consumption will be addressed - firstly by examining the field of consumer behaviour and lastly, childhood studies.

3.5.1 What is power in the context of children's cultures of consumption?

There is a multitude of theories and different perspectives on power; therefore, it is a difficult concept to define. However, to situate power in the context of this thesis, some clarification is necessary. Upon examining writings on power, it is clear that there are differences in how power is theorised.

One view, which is consistent with this thesis, is that power is always present in social interaction (Foucault, 1986). This means that power is ever present in children's lives, whether in interactions with adults or other children. Whilst it is obvious that children hold less power than adults, little is actually known of how children experience this lack of power. More interestingly, if power is always present between people, it may be highly valuable to explore the power relations between children. Therefore, power is not restricted to relationships between adults and children – power is evident in children's relationships with one another (Holmes, 1998).

Another aspect of Foucault's theory on power is that it is intimately linked to knowledge. In the context of science, discourses have been constructed of a child consumer who is powerless, incompetent, unknowing and unable to make decisions. It may be a fact that children are in need of *some* form of protection, and few would dispute that children hold less life experience than adults; however, to what extent children should be protected, is still unclear. This is due to the lack of research with children as consumers from various modes of thinking. It is therefore, conceivable that inaccurate discourses about children and consumption have frequently been reinforced. Through such discourses adults legitimise and fail to question their power status vis-à-vis children.

The power in interpersonal relationships - often termed social power - is generally considered to refer to the capability to exercise influence on others or withstand influence (Brehm & Kassin, 1996). By implication those who hold power exercise some

degree of control over other people. However, as Lukes (2005) suggested, power is more than the ability to influence. Instead, he proposed a view of power which is three-dimensional. Firstly, power can be exercised through *expressing* preferences and thus influencing decision-making. Secondly, power can be exercised by *preventing* specific issues from even being addressed. Lastly, power can be exercised by "...shaping desires, manipulating the wishes and desires of social groups" (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004: 541). As a result, the exercising of power does not necessarily entail highly visible acts of control. Consequently, a methodology is required which can observe the sometimes subtle nuances of these various dimensions of power.

It has been previously highlighted that children's lives are heavily controlled by adults through organizations, government bodies, officials, parents, teachers and relatives. Thus, in constructing their cultures, children must do so within certain structural constraints (Russell & Tyler, 2002). Nevertheless, this thesis takes the view that children are active agents, instrumental in shaping their own lives – within such structures. Therefore, as children mature and strive to take control of their own lives, they are continuously encountering the lack of power they hold – because of their age.

3.5.2 Power and consumer behaviour

As will be seen the nature of consumption power in children's relationships is a matter of great importance to consumer behaviourists – and must not be overlooked. This is evident when considering that "...relationships of power and status are refracted through practices and patterns of consumption" (Kenway & Bullen, 2001: 31). This means that material possessions play a highly significant role for children in exercising social power and constructing boundaries of identity and ownership. In this sense, possessions "...almost literally *embody* social relationships...[because]... children's positions in the group's hierarchy and their friendships are reflected in their decisions about who is allowed to use their possessions and who is not" (Dittmar, 1992: 52, emphasis as in original). Therefore, it is clear that children use toys and other objects to control and characterise their relationships with others.

Within the field of consumer behaviour little is known about the nature of power and consumption amongst children. However, a range of theorists (some outside marketing) have shown interest in the implications of marketing to children. Next two streams will

be addressed which are relevant to children's consumer behaviour: scientific consumer socialization and research outside the field of marketing. This is followed by an examination of power in the field of childhood studies.

Scientific consumer socialization

This stream of research has its origins in the critiques put forward by those concerned with the effects of marketing to children, and protection groups campaigning to ban advertising aimed at children (John, 1999a; Pecora, 1995). One of the key issues raised by protection groups was that advertising is inherently unfair as children are cognitively immature and, therefore, unable to understand the persuasive intent of advertising. Therefore, such groups considered children to be manipulated and hence much of marketing to children was viewed as unethical. Subsequently, the field of scientific consumer socialization emerged to ascertain exactly what children do or do not understand. It is conceivable that if consumer behaviour as a field was seen to be progressive in this area, marketing to children could be legitimized and if necessary tweaked.

Studies on children's cognitive and social development in relation to consumption have yielded a plethora of findings (see John, 1999a for a review) and there is, as yet, no clear consensus concerning when children understand the persuasive nature of advertising (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). However, in recent years the shift in this literature has moved from viewing children as incompetent, immature and unable to understand to viewing them as fickle, sophisticated and even strong consumers (Martensen & Tufte, 2002).

One concept which is closely related to power is that of the savvy consumer. Many authors acknowledge and pay reference to children as savvy consumers, yet, few have explored this concept in much depth. Research on consumer savviness, is concerned with the extent to which consumers are knowledgeable, sophisticated and marketing literate. Most studies concerned with consumer-savviness tend to focus on adults (e.g. Harker & Egan, 2004; Macdonald & Uncles, 2005; 2007), however, there are some which have explored children as savvy, marketing literate consumers (e.g. Ritson & Elliott, 1999; Tinson & Nancarrow, 2005).

Drawing on various literature Macdonald & Uncles (2005: 38) have provided some themes which represent the "savvy new consumer" These included the degree to which

consumers are experienced with marketing methods and marketing literate, the degree to which consumers are technologically sophisticated, more demanding and aim to take control in their consumption. For the purpose of this thesis, the degree to which children are savvy consumers can contribute to understanding the process through which children exercise power/control with respect to consumption.

Despite such changes in discourses concerning children's competencies as consumers, the scientific consumer socialization paradigm has not sufficiently recognized children's agency (Devine, 2002). Although it may not be an intentional strategy, such discourses on children have led to too many consumption constraints being placed on children, by either limiting their choices substantially or, even preventing them from making choices altogether (James et. al., 2001).

Research outside marketing

This body of literature outside the field of marketing (e.g. within the field of education, media studies, social policy, psychology and psychiatry) is rather broad and frequently concerns writings which discuss marketing to children on a general level. From this perspective, marketing is considered variously to promote materialism, to stereotype gender representations, promote social exclusion and health problems (especially obesity) and the general discourse suggests that marketing to children is morally wrong (Buckingham, 2000; Seiter, 1993).

Notwithstanding this moral critique of marketing, children have increasingly been described as powerful, pestering consumers. Nevertheless, it is within the "children as victims" discourse that most writings in this group seem to be situated. In other words, children are not considered to be consumers *with* power but *powerless* and manipulated consumers (Edwards, 2000). Furthermore, it is argued, that marketing is increasingly difficult to distinguish from the plethora of stimuli that children face due to the hybridized nature of marketing messages (Balasubramanian, 1994; Kenway & Bullen, 2001). That is to say, marketing and other forms of entertainment programmes or leisure activities are gradually more intertwined as e.g. in the case of product placements in films. This, critique of marketing to children, Seiter (1993: 96) would have, is in stark contrast with the belief of practitioners in the marketing industry:

"Those interested in selling things to children have an amoral but probably better-informed and more accurate view of young children as a television

audience than do protection groups and educators. The problem is not that children do not understand commercials – as the protectionists would have it – but that they do”.

The extent to which writers in this group believe children as consumers are being exploited varies. Yet the basic argument which lies at the heart of these writings is that marketing is a force of power over children. When children are not presented as powerless victims, they are displayed as pestering or gaining power over parents. However, the inherent theme that runs through much of this literature is of marketing as something negative which perpetuates ideologies.

A more specific critique of marketing to children is of gender representation in advertising, which it is argued, is strongly stereotypical. That is, marketing generally and advertising specifically are powerful enough to reinforce unrealistic, or at the least exaggerated, gender representations. This refers both to the content of children's advertisements (Browne, 1998) as well as production features e.g. cutting rates, width of shots and use of voice-overs (Chandler & Griffiths, 2000). The implications, it is argued, are that children come to attribute unrealistic gender characteristics - perceiving boys as consistently more dominant, more active, aggressive and more powerful whilst girls are portrayed as less assertive and controlling, shy, gentle and more passive (Browne, 1998). This is further reflected in beauty ideals where unrealistic pressures, especially on girls, to conform to images of thinness and beauty are communicated through messages in the media (Herbozo et. al., 2004), resulting in children having poorer images of their own bodies (Martin et. al., 1999).

Another major critique of marketing, which will be touched upon here, is the growing nature of children's desire for material goods. It has been argued that children are becoming increasingly materialistic (Goldberg et. al., 2003). In other words, children come to view possessions as leading to happiness (Belk, 2001). Authors writing from this standpoint come from a range of fields and have argued that children's obsession with brands and consumption-related status (Klein, 2000) can lead to low self-esteem and even depression (Schor, 2004).

Looking at the overall arguments on power within the literature on children's consumer behaviour, it is clear that marketing is viewed as a powerful force that is capable of shaping children's view of themselves and the world around them. Scientific consumer socialization, on the other hand, has been more concerned with exploring what children

know and understand, in order to develop effective marketing strategies and/or ensure children are not being manipulated. Therefore, children's lack of power has been taken as a given but not seriously questioned in research. Importantly though, the writings that have been presented above are practically all concerned with adult power over children and there is little evidence of research analysing child-child power relationships. The childhood studies literature, which forms another area of research concerning children and power, will be examined next.

3.5.3 Power and childhood studies

Broadly speaking, childhood studies has addressed power, directly or implicitly, in children's cultures on two main fronts. Firstly, much discussion has been centred on children's low status in society, their lack of power and the unequal power relationship that is present between adults and children. In particular, the focus has been on how to work around the unequal power relationship between researcher and children from a methodological perspective (e.g. Christensen & James, 2000; James, 1996; Mandell, 1994; Mauthner, 1997; Mayall, 1999; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Furthermore, the power and control adults have over children's lives has been addressed more generally throughout the literature (e.g. Devine, 2002; James et. al., 2001; James & Prout, 1997; Mayall, 2002; Valentine, 2000; Wyness, 2000) and, with a particular focus on children's human rights in society (e.g. Archard, 1993; Franklin, 1995; Hill & Tisdall, 1997).

Secondly, power in children's cultures has been studied by researching children exercising power in their peer cultures, either over each other or as means of gaining control of their lives (e.g. Corsaro, 1997; Evaldsson & Corsaro, 1998; Evans & Eder, 1993; Ridge, 2002; Thorne, 1993). Therefore, it is evident that throughout much of the literature in childhood studies, power has been a key issue.

However, the main difference vis-à-vis other approaches is that childhood studies has seriously questioned the status quo and has presented an *analysis* of power relationships in children's lives – rather than taking it as a given. Along this line, Wyness (2000: 88) stated that "...a key aim of the new sociology of childhood is to bring this marginal status [of children] to the foreground and identify possible and actual means through which children are seen as 'agentic'". In other words, research from this perspective has

identified children as capable and active social agents; however, their low status in society and scientific studies has restrained and disempowered them.

Whilst power is referred to throughout the childhood studies literature, very little attention has been paid to power and consumption in children's cultures. In fact, consumption is barely mentioned in the literature although more recently a few notable exceptions have emerged (e.g. Boden et. al., 2004; Martens et. al., 2004; Russell & Tyler, 2002; Valentine, 2000). Some of these recent contributions have specifically mentioned the importance of consumption in children's power relationships. Examples include Martens et. al. (2004) who found that children use consumption to access popular groups or as strategies to resist adult authority and gain control of their lives (Boden et. al., 2004).

3.5.4 Conclusion

From the literature it is clear that power is a key issue in children's cultures in the context of consumption. However, the fact that children have power relationships, both *vis-à-vis* adults and *vis-à-vis* each other, cannot be ignored. Naturally, it is way too simplistic to divide children's power relationships into two types; those with adults and those with children. However, it is conceivable that the nature of these relationships may be different – one of the issues which will be explored throughout this thesis. Therefore, the following research questions emerged from the literature review on power in children's cultures of consumption.

- What is the nature of children's power relationships with adults and children and what mediating role does consumption play in these?
- How do children use consumption to construct hierarchies within their groups?
- How do children use consumption to gain control over their lives?
- What consumption-related strategies do children use to resist adult power?

Now that power as an expression of culture has been addressed, the literature on the fourth and final expression, namely identity, will be addressed.

3.6 Identity

This section commences with a definition of identity and places identity into the context of consumption. This is followed by a review of the literature on consumption and identity in children's cultures divided into two subsections: consumer behaviour and childhood studies.

3.6.1 What is identity in the context of children's cultures of consumption?

Over time, and especially with the emergence of postmodernism, one of the central themes in studies on Western consumption has become that of identity (Featherstone, 1998; Gabriel & Lang, 2002). Yet, identity is a heavily used term both academically and in everyday life, and its meanings and definitions vary between authors and theoretical orientation. Jenkins (1996: 5) has provided a relatively clear definition of identity as he sees it:

“Social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others...it [social identity] too is the product of agreement and disagreement, it too is negotiable”

This means that childhood identity is not only about how children view themselves but how others see them. Identity says something about uniqueness – how individuals view themselves as *different* from others. On the other hand, identity says something about how individuals identify with others i.e. how *similar* to others they perceive themselves to be. Therefore, identity is about similarity and difference. The famous sociologist G. H. Mead considered identity to be a central process in socialization where children, in constant interaction with their surroundings, place themselves in the place of others in order to understand how others see them. It is through this process, Mead argued, that children develop a sense of self (cf Ritzer, 2000). It follows that identity is a key issue in the study of children.

Due to the importance of consumption in everyday life, for adults and children alike, it has been argued that the meanings attributed to material goods become important resources for the construction of identity (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Thompson & Haytko, 1997). In contrast to traditional society, where identity was inextricably linked

to work roles in the production process (Bocock, 1993), "...modern identity is best understood through the image of consumption" (Slater, 2002: 85). Therefore, identity has moved from being a relatively stable and fixed entity to one in constant change (Kellner, 1995).

However, Gabriel & Lange (2002) have suggested that whilst identity may be constructed through consumption, people tend to search for some element of stability - rather than maintaining identities in constant flux. It follows that researchers must not ignore that people may not want to/be able to readily "purchase" identities. Therefore, whilst consumption may for some constitute a key aspect of identity construction, other features of life (family for instance) are highly significant.

One way of understanding identity is by distinguishing between identities. In this respect, Jenkins (1996) suggested that some identities, called *primary identities*, develop early in life and are more stable and resilient to change. These include gender identities, selfhood and sometimes kinship and ethnicity. *Secondary identities*, on the other hand, are less fixed, more changeable and tend to develop later. These include a range of other identities related to consumption, work, lifestyle and so on. Whilst it may be simplistic to categorise identities, it does however provide a useful tool to understand how consumption may relate to identity. The question, therefore, is whether consumption is merely a vehicle through which more important identities (primary identities) are constructed (Miles et. al., 2002) – or whether secondary identities literally are constructed through consumption.

3.6.2 Identity and consumer behaviour

As children have become important consumer groups, they have increased opportunity of choosing between lifestyles, which are frequently based on the same consumption resources (media, brands, leisure etc.) as those accessible to adults (Valentine, 1999). By implication, children are faced with the same high-risk choices associated with consumer society – constructing identities that command the love or respect of others (Gabriel & Lang, 2002).

Foucault argued that identities are constructed through context and situational factors and everyday environments, yet at the same time wider social structures such as age,

class, ethnicity and gender shape identity (Marshall, 1998). This means that children's identities are constructed through encounters with various overarching structures and institutions such as the mass media, family, the education system, language etc. (Kacen, 2000). At the same time though, children in their cultures construct identities through their own personal experiences and localised contexts.

Within consumer behaviour, a range of studies have explored the relationship between identity and consumption in adults (e.g. Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992; Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998; Richins, 1994; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Sirgy, 1982; Solomon, 1983). This literature has for some time acknowledged that material possessions play an important role in the sense of self (Belk, 1988; Dittmar, 1992; Solomon, 1983). More specifically, Belk (1988) argued that possessions can even be regarded as constituting part of the self - or what he termed *the extended self*. The question is therefore, whether one can assume that the literature on identity and consumption equally applies to children as consumers.

A limited amount of research has examined children's recognition of consumption symbolism and the degree to which children make inferences about others, based on the products they consume (Belk et. al., 1984; Derscheid et. al., 1996). Nevertheless, in these studies the focus still remains on children's capabilities at different ages rather than an examination of how children use products in their everyday lives. Even gender, as a primary identity in children, has been relatively neglected in consumer behaviour (John, 1999a). More recently, a few studies have examined children as consumers from an interpretive perspective (e.g. Auty & Elliott, 1998; Elliott, 1994; Kjeldgaard, 2003). These studies are, however, all with older children or young people. Therefore, it is fair to say that little attention has been paid to childhood identities in the context of consumption.

In his study of young people, Kjeldgaard (2003: 285) found that youngsters (17-18 year olds) were active in constructing their identities through consumption, yet he further established that the "...global and local structures also determine the resources and thereby the identity possibilities available". This means that children cannot simply construct any identity of their choosing. The structural aspects of their lives present them with a limited set of choices – especially in view of the low power status children have, compared to adults.

It has been argued that children do not have the ability to understand brands at a conceptual level prior to the age of eight (Achenreiner & John, 2003). Therefore, research within consumer behaviour has not yet explored what products and brands mean to younger children despite the fact that social psychology has long acknowledged the importance of possessions to children in their development (Dittmar, 1992). One body of literature that has explored childhood identities, at an early age, is childhood studies, which will be examined now.

3.6.3 Identity and childhood studies

The importance of childhood identities has been addressed by numerous writers in the field of childhood studies (Aydtt & Coraro, 2003; Davis & Machin, 2000; James, 1993; Kelle, 2001; Thorne, 1993; Valentine, 2000). Some of the key findings from these writings are that children are acutely concerned with their identity within groups. In their peer cultures they work at constructing social relationships where they can define themselves as the same as *and* different from others. Fitting-in is essential, yet a degree of individuality is pursued (Ridge, 2002). It follows that children in their cultures continuously must "...manage tensions between conformity and individuality" (Valentine, 2000: 258).

Several authors within childhood studies have argued that gender as a primary identity is one of the key identities for children (e.g. Aydt & Corsaro, 2003; Corsaro, 1997; James, 1993; Thorne, 1993). In an extensive study of gender in children's cultures, Thorne (1993) argued that one major problem with much of the literature on children and gender is the pre-fixed notion of girls and boys as being separate and different. As a consequence, she argued, authors fail to take account of the within-gender variations as well as the impact of factors such as social class and ethnicity. It follows that girls and boys are not a group of people who can be neatly categorised into one of two groups but who have complex identities, constructed through a range of factors – including consumption.

So far, it has been stated a number of times that children are a group that hold less power in society due to their age. As they grow older, children gain more autonomy and increasingly make decisions in matters affecting them. Therefore, age is an important identity for children due the level of power/status that follows with age. Obviously, age

is a constantly changing identity (as children naturally age); however, in the short-term it is sufficiently stable to be an important identity *vis a vis* adults as well as other children. In a study on children's discourses surrounding development, Kelle (2001) found that children's construction of identities was closely tied-in with age. However, age was not merely a chronological unit of identification but inherently social. Therefore, children's social age proved to be the degree to which they considered themselves and others (also of the same chronological age) to be more or less developed (i.e. physically, intellectually and psychologically).

In an extensive discussion on children and their relationships, James (1993) argued that the body is a key site of identity construction for children – a point confirmed by others (Boden et. al., 2004). James (1993) stated that "...relatively little critical attention has been given to children's own experience and understanding of the body as a signifier of identity" (104). She further suggested that there are five significant aspects of the body which are important in children's identity construction. These are height, shape, appearance, gender and body performance²¹.

Overall, the findings in childhood studies have shown that a concern with identity is not confined to older children but important to younger children as well (James, 1993). Given the literature reviewed in this field it seems that there are certain key identities that emerge as significant to children. These are age and gender as well as others associated with the body: height, shape, appearance and performance.

3.6.4 Conclusion

It is clear that some key issues have emerged from the literature on identity and consumer culture, consumer behaviour and childhood studies. Firstly, it is evident that identity is an important factor in consumption. Secondly, consumer behaviourists know very little about children and identity construction in the context of consumption. Lastly, children are actively engaged in constructing identities in their peer cultures. Consequently, there is a clear need for more research to further understanding on how consumption serves as a resource in children's identity construction. Therefore, the following research questions have emerged from the literature review:

²¹ Body performance refers to the actual functioning of the body - how fast one can run, how well one can dance and so on.

- What role does consumption play in constructing identities in peer cultures?
- For which identities is consumption particularly significant?

3.7 Overall conclusion

Following the discussion of the four expressions of culture this chapter concludes by assembling the research questions from the literature review. Firstly, the research questions which emerged from Chapter Three; Childhood studies, present some overall issues to be addressed throughout the study:

- *How can we understand children's cultures of consumption seen from a child perspective?*
- *What meanings do children attribute to consumption and how should these be interpreted?*
- *What methodology can help us understand the social interactions that take place between children?*

Throughout Chapter Four, the expressions of children's cultures of consumption were identified and culminated in specific research questions for each of the expressions as presented in Table 3.2 (overleaf).

Table 3.2 Research questions: Children’s cultures of consumption

Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What types of rituals are evident in children’s cultures?</i> • <i>To what extent are consumer goods involved in these rituals?</i> • <i>What is the significance of these rituals in children’s cultures of consumption?</i>
Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are the consumption symbols in children’s cultures?</i> • <i>How do they interpret, change and manipulate the meanings attributed to these symbols in their cultures? Is it the same as or different from adults?</i> • <i>What is the significance of consumption symbols in children’s cultures?</i>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How do children use consumption to construct hierarchies within their groups?</i> • <i>How do children use consumption to gain control over their lives i.e. from adults?</i> • <i>What consumption-related strategies do children use to resist adult power?</i>
Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What role does consumption play in constructing identities in peer cultures?</i> • <i>For which identities is consumption particularly significant?</i>

Chapter Four: Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to provide a clear understanding of how the research questions for this study will be answered. So far, it has been reiterated that childhood studies is a child-centric approach to researching children. It follows that within the childhood studies literature generally and this chapter particularly, much emphasis and space has been devoted to discussing how child-centric data is gathered. Within this methodology chapter there are five main sections. Firstly, ethnography is defined and discussed in the context of scientific consumer socialization, childhood studies and consumer behaviour. The second section is devoted to explaining and justifying how this particular ethnographic study was conducted, including a number of relevant issues: sample, access and time spent in the field, consent, researcher role in the field and methods employed. In the third section of the chapter a discussion of data recording and analysis is provided. This is followed by section four, which is an examination of the ethical issues concerning research with children. It should be pointed out that the childhood studies approach to studying children involves ethics as a guiding principle through the entire research process – not merely at the outset. Therefore, when appropriate certain ethical issues are addressed throughout the chapter. Lastly, prior to concluding the chapter, section five looks at methods for evaluating the credibility of qualitative research data.

4.1 Ethnography as methodology

Whilst childhood studies may constitute a new paradigm in our understanding of children, its methodologies are well-established. It has been argued previously that ethnography has become the central (albeit not only) methodology in childhood studies (Jenks, 2000; Lee, 2001b) as it allows researchers to understand children's cultures from within. In this first part of the methodology chapter, ethnography is defined, evaluated and subsequently, the main methodological differences between scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies are examined. This is followed by a discussion of ethnography in the context of consumer behaviour.

4.1.1 What is ethnography?

Some of the first writings within childhood studies are attributed to authors from anthropology and sociology (Prout & James, 1990). Consequently, it comes as no surprise that the central methodology of anthropology - ethnography, has been extensively applied in childhood studies. Within childhood studies ethnography has been found to be most useful (Prout & James, 1997) as the methodological limitations of traditional research approaches can be addressed. Furthermore, ethnography enables researchers to explore the socially constructed nature of children's cultures – a highly significant feature within childhood studies.

Despite its origins in anthropology, ethnography is a term that encompasses several philosophical perspectives (Agar, 1996). Consequently, approaches to ethnography vary; nevertheless, it is characterised by several common features. These common features are highlighted by Hammersley and Atkinson (1997: 1), who suggested that:

“...it [ethnography] involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research.”

From the definition it is clear that ethnography offers a multi-method approach, thus providing a range of angles to grasp what consumption means to children. Therefore, to practise ethnography, entails becoming immersed in the culture being studied.

Throughout the ethnographic process the researcher attempts to understand structural features, patterns of communication and, more specifically for this study the nature of rituals, symbols, power, and identity. Essentially, the researcher interprets (in this case children's) meanings in the context of everyday life (Harvey & Myers, 1995). Therefore, ethnography can help overcome the criticism of some other methodologies, which tend to abstract children from natural activities/settings. In doing so it is necessary to adopt an emic ethnographic approach. This means that the ethnographic account is an analysis of children's cultures in terms of what is meaningful to *them* rather than to the researcher (adult) world.

In common with some other forms of qualitative inquiry, ethnography involves the use of small samples. Few cases may be used within the setting, and researchers typically

work with unstructured data. Due to the extended period of time spent in the field it is possible to work with a range of methods such as interviews, observation, informal conversations, gathering artefacts and so on. This is particularly important when working with children who may communicate very differently to adults. Consequently, as a methodology, ethnography provides the opportunity to shed light on a particular issue from various angles. Furthermore, it enables researchers to capture a great amount of detail of the everyday lived experiences of those being studied.

Ethnography has become utilised in a variety of fields and been integrated into debates from different theoretical movements (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998) e.g. symbolic interactionism, poststructuralism, feminism and so on. This has led to a critical discussion about how ethnography should be conducted (Agar, 1996). More specifically, within childhood studies, one of the key issues to be debated has been the asymmetrical power relationships between adults and children. In order to understand and represent children's cultures, it is essential that researchers pay close attention to power interactions between themselves and the children. Precisely, how this is done within this study will be addressed throughout the chapter.

In Western society children spend much of their daily life away from parents in institutions such as nurseries and schools. Therefore, in reality adults have very little insight into large parts of children's lives. Yet children form part of the culture and therefore, the simultaneous "...*physical* closeness and...*social* distance (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988: 10, emphasis as original) means that it can be difficult for adults to see the world from the perspective of the child. The question as to how a culture can be understood has implications for the extent to which it is possible for researchers to *become* one of the culture being studied. Clearly, adults can never become children again and neither is it necessary to become a fully-fledged member of a culture in order to interpret it (Geertz, 1973). Rather, to interpret other cultures Geertz (1973: 6) advocated the use of "thick description", which involves providing detailed and dense reports on social phenomena.

One of the strongest critiques of ethnography is the extent to which ethnography can be considered to represent some form of reality. The social construction of data begs the question as to whether observations at times reflect more about the researcher than the culture being studied. Therefore, to suggest that it is straightforward to reproduce and interpret social reality, is a doubtful argument. On this issue Hammersley and Atkinson

(1997: 18) argued that although ethnographic data and findings “...are constructed [it] does not *automatically* imply that they do not or cannot represent social phenomena”. Rather by acknowledging subjectivity researchers can “...engage in procedures which improve the accuracy of their interpretations” (Rizzo et. al., 1992: 103), thus ensuring they represent reality as accurately as possible. Some of these procedures are discussed in Section 4.5.

4.1.2 Scientific consumer socialization and childhood studies methodology

As some key issues surrounding ethnography have been defined and examined the following sections will compare and contrast ethnography with scientific consumer socialization methodology. The discussion is structured by addressing four key methodological issues. These are 1) theory building, 2) proximity, i.e. the distance between researcher and participant, 3) duration and context, i.e. the research setting and length of time spent with participants and 4) measurement, i.e. the nature of data units.

4.1.3 Theory building

One general feature of qualitative studies is that they are typically inductive in nature (Schwandt, 1998). In other words, researchers build theory by focusing on detailed cases and subsequently work from the bottom up to a more general conclusion. Essentially, such a “grounded” approach involves researchers moving through a continuous, iterative process from data to theory. Furthermore, in generating theory with observational longitudinal data (as with ethnography) it is possible to shift focus during research – in light of new, interesting data (Silverman, 2001). This stands in contrast to positivist research which tends to start off with pre-existing hypothesis that are either confirmed or denied (Saunders et. al., 2003).

Whilst childhood studies as a paradigm has become firmly established, there is still much theory building necessary. Therefore, to explore the details of children’s cultures of consumption in context, it is necessary to employ inductive analysis. This way, ethnographers can work with the data and identify key issues of concern to the children.

4.1.4 Proximity

From the scientific consumer socialization perspective, objective enquiry is conducted through careful, observation and measurement. On this premise a distance is created between the researcher and the child/children. Therefore, despite being a human being with consciousness, the child becomes the “object” of enquiry in order to maintain objectivity (Graue & Walsh, 1998). One of the drawbacks of this approach is that research becomes something that is conducted *on* children rather than *with* them (Hill et. al., 1996).

Consequently, the proximity to children becomes distant to avoid influencing or contaminating the data. This means that studies are designed such that steps are taken for researchers to remain objective. In reality though, this can create barriers to gaining deeper understandings of children and their cultures. Some have even gone as far as to suggest that to maintain that research can be conducted objectively can even devalue the data and reduces rigour. This point is put forward by Denzin (1994) who argued that because the research gaze is “...always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity” (Denzin, 1994: 12), there can be no objective observations. Therefore, it is important for researchers to reflect on the subjective nature of gathering data and analyse the impact they, as researchers, have on the research process (Davies, 1999).

In contrast to objectivist/constructivist epistemology, childhood studies and ethnography provide the opportunity to observe, interact and try to make sense of social behaviour *within* a culture. At the core of ethnography is the principal technique of participant observation. To what extent an active/passive role is adopted within the culture will determine how researchers interact with the culture and how they behave on a daily basis toward children. For this study a *participant as observer*²² role was adopted which provides a valuable opportunity to get close to the children (this is discussed in more

²² There are generally considered to be four types of participant observation (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998): *complete observer*, *observer as participant*, *participant as observer* and *complete participant*. Complete observers are relatively detached from the culture they are studying, try to remain objective and hardly interact with members of the culture. The observer as participant mainly observes although there is some interaction with members. On the other hand participants as observers actively participate as well as observe. The complete participant, however, does not reveal his/her identity and functions as a fully fledged member of the culture. The type of participant observation is significant for the role adopted by ethnographers upon entering children’s worlds. As an example, Corsaro (1988) when conducting research in an Italian nursery adopted an *observer as participant* role. He sat on the sidelines watching, observing and waiting for children to approach him.

detail in section 4.2.4). Therefore, to study children's cultures of consumption, it is possible to gain an understanding of how children communicate, develop relationships, create identities, and structure their social interactions in relation to consumption.

4.1.5 Duration and context

Traditional methods employed within the scientific consumer socialization paradigm, such as surveys and experiments, typically result in relatively short periods of time being spent with children. This means that researchers have little time to gather rich, meaningful data about children as consumers. Research frequently does not ask for children's direct input about their lives, but uses parents as informants (e.g. Haynes, et al., 1993). Furthermore, children may be (de)selected for their verbal (in)abilities (e.g. Derscheid et. al., 1996). The implications are that children's voices are either not heard at all or at best selectively heard. Seeing that children may communicate differently compared to adults, it is the task of researchers to design research that ensures the voices of children are not limited to those informants that are "easier" to research.

The question of studying children in context has not been addressed in scientific consumer socialization. Research from this tradition has focused more on the measurement of variables; therefore, children are often studied away from their natural environment (Ingleby, 1986; Rizzo et. al., 1992) in order to minimise the effect of external variables on the data. Consequently, the complexities of children's lives may be difficult to detect.

The extended period of time spent in the field during ethnographic research provides a range of opportunities not normally at the researcher's disposal. Firstly, and most obviously, is the opportunity to get inside the culture and face its complexities. Secondly, phenomena can be investigated across a range of situations. This is important as behaviour can be inconsistent and depend on time and place. Therefore, to analyse such variation can provide powerful insight into children's cultures of consumption.

Thirdly, by spending lengthy periods of time in the culture ethnographers can test a range of methods. Children have their own means of communication and spend most of their time engaging in very different activities from adults. Therefore, ethnographic research presents opportunities to utilise several methods and shed light on phenomena

from different angles. This is a powerful feature of ethnography which entails a process of developing or evolving over time (as the ethnography progresses) - essentially providing it with flexibility and a sense of self-correction (Eder & Corsaro, 1999).

In his discussion of Moerman's study of the Lue tribe, Silverman (2000) pointed out that people, when reporting to others, external to their culture, may apply cultural criteria not otherwise used in naturally occurring interactions *within* the culture. Consequently, the cultural identities the Lue described were often cultural representations that were, in reality, relatively abstract in their daily lives. The point being, that to question children directly on their cultures of consumption may not yield a true or natural reflection of their lives. Therefore, to study children in context represents precisely the phenomena which qualitative researchers advocate are lost in statistical measurement - which will be considered next.

4.1.6 Measurement

Description in research from the positivist perspective is concerned with measurement of quantifiable units of data (Marsden & Littler, 1996). To build a body of knowledge concerned with children as consumers based on what is readily or vaguely measurable, poses some limitations on our understanding of children's consumer behaviour. It is important to have some form of measurement and quantification, however, much of children's behaviour is simply not amenable to units, scales or scores or other forms of statistical measurement (Graue & Walsh, 1998). Geertz (1973) argued that it is *impossible* to study people away from or apart from culture. Culture is in the person, the person is part of the culture - the two are inseparable. Therefore, the many complicated facets of children's cultures of consumption cannot be understood based purely on quantitative measurements.

In ethnography the emphasis is not on reporting numerical or statistically analysable data – although it may include some form of quantitative methods (Taylor, 2002). Instead, narrative data is generated, based on detailed field notes, interview transcriptions, personal diaries, photos and other artefacts. However, descriptive accounts of social interactions are not enough. To interpret children's cultures of consumption, it is necessary to engage in the process of thick description, which means going beyond “microscopic examination of actions” (Eder and Corsaro, 1999: 523). Rather, the context

in which events take place must be understood. This includes examining structure, process, power, cultural references and the meaning that members of the culture attribute to their lived experiences. To produce such accounts that span time, space, social groups and various layers of context, requires producing data that simply may not be quantifiable. Prior to discussing the particulars of this ethnographic study we briefly examine the role of ethnography as a methodology in consumer behaviour.

4.1.7 Consumer behaviour and ethnography

Although ethnography/participant observation has not enjoyed a wide application in consumer behaviour, notable studies exist (e.g. Arnould & Price, 1993; Coupland, 2005; Kates, 2002; Ritson & Elliott, 1999; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). This may be in part due to the dominance of quantitative methods in consumer behaviour and partly due to the time factor involved in conducting ethnography. Some have argued that the lengthy period of time spent in the field setting is one of ethnography's main drawbacks (Flick, 2002). However, this has not deterred the call for the use of ethnography in studying consumer behaviour (Arnould, 1998; Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Elliott & Jankel-Elliott, 2003).

The use of ethnography in consumer behaviour has the potential of gaining access to consumer cultures to explore how consumption is woven into the everyday lives of people. This means it is possible to go beyond consumers' self-reports of purchase intentions and consumption patterns – which have largely turned out to be inaccurate in the past (Elliott and Jankel-Elliott, 2003). Through ethnographic research, consumer researchers can gain deep insight into the social significance of products and brands. In doing so Elliott and Jankel-Elliott (2003: 215) suggest that ethnography can provide some answers to:

“...the lived experience of the consumer as social being...[and] ...the attitudinal, emotional and behavioural aspects of brand consumption”. [It can explore]...how this brand-related behaviour integrates with wider social and cultural experience in the life-world of the active consumer”.

Therefore, it is clear that despite the lack of experience consumer behaviour has with ethnography, several authors within the field advocate its use to understand consumption

phenomena. With this in mind we now turn to a discussion on how consumption phenomena have been researched throughout this ethnographic study in particular.

4.2 Field research

So far this chapter has presented a theoretical debate and argued for the use of ethnography in studying children's cultures of consumption. The focus will now turn to the specifics of the ethnographic study conducted for this thesis - starting first with the sample.

4.2.1 Sample

The most basic distinction made in sampling is that between random and non-random samples²³. In qualitative research purposive sampling (non-random) is the most common strategy applied. Purposive sampling means that cases are chosen that will best answer the research question (Saunders et. al., 2003). This is because sampling in qualitative work is not driven by the need to generalise data to entire populations or to provide predictions of human behaviour (Kuzel, 1999). Instead, investigators are typically looking for rich, deep and meaningful data. To obtain such depth typically requires samples in ethnography to be relatively small - as with other qualitative methodologies (Kuzel, 1999). Therefore, large-scale samples designed for statistical analysis would be inappropriate for this study.

It is fair to say that the lives of children in the Western world are all to some extent embedded in consumption. It follows that in respect of consumption there are, as such, no boundaries to define (Schensul et. al., 1999). However, the meaning children attribute to consumption is likely to vary between individuals/groups of children. Consequently, children as consumers will be compared on the basis of the variables of age, gender and socioeconomic background.

In ethnographic work, sampling is a process that takes place *prior* to field entry as well as *during* field work (Flick, 2002). This means that certain groups of children have been

²³ Random sampling means that in a given population each unit has an equal chance of being chosen. With non-random sampling techniques on the other hand, the chances of units being selected (also known as non-probability sampling) are not equal (Saunders et. al., 2003).

selected prior to field entry whilst the sample is refined into smaller groups during fieldwork. Furthermore, although children constitute the sample, other crucial informants to the study are the adults, who are part of children's lives (e.g. parents, caretakers, teachers, school staff). Selecting adult informants becomes a natural product of the child sample. That is to say, the adults who are selected as informants are those who are close to the children in the sample. The sampling strategy for this thesis is explained throughout the following sections: age of children in sample, location of sample, socioeconomic profile of children in the sample, and sampling whilst in the field.

4.2.1.1 Age groups

In Chapter Two, scientific consumer socialization theory was challenged for overemphasising age in children's development. Furthermore, it has been suggested that chronological age may be less important than life experience (Belk et. al., 1984; Morrow & Richards, 1996) Despite this, it is difficult to ignore the fact that as children grow and learn, their perspective on life, and evidently consumption, changes. Therefore, this thesis will take a dialectic approach and include age as an important factor in how consumption is interpreted by children in the context of their everyday lives.

Gaining access to groups of children can be difficult. As a result, schools provide convenient settings and are frequently used in research with children (Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Since consumption encompasses many different areas of everyday life, including school-life, the school setting was considered to present important opportunities to understand children's cultures of consumption. This is similar to the approach of Ritson and Elliott (1999) who explored the social uses of advertising in the context of schools. Conducting research with small groups of children in the school context is a form of convenience sampling, which is, according to Schensul et. al. (1999), appropriate in exploratory research:

*“Studies of adolescent behavior in general, for example, could be undertaken in the high school nearest to the researcher's office – with the usual cautions that such populations may not be representative of **all** adolescents in a given society” (233).*

In other words, the schools were selected as a field site as they present an opportunity to access and analyse children's cultures of consumption. Furthermore, the structure of the

education system in the United Kingdom is such that children are clustered according to age – one of the variables of this study.

When determining the ages of children for this study, previous literature was consulted to establish where research was most required. In childhood studies it has been argued that pre-adolescent children have long been overlooked (Hill et. al., 1996). Furthermore, it is particularly the middle years (from four to ten years of age) of childhood which have been ignored (James et. al., 2001). Upon inspecting the scientific consumer socialization literature it is evident that research has been conducted with children of different age groups. However, few studies have focused on pre-school age groups (Dersheid et. al., 1996). In the field of consumer research other non-developmental studies with children have largely focused on teenagers or young people (e.g. Elliott, 1994; O'Donohoe, 1997; Ritson & Elliot, 1999). The literature, therefore, presented a clear need to conduct research with pre-adolescents.

In establishing a potential lower age limit, it was important to understand when children start to function in groups – so as to capture them constructing their cultures. Corsaro (1997) has pointed out that an important move for children is when their worlds come to encompass institutions such as nurseries. When the boundaries of children's lives are moved outwith the home, their horizons widen and they become part of various social networks. Such group life for children typically starts from the age of around three (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988); therefore, it was decided that children in the sample should be no younger than three.

On the basis of the above, the sample was limited to children between the ages of three and preadolescence (approximately eleven years old). As a result three age groups were selected, enabling the researcher to capture developmental differences as well as children's diverse interpretations of consumption. These are: preschoolers at nursery (aged 3-5), primary 3 (aged 6-7) and primary 6 (aged 10-11).

4.2.1.2 Location of sample

It has been argued that children's consumer behaviour is strongly affected by social class (Belk et. al., 1984). Conversely, others have argued children's consumer environments (defined as the types, sizes and concentration of stores as well as product/brand offerings available in children's near environment) are more important than class (Page & Ridgeway, 2001). It has been debated whether it is realistic to talk of social class as a

feature of consumer behaviour (Williams, 2002). However, for the purpose of this study it was decided that some form of variation in socioeconomic background might shed light on differences in children's cultures of consumption. Therefore, the selected schools were based on contrasting socioeconomic profiles, one in a relatively affluent area and one in a more economically deprived area (in each school two age groups were studied – primary 3 and 6). Ideally, the researcher would have preferred to have two nursery locations (pre-school age –group), but due to difficulties in gaining access it was not possible to achieve this. This could have presented a limitation, however, the selected nursery represented children from mixed socioeconomic backgrounds; therefore, it was deemed sufficient that the sample was limited to one nursery.

4.2.1.3 Sample profiles

Northern Primary School²⁴ (hereafter NPS) is located in Treader council and has 320 pupils. It is one of three primary schools in a village some 10 miles from a large city (Clovensham) in central Scotland. Waterside Primary school (hereafter WPS) is in Longbourne council, has 220 pupils and is a slightly smaller village in central Scotland but has a comparable distance to the large city. NPS is relatively deprived, compared to WPS, as the following statistics indicate (Table 4.1, see overleaf). It should be noted that all figures, except free school meals²⁵ are from 2001 census²⁶. Further explanations of the education and occupation categories are available from www.scrol.gov.uk.

²⁴ To ensure anonymity of the people involved, the names of schools, towns, places and people have been substituted with fictitious names.

²⁵ These figures represent percentages of children within the school who receive free school meals. Source: NPS and WPS.

²⁶ The figures from the census represent percentages of the population in the towns where the children live.

Table 4.1 School profiles

	Northern Primary School	Waterside Primary School
Free school meals*	23%	2.7%
Unemployment level	3.56%	1.95%
Household composition i.e. one adult, one+ children	14.9%	4.1%
Parental education (aged 16-74):		
-No qualification	39.4%	20.8%
-Level 3** qualification	5.3%	8.5%
-Level 4*** qualification	8.2%	34.4%
Parental occupation (age 16-74):		
-Manager/senior officials	8.4%	20.4%
-Professional occupations	4.9%	17.1%
-Associate professional and technical	9.8%	15.4%
-Administrative/secretarial	14.5%	12.8%
-Skilled trades	15.3%	8.7%
-Personal service	9.4%	9%
-Sales and customer service	10.4%	5.1%
-Process, plant, machine oper.	10.2%	6%
-Elementary	17.1%	5.4%
Average no of cars per household	1	1.6
% of households that rent from council	29%	16%
% of households that own property	58.4%	77.9%

*Free school meals are provided to children whose parents are on income support

**Level 3 qualification: HNC, HND, SVQ level 4 or 5.

***Level 4 qualification: First degree, higher degree, professional qualifications

From Table 4.1 there are obvious differences between the two schools and the areas in which they are located. Most noticeable is the fact that NPS has many more children who receive free school meals. Furthermore, the unemployment level is higher in the catchment area of NPS. Glancing further down the table it is clear that WPS children are likely to have parents/guardians who are better educated and employed in higher occupational groups. In contrast to WPS, NPS children are less likely to have parents/guardians who own their house and have fewer cars per household. These statistics indicate that on average there are clear differences in the socioeconomic backgrounds of children from the two schools.

As an additional point of reference it is worth referring to the *Carstairs deprivation categories* for postcode sectors (see McLoone, 2000 for an extensive explanation).

These categories, which range from 1 (most affluent) to 7 (most deprived) are based on the 1991 census data and are used to indicate the relative deprivation in *localities* rather than of individual households. By examining the post code sectors of both schools, it was found that all pupils of NPS belonged to deprivation category 5 whilst all pupils from WPS belonged to deprivation category 2. Therefore, WPS is located in an area which is more affluent than NPS. Whilst this provides only some information about relative affluence/deprivation of *areas*, it highlights, when used alongside the data in Table 4.1, that there is a stark contrast between the two schools.

Nursery Profile

Sunny Nursery (hereafter SN) is a private nursery in Treaders Council and does not operate on the basis of catchment-area as state nurseries do. Therefore, it proved much more complicated to build a profile for the nursery than the schools. Being a private nursery many of the parents were professional people with relatively well-paid employment. However, since the introduction of government nursery vouchers (which provides parents with the choice to spend vouchers in private and public nurseries) SN has seen an increase in children from less affluent backgrounds. During the time at SN the researcher attempted to collate further information relating to the children's socioeconomic backgrounds.

Interviews and informal conversations with parents/nursery staff provided opportunities to ask about employment and through home visits the researcher was able to establish the type of socioeconomic backgrounds of the children. Although there were some less affluent families, the majority did in fact belong to the following occupation groups (based on 2001 census grouping of occupations): manager/senior officials, professional occupations, associate professional and technical, administrative/secretarial. Therefore, the skew of the nursery children was towards a moderately affluent background.

The nursery is structured into a baby room, toddler room, junior room and the oldest children (3-5 years of age) are in the pre-school room. The fieldwork for this thesis was carried out in the pre-school room where on average 16-18 children attended daily.

4.2.1.4 Sampling whilst in the field

Although the sample is defined in advance further sampling takes place during fieldwork. The depth of analysis required in ethnography makes it necessary to adopt a funnel-like approach to the issues that emerge in the field. In part, this involved choosing

samples which best enabled the research questions to be answered – otherwise known as purposive sampling. Ethnography provides the flexibility to utilise a range of purposive sampling techniques due to the length of time spent in the field. Upon field entry and throughout the fieldwork, heterogeneous samples²⁷ were used to understand the key themes of children’s cultures of consumption (Saunders et. al., 2003). Once the researcher had gained some insight into the children’s cultures, so-called negative cases (those which challenge the mainstream of data) were used to explore those cases/children that deviated greatly from the average (Schwandt, 2001). This prevents those children/situations which fall substantially outwith the average from being overlooked.

Authors in childhood studies have been criticised for ignoring the presence of adults and their role in structuring the world of children (Handel, 1990). Therefore, significant others who can shed light on children’s cultures of consumption, such as teachers and parents/guardians, were interviewed. These adults represent important informants because of their knowledge of the children being studied.

4.2.2 Access and time spent in the field

Gaining access to children can be problematic and a time-consuming activity for researchers. This is especially true for ethnographic work due to the lengthy time spent in the field. For various reasons authorities, head teachers, teachers and even parents may object to research being carried out with children. Moreover, the schools in this study frequently had visitors from student teachers, researchers, government inspectors and others, making them busy places. Therefore, the strategy which researchers adopt upon approaching school authorities, schools and individual teachers is important when negotiating access.

For each of the schools the researcher had to negotiate access by having something to offer. The nursery and schools were promised a report of the findings. In addition, schools were looking for some direct input. Therefore, the researcher offered to help by taking reading or maths groups. For an account of the access strategies to each of the sites see Appendix 1.

²⁷ Heterogeneous sampling involves collecting data that explains and describes the key themes that are observed in the research setting (Saunders et. al., 2003).

Within WPS there were internal issues which led to the head teacher advising that it would not be possible to use primary 3 and 6 as intended. *Instead*, the researcher was offered primary 2 and 6, which she accepted. This means that primary 3 from NPS and primary 2 from WPS have been used to represent the same age group. In terms of the time spent in the field the total period amounted to one year. An overview of the time spent collecting data in all three sites is illustrated in Table 4.2. See also Appendix 2 for an example of how the days spent in the schools were structured.

Table 4.2 Time spent at each site

Sites	Age groups	Period of data collection	Time spent on site
Sunny Nursery	Pre-school (ages 3-5)	9/5/02 – 19/9/02	3 days per week
Northern Primary School	Primary 3 and 6 (ages 7/8 – 10/11/12)	20/10/02 – 15/2/03	3.5 days per week
Waterside Primary School	Primary 2 and 6 (ages 6/7 and 10/11)	1/3/03 – 25/6/03	3.5 days per week

4.2.3 Consent

Consent by adults is normally required when studying children (Ireland & Holloway, 1996). Gaining access to the field goes hand in hand with obtaining initial consent from gatekeepers. Whether or not it is ethically correct that adults provide consent without involving children, is a matter of debate (Alderson, 1995). From the childhood studies perspective, children are considered competent social actors and have the right to be consulted and heard on matters that affect them (UN Convention on the rights of the child, Article 12). In this sense, consent is more than the agreement of gatekeepers to conduct research with children, but is about respecting children and their rights as human beings to say no (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; Miller, 2000). For this study consent was granted on behalf of parents by education authorities and schools/nursery although parents were informed about the research. This is a common approach and other researchers have found access to children in school settings to function in a similar manner (e.g. Holmes, 1998).

Despite consent initially being provided by adults, every effort was made to ensure that children understood they were under no obligation to participate in the research. To do this, Miller (2000: 1231) maintained that "...to consent or assent a person requires information shared in such a way that it is comprehensible". Therefore, information provided to children about the research was tailored such that it was developmentally appropriate. This means that researchers face decisions on the *depth* and *amount* of information offered to participants. Consequently, during the fieldwork a *shallow cover*²⁸ approach was adopted where the researcher revealed the topic of study without providing *all* the details (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988). Providing too much detail can lead respondents to start "predicting" what type of data the researcher is looking for. Therefore, the children were told that the researcher was learning/writing about children and wanted to understand what it was like to be a child.

A key issue with informed consent is that children must not only understand the research in which they are agreeing to participate, but they have the right to withdraw their consent at any moment (Hood et. al., 1996). Children may not feel comfortable saying no to adults – especially within the school context where children are strongly regulated. Therefore, throughout the period in the field the researcher was always aware that children might withdraw consent from one moment to the next. For example, when sensing that a child was reluctant to answer questions, the researcher evaluated the situation and withdrew from the conversation. Whilst children seemed quite happy with this approach, adults were not always comfortable as the following extracts indicate:

I asked Peter which videos he has brought-in in the past. He often brings in videos but I had forgotten the titles. He did not reply straight away. Hilary (the nursery teacher) heard this and said: "Peter could you please answer Erika when she is talking to you!"

Fieldnotes, SN, 21/6/02

Peter *did* hear the question but chose not to respond; therefore, in this case the researcher would not have pursued the matter further. However, the nursery teacher was acting on

²⁸ Fine & Sandstrom (1988) distinguished between three different levels of cover during research. Explicit cover involves detailed information provided to participants about the research. Despite seeming the most ethical approach it is problematic to provide too much information due to the "...expectancy effect by which knowledgeable subjects attempt to confirm or deny the researcher's hypotheses" (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988: 19). Deep cover is quite the opposite and involves not informing participants they are being studied. Adopting a shallow cover on the other hand, involves explaining the topic of study without revealing details.

the basis that not only should children answer when spoken to, but most especially when an adult addresses them. A further example illustrates this mode of thinking:

Prior to starting at NPS a meeting was arranged with the head teacher and the two teachers of the classes I would be with. I asked the head teacher during our meeting whether it would be alright for me to explain to the children that they did not have to talk to me so they knew they were free to say no and not participate in the research. The head teacher was not happy about this request. She explained that she was concerned about something like that as the children are taught that they must respond to adults.

Fieldnotes, NPS, 10/11/02

As the above extract indicates, it was not always possible to explain to the children that they were not obliged to participate. However, the research was conducted in such a manner that each situation was “read” and interpreted to ensure that children consented on an ongoing basis i.e. by means of body language. Furthermore, verbal consent was provided by children on numerous occasions as the following extracts show:

The kids in primary 2 and primary 6 have started to be more and more curious as to what I am writing. I use it as an opportunity to ensure they consent to the research. I tell them I am writing down what they were just saying and ask if it is okay with them. “Yes” they say.

Fieldnotes, WPS, 12/5/03

Thus it is clear that despite reservations by other adults on issues of consent, the researcher was able to ensure that children did not participate in the research against their wishes. Having discussed issues relating to consent, we turn to another important matter during research; the researcher’s role vis-à-vis the children whilst in the field.

4.2.4 Role

There are profound implications of the adult-child power barriers for the construction of the researcher role in the field and these have been extensively debated within childhood studies (e.g. Corsaro, 1988; 1997; Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Holmes, 1998; James et. al., 2001 Mandell, 1994; Mayall, 2000; Thorne, 1993). To understand the world through children’s eyes requires adults to substantially reduce the asymmetrical power relationship between themselves and children.

Adultist, supervisory and teacher-like roles, which have so often been adopted in research with children in the past, do little to reduce the social distance between adults and children. Furthermore, such roles are incompatible with the philosophy of childhood

studies (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988). From the childhood studies literature there is a consensus that some form of “friend” role is preferable; however, ideas on what this actually means varies between authors.

Mandell (1994) advocated, what she termed, a *least-adult* research role to studying children. For Mandell (1994) becoming least-adult involved being like children in the field setting. She sat with children on small chairs, played in the sand-pit with them and was told off by teachers (at her own request) when doing something wrong. However, others have suggested that by adopting a research role where one is positioned on the side-lines of children’s cultures may be more effective: “Might not more, or at least different, things be learned about children and their social world by adopting the more middle ground of semi-participant or friend?” (James et. al., 2001: 183). This is consistent with what Corsaro (1997: 29) termed a “reactive method of field entry”. His technique involved observing on the side-lines and waiting for children to respond to his presence. In essence, therefore, the children were as much co-constructors of the role as Corsaro.

For this study, constructing the role as friend whilst in the field was an evolving process. This was a role the researcher not only achieved but felt increasingly comfortable with. Before commencing fieldwork at each of the sites, considerable time was spent explaining to the teachers the goals of the research. Being present in the nursery and schools was essentially based on ongoing goodwill from adults. Therefore, a good working relationship with those adults in charge was vital. Furthermore, the researcher was acutely aware that a better understanding of the work meant that teachers, when possible, created opportunities for data collection as the following extract shows:

After the story Christine (the nursery teacher) announced it was time to play. Before leaving the story corner the children normally do a short game with colours, numbers or letters. The children were asked to tell the others what their favourite thing was that they like to buy in the supermarket. (I knew Christine chose this topic to aid my data collection).

Fieldnotes, SN, 4/6/02

During the first few days at each site the researcher was relatively quiet, sitting mostly observing without taking notes in front of the children. As the children started to approach, the researcher became more actively involved in their cultures. During the fieldwork the researcher sat with children when they were on the floor, with them at

their desks, during lunch, and tried to be where they were. Furthermore, the researcher made every effort to avoid being above children's eye-level thereby reducing the power imbalance. However, occasionally the researcher's physical size provided some limitations with the youngest children at the nursery. They would sometimes go into a hole underneath the climbing frame and talk. Despite a small stature the researcher was unable to get in. Notwithstanding some of these limitations, the role of friend proved fruitful in trying to see the world from children's point of view. Furthermore, throughout the process the role of friend was achieved by adopting a mindset where a genuine respect for the children was at the heart of interactions, a point Fine & Sandstrom (1988: 17) have emphasised:

“The key to the role of friend is the explicit expression of positive affect combined with both a relative lack of authority and lack of sanctioning of the behaviour of those being studied. In turn adopting the friend role suggests that the participant observer treats his or her informants with respect and that he or she desires to acquire competency in their social worlds”.

Whilst conducting fieldwork, the most valuable moments of insight into children's cultures of consumption were those away from the interference of adults. Therefore, time spent e.g. in the playground during break, eating lunch with the children and going on fieldtrips proved to be excellent opportunities for gathering data. To witness these accounts and have a valid presence during these moments, the researcher played with the children, spoke with them and tried to be their friend.

The children seemed to understand that the researcher genuinely enjoyed spending time with them. Furthermore, from the outset no authority was asserted over them by the researcher. During the early stages at the nursery, the researcher was frequently asked for permission to go to the toilet, for instance. The response was always that they would have to ask the teacher. Sometimes the children would look to the researcher to resolve a dispute – one which she resisted. On occasions if the argument became too aggressive an effort was made to divert their attention to something else rather than interfere. In the schools it took less time to establish a friend role as the older children seemed to quickly accept the researcher into their social order. As Fine and Sandstrom (1988: 17) pointed out: “Children may suspend their typical modes of dealing with adults, but this type of unique interaction takes time to develop”. The following extracts provide an example of children suspending their typical ways of managing adults.

We were playing football outside at break. After a while and having touched the ball a few times Caitlyn said: Erika! You should be a P6'er.
Kathy: She is a P6'er.
Very shortly afterwards Henrietta turned to me and said:
You're like a P6'er. You sit with us. You act like us.
I felt accepted in a way that adults are not normally.
Fieldnotes, P6, WPS, 24/6/03

It is evident from the above extract; therefore, that the researcher was accepted into the children's culture and was acknowledged as having a different status to adults generally. However, relationship-building was partly influenced by the structures in the schools, which will be discussed next.

4.2.4.1 Differences between sites

It was clear that within SN adult relationships with children were more informal than in the schools. Furthermore, the structures within nurseries are generally more informal. Therefore, getting close to the children was easy. At NPS the primary 6 teacher seemed relatively relaxed at the researcher's presence and was happy for her to sit with the children during class and be addressed informally, by first name. On the other hand the primary 3 teacher preferred the researcher be addressed by title and surname. Furthermore, a seat was provided at the side of the classroom for her to observe rather than sitting with the children.

At WPS the primary 2 teacher provided a desk at the side of the class. As with NPS the researcher sat with the children on the floor at the start of each day and during collective activities. The primary 6 class teacher was happy for the researcher to sit with the pupils and for them to address the researcher using her first name. Furthermore, a place was provided next to Patricia, who was assigned to function as a kind of "buddy". The class was reshuffled a few times throughout the time but a space was always provided next to Patricia. In the primary 6 class the pupils were permitted to chat quietly amongst themselves whilst working; therefore, this proved to be valuable moments in data collection.

4.2.5 Methods

Once entering the field there were several issues pertaining to the methods of data collection that had to be addressed. We commence this section by addressing the process

of entering the field as it can determine the success of establishing the desired role in the group. Secondly, the approach to selecting particular themes of importance is discussed. Lastly, the particular methods adopted for different age groups are presented.

4.2.5.1 *Field-entry*

In order to conduct ethnographic research and establish an identity in the field it is essential that special attention is paid to the field-entry phase (Rizzo et. al., 1992). Most of the children were informed in advance that the researcher would be spending time with their class over the coming months. In SN and WPS a visit took place prior to commencing the fieldwork and the children were given an opportunity to ask questions about the study. Teachers introduced the researcher to the group upon arrival and explained her presence. In addition to this, the younger children were told that the researcher would be their special friend for a while.

Upon entering the field, it was soon noticeable that the manner in which individual children chose to engage with the researcher varied. This, Agar (1996: 135) has argued, is because “Most groups have official or unofficial stranger-handlers to deal with outsiders. Such stranger-handlers are natural public relations experts”. Similarly in this study, when entering each setting there were children who naturally approached the researcher and were keen to ask questions, learn about the research and make friends with the researcher.

Considering that the researcher was working towards achieving a friendship status in the children’s cultures, building relationships was the main initial concern. Some teachers, despite being friendly, were slightly apprehensive about the researcher’s presence. They were used to government inspections, student teachers and classroom helpers. The researcher, however, was somehow an anomaly. Therefore, to gain support, every effort was made to explain the research to the teachers.

4.2.5.2 *Funnel approach*

Part of conducting ethnographic research is the process of identifying key concerns within the cultures being studied. To do this Agar (1996) suggested adopting a funnel approach where the ethnographer upon entering the field, is open to learning a wide range of issues pertaining to the research questions. After some experience in the field, the ethnographer can focus on central issues of importance in the culture. This means that fieldwork commences by recording data which relates to the wider structures,

patterns and behaviour of the group. Subsequent data is narrowed down to concentrate on key topics.

Childhood studies advocates this approach to avoid research that is driven by adult-centric research questions (Davis, 1996; Morrow & Richards, 1996). In other words, through the funnel approach, researchers “going in wide” are in a position to identify *children’s* key concerns. In contrast, adopting a standardised approach can be too restrictive and may prevent researchers from discovering the complex realities of children’s lives (Alderson and Goody, 1996). Therefore, a funnel strategy was applied in this study, enabling the researcher to identify the important issues in children’s cultures of consumption, which were then related back to the literature. Consequently, through this iterative process the research questions emerged and provided specific issues to focus on. Therefore, in line with the philosophy of childhood studies the children themselves have set the research agenda.

4.2.5.3 Methods employed with pre-school children at Sunny Nursery

To collect quality data, one barrier to overcome is how to access the play groups of these young children. In the early stages of fieldwork the researcher was essentially still a stranger. Therefore, in accessing children’s play groups a so-called “action reproduction” strategy was used (Mandell, 1994: 55). This involved quietly sitting next to children and doing what they were doing. Gradually, the children started addressing the researcher. For instance, the researcher would start doing a puzzle next to a group of children who were building puzzles. In later stages of fieldwork, the children were so used to the researcher that more direct access strategies (to children’s groups) were appropriate e.g. by joining-in or directly asking the children what they were doing.

The days were spent doing what the children did. Considerable time was spent in the *Story corner* throughout the day; in the morning to hear a story and do register, before going out to play, after lunch and in the afternoon to watch a video. Furthermore, the researcher played with the children, sat and had lunch at their table and went outside at playtime as well. Each of these yielded different opportunities in terms of data collection. The time in the story corner was often teacher-led providing observation-type data. Other times of the day the researcher was actively participating in what was going on. Times when children were less supervised, e.g. at lunch, in the *Home corner* and outside, provided valuable opportunities for speaking to and interacting with the children. Furthermore, the various activities of the day provided occasions where

children's topics of conversation would change. At lunch the children frequently spoke of food. Whilst indoors playing with the toys children often spoke of toys. Furthermore, during *sharing time* (once a week each child could bring in a toy or possession to show others) the children spoke intensively about their possessions.

Mauthner (1997) argued that younger children generally do not feel comfortable being interviewed individually. They have difficulty answering the direct nature of questioning during interviews. Therefore, the opportunity was taken to talk to children alongside naturally occurring activities - as advocated by other authors (Davis, 1998). Although conversations with children were vital to the data collection process, observations proved particularly important in this age group. Some children were less inclined to express themselves verbally. Therefore, their actions were found to be most expressive and particularly important during interactions. It soon became clear that the process of ethnography enabled the researcher to overcome some of the criticisms of methods employed in scientific consumer socialization, where those children who are less verbal tend to be ignored or overlooked.

Other methods used at SN included going shopping with the children. This meant the researcher could observe how children responded to a naturally occurring consumption event. On one occasion, various brands/labels of yoghurts were brought in to the nursery. The children chose a yoghurt pot, which provided an opportunity to discuss their choice and their reflections of food consumption at home. On another occasion, photographs were brought in of various products such as food, toys, hi-fi equipment and deodorants. These included branded and non-branded items (see Appendix 3). As a form of hypothetical questioning, the children were asked to select five items they thought a boy/girl their own age might choose. This provided an opportunity to discuss specific consumer products, their relative significance and the importance of branded items for the children.

The researcher was permitted to take photographs of the nursery – inside and outside (see Appendix 4). However, the nursery manager did not permit children to be on the photographs. These, along with drawings of the nursery layout, provided an overview of the space that framed the children's everyday activities. Additionally, a more holistic view of the nursery was provided by interviewing the staff (teachers and the managers). Furthermore, home visits were conducted with a third of the children in the pre-school room at SN. This involved an interview with parents where children frequently were

present - and time spent in the child's bedroom. By then, the children considered the researcher to be their friend and were most keen to show off their room and their toys, games and other possessions.

4.2.5.4 Methods employed with primary 2/3 children

During the field-entry phase a similar technique (to SN) for accessing the children's play activities was employed. However, the process was faster with children at this age as several of them had plenty of questions relating to the researcher's presence. Conducting research with primary 2 and 3 children in both NPS and WPS proved to be the most challenging groups. At this age, in the formal education system, their day is heavily structured leaving less time for interaction. Furthermore, the children in this age group were closely watched and controlled by the teachers, leaving them little autonomy and flexibility. This meant that any moment when children were removed from the adult gaze had to be utilised to observe and interact with them.

In both schools the researcher observed, went out at playtime, stood in line with the children, ate lunch with them and went on excursions (e.g. pantomimes, swimming). Later, when the researcher was more established, she started taking occasional reading or maths groups. This provided an additional opportunity to talk to the children. Furthermore, the questions asked in reading groups, although grounded in the story they read, were times when the conversation could be directed towards consumption-related issues.

Children at this age have had little experience of being interviewed. They are accustomed to the questioning technique that takes place in class rooms. Such direct questions are continual assessments of children's knowledge (Graue & Walsh, 1998); consequently, children are taught that questions have correct and incorrect answers. Therefore, it was necessary to channel a great deal of effort into explaining to the children that it was *they* who were in fact teaching - teaching the researcher about childhood. Initially, the children found this surprising but soon accepted the researcher as learner.

After some time in the field, the role of friend/learner was established. At this point the researcher started conducting informal interviews with the children. To make the children feel more at ease, interviews took place in groups of two or three (Graue & Walsh, 1998). Children were continually reminded that there was no right or wrong

answer. Despite being told that participation was on a voluntary basis, the children were most eager for “their turn” to be interviewed. In some cases removing children from their classmates can feel like a form of punishment (Holmes, 1998). Therefore, interviews were conducted within the vicinity of the classroom at all times e.g. just outside the open classroom door. To relax the children they were permitted to test the dictaphone used for recording the interviews to hear their voice on tape. Props are useful in holding children’s attention during interviews (Graue & Walsh, 1998); therefore, photographs of restaurants, products and toy shops were a valuable source of conversation for this age group.

At NPS *Golden Time* (every Friday morning children were free to choose an activity such as drawing, painting or a game) was an excellent opportunity to sit and chat to the children alongside their Golden Time activities. Since Golden Time was scheduled for Friday mornings, the topic of conversation was frequently related to the forthcoming weekend - providing important insight into children’s weekend activities. On Mondays, children at NPS had time together where anyone was free to contribute with stories about their experiences over the weekend. This meant that data was collected prior to and after weekend events. In contrast, at WPS primary 2 children wrote a diary of their weekend activities every Monday morning, which the researcher was permitted to photocopy and use as data (see Appendix 5).

Generally speaking, there was a more relaxed atmosphere in the P2 classroom at WPS compared to NPS. This may be partly linked to the nature of the layout of the school. Since the school was essentially an open-plan school, one could always hear voices. Therefore, it was more accepted at WPS (P2) than at NPS (P3) that children talked quietly amongst themselves whilst working. This naturally occurring talk alongside school activities was a valuable source of data. Furthermore, primary 2 at WPS were permitted to do so-called *finishing activities* when they had completed the work set by the teacher. These finishing activities included painting, drawing or playing with Lego. The researcher was advised that during finishing activities she could approach the children and chat to them.

In addition to the data collected from children, parents and teachers were interviewed. Around one quarter of the parents were interviewed, some of whom preferred to come to the school for the interview whilst others were happy for the researcher to conduct home visits.

4.2.5.5 Methods employed with primary 6 children

Being the oldest group and thus more mature, the primary 6 children were, not surprisingly, more sophisticated in their verbal abilities. Therefore, it proved less of a challenge to interact with this age group. Furthermore, there is less power distance between adults and older children in comparison with the younger children. Consequently, the primary 6 children were quicker to accept the researcher as a “non-traditional” adult.

Children at this age are more experienced in social interaction and more accustomed to talking in groups, rather than focusing on a particular play activity. Therefore, once the researcher became accepted in their groups, it proved to be a relatively natural activity to speak to/observe the children in the playground, at lunch or elsewhere. The researcher tried not to stand out too much by dressing similarly to the children and wearing trainers. Furthermore, it proved to be an advantage that the researcher was, in fact, physically smaller than some of the children.

Being female, the researcher quickly found ways to establish a bond with the girls. With the boys the researcher soon learned that most of them enjoyed football; therefore, playing football was a useful method of initially joining their groups. Furthermore, it was evident the boys enjoyed talking about films, video games and computers, which the researcher utilised as conversation topics over lunch. For those who had different interests, an effort was made to establish their likes and dislikes and focus on these as potential topics of conversation.

Other sources of data included assignments describing holidays, open-ended questionnaires, outings and Christmas and Easter events (see Appendix 6). In addition, the children were interviewed in pairs which they seemed to thoroughly enjoy as several of them described the interviews as “cool”. In many respects the children proved to be interested in consumer goods, so it was easy to get them to talk about consumption topics. Around one quarter of parents were interviewed at home and although it was suggested that children were welcome to be present, most chose to conduct the interview while children were still at school.

4.2.5.6 Overview of methods employed with various age groups

Whilst there are similarities in the methods employed with various age groups it is clear that methods must be tailored to children's developmental level. In order to provide a clear overview of these varied approaches all interviews and methods employed with the different age groups are detailed/summarised in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 (overleaf).

Table 4.3 Interviews

Nursery/School and age group	Interviews: Children	Interviews: Parents	Interviews: Teachers
Sunny Nursery: Pre-school (3-5)	No direct interviews with children. Other methods due to children's age. Conducted 6 home visits	6 interviews with parents	3 interviews with teachers (there were 3 teachers in total). Also interview with nursery manager.
Northern Primary: P3 (7-8)	All children interviewed in groups of 2 or 3, 3 home visits	3 interviews with parents	Interview with teacher
Northern Primary: P6 (10-11)	All children interviewed in groups of 2 or 3, 4 home visits	4 interviews with parents	Interview with teacher
Waterside Primary: P2 (6-7)	All children interviewed in groups of 2 or 3, 3 home visits	4 interviews with parents	Interview with teacher
Northern Primary: P6 (10-11)	All children interviewed in groups of 2 or 3, 1 home visit	1 interview with parent (parents not available as holidays were approaching)	Interview with teacher

Table 4.4 Other methods of data collection

Nursery/School and age group	Other methods employed
Sunny Nursery: Pre-school (3-5)	Observation, play activities, shopping trip, photos of toys and grocery items along with discussions of these, outdoor play, trips with nursery, sitting with children at lunch and in story corner, watching films with children, photographs of nursery layout, games where children talked of their favourite things and leisure activities, sharing time sessions, drawing activities.
Northern Primary: P3 (7-8)	Observation, excursions, Christmas and nativity events, reading and maths groups, school-activities relating to consumption (e.g. writing short reports on holidays), drawings and paintings, photographs of restaurants, products and toy shops as basis for discussion, sitting with children at lunch, playtime interactions (chatting and playing).
Northern Primary: P6 (10-11)	Observation, excursions, swimming trips (pool external to school), Christmas and nativity events, reading groups, school-activities relating to consumption (e.g. writing short reports on holidays), drawings and paintings, photographs of restaurants, products and toy shops as basis for discussion, sitting with children at lunch, playtime interactions (chatting and playing), chatting during school activities (older groups were given more autonomy to talk in class), discussions in class (referred to as "news": children were free to share any news they had), class party.
Waterside Primary: P2 (6-7)	Observation, excursions, school-activities relating to consumption (e.g. writing short reports on holidays), photocopying children's diary, drawings and paintings, photographs of restaurants, products and toy shops as basis for discussion, sitting with children at lunch, playtime interactions (chatting and playing).
Waterside Primary: P6 (10-11)	Observation, excursions, school-activities relating to consumption (e.g. environmental theme days, writing short reports on holidays), drawings and paintings, sitting with children at lunch, playtime interactions (chatting and playing), chatting during/participating in school activities (older groups were given more autonomy to talk in class), discussions in class, competitions in class, open-ended questionnaire related to brands, sports activities.

4.3 The data

So far, the actual fieldwork and the methods employed to generate data have been explained. A discussion of how the data was recorded and subsequently analysed, will now follow.

4.3.1 Recording data

Within ethnographic enquiry, fieldnotes (see Appendix 7) constitute a central research activity (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1997). Essentially, fieldnotes can record interactions between people, describe social processes and the context of the culture. Fieldnotes are used to record what is observed in the field including acts, events, behaviours, people, conversations, structural features, physical environment, and objects. However, ethnographers must record their observations with care, clarity and attention to relevant detail. In discussing fieldnotes Agar (1996: 162) has pointed out that: “In their worst form, they [fieldnotes] are an attempt to vacuum up everything possible”. To avoid this problem, the funnel approach enabled the development of a focus (from wide to narrow) to understand the key expressions of children’s cultures of consumption.

Data should be recorded as soon as possible after the events (Mulhall, 2003). In reality, it is not always feasible to record data as it is played out in context. For instance, events may take place during a running game in the playground. Therefore, frequently it makes more sense to let events unfold and wait until afterwards to take notes. In this study, the researcher developed a technique of noting abbreviations and keywords immediately after events or during observations. These keywords subsequently formed the bases for expanded chronological fieldnotes, which were written-up at the end of the day.

Recording the key features of events took place in the presence of the children. Since there was no mystique surrounding the fieldnotes (as children were permitted to read the notes²⁹), the children seemed perfectly comfortable with the researcher’s frequent scribing.

Recording fieldnotes can involve noting events that do not seem to have much significance at the time. In light of later evidence, however, they may prove to be key issues in enhancing understanding of culture (Davis, 1996). Consequently, the fieldnotes sometimes contained details of events that were not understood at the time they were recorded. Moreover, analysis and interpretation are ongoing features of ethnography, which highlights the need to reflect on events at later dates (Mulhall, 2003). Furthermore, an ongoing review of the fieldnotes enabled the researcher to add later comments or thoughts.

²⁹ Confidentiality is addressed later in this chapter

In addition to the daily fieldnotes a range of other sources of data were recorded. A personal diary was kept, where methodological and personal reflections were noted. Furthermore, issues which the researcher did not wish to include in the fieldnotes (as these were shown to the children on occasion) were noted in the personal diary. Of all sites, details of the layout of rooms, furniture, desks and so on were either photographed or drawn up (see Appendix 4 and 8 for examples). Children's work was kept or photocopied (with permission) when relevant to the study. A record was made of all the children, their background and descriptions of their personal attributes/identities. Various literature pertaining to the school or nursery, e.g. letters to parents or brochures, were kept along with drawings and paintings given to the researcher. Interviews with parents and teachers were tape recorded and transcribed (see Appendix 9 for sample interviews). Furthermore, all the school children were interviewed and half of these interviews transcribed. Teachers at NPS were uncomfortable with tape-recording and, due to the difficulties of gaining access to the school in the first place, the researcher felt it was not possible to push the issue any further. Therefore, to record the interview the researcher used the technique of using abbreviations and key words. In situations where the researcher was in doubt the interviewees were revisited and asked for clarification.

4.3.2 Data analysis

Deciding what to record, what is important and what it means, necessitates some form of interpretation on the part of the researcher. Therefore, data analysis commences already whilst in the field (Silverman, 2001) - selecting what to record and what to leave out. The usefulness of ethnography as a methodology was clear time and time again even in the early stages of the fieldwork. Events would unfold or remarks would be made which the researcher knew she only understood because they had references to previous events where she had been present (or had been told about). It follows, that researchers conducting ethnography (should) become more knowledgeable and able to interpret events as they unfold and recognize their significance in light of previous events – than e.g. through interviews alone.

As part of the funnel approach (Agar, 1996) the data started off with relatively broad categories. This involved watching, listening, asking questions, observing and being open-minded. To enable the data to move from the general to the specific involved ongoing coding of data and searching for key themes. Once the expressions of culture

were identified (from the data and the literature), data collection continued, focusing more specifically on rituals, symbols, power and identity. However, to discover patterns, hierarchies, values and concerns within the culture meant looking for more than key themes. Analysis involved identifying the children's roles within the culture, their positions in the hierarchy and how the wider structures of their lives were manifested in consumption. Therefore, in searching for complex patterns, ethnographers must try to make sense of a vast amount of data.

As qualitative researchers, it is important to recognize that words are imbued with multiple meanings depending on people and context. Therefore, throughout the process of analysis, researchers should pay attention to words which are used again and again (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For this study it was crucial to understand the meanings the *children* attributed to the words they used. For instance the word "cool" was used again and again to evaluate phenomena in the children's cultures. To ensure the researcher understood how the children used this term, she asked the children on several occasions to explain what *they* meant by the term "cool".

The fieldwork produced in excess of 500 A4 pages of typed data in addition to a personal diary and a plethora of other documents. During fieldwork, the data was coded manually on a daily basis. Initial coding started off using what Miles and Huberman (1994) call descriptive codes. This means classing phenomena to segments of text in a relatively simple manner. For instance, a statement where children are discussing branded products could be termed BRANDS. Adopting the funnel approach involved the codes being revised again and again prior to arriving at more focused themes.

After withdrawing from the field, the software package, Nvivo, was used to aid data analysis. The data was coded again (see Appendix 10 for a list of codes) based on the expressions of culture in addition to structural features and methodological issues. After entering the data, reports were generated for each setting (two schools and one nursery), for each age group (pre-school, primary 2/3 and primary 6), with data for each of the relevant codes. That is, five reports for each code, totalling 225 reports (see Appendix 11 for sample report of coding).

Subsequently, every report was reanalysed by drawing out patterns in the data. These were identified by counting (frequency of occurrence), by comparing age-groups, in view of gender (e.g. were boys more likely than girls to have a certain opinion) or the

individual children (e.g. was there any features of a child's background which might have some bearing on the data). As a result, one A4 page was produced for each of the reports highlighting important patterns and themes and references to key quotes were added. The researcher then decided to withdraw from the data for a period of time and then revisited the data going through the same process of reanalysis to allow for new/different interpretations. When the data was revisited, the data the key themes were outlined once again which provided a revised set of classifications; namely the child consumer segments. These were drawn from each of the cultural expressions.

A key concern for all researchers working with children is to represent their reality, rather than that of the researcher. Therefore, to increase the credibility of the analysis process, the data was presented to an experienced ethnographer in the field of childhood studies. Initially, meetings were held on a weekly basis, later they were less frequent. These meetings involved analysing segments of data to ensure there was some common agreement of what the data meant. Whilst these meetings were helpful in understanding/developing the key issues within the data, they further confirmed the validity of the data as there was a high level of consensus of data interpretation.

4.4 Ethics

Although any form of research with people involves some element of ethics, research with children presents some further considerations. Children are less experienced than adults and have a different understanding of the world. Furthermore, the most profound consideration researchers must take into account is the immense power difference between adults and children (Morrow & Richards, 1996; Thomas & O'Kane, 1998) – this has been addressed on several occasions throughout the chapter.

Most ethical codes of conduct for research with people do not mention children at all and fail to embrace ethics as a guiding philosophy. The Napier University research ethical guidelines do encompass a brief mention of children; however, in many respects they are inadequate. By and large, such guidelines address consent for conducting research with children as a matter for adults and an issue to be addressed at the outset of research. Rather, ethical research issues with children should be an integrated approach that guides the process in its entirety (Lindsay, 2000). In this respect Graue & Walsh (1998: 56) considered researcher attitude to be of key importance to ethics:

“Ethical behaviour is really about attitude – the attitude that one brings into the field and that one brings to one’s interpretation. Entering other people’s lives is intrusive. It requires permission, permission that goes beyond the kind that comes from consent forms. It is the permission that permeates any respectful relationship between people.”

Within this chapter several important ethical issues have already been discussed, some of which were considered to be sufficiently important to warrant separate sections. These include informed consent and accessing children’s cultures. In addition, the role researchers adopt whilst in the field was discussed previously as it is a crucial method of redressing the power imbalance between children and adults - a claim supported by Eder and Corsaro (1999: 527):

“By detaching from adult roles of authority, researchers reduce the inherent power imbalance between adults and children. However, the unequal power relationship is a central issue throughout the entire research process and goes beyond issues of consent and the role adopted in the field.”

Nevertheless there remain some important ethical issues to be discussed in the context of this study including confidentiality, protecting children (and oneself) and rewards/gifts to children. This discussion begins by addressing confidentiality.

At the outset of the research process school authorities, teachers, guardians and, most importantly, the children were assured that all data was confidential. It was explained to the children that conversations would go no further. Therefore, they knew the researcher would under no circumstances pass on information to either their friends or adults. Notes, diaries, tapes, transcriptions and other data were stored according to the 1998 Data Protection Act.

On occasions when children asked if they could see/read the fieldnotes, confidentiality was demonstrated to the children. They were permitted to read the research notebook for data in which they personally had contributed/been present. For other data, the children were told: “You know I never tell anyone what you tell me, not other children and not adults, so I can’t show you what someone else has spoken about.”

Confidentiality can be more complicated for research with children because adults sometimes believe they have a right to access data about children (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Furthermore, the researcher must acknowledge the possibility of being confronted

with data that involves children being harmed. For instance, Holmes (1998) encountered a child telling her he wanted to kill himself. The ethical dilemma lies in the balance between keeping one's promise of confidentiality and protecting children. At the outset it is, therefore, important to give some thought to how one would tackle such situations.

Although the greatest concern of a researcher is to act in an ethical manner, protecting *oneself* is an important issue as well. Researchers have been known to be the target of false accusations of child molestation (Holmes, 1998). Therefore, whilst in the field, the researcher's main concern was never to be in a situation where one's personal integrity could be questioned. Consequently, care was taken to ensure the researcher was never left alone with children.

Giving rewards or gifts to children can influence the data collection as children may feel duty-bound to contribute to the study. It is important that when children provide researchers with access to their cultures, it is because they want to and not out of obligation. Researchers may e.g. witness underprivileged children whilst in the field and be tempted to give gifts. However, Holmes (1993) suggested that anonymous contributions to schools or other organisations are preferable, rather than personal gifts. On the other hand, it is common practice to pay participants modest amounts. To avoid children in this study feeling any sense of obligation toward the researcher, gifts were not given until the final day in each school/nursery.

4.5 Evaluating the data

One of the central questions facing qualitative researchers is the extent to which "...the specific constructions are empirically grounded in those of the members" (Flick, 1998: 225). In other words, how can the researcher ensure that the meaning being represented is the same meaning the children attribute to their world? Within debates concerning qualitative research this question has been termed the crisis of representation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Contrary to objectivist worldviews, much qualitative research is grounded in paradigms that place social subjectivity as a central feature in the research process. Therefore, positivist criteria are not only inapplicable but inconsistent with qualitative research paradigms (Shaw, 1999).

Faced with the criticism of lacking rigour, qualitative researchers have suggested alternative criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research. These are: *credibility, transferability, dependability* and *confirmability* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Meanwhile, others have argued that these criteria may be problematic and are derived from the scientific tradition (Koch & Harrington, 1998) and, therefore, may be inconsistent with the philosophical perspective of qualitative research (Fossey et. al., 2002). The question of rigour in ethnography has been addressed by Davis (1996: 22) who argued that:

“Ethnography involves both field work and writing up, the process of self-reflection continues throughout the writing up stage. This process is not ‘sloppy’ in any respect. It is both thoughtful and rigorous, indeed it could be argued that this process is more rigorous than scientific approaches because it questions the very self of the researcher... Ethnographic fieldwork involves constant checking, reworking and re-understanding of observations and experiences which in themselves may often appear to have no meaning but which when related to the ‘whole’ have much significance.”

It has been suggested by Koch and Harrington (1998: 886) that rigour need not be confined to methodology but can “...be generated within the research product itself through detailed and contextual writing and a reflective account of the actual research process”. Therefore, this study has adopted a reflexive approach where the researcher has continually addressed and analysed her own influence on the construction of data. The evaluative criteria are discussed below, followed by an examination of reflexivity.

4.5.1 Evaluative criteria

Credibility is considered to be the most important of the evaluative criteria as it represents some form of truth value of the research (Shaw, 1999). In this study the credibility of the research data was ensured through prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, exposing and discussing the data with supervisors in weekly and later bi-monthly meetings, searching for negative cases, and member checking (Seale, 1999).

Specifically in ethnography, member checking or respondent validation has been suggested as one form of determining data credibility (Walsh, 2000). Member checking involves presenting data to participants to determine whether events, statements or interactions have been accurately represented/understood and may even generate

additional data (Shaw, 1999). In practice, however, member checking can be problematic (Koch & Harrington, 1998), especially in the school setting. For instance, it can be difficult to get the time with children to go through data. Furthermore, they may not wish to spend time confirming the data just because a researcher considers it to be of importance.

As the children were from different age groups, the researcher used developmentally appropriate methods for member checking. With all groups, the researcher presented her understanding back to the children. Getting children to confirm the data provided opportunities for children to explain or change their statements. However, the youngest children did not possess the same level of verbal abilities. Instead a greater reliance was on repeating statements back to children to provide an opportunity to confirm understanding. For instance, in response to a child stating his/her favourite colour is blue: “Oh, your favourite colour is blue?” Furthermore, older children received transcripts and discussed the data with co-interviewees. They added remarks, corrected errors and so on. In addition, parents and teachers were provided with transcripts of interviews for checking.

Data credibility can be further enhanced through the use of triangulation. Triangulation, which is the process of using different sources of data (Walsh, 2000), enables the researcher to gain more than one perspective on the same issue. Ethnography is particularly suitable for triangulation due to its longitudinal nature. Researchers are exposed to various opportunities for examining an issue and can, therefore, use multiple methods of data collection and view behaviour in different contexts which are spread over time. The different methods, as discussed in Section 4.2.5 ensured triangulation in this study.

Transferability involves presenting data such that other researchers can determine to what extent the study is applicable in other settings (Seale, 1999). Transferability was achieved through detailed descriptions of the setting, physical layout of nursery and school, structures within the schools and in the community.

Dependability is the assurance that the research process is logical, clear and can be traced (Schwandt, 2001). The data must be dependable should others wish to replicate a similar study; therefore, researchers must provide an audit trail for others to follow. To ensure the dependability of this study, detailed fieldnotes were kept throughout the

process. The notes contained information on decisions and personal reflections on a variety of issues encountered prior to entering the field and during the fieldwork.

The last of the four evaluation criteria is *confirmability*, which is intended to ensure there is some degree of neutrality, however much is possible. Therefore, in addition to a detailed audit trail, recordings of interviews have been kept along with transcripts and other documentation. However, unless a reflexive approach is adopted, confirmability can be problematic as reflexivity assumes that researchers analyse bias, prejudices and preconceptions.

Reflexivity is a significant characteristic of social research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1997) although a term used variously (Holliday, 2002). As a result of the debate surrounding the extent to which ethnographers can capture lived experience, social research became more reflexive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). That is, researchers started analysing the impact they themselves had on the generation and analysis of data. For the fact remains that social researchers are embedded within social worlds themselves (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1997). They have a gender, a socioeconomic background, a religion and so on. This means that, researchers must analyse their own cultural “baggage” throughout the entire research process. Therefore, researchers must call into question and analyse their own life views.

It has been suggested that to conduct reflexive research may be easier to do than to define (Davis et. al., 2000). However, for the purpose of this thesis, reflexivity is taken to mean a process by which one’s own values and beliefs are built into the research process and a clarification of one’s role within the culture (Maggs-Rapport, 2001). Essentially, adopting a reflexive approach provides a clearly signposted account of what is going on during the research in order for readers themselves to determine if the research product is rigorous (Koch & Harrington, 1998). It is naïve to assume that researchers enter the field without subjectivity (Holliday, 2002). Hence “...reflexive research is characterised by ongoing self-critique and self-appraisal” (Koch & Harrington, 1998: 887).

Whilst negotiating field entry and during fieldwork the researcher spent a great deal of time reflecting on her impact on the construction of data. Two of the key issues relating to reflexivity are the role adopted in the field and the analysis of the unequal power

relationships between the children and the researcher. These have been discussed previously.

It has been argued that researchers cannot enter research settings value-free; therefore, it is impossible to conduct research gender neutral. Gender is an important feature in how researchers see the world (Holmes, 1995). When negotiating field entry and whilst conducting field work with children, the researcher was conscious that gender had an impact on how she was perceived by adults and children. At the same time gender was an issue in communicating with the children and for accessing groups. The researcher tried to avoid taking on a strong gender identity e.g. through clothing and balancing interactions with boys and girls. However, through her gender the researcher – as did Thorne (1993), felt it much easier to access girl groups and establish rapport, especially in the early days of the fieldwork. It is easier to talk about issues that one has personal interest in and experience of. The following extract indicates a moment at SN when the researcher learnt to establish rapport with a boy:

I had previously been writing that I find it a little difficult to get further contact with David. I now realized it was my fault for not interacting in a way suitable to him. He's seems to like to play rough and tumble. I went to the story corner where David, Bridget, George, Lorraine and I started playing, hiding behind cushions. David jumped in and we hid behind the cushions and ended up rolling about the floor laughing. After that I felt like we were communicating on a different level.

Fieldnotes, SN, 24/5/02

In British nursery and school settings children are more used to interacting with females as staff are predominately female. Furthermore, in British culture, females are viewed as less threatening (Holmes, 1995). This may explain the extent to which the children (especially nursery group and primary 2) sought physical contact with the researcher.

I always get so many cuddles – especially from the girls. They seem to like to touch me, my jewellery and my clothes or sit on my knee. I remember speaking to a male researcher who had conducted ethnographies in schools. He advised me that due to his gender he could never have engaged in that kind of physical contact.

Fieldnotes, NPS, 5/2/03

Therefore, to assume one can enter a setting and conduct objective research may lead to inaccurate data. Rather, when subjectivity is both acknowledged and analysed, results are ultimately more representative.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the methodology of the study. Ethnography has been defined and evaluated in the context of childhood studies and consumer behaviour. Some of the debates within ethnography have been touched upon and a discussion of the differences between the positivist approach to studying child consumers and the methodology of childhood studies was presented. The middle sections of the chapter were devoted to discussing sample, access, consent, role in the field and the methods employed. This was followed by an overview of how the data was recorded and analysed. Subsequently, the subject of ethics was addressed in a separate section although, where appropriate, ethical issues have been discussed throughout the entire chapter. Lastly, the trustworthiness of the data has been considered by applying various evaluative criteria to the study. Having looked at how the study was conducted we now turn to the actual findings of the ethnography.

Chapter Five: Findings

This chapter commences with an overview of the framework used to interpret data/theory-build based on the ethnographic findings. Subsequently, the findings are structured into three parts. Firstly, the cultural expressions (rituals, symbols, power and identity) are addressed. These form the most basic ingredients of children's cultures of consumption. Then in the second section, the five child consumer segments which emerged from the analysis are discussed. Lastly, the third section outlines the overriding principles evident in children's cultures of consumption. The chapter is brought to a close with an integrated framework for understanding children's cultures of consumption.

5.1 Analytic framework

The framework for this chapter represents a three-tier approach to understanding children and consumption. In other words, the theory-building from the findings comprises three levels or dimensions of data analysis. On a most basic level, the cultural expressions function as the primary ingredients of children's cultures of consumption. On a secondary level of analysis, five child consumer segments emerge. These segments contain various mixtures of the primary ingredients, providing a deeper understanding of consumption in childhood. Finally, in the third level of analysis, certain overriding issues/concerns, clearly evident in children's cultures of consumption as a whole, are discussed. These key concerns provide some indication of themes which run as threads through the entire data, encompassing the cultural expressions as well as the child consumer segments. Therefore, the analytic framework developed for this study contributes to existing knowledge by identifying three levels of knowing children's cultures of consumption. This gives an understanding of how children's consumption meanings are complex, interlinked and contextual.

The first part of this findings chapter addresses the cultural expressions of children's cultures of consumption, which were pre-defined in the literature review; namely rituals, symbols, power and identity. As previously pointed out, these constitute four highly significant cultural expressions albeit they are not the *only* forms of expression in children's groups. Essentially, therefore, this first part of the chapter will identify, map

out and explain the terrain of children's cultures of consumption. Thus the reader will be left with an understanding of the landscape of consumption in childhood.

An examination of cultural expressions can provide important insight into the structures and boundaries of children's cultures of consumption. However, it is somewhat mechanical to address cultural expressions individually as these are always interconnected, overlapping and interrelated. In other words, rituals, symbols, power and identity are seldom present in isolation. Therefore, the second part of the findings chapter, child consumer segments, will provide another important approach to the data. This gives an initial insight into the living, dynamic and agentic nature of children's cultures of consumption. The child consumer segments which emerged are 1) the protected child consumer, 2) the resistant child consumer, 3) the communicative child consumer, 4) the gendered child consumer and 5) the independent developing child consumer.

For the purpose of this thesis the term *segment* is not used in the traditional sense as often applied in marketing. In other words, the segments in children's cultures of consumption are not stable, closed or fixed as such. Whilst the segments proved to be relatively enduring, the children who made up these segments varied. The children's consumer behaviour transformed, based on time, context and different situations. This means that children may find themselves belonging to a range of segments within short spaces of time.

The implications of this approach for marketing are considerable as children's consumer behaviour proved to vary greatly depending on which segment they were *located* in. Thus children being *located* in segments signals that children sometimes find themselves having very little consumer choice – and hence do not always actively choose segments³⁰. Rather, segments tell us something about children's consumer values based on various situations they find themselves in.

In the third level of the framework, the overarching concerns that children have with respect to consumption become visible. These represent some of the core values that they hold in their cultures. Thus, whilst it has been argued that cultural values can be

³⁰ It is acknowledged here that the degree of power children have in their consumer choices varies. Therefore, there are times when children actively choose segments and have great power in their consumer behaviour. However, children being *located* in segments merely reminds readers that children as a low-status group are often faced with situations where they exert very little control.

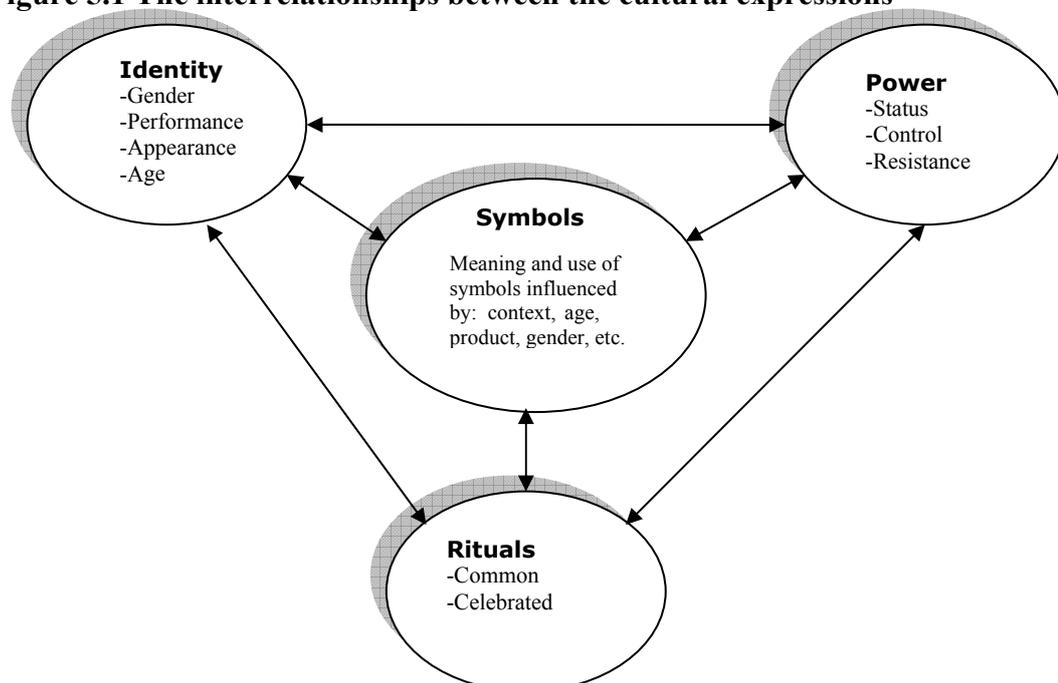
difficult to catch sight of, by first understanding the basic ingredients and child consumer segments, this can be achieved.

Constructing a three-tiered framework has important implications for promoting understanding of children's cultures of consumption. That is to say, the basic and readily observable key ingredients (rituals, symbols, power and identity) of children's cultures of consumption are introduced. Secondly, an examination of the child consumer segments gives insight into how these ingredients are mixed together in different ways. Lastly, the key principles provide an understanding of how these overriding cultural concerns are represented in the cultural expressions and child consumer segments. These represent some of children's core cultural values with respect to consumption. Finally the understanding of children's cultures of consumption has come full circle. In the first part of the findings, the cultural expressions are addressed.

5.2 Part one: Cultural expressions

In this section the findings relating to the cultural expressions will be addressed in turn starting with rituals then moving on to symbols, power and identity. It has been pointed out that this part of the findings represents the basic ingredients of children's cultures of consumption. In this way, an overview is gained of what consumption means to children in their everyday lives. However, it is not until part two - the child consumer segments – that a deeper level of analysis is achieved. The interrelationships between the cultural expressions will be examined prior to presenting the findings.

Figure 5.1 The interrelationships between the cultural expressions



As can be seen from Figure 5.1, consumption symbols are located at the centre of the model. Upon analysis of the data it soon became clear that within children's cultures, symbols are at the heart of power, identity and rituals. Essentially, consumption symbols facilitate the activities in the rest of the model. In other words, symbols as cultural expressions in themselves play a pivotal role in *other* expressions of culture. That is to say, within the world of consumption, symbols become integral features of power interactions in constructing identity, and as key ingredients in ritual performance. However, the data will reveal that cultural expressions seldom exist alone. Therefore, the direct relationship between power, identity and rituals are represented with arrows. The findings relating to the first of the cultural expressions, rituals, will now be presented.

5.3 Consumption rituals

Throughout the fieldwork several rituals were identified, the most important of which will be discussed here. It was clear that these rituals vary in size, importance and frequency; therefore, the rituals are structured into two overall groups. Some were found to be performed often, here termed *common rituals*. Common rituals tend to be integrated into everyday life and are not necessarily easy to identify. Due to their frequent nature these rituals tend to be less intensely/seriously performed – in contrast to *celebrated rituals*. Celebrated rituals are generally larger in scale and performed infrequently. The most important celebrated rituals in children's cultures of consumption found in this study are birthdays and Christmas – each will now be discussed in turn.

5.3.1 Birthdays

During research, the magnitude of birthdays soon became apparent. Two consumption rituals - exchange rituals and possession rituals³¹ (McCracken, 1986) were found to be highly significant for the birthday event. The children spoke extensively about birthdays, receiving presents, planning parties, going to other children's birthday parties and so on. Furthermore, birthdays were special to children as they became the centre of attention. In this sense, birthdays differ from other collective ritual events because birthdays happen to individuals and not everyone at once. For children in all three age groups the

³¹ Exchange rituals in birthdays are gift-giving/receiving and also possession rituals which involve bringing birthday symbols, such as gifts, to school to show off to other children.

excitement around birthdays was immense and, therefore, constituted very important ritual events. However, the data indicated that the middle age group (primary 2/3) displayed particular excitement in anticipating the big day as the following extract indicates^{32,33}:

Interviewer: So how important are these events (birthdays and Christmas) to the kids?

Mirren: Oh absolutely huge, especially at this age, it really is. They are on count down to their birthday and when they're going to be and who's older than who...

Interview, P2 teacher, WPS, 16/6/03

To intensify, communicate and give meaning to the birthday ritual, material symbols are integral to the ritual. For this purpose there are a range of important consumption objects associated with birthdays such as gifts, cakes, candles and birthday cards – many of which make reference to the new age of the child. During the fieldwork, the researcher found that children marked the occasion by bringing to nursery/school birthday ritual symbols such as a cake, sweets or birthday presents. Furthermore, teachers allowed children to report during class sessions what presents they had received and how the day would be celebrated.

Although birthday parties were mostly performed outside school, they were visible in the school setting. How and where the party was held and who was invited constituted important conversation topics amongst the children, not least the girls who spent much time discussing and sometimes arguing about who should be invited to such events. In the two schools there was a difference in where birthday parties were celebrated. Children at WPS were much more likely to host parties outside the home – frequently at places which required transport. Yet, whilst consumption was central to birthday rituals, children proved to be acutely concerned with other aspects of birthdays, as Findlay told the researcher:

Interviewer: So what do you like best about birthdays?

Desmond: You get presents.

Interviewer: So what would happen if somebody didn't get any presents?

³² “I” stands for interviewer. Three full stops represent a pause or break. A forward slash represents cases when sentences are not completed and the other party interrupts or takes over and talks.

³³ The following details are noted below each passage: Which data set (interview, fieldnotes etc.); which age group (P2/P3 or P6 – in the nursery there was only one age group, therefore, SN refers to Sunny Nursery which had the pre-school age group); gender of child (therefore, when a parent is interviewed the gender of their child is noted); ethnographic location (NPS, WPS and SN) and lastly the date. It should be pointed out that unless text is specified as a parent or teacher conversation/interview, the text represents children's conversations.

Desmond: Well it's also about people changing their age. Last October I was six.

Fieldnotes, P2, M, WPS, 1/4/03

The above passage highlights the importance children place on age - as it becomes an indicator of the degree of power/control that they have over their lives (discussed further in section 6.4). Therefore, whilst children are concerned with consumption symbols/artefacts associated with celebrating birthdays, it is clear that for children the changing of age is an important matter. Another significant celebrated ritual in children's cultures of consumption is Christmas, which will be considered next.

5.3.2 Christmas

The vastness of Christmas in the UK is obvious, most especially in terms of marketing. Not surprisingly, the data revealed that Christmas is a significant ritual for children. Here, as in birthday ritual, the main consumption rituals were exchange and possession rituals (McCracken, 1986). Through conversations in class (in teacher-directed activities) and social interaction outside the classroom, it was clear that Christmas was a very special time. The children spoke extensively of Christmas and the many associated events (gifts, card-giving, pantomime, Christmas lunch to name but a few). In all age groups/ethnographic locations one of the predominant associations of Christmas was of it being a source of material goods. Yet, as with birthdays, the following extract indicates that children consider these celebrated rituals to be important; however, they are not purely motivated by material values.

Interviewer: Do you think birthdays are important to kids?

Patricia: Well, yes cause like everyone says that their favourite things between either birthdays or Christmas, it's probably Christmas because they say that you get more presents. And I just said, well I like both cause I get time to spend with my family and my friends all together instead of just one by one.

Interview, P6, F, WPS, 18/6/03

The surrounding rituals leading up to Christmas frequently had a heavy consumption involvement. The Christmas theme was present in many dimensions of school life. For instance, in art classes the subject matter was mostly Christmas-related. The children attended pantomimes, had Christmas lunch, took part in a nativity play, attended church and the school Christmas party. Furthermore, the school was decorated for Christmas

and mailboxes were set up to enable children to “send” Christmas cards to one another. It was clear that Christmas was “in the air” and therefore, a much discussed topic.

However, the magnitude of Christmas as a celebrated ritual contrasts with more common rituals. These rituals are less conspicuous, lower in scale and it can take time to understand that these are in fact ritualized events – yet it is clear that they serve as important activities in children’s lives. In this study several common rituals were identified, the most important being sharing time, swapping, lunch/snack breaks and sleepovers. The discussion starts with sharing time.

5.3.3 Sharing time

Sharing or *sharing time* as it was called was a structured event at the nursery and proved to be an important possession ritual (McCracken, 1986) for the children. Once a week children were permitted to bring a possession from home to show others. The type of possessions children brought in for sharing time varied greatly but ranged from books, dolls (e.g. Barbies, baby dolls), action style dolls (e.g. Action Men, Power Rangers), soft toys, animals, dressing-up clothes, videos, bags, jigsaws, umbrellas, gifts from McDonalds/Burger King and many more. The children were extremely proud and happy to show off their possessions and the significance of sharing time was clear, which the following extract highlights:

Interviewer: But how important sharing time is...?

Angela: Very important. She's always asking: "What day is it today, is it my sharing day today?" and she likes to choose something.

Interviewer: Umhmm.

...

Angela: It's very important. They like to take something in and do they're little talk.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Angela: Show off, this is mine.

Interview, parent, F, SN, 12/10/02

In an institution, such as a nursery, children have limited opportunity to use possessions in the construction of identity. This may explain why sharing time is important to children in expressing who they are. Furthermore, sharing time was a moment when they were in focus, could be envied and potentially gain status. At WPS bringing in personal possessions was actively encouraged with children in P1 partly as a *show and tell* (very

similar to sharing time at the nursery) and partly as a comfort to the children who were going through a period of change upon starting school. After P1, personal possessions were restricted for use in the playground. However, the playground presented a whole new set of opportunities, swapping for instance.

5.3.4 Swapping

Swapping, as the children themselves called this activity, is a common exchange ritual (McCracken, 1986). Essentially, swapping is an activity or process where children exchanged food items, pens, toys and the like. Although children at WPS were seen exchanging items, the ritual seemed to be most widespread at NPS among the P6 age group. Swapping was most notable at lunch time as children could exchange items in packed lunches or on school dinner trays. The purpose was to obtain something more desirable such as a packet of crisps for a chocolate bar.

The researcher frequently witnessed children negotiating with each other in what appeared to become mini-market places. They were functioning as well-informed consumers and, furthermore, their negotiation strategies were at times most sophisticated. The relative value of desired items was weighed-up, sometimes discussed with others and, subsequently, the other party offered something in return. If the offer was rejected, a new offer was frequently made until a deal was agreed upon, as the following example shows:

*Hope was desperate to swap her Fudge for Susan's chocolate crispie bar.
Hope begged: Please, please, please!
Susan stuck to her guns and said no. The Fudge was simply not attractive enough. A while later Hope walked past our table - this time with her Fudge and a packet of skips...
Susan, who had previously been unaware that Hope had a packed of Skips, shouted: Skips! Skips! Skips!
So the trade was made. The Skips for the chocolate crispie.
Fieldnotes, P3, F, NPS, 27/11/02*

It became evident that swapping as an exchange ritual was an important process where children could exert some control over their possessions. The children were relatively removed from adults in the playground and the food hall, which meant they were able to swap without interference from adults. Having such breaks away from adults where children are less controlled constitute important rituals to children, as will be seen next.

5.3.5 Lunch breaks and snack breaks

Lunch/snack breaks may, originally, have been implemented by adults as a routine; however, for the school children they were ritualized. In contrast, nursery children did not have similar breaks away from adult control due to their young age. Lunch/snack breaks were highly valued by the children and they were always happy when the time came. During morning snack breaks the overwhelming majority of children from both NPS and WPS brought in snacks everyday. Additionally, in WPS the P7 children were responsible for the tuck shop, which sold crisps and fruit. Therefore, food items constituted consumption which was integral to the lunch/snack break ritual.

Interestingly, there was a marked difference between the two schools in the type of snacks that children brought in – partly attributed to the policy at WPS that no sweets were permitted. At NPS the researcher cannot recall having seen a child bring fruit to school, whereas this was common at WPS. Lunch breaks too proved to be important times for the children. It was a time when they sat down together to eat, away from adults – in a less supervised atmosphere. The children spent much time discussing who was to sit next to whom, the food, what was in their packed lunch, swapping and general topics and concerns they had. Not surprisingly the issues being discussed and the manner in which they communicated changed with age and gender. For instance, the P6 boys often spoke of films, computers and sport whereas P6 girls spoke about boys, friendships, school and sleepovers – which will be discussed next.

5.3.6 Sleepovers

During fieldwork it soon became apparent that sleepovers were considered to be exciting events – most particularly for the school children. One point the children tried to put across to the researcher was that sleepovers were *not* the same as having a friend “staying the night”. Sleepovers were mysterious, rebellious and exciting and often involved more than one child sleeping over. Some of the features of sleepovers included going to sleep very late, having “mid-night feasts” or even having what the children called “all-nighters”, i.e. staying awake all night. Therefore, they proved to be rituals of resistance – resistance towards adult authority. Interestingly though, as some parents saw it, sleepovers were a relatively new phenomenon, as one mother explains:

Valerie: Yeah. This sleepover's an American thing. They've got that from the television, definitely.

Interviewer: Ahh.

Valerie: We never talked about sleepovers. We never did that when we were younger. There had to be a crisis in the family before you stayed at somebody else's house.

Interview, parent, P6, F, NPS, 31/1/03

The children looked forward to sleepovers and spoke extensively about such events, both forthcoming and afterwards. Frequently, children would ask for a sleepover instead of a traditional birthday party. The likes of sweets, snacks, pizza, possibly a film and even games marketed as “sleepover games” were important symbols that constituted the ritual. Therefore, although sleepovers do not constitute consumption rituals in themselves, they have strong consumption implications.

5.3.7 Conclusion

Throughout this section the rituals of significance in children's cultures of consumption have been presented. They have been divided into celebrated and common rituals marking the frequency, intensity and size of the rituals. Celebrated rituals include birthdays and Christmas whilst common rituals performed in the nursery/school setting include sharing time, swapping, lunch/snack breaks and sleepovers. These celebrated and common rituals constitute important events in children's everyday lives and are key aspects of their cultures of consumption. Therefore, knowing the rituals of children and their associated symbols provides crucial information in our understanding of children's consumer behaviour. Another important expression of culture, namely symbols, will now be discussed.

5.4 Consumption symbols

This second section on cultural expressions presents findings pertaining to symbols in children's cultures of consumption. Four main categories of consumption symbols emerged from the data. To categorize symbols in this manner is essentially a simplification of reality; furthermore, the categories overlap. Nevertheless, to provide a clear overview of the types of symbols, this approach has been adopted. The four

categories are: 1) brand logos and names, 2) heroes, 3) brand characters and 4) products. An explanation of the symbol categories is provided prior to discussing each in turn.

5.4.1 Symbol categories

Children's cultures of consumption were found to be abundant with consumption symbols that powerfully frame their everyday lives. In other words, consumer goods were frequently at the centre of interactions between the children and highly visible in their cultures. Yet the different ways in which the children encountered, interpreted and used the symbols depended on factors such as age, context, background and gender. The four categories of symbols identified from the data are explained below:

- *Brand*³⁴ *logos and names*. These are visual signs or words that identify a company, product, service or event in some distinctive way. Examples include "M" for McDonald's, Barbie, and LEGO.
- *Heroes*. These types of symbols include sports celebrities and pop stars who frequently feature as role models for children and young people.
- *Brand characters*. These are characters often featured in the media, such as cartoon or animated characters, e.g. Winnie the Pooh or Tom and Jerry.
- *Products*. There were clear indications that certain products in themselves had symbolic value rather than being reliant on a brand name. Bikes are an example from the data where the product itself (size, type of bike etc.) proved to be more important than particular brands of bikes.

5.4.2 Brand logos and names

Brand logos/names were highly visible amongst all groups of children; however, the types of brand logos/names changed with age and context. Generally, brand logos/names were mostly identified on products such as clothing, shoes, bags and pencil cases. There was a clear indication that younger children were interested in brands. However, their interest and knowledge proved to be much more extensive for brands they feel are applicable to them – brands they can identify with, such as McDonalds and Power

³⁴ Brand is here taken to apply to goods and services and can be defined as "...a specific name, symbol or design – or, more usually, some combination of these – which is used to distinguish a particular seller's product" (Doyle, 1998: 166).

Rangers. Therefore, we shall here distinguish between child brands (those directed at children) and adult brands. Whilst children are *users* of adult brands these tend to be primarily targeted at parents. Examples include makers of children's clothing such as Next or Gap. The study found children's abilities to read or identify logos varied greatly between these two types of brands (child-targeted and adult-targeted).

Children visit supermarkets and other retail outlets regularly and, therefore, their conversations/stories/pictures frequently feature shops. Furthermore, discussions of store logos/colours were witnessed on many occasions. The pre-school children were able to "read" a vast range of store names such as Tesco, Sainsbury, Ikea, Toys R Us and so on. Through conversations with nursery children and later on a shopping trip, it became apparent that many of the children were in the habit of using packaging (e.g. colours or symbols on the packaging) to identify products, as in the passage below:

*At the supermarket we were walking through the aisles.
David: I love jaffa cakes. (Above the McVities brand was the Co-op own brand of jaffa cakes.)
Interviewer: Oh look are these jaffa Cakes? (the packaging had a picture of jaffa Cakes on the box)
The children all agree and said No!
David: These are (pointed to the McVities brand)
Maria: Jaffacakes are blue.
Fieldnotes, F/M, SN, 2/7/02*

It is clear from the quote that even young children do distinguish between brands and, despite being unable to read, use colours to identify specific brands. However, overall (taking all age groups into consideration), the single most visible and talked about type of brand was branded sports gear. Some nursery children identified e.g. the Nike swoosh to mean: "sport"; however, it was clear that sport logos and names became more important with age. The P2/P3 children displayed clear knowledge of branded sport logos and names. For instance, during interviews with P2 (WPS), children were shown photographs of branded trainers and over half of the children were able to identify the brands on the pictures. The importance of sports brands to some children in the P2 age group is evident from the following passage:

*During the interview I get the photographs out and show Lesley and Andreas.
Andreas: I like those trainers.
Interviewer: Ehmm the red and silver ones? (Nike)
Lesley: I like Nike trainers.
Interviewer: You like Nike trainers. Is there anyone of these that are Nike?*

Andreas: Adidas. I think that's Nike, it's got the tick. That's Reebok and that's Adidas.

...

Lesley: I've been here to the sports centre to the training place at the Culper shopping centre but none of them were size 13s and my mum didn't like any of them and there was no 13s or 1s in Nike or anything. Because I was wanting, I was really really really wanting Nike or Adidas and there was none of Adidas for any size, I think but there was loads of Nikes for like 3s and like 4s/

Interview, P2, F/M, WPS, 19/5/03

Here Lesley in particular shows a desire to own a pair of Nike or Adidas trainers.

Therefore, already at this age, sports brands are important to some children. Interestingly though, during a later interview with Lesley's parents they explained that she did not understand the difference between the Nike/Adidas trainers and the M&S trainers she actually got. Yet, Lesley appears to be acutely aware that the purchased trainers were *not* what she had originally wanted. Therefore, this would seem to indicate that parents are not always accurate informants of their children's consumer behaviour.

By P6 sports logos/names had become highly significant for the children at both schools. During interviews and observations the children discussed sports brands extensively, yet boys placed greater importance than girls on branded sport items. The most frequently mentioned sports brands in both schools were Nike, Adidas and Reebok. To the children they were cool, looked good, were good quality and famous people wear them. In the following passage, sports brands are being discussed:

Interviewer: Everyone seems to mention Nike. Why do you think that is?

Rachel: It's the most popular brand there is.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Rachel: Good quality. Nike's dear – it's like it's worth every penny.

Interviewer: Why do you think people like the way they look?

Rachel: The big ticks. Everyone likes them.

Interview, P6, F, NPS, 7/1/02

Here it is clear that the sport logos mean something to the children. Whilst girls too were concerned with sports brands, they pointed out that fashion was an additional important factor for them. Therefore, other brand logos/names they were interested in were frequently actual store ranges e.g. Tammy or New Look. Another type of consumption symbol, namely heroes, will be considered next.

5.4.3 Heroes

Heroes are an important feature of cultural groups as these represent what members believe in (Luna & Gupta, 2001). In children's cultures specifically, heroes are significant as they play a role in children's developing sense of identity (Anderson et al., 2000). Whilst children's heroes may be in the near environment (e.g. parents, teachers), important heroes include more distant persons or animated heroes, e.g. Power Rangers. However, the heroes identified and discussed here are generally public heroes known to and admired by groups of children, such as sporting heroes, pop stars or other celebrities.

The data confirmed previous studies that as children mature they are more likely to have real life rather than fictional heroes (Anderson et al., 2000). The heroes of the youngest children were generally fictional characters from cartoons, television programmes/films or from books or other print media. At the nursery during children's play, the researcher witnessed on a daily basis references to heroic characters such as Spiderman, Superman, Power Rangers, Ninja Turtles and so on.

Children in P2/P3 still enjoyed talking about fictional heroes (Pokomon, Spiderman, Power Rangers and Scooby Doo) yet, there was a definite trend toward real life people obtaining heroic status (football/sports heroes and pop stars). Sports in general and football in particular became especially important to some boys in this age group - from both schools. In the following example, Andreas displays strong support for a major Scottish football team and utter disgust at their rivals.

Andreas and Sophie were gluing and had to use a sheet of newspaper underneath. When Andreas opens the newspaper it is a photo of some Rangers players.

Andreas: Aarghh! I'm not having that. Rangers!!

Sophie: Me neither.

Interviewer: Who do you support?

Andreas and Sophie: Celtic!

Andreas pages on and then lays a sheet on the table with Henrik Larsen from Celtic. Andreas pretends to kiss him.

Fieldnotes, P2, F/M, WPS, 1/4/03

The admiration for sporting heroes became most apparent in the oldest groups (P6). The boys in particular demonstrated their immense admiration for sports stars/teams by purchasing official football strips, wearing jewellery (mainly at NPS), hanging-up

posters, having themed bedrooms, emulating haircuts and copying techniques during games of football.

Another major type of hero the two older groups greatly admired was pop stars. In the P2/P3 age group, girls were more likely than boys to speak of pop music/stars and bring CDs to school to show friends. Furthermore, girls were more likely to aspire to becoming pop stars. For most of the older children music figured importantly in their lives, yet there was clear observable distinction between music they liked and those performers that actually attained hero status. Those who gained hero status were copied, talked about and greatly admired, over and above the actual music. In contrast, other singers/pop stars were listened to, but proved to be much less visible in the children's lives.

5.4.4 Brand characters

Another important symbol category in children's cultures of consumption is brand characters. Occasionally, the category of heroes can overlap with brand characters as these can obtain hero status, for instance Superman. However, to clarify how brand characters will be discussed in the context of these findings, a further distinction is necessary. Therefore, brand characters can be:

- A vehicle which personifies or embodies (person/animation) a brand, thereby imbuing it with human characteristics. E.g. the Sugar Puff cereal fluffy character.
- A toy in itself may be the character (e.g. Barbie).
- The character itself (e.g. Mickey Mouse, Power Rangers, and Bart Simpson) becomes so popular that it can be considered a brand in its own right, thereby supporting/triggering the sale of a range of associated merchandise.

This means that products may be either closely *linked* with a character or the character itself may be the actual brand. The study found in abundance of brand characters in children's cultures of consumption – especially as brand characters are frequently targeted at children.

From the findings there were gender issues surrounding the use of brand characters. Whilst certain brand characters were clearly gendered e.g. Barbie and Power Rangers

others were relatively gender neutral e.g. Winnie the Pooh and The Simpsons. Furthermore, it was clear there was a greater emphasis on the use of brand characters among the younger age groups (pre-school and P2/P3). Brand characters from animated programmes, especially (e.g. Mickey Mouse, Monsters Inc., Tweenies, Bob the Builder), were highly visible on clothing, toys, books, school bags and other possessions in the younger age groups. Clothing in particular – right down to socks and pants were important vehicles for children to carry or display brand characters they liked as the following extracts indicate:

I observed as George looked proud whilst showing Peter his Action Man socks. Peter's face indicated that he liked the socks.
Fieldnotes, M, SN, 7/6/02

*Fergus came out of the toilet, made a jump and pulled down his trousers to reveal what was underneath and said to me:
Fergus: You've gotta see this!! (Reveals his Spiderman pants, which he is clearly very proud of).*
Fieldnotes, M, SN, 7/6/02

The above extracts specifically, and the findings generally clearly indicated that children enjoy surrounding themselves with the symbols they can relate to and which they love. Furthermore, brand characters provide signals to others as a form of communication about whom/what the children identify with. Therefore, it is evident that the added value that consumer goods can attain in children's cultures by being labelled with characters is in many ways synonymous with the function of brands for adults as the following interview with a parent revealed:

*Katrina: Yeah, if he goes round a shop and he sees something related to say a cartoon or something like that. "I want that". If it's a sweetie, a tin of spaghetti, and he doesn't like spaghetti. But it's got the/
Interviewer: Yeah.
Katrina: ...it's got the thing (brand character) on. I want that because that's got that on it. Ehhm...
I mean, I don't know maybe it's something they maybe feel familiar with and that's why they go to it.
Interviewer: Yeah.
Katrina: I guess we're the same. If there's something we're familiar with we go straight to that. And I think that that's maybe what children do.*
Interview, parent, M, SN, 17/9/02

Here it is clear that brand characters become important symbols for children. In the unfamiliar world of groceries and adult products, brand characters provide children with

some stability, some feeling of familiarity. Therefore, even a tin of spaghetti (as we saw above) can become friendly and safe.

For all age groups the data indicated a strong liking for programmes and associated characters that were funny. Humour was immensely important to the children – especially the oldest age group (P6). This was particularly evident amongst the boys. Therefore, brand characters and adverts which were considered humorous were popular – as with *The Simpsons* for instance. Several examples of brand characters on consumer goods such as spectacles, pencil cases, bags etc. confirmed this. Yet, not all significant consumption symbols were necessarily brands, sometimes merely owning a certain type of product carried symbolic meaning, as will be seen next.

5.4.5 Products

The final category of consumption symbols are products. Whilst brands may serve as powerful symbols for children, there are times when these are rendered less important and the product itself of greater significance. Children's age, gender and the context had an impact on how products were used as symbols. However, the data revealed two product-related factors which sometimes become more important than brands. These are:

- Product category/type such as television, bike or mobile phones
- Special features such as colour, size, light-up trainers

It is clear that although certain products are of great importance to the children, there are many occasions when this has no relation to the brand as a symbol. One example of a product category is children's bikes. These were for many their proudest possessions and whilst they were classified into for instance speedbike or mountain bike, the children did not distinguish between brands of bikes. When Susan was asked what kind of bike she had, she responded by saying: *Purple and pink*. (Fieldnotes, P3, F, NPS, date). In this example the distinguishing features of the bike were, for Susan, the colours.

In other cases, children were acutely concerned with special features of consumer goods. One example of this was when one (WPS) P2 girl had received new gym shoes. These were a different type from the rest of the class – the only difference being that the shoes had laces rather than an elasticated top. The other girls showed great admiration for

these new gym shoes, asking where they were purchased, and expressed a desire to own such shoes.

Throughout the ethnographic work there were many such instances where the product itself or its features were important as consumption symbols and brand names/logos of no/little significance. On some occasions this was related to the extent of ownership of specific items. For instance, if few children within a peer group owned a mobile telephone, the phone itself or certain features (rather than the brand) became an important consumption symbol as the following quote indicates:

Gail and Kathy from P6 are discussing mobile telephones.
Gail: My dad has got a new phone. It's a flip phone.
Fieldnotes, F, WPS, 22/4/03

The fact that Gail's father had a new flip phone was, to the girls, a desirable feature attributed to his mobile telephone. The fact that his phone is defined in terms of its features rather than its name is the key issue here. Therefore, it is apparent that once ownership of mobile telephones became widespread amongst groups of children, key features attributed to the physical product increase in significance. Overall though, it is clear that certain products function as consumption symbols in themselves. Thus without doubt, consumption symbols are many things, not just brand names.

5.4.6 Conclusion

From the findings, four categories of consumption symbols were found to be important in children's cultures. Whilst the types of symbols within each category varied, the most significant differences were found to be in age and gender. This is not surprising given the emphasis placed on these demographic factors when marketing consumer goods to children. However, it is important to recognize that not all children fit neatly into such predictable categories, and features such as individuality, friendship groups, family background and context are important in understanding what consumption symbols mean to children.

5.5 Consumption power

This section of the findings concentrates on the issue of power in children's cultures of consumption. Notwithstanding the importance of macro power in shaping children's lives, the type of power concentrated on here is social power surrounding consumption issues - in other words, power evident in children's everyday interactions. Power is a highly complex issue; therefore, to abstract power and categorise it into different forms is a simplification to say the least. Nevertheless, as the reader will find, it does provide important insights into the role of consumption in children's power interactions. From the data analysis, consumption power was found to surface as three main forms: status, control and conformity. This section commences by explaining these forms of power and, subsequently, discusses each in turn.

5.5.1 Power in children's cultures

As previously discussed, power in children's cultures is problematic given that children are able to exercise significantly less power than adults. Furthermore, power is ever present, yet processes of power change from one moment to the next depending on the context. Consequently, and as this ethnography found, the process of power amongst children is particularly subject to change as adults enter/exit children's interactions. The data was gathered primarily from children's interactions with each other, yet adults (in school, at home and in society in general) are a natural part of children's everyday lives and must, therefore, figure in the analysis. However, prior to this analysis, an explanation is provided of the three forms of power identified in this study.

Status, as discussed in the literature review, is closely related to power. It provides actors with the means to exercise power. For the children, holding status proved to be empowering although status can be relatively fluid and changeable. For instance, during maths quizzes low status individuals who were good at maths became powerful for a short while - later reverting back to their "usual" status. Some children, on the other hand, held more enduring high status.

Control is a key power issue in children's cultures. Children constitute a low status group in society due to the lack of power they are able to exercise. Therefore, from a young age, children face a constant struggle to gain more control over their lives. We

shall see how children, in the context of consumption, use consumer goods as instruments in the process of gaining control.

Conformity represents the degree to which children accept/resist power imposed on them either by adults or other children. In the context of the school countless rules regulate how children are expected to behave and interact. Obviously, there are clear interrelationships between the forms of power discussed here. For instance, in an attempt to gain control over their own lives, children may choose not to conform to adult power.

5.5.2 Status

Status was not a word the children generally used themselves, yet there were clearly children who held higher status than others. These children held power across a variety of situations, which proved to be exercised in a variety of manners. For instance, deciding which games to play, creating/manipulating the rules, determining who was granted loan of possessions or in shaping attitudes/trends around consumer products. The data analysis indicated that there were four primary types of *achieved status*³⁵ in children's cultures (although the list is not exhaustive):

1. Status based on academic performance
2. Status based on physical performance and appearance
3. Status based on experience/knowledge
4. Status based on access to valuable resources such as consumption objects

These types of status all have implications for consumption, for instance physical appearance can be modified/changed through clothing and grooming. However, the nature of status varied as certain children had relatively enduring high status whilst the status others held was of a more temporary nature. This depended on the context, situation or relative status of those present. One example of temporary status was when Lesley received her new bike and felt she gained a higher status in the street where she lived. However, when a friend, who was younger than Lesley, was given a new and

³⁵ The type of status focused on in this section is *achieved status*. In other words social positions children hold largely through their own effort as opposed to social positions one is born with or attain through chance such as sex, race – generally named *ascribed status* (Marshall, 1998). Types of ascribed status are discussed in more detail under identity (see section 6.5).

larger bike, Lesley was upset as it undermined the status she had achieved (Interview, parents, P2, F, WPS, 21/6/03).

Popularity is one of the most important types of status in children's cultures. Although the younger age groups do not as such talk of popularity, the P2/P3 age group had a clear idea of whom they considered to be popular – as did the P6 children. Popularity was determined by a range of factors. The girls, on evaluating what made a girl popular had a greater tendency to focus on looks, clothes, face, being nice and “boys wanting to kiss” the popular girls (Fieldnotes, NPS, P3, 22/1/03). Popular boys were typically funny, sporty and achieved well academically. In P6 at WPS there was a particular emphasis on being a fast runner. Both the most popular boy and girl in the class were fast runners. However, in general popular children were perceived to have a combination of desirable characteristics and, therefore, there was often significant overlap between the four primary types of achieved status.

The way in which status was used as a significant power enabler was most visible when children directly attempted to influence situations. In the nursery, David had been in the pre-school room for much longer than Allan. Therefore he used his experience and knowledge to entice a toy back from Allan, as the following extract indicates.

David is distracted by something while he is playing and puts down the Action Man. Allan (who is new in the pre-school room) jumps in and takes the Action Man. David notices this and says:

No you can't touch it unless you've washed your hands.

Allan believes this and goes to wash his hands. Meanwhile David takes the Action Man back and upon returning. Allan is disappointed to see that David has the Action Man.

David defends himself: I was only looking at the other (toys) stuff. You weren't to take it... You can have it in five minutes.

Fieldnotes, M, SN, 9/8/02

Status associated with owning consumption objects such as toys, clothing etc. was evident in all three age groups. In the nursery group, children were aware of the positive implications of bringing in an interesting or desirable toy for sharing time. Furthermore, in the P2/P3 group children were frequently keen to try out toys/games that others brought to school. However, this type of status was most clearly expressed in the P6 groups, as the following extract indicates:

Interviewer: First of all I was wondering if somebody, people who are popular what kind of people do you think are popular?

Martha: In the class?

Interviewer: Or just in general, people who/

Martha: Well, they have blond hair...Fast runner, cool, in the latest fashion.

Interview, P6, F, WPS, 17/6/03

Although younger children saw consumption objects as contributing to status, they tended not to infer any particular form of low-status on other children. In other words, there was less difference between the children. However, low-status started to become apparent in the P2/P3 age group. Yet, this was much more evident at NPS than WPS. At NPS there was a group of children who were considered to have underachieved academically and to be “disruptive”. Therefore, in the classroom the teacher had grouped these children together for various activities. Most of these children were not well groomed; some had difficult backgrounds³⁶ - contributing to their lower status. However, by the P6 age group the children made very clear distinctions in status and it was easy to identify those to whom the children assigned low status. In the following example Luke is describing himself:

Luke: I'm not interested in being popular so I don't really have a care for fashion...I dinnae have a care now about being popular. I know I'll never be it.

Interview, P6, M, WPS, 28/5/03

It is clear that the children at this age give some thought to their own position in the class and are self-reflective. Luke, who was considered to be a little different by the other children, is very aware of his status in the class and appears to have given up on ever being popular. Furthermore, Luke sees a clear link between fashion and popularity. This means that for Luke one of the ingredients or features attributed to popular children is their clothing. Therefore, one can conclude that at least in some cases there is a relationship between consumption and popularity.

5.5.3 Control

Adults are responsible for children and therefore, exert a great degree of control over their lives. For children, therefore, a central concern of growing up is increasingly gaining control and a sense of independence. In other words, they frequently attempt to

³⁶ The teachers had informed the researcher of the backgrounds of these children. This included economic deprivation and neglect.

distance themselves from childhood. From the data it was evident that there were two main methods by which children attempted to distance themselves from childhood. The first method involved being knowledgeable on various important issues, being streetwise or displaying experience. The second (related) method is acting older by using makeup, being permitted to go places without parental supervision and so on.

Already at nursery there were children who constantly strove to be older than their years. Children would proudly tell each other of things they were permitted to do – especially if these were associated with the adult world such as staying up late, using makeup etc. By P6 the children were granted much more freedom to go about their lives with less adult supervision. Being permitted to go to retail parks and shop without adult supervision was popular in P6 at WPS amongst the girls and boys. They liked “hanging out”, looking in shops and going for something to eat with friends. This was confirmed by one mother:

Kim: And I've sometimes seen maybe myself or other parents would maybe take them to the Culpar shopping centre or Halber shopping centre and they'll be allowed to wander round, you know the shops and do their own thing and then meet up with them later.

Interview, parent, P6, F, WPS, 21/6/03

So far in this section, children's attempts to exert and display control in their own lives have been discussed. However, children's increased autonomy can lead to parents feeling a sense of losing control – this was reflected on a few occasions in interviews with parents. We return to this important matter in Section 6.7.

5.5.4 Conformity

Whilst status is about the position children hold in relation to each other, and therefore the degree of power they exercise, control is about children trying to take charge of their own lives. Conformity, on the other hand, is about children's choice/decision to comply or not – in other words accepting/resisting power. This section will briefly discuss consumption and conformity (by and large in the context of child-adult relationships) as it overlaps considerably with one of the themes which emerged from the analysis: *the resistant child consumer*.

Adults are heavy regulators of what, how, when and where children consume. Consequently, the analysis indicated that consumption was frequently central in processes of children conforming/not conforming to rules. Yet, in their everyday lives the children displayed a clear tendency to regulate themselves – reminding each other of what was “allowed” or not. Therefore, children are continuously faced with choice points where they make decisions about whether or not to conform. As expected, children sometimes resist rules, both in the class room and in the playground. In NPS, children were not permitted to bring toys to school. Despite this, some chose to secretly hide toys they had brought to school, as in the following extract:

On the way out to break I noticed Mark was hiding something under his jacket, which he was sharing with Ethan and one or two others. I asked if I could see it. Mark showed me his new wolf-like figure.

Fieldnotes, P3, M, NPS, 21/11/02

In WPS on the other hand, toys, CDs, games etc. *were* allowed at school. However, these were only permitted to come out at playtime. In P2, children’s desire to show-off/look at such personal items led to them placing objects on desks – despite this being against the rules. Whilst these are relatively minor examples of nonconformity, there were instances where children’s actions were deemed so serious that they were remembered for a long time – even years. The deeds were almost considered heroic, such as painting the huts with spray-paints or Frank (P6, WPS) stealing the password to the computers, accessing the teacher’s data and gaining unrestricted access to the Internet.

It is clear that consumption constitutes an important resource in children’s power relationships with adults and other children. Whether children conform or not depends greatly on age, background, context and individuals. However, the findings indicated that consumption can figure as significant materials in resisting adult power. This means that consumer goods, as symbols of resistance, are central to children’s fight for control.

5.5.5 Conclusion

Within this section three forms of power have been addressed. These are status, control and conformity. It is evident from the data that the status children hold in relation to each other had implications for the power they exercised. Furthermore, for the children,

growing up is inextricably linked to increasing control over everyday life generally and consumption specifically. Finally, decisions about whether or not to conform to rules proved to be important in actively resisting/accepting power. For all of the three forms of power it is clear that consumption plays a central role. This became clear when observing interactions and seeing the choices children make around consumption - frequently to gain/display status, to increase the level of control they have or to accept/resist power exercised over them.

5.6 Consumption identity

Bringing with them, as children do, only their physical self (apart from a few consumption items) to school/nursery, children are restricted in what resources they can use to construct identities. They have relatively little freedom and, as regards consumption, the spaces within such institutions to display consumer goods are limited. However, the data clearly indicated that children make sufficient use of opportunities available to construct identities using consumer objects and consumption references. Throughout the ethnography some of the most important types of identity which emerged can be summarised as follows:

- Gender
- Performance
- Appearance
- Age

Data will be presented to highlight how consumer goods are used as resources in the construction of identity. Whilst some of these identities invariably overlap, they will be treated separately for the purpose of analysis. Invariably, other identities such as ethnicity, religion and disability are of importance to many children. However, in the small samples of this study there was too little data pertaining to these identities to warrant a discussion. There were no children with disabilities, for instance.

5.6.1 Gender

In the context of children's cultures of consumption, gender proved to be a highly significant aspect of identity. In constructing their identities, gender is an enduring

primary identity which has a great deal of influence on children's consumption choices, and the choices others make on their behalf. However, the data revealed that gender is sufficiently important in childhood to warrant a theme in itself. Therefore, the discussion on gender as consumption identity will be postponed and addressed as a separate child consumer segment in Section 5.11.

5.6.2 Performance

Performance can be described as the way children (individuals and groups) perform or accomplish certain tasks of significance – whether they are physical or mental/academic activities. Although children are undoubtedly influenced by societal expectations of which activities are considered important, they too have their own criteria of which performance characteristics are valuable in the construction of identity.

The idea of performance and attempting to perform well implies a comparison of self to other. Recognizing how one is the same as/different from others and, as in the case of performance, better/worse than others is at the heart of identity theory. It was clear from the data that children start at an early age to compete with each other. At the nursery children would compete at anything and everything, for instance who could drink the fastest, jump the highest or who had the most food on their plate. Therefore, it was clear that these children's understanding of their own personal strengths and weaknesses was less developed than with the older age groups.

By P2/P3 the children had some idea of their performance and the things they wanted to be good at. In terms of gender it was evident that boys are more competitive at this age but have become more selective in what they compete at. The school system contributes to this by emphasising which things are “good to be good at”. At P3 in NPS one boy, Robert, was particularly proud of his reading ability. He often spoke of reading the Harry Potter books – something he was immensely proud of. Subsequent interviews with the teacher and his mother indicated that the praise Robert received for reading Harry Potter led him to describe himself as a “number one Harry Potter fan” (Fieldnotes, NPS, M, 13/11/02). This was reflected in the books Robert purchased (all the Harry Potter books), his Harry Potter bag and lunch bag. Therefore, it is clear that children's own perception of their competencies can influence consumer behaviour.

Physical performance was not as heavily emphasised by the schools as academic performance; nevertheless it was of great importance to the children – especially with respect to sport. This was especially evident in the P6 age group. The children spent much time talking about sport, performing sport, admiring sport personalities and so on. For some children sports consumed much of their time. The consumption implications were clear – those children who considered themselves “sporty” were much more likely to wear sports clothing. Interestingly, for girls being sporty was sometimes defined as a contrast to being feminine, as the following extract indicates:

Julie: Nearly everyone has sports bag for rucksack. We're really into sports. We're all tomboys.
Interview, P6, F, NPS, 13/12/02

It was evident from the data that sports goods were significant as a resource in the construction of identity. Yet, being “sporty” as the children described themselves was not confined to performing well physically but was sometimes referred to as a style of consuming clothes, bags and the like. In other words, some children identified with sports yet did not actively engage in sports.

5.6.3 Appearance

The appearance of the body is a key characteristic of children’s identity since it is, in material terms, the most visible. The appearance of the body is here taken to refer to both physical and extra-physical³⁷ appearance. The former refers to height, shape (build) and other bodily features whilst the latter refers to the dressing up of the body e.g. with grooming and clothing.

Children in all age groups were preoccupied with height and compared themselves to each other. However, at the P2/P3 age, the children started to become more preoccupied with other aspects of physical appearance and by P6 the children paid much attention to body shape and facial features. For instance, during conversations P2/P3 children, girls in particular, described other girls as having “nice hair” and a “nice face”. Furthermore, body shape had already become an issue for some girls at P2/P3 age, as the following example demonstrates:

³⁷ The term extra-physical is used here to describe certain appearance characteristics which function as an extension, as it were, to the body. Therefore, although clothes for instance are material objects, they are not in themselves part of the physical body.

Lesley: Yes but sometimes when you see, you know at the Culper shopping centre and you see these people, these model people wearing these clothes in that big shop thing?

...

Lesley: They always look ehmm, very not fat when you see them and if you're quite fat then you think: Oh I'll look the same as that and when you get them then you don't look anything like it.

Interview, P2, M/F, WPS, 19/5/03

In the above extract Lesley is referring to models and how thin they look when modelling clothes. When comparing other bodies, Lesley notes how entirely different these can appear upon wearing the same clothing. It is clear therefore, that even at a young age children can demonstrate an understanding of the effect different body shapes can have on the appearance of clothing.

With regard to extra-physical appearance, clothing and grooming were highly significant for children in the P6 age group, and to some extent in the P2/P3 and nursery age group. Younger children had clothing preferences and liked wearing clothing with symbols they identified with and which reinforced their gender identity. However, comfort was an important factor for P2/P3 as they felt restricted and could not run in uncomfortable clothes.

As extra-physical appearance was particularly significant to the P6 age group, the remainder of this section will focus on grooming rituals. The boys in P6 at both schools were greatly concerned with appearance, which was especially manifested in their use of hair grooming products and deodorants. They displayed no shyness when discussing grooming, as in the following:

Samuel: Normally we spike hair up.

Greg: Yeah put gel in.

Interview, P6, M, NPS, 19/12/03

Graeme: I've not had my hair down in school for like four years or something so I'm not gonna put it down now. I just hate it down.

Interviewer: So what is it that you like about having it up? Cause all three of you have got it/

Graeme: It's cool.

Cameron: It's cool yeah.

Interview, P6, M, WPS, 10/6/03

The extract illustrates how constructing cool identities was partially dependent on grooming. Clothing proved to be equally significant and the boys would often speak of various styles such as “sweaty”, “goth”, “baggies” and so on. However, what was considered appropriate clothing changed with context (school, parties, golf, football, skateboarding etc.). Extra-physical appearance was greatly important for the girls too in identity construction. They were more likely than the boys to discuss fashion. The girls had a tendency to downplay the issue of looks somewhat. However, observations and interviews with parents/teachers at NPS contradicted this and revealed that fashion was a much bigger issue than the girls cared to express. One girl explained that:

Rachel: Most of the girls in our class: looks are everything.

Interviewer: What makes you say that?

Rachel: When there's parties they come in all sorts of dresses

Interviewer: But do looks matter for school?

Rachel: Yeah they do their hair for school and put hairspray in.

Interview, P6, F, NPS, 7/1/02

However, despite the importance of extra-physical appearance for the majority of children, there were several children who were not interested in fashion, clothing, gel or other grooming products. Therefore, it is clear that not all children use clothing and grooming in the same way as a resource for identity construction. Overall, it can be concluded that appearance is of key concern to the children and critical in identity construction. The physical body remains central throughout childhood; however, extra-physical appearance increases in importance as children get older.

5.6.4 Age

Age as identity overlaps with one of the themes which emerged from the data: *the independent developing child consumer*. As a result, some of the findings pertaining to age are included later in the analysis chapter. In research generally, age is treated as a demographic factor - as has been the case throughout this thesis. However, for children age is also a significant aspect of individual and group identity. In Western society children are grouped together in age cohorts early in life. However, the data revealed that age hierarchy, within *same* year groups as well, is an important feature of children's cultures. School aged children displayed great awareness of the age hierarchy within the class. More importantly, children are very aware of their age identity, as they perceive it, much of the time, to be central to the degree of control they have over their lives.

Therefore, although it is impossible to *be* older than one is, it is possible to strive to act older and increase one's social age.

Frequently, social interactions centred on age and which films, magazines, games etc. children were permitted to consume. Furthermore, the children had clear ideas of what consumption was appropriate for different age groups. Some consumer items were described as "babyish" whilst others were "cool". There were several examples of children being confronted with age as a limiting factor in terms of consumption. For instance the boys in P6 (WPS) were keen to hold birthday parties at Laser Quest; however due the age limit at Laser Quest, this was not possible – something they felt was unfair. Interestingly though, children displayed inventive tactics to overcome age limits on toys, as the following examples show:

Hector: You've got to be over 8 to build them and to launch them (Beyblades).

Interviewer: But Beth's not over 8.

Hector: I'm not over 8.

Interviewer: Where does it say that you've got to be over 8?

Hector: At the top of the box.

Interviewer: So how come then you get to do it anyway?

Hector: Just cause we can do it.

Nena: Our mum and dad let us.

Hector: They don't even know it's 8+.

Nena: I know.

Interviewer: Do they not?

Hector: We scribble it out.

Interview, P2, M/F, WPS, 12/5/03

In the above extract Hector and Nena are discussing the age labelling on toys – in this case Beyblades, which are for those aged eight and upwards. In reflecting on parental control, Nena believes parents actually know age labelling but choose to ignore it. Hector, on the other hand, is sure he has successfully concealed the minimum age on the box. Either way, the children are demonstrating an acute awareness that age restricts their freedom to choose between consumer goods.

5.6.5 Conclusion

It can be concluded from the data that consumption is instrumental in constructing identities. In this respect gender, performance, appearance and age proved to be key identities in childhood cultures. The data revealed that consumption and consumer goods

are a central aspect upon which children construct their identities. In this process, consumption can both confirm/build upon existing identities and create new ones. Therefore, consumer goods become important resources in an iterative process of building identities. Nevertheless, as has been mentioned previously, it is worth pointing out that despite powerfully framing children's lives, consumption does not wholly define them. This means that there are moments when consumer goods are not a central feature of identity in children's cultures.

5.7 Part two: Child consumer segments

Part one has examined the cultural expressions of children's consumption each in turn. However, these cultural expressions cannot be understood individually, in isolation, separate from the whole. Rather they must be analysed holistically and in relation to each other. To do this, this second part of the findings, will explore five themes. These themes emerged from the data and are here termed child consumer segments. That is to say, these segments were made up of children who displayed similar characteristics/behaviour with regard to consumption. Therefore, the segments constitute subgroups, as it were, of child consumers. However, such subgroups are not static or fixed. Belonging to a segment proved to be dependent on time and place. Consequently, children moved in and out of segments depending on context - sometimes willingly, other times reluctantly. The segments are anchored in those aspects of consumption which are of prime importance to children – often such concerns are very different from those of adults, yet sometimes very similar, as will be seen.

The child consumer segments presented here contribute to the literature in more than one way. Firstly, insight is gained into several features of children's consumption where previously there was little data. Secondly, a deeper level of analysis is presented following the exploration, in Part one, of the key ingredients, or cultural expressions, of children's cultures of consumption. This means further insight is gained into the relative importance of each ingredient in various contexts. Thirdly, the child consumer segments provide insight into the complex nature of children's cultures of consumption. That is to say, the segments provide greater understanding about how context, age, gender and power dynamics impact on the meaning children attribute to consumption.

The first of these five segments, *the protected child consumer*, analyses how adults attempt to protect children from consumption. Such protection is manifested in various behaviours e.g. by shielding children from consumption values or controlling children's consumption to protect them from physical harm. This segment, therefore, focuses on child consumption through adult eyes.

The second segment, *the resistant child consumer*, is in many ways the opposite of the protected child consumer. This segment concentrates on how children deal with consumption and adult control. In an attempt to exercise more freedom, children find themselves rebelling, sometimes in very subtle ways, through consumption. Therefore, these first two segments deal with the (asymmetrical) power relationship between adults and children and how this is manifested in consumption. In many respects the childhood studies literature can be criticised for over-privileging the child view of the world. That is to say, adults sometimes disappear in the childhood studies literature. However, adults are a necessary feature of children's lives; at least in the manner in which the Western world is structured. Some authors (e.g. Mayall, 2002) have called for a study of childhood which analyses the relations between adults and children. Therefore, one of the virtues of this thesis is that it helps overcome some critiques of childhood studies.

The third segment, *the communicative child consumer*, addresses moments when children use consumption as a form of communication. In this segment children convey through consumption something about themselves, whether it be identity, emotions or concerns.

The fourth segment is *the gendered child consumer*. The findings indicated that gender powerfully frames children's everyday interactions, choices and discourse surrounding consumption. Whilst gender constitutes an important aspect of identity, it soon became clear that gender was sufficiently complex to warrant a segment in itself.

The final segment, *the independent developing child consumer*, approaches consumption in childhood from a slightly different angle. In this segment, how children talk about marketing, is examined. That is, the manner in which children demonstrate they understand, are knowledgeable and experienced in the world of marketing. Here, children are keen to demonstrate how they become increasingly independent in the world of consumption.

Now the five segments have been introduced, the links between the ingredients and the segments can be examined. The process of analysing the data revealed that the relative importance of the ingredients varied in each segment. To illustrate this, Table 5.2 provides an overview of how the ingredients (rituals, symbols, power and identity) are represented in each segment.

Table 5.2 The representation of cultural expressions in each child consumer segment

Consumer segments Cultural Expressions	Protected child consumer	Resistant child consumer	Communicative child consumer	Gendered child consumer	Independent developing child consumer
Rituals	●	●●	●●	●●	●
Symbols	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●
Power	●●●	●●●	●	●●	●●●
Identity	●	●●	●●●	●●●	●●

- Little evidence of this cultural expression in the child consumer segment
- Some evidence of this cultural expression in the child consumer segment
- Much evidence of this cultural expression in the child consumer segment

The dots represent the relative importance of individual ingredients in the child consumer segments. For instance, in the protected child consumer it is clear that symbols and power are the most important ingredients as these each have three dots. It should be further pointed out (as discussed in Part One and Figure 5.1) that symbols proved to be central to all of the segments. This explains why symbols are represented with three dots in each of the child consumer segments.

It can be seen therefore, that the table is a visual overview of how the cultural expressions are manifested in the child consumer segments. Thus the segments are pieced together with a complex mix of the cultural expressions. Now that the second part of the analytic framework has been introduced, the first segment - the protected child consumer – will now be discussed.

5.8 The protected child consumer segment

Throughout the entire ethnographic process, children as protected consumers surfaced as a key issue time and time again. Given that children are less powerful and, therefore, more vulnerable than adults, it comes as no surprise that this is manifested in consumption. Yet it was clear from the data that what children actually were being

protected from depended greatly on age, background, product groupings and individual values as will be seen. This section commences with findings pertaining to parental³⁸ attitudes to consumption in general. It examines different parental approaches to the world of consumption and how some adults are reluctant to give children more consumption autonomy. Furthermore, this section also discusses the role of consumption in protecting children from actual bodily and psychological harm.

5.8.1 Children as protected consumers

Interviews and conversations with parents, teachers and children demonstrated that children's consumption is a process of negotiation. However, the data indicated that both children and adults attempt to find inventive strategies to take control and even *avoid* such negotiations - as will become apparent throughout this section.

Children are often displayed as demanding individuals who are obsessed with consumption and manipulated by marketing (Cook, 2005; Seiter, 1993). Parents, on the other hand, are frequently depicted as losing control of children. Whilst this tends to be passed off as fact, little has been done to analyse the process of negotiation/control/struggle which goes on between children and adults surrounding consumption. The findings from this ethnography indicate that, at its most basic, children want to gain control over their lives – including consumption. Furthermore, adults (especially parents) have a tendency to want to *keep* control over children. Yet, the level of control over children's consumption proved to differ amongst parents. In the following passage one mother does not want her five-year-old son to be introduced to the idea of wanting/asking for consumer goods:

Anna: I just think he wants and asks all the time cause he just thinks that, I remember, he was hardly even two and his grandmother ehmm, put down the Argos book and said: "Show me something that you like". Oh please!! (meaning it was ridiculous)

...

Anna: He wants all the time but he wants because his grandparents ask him: "What do you want for your birthday?" and I don't...Bob wants to totally ruin him at birthday time. He's talking about motorised motorbikes and stuff like that and I get annoyed because, you know, there was three of us and maybe we didn't have as much as that, but I can't stop it I suppose.

Interview, parent, M, SN, 10/10/02

³⁸ The term parent(s) is here used to encompass parents and guardians.

Here Anna, John's mother is concerned that she cannot shield her son from the world of consumption. She feels a sense of losing control and blames it on other adults around her. Furthermore, the fact that Anna perceives her own upbringing and identity as being less materialistic impacts on what she wants for her son. Yet, her husband Bob and his parents are much more inclined to open up the world of consumption to John and thus Anna finds herself in conflict with other significant adults in John's life. Moreover, Anna's concern about consumption impacts on how she sees other children. In the following passage she is talking of John's cousin, who is eight years old.

He's (John's cousin) been like that since he was wee. He wants to see the brand.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Anna: It's horrific...As long as the ignorance (of consumption) can stay I'm happy.

Interview, parent, M, SN, 10/10/02

It is clear that Anna has strong concerns over consumption and wants to use her power as a parent to ensure that Ben does not construct an identity which is overly materialistic – even if it means her son is ignorant. Thereby, Anna actually wants to avoid negotiating with Ben altogether with regards to consumption. Whilst Anna's concern is pertaining to consumption in general, adult concern may be directed towards specific products – clothing for instance. This was particularly an issue for older girls who were increasingly interested in fashion. These girls frequently found that parents did not have the same opinion of what was suitable to wear, as we see from the examples below:

Valerie: And the wee straps an' it was like a jacket thing that fitted over the top with a fur collar and knee length boots. And she came down and she said "I think this is what I'm wearing mum". I says, I think not Julie...But it was a thing that was on the television that I was watching. It was ehh, about kids dressing too old.

Interview, parent, P6, F, NPS, 31/1/03

Carlie: But my mum makes me always wear school shoes and I hate school shoes.

Interviewer: I see. So would you rather wear something else?

Carlie: Yeah, I'd rather wear trainers but she doesn't like me wearing trainers.

Interview, P6, F, WPS, 15/5/03

In the first passage Valerie is concerned about the symbolic nature of clothing and how old it can make Julie look. Therefore, she perceives herself to be protecting Julie for safety reasons. In the second passage however, the conflict Carlie has with her mother is of a different nature. The two disagree over what are appropriate shoes for school and Carlie finds herself being frustrated over not being permitted to wear trainers. Similar

conflicts with parents were mentioned by several of the (P6) girls, from both schools, who found it most frustrating that they had to wear school uniforms. Many of them wanted to construct their self-identity by wearing more fashionable clothing but were restricted by parents. Yet it was clear that some parents were more open to negotiation than others. For instance Caitlyn (P6) compromised with her mother and wore her school jumper *underneath* her GAP top (Interview, P6, F, WPS, 17/6/03).

Protection for reasons of safety aside, it soon became clear that adults could be grouped into *consumption resisters* or *consumption acceptors*³⁹. In other words, those who were consumption resisters steered their children away from consumerism and felt a general unease at observing consumption values in children. Whilst consumption is a necessary feature of life, resisters attempted to keep children's consumption at a level they perceived to be acceptable/necessary. On the other hand, those who were consumption acceptors did not actively oppose material culture. They accepted that consumption was inextricably embedded in everyday life and that children should/would naturally access the world of consumption. In the following passages three mothers display different strategies for dealing with food consumption by their nursery-aged children:

Trisha: So a lot of the time I'll go for what I know they'll eat anyway, rather than, I just want an easy life... so I guess sometimes you think, oh we're eating it. They should really eat everything we're eating but you want an easy life so sometimes you don't. You think, there's no way they're really going to enjoy this then, you know, salad and whatever else we've got beside it. So we'll give them an alternative, you know.

Interview, parent, M, SN, 7/10/02

Anna: We'll not get cereal just because there's a toy in it... We don't discuss what John's having for a meal. He has food put down.

Interview, parent, M, SN, 10/10/02

Katrina: I can say that we have at times (purchased cereals with gifts inside the packet) bought the cereal, after having a fuss in the supermarket.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Katrina: Then ehh, then he (her son William) doesn't eat it and then you have to go and give it to somebody else.

Interview, parent, M, SN, 17/9/02

In the first of the passages Trisha indicates a consumption acceptor attitude, despite feeling she possibly could do more to influence her son's eating. This stands in stark

³⁹ These categories have been set up to illustrate different views of consumption. Some parents were predominantly one or the other, others were in-between whilst many resisted and accepted, depending on the situation/product.

contrast to the second passage where Anna functions as a resistor – maintaining strict control over her son’s eating, thereby leaving little room for negotiation. The third passage lies somewhere in between - Katrina does resist William in the supermarket but agrees to purchase the cereal in the end. It was obvious from the research that food is highly significant in child-parent interaction. Firstly, what children eat is vital to their health, wellbeing and ultimate survival. Furthermore, mealtimes frequently constitute family rituals and shared consumption. That is to say, much of the time families consume the same food - eating together at mealtimes. This stands in contrast to clothing, toys and other possessions which tend to be personal items. Given the significance of food it can, therefore, be a source of power battles between parents and children.

Another major form of consumption which parents wanted to protect children from was the media. Many children explained that they had restrictions on television viewing with regard to what and how much they were permitted to watch. There proved to be two main factors which influenced the degree to which children were protected from the media: children’s age and family values/concerns over the media in general. The following passages illustrate these points:

Interviewer: So why does your mum not like you watching too much TV?

Carlie: Well, we’ve got a very big garden so she thinks we should use it more...

Interview, P6, F, WPS, 10/6/03

Christine: Some films that Jimmy (P5) wants to see we don’t let Lucy (P2) watch because she’s only six and we think well, it’s okay for him to watch James Bond, it’s not okay for her.

Interview, parent, P2, F, WPS, 24/6/03

In most parent interviews television emerged as an important concern. Those who expressed the strongest views with regard to the media tended to resist consumer culture. Furthermore, resistors were more likely to protect children by regulating their viewing habits. The television was blamed for children’s requests for consumer goods and for opening up their world to a range of issues such as ritual behaviour (sleepovers). As one mother indicated: *This sleepover’s an American thing. They’ve got that from the television, definitely.* (Interview, parent, P6, NPS, 31/1/03). Therefore, it is clear that for parents the media proved to be one of the most significant elements of consumer society that children needed protection from.

As children mature, they are granted more freedom and are less supervised. Interestingly, parents themselves – even resisters, used consumption as a means of staying in control of children. From parental interviews it emerged that parents felt more at ease when they were able to contact their children and vice versa. Therefore, most (P6) children and some younger (nursery, P2/3) children had been given mobile telephones:

Valerie: Yeah. And they have, well they've both got mobiles now. They got mobiles at Christmas...It was something I was in two minds about but it was for the safety aspect of it...

Interview, parent, P6, F, NPS, 31/1/03

However, children's increased autonomy can lead to parents feeling a sense of losing control – this was reflected on a few occasions in interviews with parents. As children grew older and were ever more exposed to agents of socialization, parents were less in control of their children's consumption desires and consumption habits. For instance, children may be given presents by other people. One mother explained how she was against toys associated with war/killing. Despite this, her son had received Action Man and guns for his birthday. Parents, are therefore, not always able to control the symbols associated with gift-giving rituals.

We have seen that adults may use consumption to protect children from danger. However, the data indicated that offering consumer goods to children can be used as yet another form of negotiation, namely incentives. Several children spoke of receiving gifts if they had behaved well. Thus parents use consumer goods to regulate children's behaviour (e.g. behaving well, getting good grades) and remain in control of children and their consumption. During an interview it emerged that one mother had concerns that her daughter did not eat a varied diet, as the extract shows:

Evelyn: I wouldn't say she's spoilt but if we think her behaviour's been good enough or you know...she's not a great eater. If she's been eating all her dinners, then a little thing as an incentive to keep her going.

Interviewer: So what do you mean she's not a great eater?

Evelyn: She eats chips, all the time...You know, she had them for breakfast this morning but that was just to avoid a confrontation.

Interview, parent, P6, F, NPS, 4/2/03

Here we see that Evelyn is sufficiently concerned about Miriam's eating habits (and therefore, her health) that she is offered incentives for eating dinner. However, as she

later points out, meal times can involve confrontations, so much so that Miriam is given chips for breakfast.

5.8.2 Conclusion

The discussion of the protected child consumer has raised several issues. It is clear that consumption is heavily embedded in children's protection. In the first instance, most parents indicated to a greater/lesser degree that children need to be protected from consumption. Therefore, parental attitudes towards consumption in childhood were grouped into resisters and acceptors. Furthermore, the need adults felt to shield children from materialism may be linked to childhood being viewed as the age of innocence. However, consumption was also viewed as important in children's physical safety; therefore, adults actively used consumer goods as a *means* of protection (e.g. mobile phones). Therefore, in the context of the protected child consumer, adults both oppose consumption and utilise consumption.

5.9 The resistant child consumer

The next segment to be discussed is the resistant child consumer segment which, in many ways constitutes the opposite consumer behaviour of the previous section. Here the focus is on resistant consumer behaviour where children challenge adults *against* being protected. It became clear that children strive to gain control and this is manifested in their consumer values and choices. Therefore, there are times when consumption becomes instrumental in resisting adult authority as will be seen throughout the findings. This section commences by looking at the rituals of resistance children engage in. Furthermore, it will examine how children stay within certain boundaries to maintain a degree of freedom. Consequently, children find other more subtle ways of using consumption to resist – this will be examined in the final part of this section.

5.9.1 Children as resistant consumers

On a daily basis children's movements are heavily controlled by adult agendas – this is rarely more evident than in institutional settings. Rules are established and spaces constructed to ensure children are managed at all times. Very frequently the data

demonstrated that children are not free to construct identities of their choosing through consumption. They are frequently constrained by adult-constructed boundaries and what these adults deem to be “appropriate” consumption for their children. Concepts such as “pester power” (Boden et. al., 2004), and the like, appear in academic and popular press to signify children’s power in badgering adults for consumer goods. However, the danger with such labelling is that, in many cases, children’s lack of power in determining their own consumption is actually overlooked.

Notwithstanding such arguments, within the school context the playground as a more informal dimension of school life gives children space to work at constructing their own cultures. Whilst adults channel much effort into shaping children’s identities, children themselves often find ingenious ways of resisting power. Drawing on the consumer goods at their disposal, children develop their own rituals, attribute their own meanings to consumption symbols, and actively shape their own identities. It is such moments that the resistant child consumer segment represents.

Throughout the study it became clear that children in this segment are bonded together as a group against adults. They actively resist adult power by means of their consumption choices. Other times, the resistance is so compelling that it can only be characterized as rebellion. Therefore, the degree of resistance and the role of consumption in strategies of resistance varied. Furthermore, strategies of resistance were rather different between the age groups. That is to say, with age children became increasingly rebellious and fascinated with anti-authority.

An examination of rituals showed clearly that these served different purposes for the children; however, some rituals were particularly valued due to their rebellious nature. One popular event amongst the two older age groups was sleepovers. Through interviews it emerged that for some parents sleepovers were a source of irritation. Sleepovers, parents argued, created extra work; children stayed up very late leaving less space for family time at weekends. Nevertheless, for the children (P2/P3 age group in particular), sleepovers were immensely exciting as they presented opportunities to resist adult rules and engage in unauthorized behaviour. Central to sleepover ritual was staying-up late and having food such as sweets, popcorn, crisps and pizza. During sleepover ritual there proved to be a particular focus on *mid-night feasts*, as in the extract below:

Interviewer: Beth, why do people have sleepovers?

Nena: Because they want people to sleepover and they want to have parties and have midnight feasts when their parents don't know about it.

Fieldnotes, P2, F, WPS, 12/5/03

Such feasts took place late at night and sometimes involved sneaking to the kitchen and eating from the fridge whilst parents were asleep. The passage above indicates that the meaning children attributed to food transformed during sleepover ritual performance. This means that the context of the sleepover proved highly significant to how children constructed symbolic meanings associated with food. Essentially, food became symbolic of resistance; therefore, children favoured relatively unhealthy foods which were not normally encouraged by adults.

Swapping possessions was another ritual of resistance where children developed their own market places in the food hall or the playground. In doing so, the children resisted the authority of parents who had previously purchased the items. Children ignored the market prices of the adult world and themselves bargained over their worth. Having power over their own possessions away from parents (who had purchased the items), children were keen to bargain for other items they desired more. Swapping, therefore, essentially became a substitute for financial resources where children could bargain with the food resources they had been given.

Yet, whilst children are keen to break free from adult power and exert more control over their lives, they are fully aware that there are certain boundaries beyond which they should not go. In other words, resisting too much can result in loss of power, fewer liberties or even punishment. In the following passage Duncan explains the importance of gaining trust and thus taking decisions for oneself:

Duncan: When I'm in P7 I'll probably be, I think I might be going on the bus to the high school so then I can tell my mum, when I'm in high school I could tell my mum that I'm going out somewhere afterwards...then after school you could bring like, your swim stuff to school and then after school you could just have a swim in the pool...

Interviewer: So it sounds like to me, that what you are saying is, when you go into first year you're going to have a bit more independence and stuff.

Duncan: Yeah.

Russell: You get more trust. Trust to do things.

Interview, P6, M, WPS, 10/6/03

Therefore, having to control their resistance children find alternative methods of breaking free from adult ideas of appropriate consumption. The findings indicated that one particular strategy of resistance for the children is music consumption. This applied to children in P6 but less so to the P2/P3 group. The children explained how their music taste was different from that of their parents – often describing their parents’ taste in music as old-fashioned or even non-existent. The P6 group, both girls and boys, showed a particular fascination with rebellious heroes, and the rapper Eminem was idolized by most of the children from both schools.

Russell: But I'm not allowed like, Eminem because my brother and sister they're really young and they can like, when I'm away cause I'm out a lot, they just...one time, I used to have it, but they came into my room and started playing it. Cause we used to share a room. Now I've got a room on my own but ehmm he was like, my mum came in and he [Eminem] was like swearing and stuff.

I: Mmmm.

Russell: So my mum took it away.

Duncan: You must have had a right go at your brother after that.

Russell: Yeah.

Interview, P6, M, WPS, 10/6/03

Neil: He's [Eminem] actually quite a nice person. Everybody thinks he's bad/

Thomas: Cause he swears.

Neil: Cool and he swears.

Interview, P6, M, WPS, 28/5/03

According to the children one of the hallmarks of rebellion is swearing. They are fully aware that adults disapprove strongly of such language. In the first passage Russell’s mother confiscated a CD after hearing Eminem swearing – much to Russell’s annoyance. The focus in the latter passage is again on Eminem swearing. Neil’s last remark indicates that Eminem swearing only serves to increase the cool factor associated with the rapper. Therefore, in adopting heroes who are rebellious children consume music (and associated symbols) as strategies of resistance. In other words, most children (in the age groups studied) are unlikely to be as rebellious as Eminem. However, by consuming Eminem, they are essentially resisting adult power through such heroes. Whilst children admire rebellious heroes, they go further and find ways to consume rebellious artefacts/styles, as in the following extract:

Interviewer: How would you describe someone who's cool?... What would they be wearing for instance?

Callum: You swagar

Interviewer: What's that?

Callum: You're hard walking. (demonstrates with upper body).

Joshua: Chains
Interviewer: Oh like here (I point to trousers)
James: The High School people have that.
Joshua: Mohechans (hairstyle)
Callum: You'd have new stuff – like new 'hings that are ore oot.
Joshua: Swearing badges.
Interviewer: Is that out now?
Callum: Yeah
Joshua: And it's got swear words on it.
Interview, P6, M, NPS, 31/1/03

For these boys it is clear that language is intimately linked to resistance but so too is clothing. Wearing chains, having certain haircuts and body movement are all part of constructing an identity which is cool. Furthermore, in the above extract swearing moved from being a word to a material consumer good (badge). Therefore, it is clear that there are times when it was important for children to visibly display anti-adult ideas of appropriate childhood identities.

Whilst visible resistance (e.g. in the form of clothing and style) constituted one strategy of exercising power, children adopted other strategies to control their own lives. For instance on one occasion one of the children showed the researcher a book called, “How to manage your parents”. The book, which segmented parents into various “parent types”, offered a strategy for successfully controlling parents. On another occasion, school elections were held to vote for two child representatives for the school council (Fieldnotes, NPS, 26/11/02). Notwithstanding the fact that adults had “given” children the power to hold such an election, the campaign still revealed that children consider some rules wrong/unfair – especially with respect to the freedom they have over consumption at school. Therefore, election promises made by child candidates included; getting more footballs, getting proper goals, music for the dinner hall, no uniforms, being permitted to bring bikes to school, mobile phones being permitted in school, improving the toilets.

It is evident that many of the election promises were consumption-related. The majority of these points involve consumption as a factor children considered would improve their school life at NPS. No such election took place during the period the researcher was at WPS. However, it is worth pointing out that the requests were symptomatic of the lack of resources at NPS as opposed to WPS, which was a well resourced school.

So far it is clear that children use consumer goods as strategies of resistance and construct/attribute their own meanings to consumer goods – often quite different from what adults would like. Furthermore, it has been shown that children deliberately enjoy, choose and admire consumption which adults may find rebellious and distasteful. However, another feature of children’s resistance is when they attribute meanings to consumption which are quite different to what the marketing profession (and therefore, adults) intended.

At home, at school and in the media, traditional gender stereotypes are reproduced by means of gender appropriate toys, colours, clothing, hairstyles etc. Yet, children find ways of resisting stereotypes forced upon them – sometimes to the irritation of adults and other children. For instance, Fergus from the pre-school room (SN) enjoyed playing with toys targeted at girls (e.g. Barbie dolls, fairies) as well as toys associated with boys (e.g. superman, power ranger). During play Fergus found ways of constructing his own consumption meanings by merging different cultural meanings, as in the following statement:

Fergus came up to me and asked me to retie his cloak. Underneath he was wearing a dress. He said he was a super girl hero.

Interviewer: Why are you a super girl hero?

Fergus: Because I want to.

Fieldnotes, SN, M, 21/6/02

It is clear that Fergus resists stereotypes and uses consumption to express his interest in toys aimed at boys and girls. Fergus challenges traditional ideas of the male super hero and constructs what he calls a super girl hero. Consumer goods given to children are representative of adult values and ideas of what constitutes appropriate childhood identities. Furthermore, one of the key aims of such consumer goods, (especially toys) is to function as socializing agents whereby children learn the culture. Yet, it emerged from the data that children continuously choose to appropriate consumption symbols into their cultures and transform the meanings originally intended by adults. The following example illustrates how the meaning of an advertisement for KitKat was transformed amongst a group of children:

Hannah: It’s really funny... have you seen the salmon ad where the salmon keeps on trying to swim up the fish ladder and then it [the advert] says “Don’t be a salmon! Take a break. Have a KitKat”.

Interviewer: Yeah, I seen that one.

Hannah: So my sister's friend loves that ad and she is always saying "Don't be a salmon!" And it was her birthday last week so we bought her like a toy salmon.

Fieldnotes, P6, F, WPS, 24/4/03

In this passage Hannah's sister's friend has adopted advertising discourse into her everyday interactions with others to the extent that the advert becomes associated with her. The symbolic meaning of the advertisement has been transformed and moved away from KitKat to the salmon. She has used the catchphrase to such an extent that her friends assist her in constructing an identity around the advert by purchasing a toy salmon. This example illustrates children's agency in constructing meanings quite different to those intended by adults. Whilst such transformation of meaning may not amount to serious rebellion against adult power, it does highlight that children refuse to accept adults imposing meanings on them.

5.9.2 Conclusion

Throughout this section it has become clear that children use consumption to resist adult power. Sometimes their strategies of resistance are more visible than other times; however, the findings have shown that resistance is a fundamental feature of being a child in a heavily adult dominated world. Furthermore, we have seen that children do not readily accept the cultural meanings associated with many consumer goods and collectively and individually construct different meanings. Some strategies of resistance are so rebellious that they pose too much risk for the children. Therefore, children dilute their resistance through heroes that dare to rebel.

5.10 The communicative child consumer segment

Two segments of child consumers have been examined so far: the protected and the resistant child consumer, both of whom are closely associated with the power relationship between children and adults (see also 5.2). With regard to the communicative child consumer this third segment concentrates more on consumption as a vehicle for communicating with others - especially other children. Therefore, child/adult relations are featured less in this section. Rather, the focus is on how children of all ages use/distance themselves from consumer goods as objects of communication. This section commences by examining the importance of consumption as a communicator of age, interests etc. Furthermore, it will highlight how children are

highly competent interpreters of consumption – including that which is less relevant to them, adult consumption for instance. The section ends by discussing examples where some children disagree on the meaning of various consumer goods.

5.10.1 Children as communicative consumers

The communicative child consumer is acutely aware of the meaning of consumer goods. They use consumption as an important medium to communicate with others. In this sense, consumption is used to display and be open about feelings, affiliations, personal experience and identity. Therefore, through the process of consumption, children attribute meaning to consumer goods in various contexts whereby they become objects of communication. This means that consumption is used symbolically to express a wide range of concerns, including power, identity and act-out rituals.

During the study it soon became clear that children's cultures abound with examples of the expressive nature of objects. Moreover, children's awareness of the communicative role of consumption starts at an early age. In this respect, consumer goods are used to display matters of age, gender⁴⁰, interests, hobbies, relationships, concerns and emotions. The sharing ritual at nursery is a prime example of personal expression. Sharing time was so highly valued by the children precisely because they were able to communicate something about themselves to the other children. As children mature, they take in vast amounts of information about the world while they are going through the difficult process of learning to be themselves – constructing who they are. Consequently, children seek security, stability and belonging, to counteract the challenges of childhood. In this sense, consumer goods become instrumental in constructing identities which are acceptable to others.

The children in this study had firm ideas of age appropriate consumption, which proved to be a crucial factor in the communicative child consumer segment. Therefore, the link between consumer goods and age was of great concern to the children as they did not want to appear “babyish”. The children had strong views on this and being told their consumption choices were babyish proved to be painful remarks. For instance Ester was

⁴⁰ Consumer goods are important communicators for gender. However, gender, as a key issue in children's consumer cultures, will be addressed in the separate gendered child consumer segment.

most upset when she was teased for wearing Barbie trainers, which were considered “babyish” (Fieldnotes, P6, F, NPS, 21/1/03).

Not surprisingly, in all three age groups the children’s interest in specific consumer goods changed with age. As they developed physically and mentally, they perceived themselves to be more mature. Consequently, various brand characters, toys, television programmes and music went from being desirable to boring, babyish or simply uncool. This is precisely the case in the following two passages:

Trisha: He (Peter) started just to think it (Bob the builder) was babyish. So I don't know if it was the type of cartoon, you know sort of, storyline that it was that he just started himself to think it was babyish.

Interview, parent, M, SN, 7/10/02

Christine: He (Jimmy, P5) will still watch Winnie the Pooh things with her (Lucy, P2) but, you know if his friends ever found out he would kill me.

Interview, parent, P2, F, WPS, 18/6/02

In the first passage, Peter (pre-school) perceives Bob the Builder to be babyish and his interest has turned to Action Man. In the second passage however, Christine explains how Jimmy still enjoys watching Winnie the Pooh, yet he is acutely aware of how this may be perceived by his friends. Therefore, children may wish to conceal some aspects of their consumption in order to avoid being labelled e.g. “babyish” as in this case. This suggests that there is a private or “secret” facet of children’s consumption.

Consequently, as children balance peer group pressure with personal interests, their public consumption may not always reflect their private desires.

Not surprisingly, the study showed that certain products communicate coolness and status. However, as children aged their perception of cool/status products changed. There were times when the meaning associated with these products transformed from communicating cool to simply being considered necessary items. In the case of mobile phones, the children negotiated boundaries or “time deadlines” so to speak. Therefore, *not* owning a mobile phone could communicate more than actually having one – a point made by Gail in the following passage:

Gail: Well, it's like if you've not got a mobile phone by 2nd year, you're not cool.
Fieldnotes, P6, F, WPS, 27/3/03

In the example above Gail states that to maintain some level of coolness, it is necessary to own a mobile phone by 2nd year. Consequently, for mobile phones the children had constructed clear ideas of the boundaries of cool and uncool consumption.

Yet another important feature of the communicative child consumer segment is the role of consumption in demonstrating one's affiliations/relationships. In other words, children choose to consume as they do to indicate who they identify with, whether it be brand characters, sport celebrities or even friends. Jewellery and clothing proved to be important in this respect. For instance jewellery (necklaces and rings) functioned as a symbolic device to communicate support for specific football teams. In gift-giving rituals the girls sometimes gave "best-friend" necklaces to each other. Such necklaces were split in two, one half being worn by each girl. In these cases, the gift symbolised what one girl felt for the other. Furthermore, by wearing the necklace the two girls communicated to others their best friend relationship – their belongingness to each other.

The children proved to be acutely concerned with selecting consumption to communicate self-identity to others. In this respect, consumer goods were used to communicate features such as being cool, attractive, fashionable, musical, sporty, competent to name but a few. In the following example, Thomas demonstrates that his identity is strongly linked to his ability to build things, most particularly Knex:

Thomas: I've been doing Knex since I was two. I've done over 50 models with no instructions.

Interviewer: Just from your head?

Thomas: Yeah. And if people found Knex in a shop they'd know it was mine.

Fieldnotes, P6, M, WPS, 7/5/03

For Thomas, being able to build a wide range of Knex models symbolizes being competent. Furthermore, Knex in itself came to mean "Thomas" to other people. Therefore, Thomas's links to the construction toy are so strong that people associate Knex with him, even in his absence.

Notwithstanding children's interpretive capabilities as regards their own consumption, the data confirmed that children have insight into the meanings of consumer goods traditionally associated with adults. In many respects children's lives are more integrated into adult worlds, once outside the institutional setting. Therefore, it is not surprising that children have insight into adult consumption and marketing aimed at adults.

Furthermore, such insight serves as important indicators of future behaviour and responsibilities, often referred to as anticipatory socialization (Wærdahl, 2005). Shopping, for instance, was an activity children frequently spoke of as many children regularly went to supermarkets and other retail outlets with parents. Consequently, children's knowledge of the meanings of adult consumer goods was evident even in younger children, as in the following passages:

Interviewer: What is it you like about them [adverts]?

Desmond: I don't know. It's just so you can get good ideas ehmm...to clean your house.

Interview, P2, M, WPS, 2/6/03

Interviewer: So do adverts make you want things, do you think?

Desmond: Yep, and there's some good like, cleaning things that I was telling mummy about but she just goes: "Put them in the bin".

Nigel (father): What cleaning things is that?

Desmond: Like vanishing.

Interview, parent and son, P2, M, WPS, 20/6/03

In the above passages, Desmond considers advertising as informative – also adverts for adult-orientated products. He subsequently advises his mother of suitable house cleaning agents. This shows that children interpret advertising of adult products and have sufficient insight into the workings of the home that they understand product benefits. As in the previous example, the product in question is a functional, everyday, household item. However, the findings in this study indicated that even at a relatively young age children learn the significance of status symbols and associated power. The following conversation between boys in P6 at WPS highlights this point.

Graeme: There's new Porsche, Maserati and Ferrari garages opened at the Culpar shopping centre.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's right I've seen it.

Russell: You could go in and wear a suit and ask for a test-drive.

Interviewer: Yeah that would be fun.

Graeme: You might be able to do that in the Porsche garage but not the Ferrari or Maserati.

Conversation goes on.

Graeme: I wouldn't get a Porsche. It's just another way of saying: Look at me. I'm rich.

Fieldnotes, P6, M, WPS, 18/6/03

In the above passage there are several indicators of children's knowledge of the communicative nature of consumption. Firstly, Russell knows that wearing a suit would signify power and/or wealth and therefore, enable a person to test drive such an

expensive car. Secondly, Graeme distinguishes between the different car makes indicating that a Porsche may not be quite as exclusive as Ferrari or Maserati. Finally, Graeme voices his disapproval of those who use status symbols to display wealth. In this conversation the boys are acutely aware of the communicative nature of clothing and sports cars. Yet they are also critical of the meanings that sport cars generally hold in society. Such critical thinking suggests that children do not necessarily accept or approve of the meanings associated with various consumer goods. Rather, they display critical thinking which indicates that children are not passive recipients of marketing messages, but rather they are able to navigate through an abundance of meanings.

So far, it is clear that children continuously read consumption messages within their own cultures. Furthermore, they are competent interpreters of various consumption messages in adult-orientated products. However, hitherto we have assumed that children agree on the meaning of consumer goods. Yet, children, as adults, are individuals with their own background, agenda, interests, desires and emotions. Therefore, it is not surprising that conflicts or misunderstandings may arise within children's cultures as regards the meaning of consumption. In the following example, the discussion centres on fashion:

Interviewer: So Luke, why are you not into fashion? What is it about fashion that does not interest you?

Luke: Because I don't understand why fashion makes people cool. I just think it makes them look silly.

Interview, P6, M, WPS, 28/5/03

Here Luke is clear that he does not understand why fashion is cool and despite being aware of how other children interpret fashion, he does not agree and rather considers fashion to be "silly". Therefore, Luke understands the communicative nature of fashion but does not share the meanings that others attribute to fashion. However, the children also demonstrated a rejection of the consumption meanings communicated through advertising of specific products. In the following passage, a P6 boy rejects the meaning communicated in Mars adverts (the traditional slogan of the adverts being "A Mars a day helps you work, rest and play"):

Duncan: This [apple] is healthy for me. A Mars a day keeps the dentist away...from his house.

Fieldnotes, P6, M, WPS, 27/3/03

In the above example Duncan has adapted the slogan and transformed the meaning to signify how unhealthy Mars chocolate bars are. That is to say, the dentist becomes so busy working because of the tooth decay which Mars bars can cause. It is clear therefore, that children do not passively accept consumption meanings. Rather, they appropriate meanings into their culture and when these conflict with their self-identity and their understanding of the world, they may choose to reject or modify messages to fit in with who they are.

5.10.2 Conclusion

Throughout this section it has been demonstrated that children use consumption to communicate with others. Children are acutely aware of the meanings attributed to consumption and interpret other people and their interactions through consumption messages. Therefore, consumption is used by children to communicate a range of factors such as identity (for instance age, gender), interests and concerns. Furthermore, children also make sense of the adult world through consumption. Yet, the data indicated that children may disagree or reject meanings that others associate with consumption – and construct their own. This suggests that children are active interpreters of meaning and do not readily accept meaning thrust upon them by adults, the marketing profession, or other children. Therefore, one can conclude that whilst it is debatable whether consumption constitutes a language of communication as such, it seems undisputable that, in the context of other signifiers, the sign value of consumer goods is extremely powerful.

5.11 The gendered child consumer segment

Children's consumer behaviour is mediated through a whole host of factors; gender being only one of them. Whilst gender constitutes an important primary identity, the data revealed that gender is significantly important in children's cultures of consumption to warrant a segment in itself. Consequently, gender will be examined as a separate child consumer segment, providing a more detailed analysis. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that gender is a theme which emerges in a whole host of consumption situations – including the other child consumer segments.

In the preceding section, there was a discussion of the sign value of consumer goods and how these are used by children to communicate a range of issues. In this respect, one of the most enduring issues that children communicate in their cultures of consumption is that of gender. The discussion starts with the youngest age group and looks at how they relate to/choose/prefer consumer goods in terms of gender. Furthermore, this section examines how children deal with others who do not consume gender-“appropriate” items. Lastly, the issue of power and gender in the context of consumption is addressed.

5.11.1 Children as gendered consumers

Gender is a primary identity for children; that is to say, it is one of the first identities that children construct for themselves. Consequently, gender is likely to be a relatively stable identity throughout life (Jenkins, 1996). However, the issue of gender involves more than identity. Gender is manifested in children’s cultures of consumption in a multitude of ways. It is visible in power dynamics, in rituals, in play and discourse, to name but a few. Therefore, it is not surprising that children’s consumption proved to be strongly linked to gender. In this sense, consumer goods confirm or deny gender; they reinforce gender and construct gender. However, the data indicated that the issue of gender in children’s cultures of consumption is not this straightforward. Gender is not a static construct, as such, which shapes all of children’s consumption. Gender is dynamic and moulded according to context. Yet different contexts, objects, people and places shape and influence the fluidity of gender boundaries. That is to say, sometimes gender is crucial; other times it is less relevant. Furthermore, as will be discussed, not all children conform to stereotypical ideas of gender roles. Nevertheless, it is clear from the data that consumer goods frequently function as important resources in the construction of gender identity.

The data revealed that even at an early age children have clear ideas of gender-appropriate consumption behaviour. This means that children’s gender consciousness is manifested in their consumption from a young age. The nursery children in this study proved to have assumed cultural knowledge on which toys were for girls and which were for boys. Statements such as, “*All girls like Barbies*” or “*Action men are for boys*” were common and expressed by both sexes. Assertions like these are generalisations where children conclude that all girls like Barbies and, therefore, being a girl entails liking Barbie. Here, girls and boys are defining themselves in relation to each other. When

questioned by the researcher as to why girls and boys like certain toys, the children reported gender appropriate consumption as some form of ultimate truth – not to be questioned. For instance, in the case of Barbie: *“Because girls like them, they just do”*. (Fieldnotes, M, SN, 22/5/02). Therefore, the children frequently displayed strong ideas of suitable possessions for girls and boys.

Statements like those above concerning the nature of girls and boys in relation to consumption were not uncommon and were made with such conviction. Consequently, it would be easy to lose sight of the children that did not fit the standard images which children held of gender-appropriate consumption. However, the data indicated that there were children who did not comply with the norm – if the above statements are to be understood as some type of norm. These will be returned to later.

Despite observing strong ideas of gender-appropriate consumption amongst nursery children, it was clear that the dynamics of children’s play changed entirely when moving from indoors to outdoors. They played in larger groups, activities were more physical (e.g. running, jumping, looking for insects, playing with balls) and the mix between girls/boys was greater. Therefore, it would appear that the spaces created by adults inside contribute to constructing social barriers between genders.

Many consumer goods are considered by children to be relatively gender neutral e.g. jigsaws, bikes and animals. At the nursery, this was obvious in how the children played. Gender neutral toys attracted both boys and girls whereas other areas of the nursery (the home corner for instance) tended to be dominated by *either* girls or boys. Consequently, a range of products such as clothes, brand characters, colours, and toys had by this stage been categorised by children as either feminine or masculine. Such categories were found to be reinforced by adults whom children are surrounded by. In this respect parents would frequently apply gender stereotyped labels to describe their children, as in the following passages:

Elaine: She’s still not got past that “everything’s got to be bright pink please”, you know, she’s pretty girly.

Interview, parent, F, SN, 29/8/02

Angela: She (Emma) had a pair of, my sister bought her a pair of denim jeans and they were just plain, nothing on them and she wouldn’t wear it. Thought they were boys’. She loves girly things, pink and sparkly.

Interview, parent, F, SN, 12/10/02

In both of these examples the girls are described as “girly” based on the consumer goods that they prefer. Furthermore, the second passage demonstrates that Emma not only likes stereo-typed feminine items, but distances herself from products associated with boys. This finding is consistent with many other children, especially in the two younger age groups, who generally avoided consuming products which communicated the “wrong” gender.

Whilst the data so far has portrayed stereotypical ideas of gender appropriate consumption, it was evident that some children did not adhere to conventional gender roles. Some children could be classed as in-between i.e. not displaying strong gender preferences in their choice of toys. Others preferred consumer goods aimed at the opposite sex. One boy in particular at the nursery, Fergus, loved dressing up, playing in the home corner (where boys rarely played) and taking on female roles (e.g. as princess). This met with some resistance among the children, both girls and boys, who reminded him that boys do not wear dresses (Fieldnotes, SN, 24/06/02). Yet, girls in general were more likely to transcend traditional gender boundaries than boys. That is to say, there was greater tolerance towards girls who engaged in gender “inappropriate” behaviour. Furthermore, they did not face the same discipline from other children as boys did.

One of the most striking features amongst boys in the younger age groups (pre-school and P2/3) was the intense revulsion many of them showed towards what they perceived to be feminine products. They distanced themselves from everything they considered “girly” in what has also been termed rituals of pollution (Thorne, 1993). In other words, girls’ things were treated as if they were contaminated. In the following example the interviewer asked Davie what television programmes he liked. Upon listing a few he then said:

Davie: Everything except (mentions the name of a programme).

Interviewer: What was that?

Davie: It’s a girlie programme.

Interviewer: Why do you not like it?

Davie: Cause it’s a girly thing. It’s got big hearts on it.

Ethen: Barbie’s and dolls is the most thing I hate. If I got one for Christmas, I would saw the head off.

Interview, P3, M, NPS, 18/12/02

This utter disgust with “girly” consumer goods was mirrored at WPS where the boys on several occasions spoke of destroying Barbie dolls. Therefore, it is clear that the need for these boys to distance themselves from items perceived to be overly feminine is expressed in their dislike for such consumer goods. The girls were much less extreme in their attitude to boys and would occasionally describe boys as “yuk”, “minging” or similar statements. Nevertheless, gender boundaries proved to change according to context. Outside school, the divisions between girls and boys were less marked. One mother explained that there were no other boys her son’s age (P3) in their neighbourhood. Consequently, her son Paul would agree to games such as skipping – games he generally considered too girly and would not play at school. So, to some extent Paul modified the boundaries of what play he was willing to engage in - compared to how he played in other settings (Interview, parent, P2, M, NPS, 5/2/03).

In the oldest age group (P6), the boys and girls were much less extreme in their perception of boys’ and girls’ things. They appeared to interact in a more relaxed fashion toward each other yet, at the same time, they were forming girlfriend/boyfriend relationships. Such relationships were often expressed in gift-giving rituals, where girls gave presents to their boyfriend. Many consumer objects of interest to this age group are *relatively* gender neutral such as CDs, mobile telephones, stereos and sports clothing. Obviously, there are gender variations in these products. For instance boys and girls displayed different musical taste, bought different sports clothing, etc. However, by this age, children are more alike as consumers than younger age groups.

Nevertheless, in the P6 age groups there were still some clear boundaries in relation to gender and consumer behaviour, albeit the boundaries were less rigid than with younger groups. For instance, girls were interested in sport and boys increasingly attentive of their appearance. In both schools many of the boys were acutely concerned with their hair, some of them refusing to go to school without hair grooming products, as in the following passage:

Richard: I'd bother if my hair was all sticking up and no gel... I'd rather stay at home. I'd say to my mum 'could you keep me home today'

Richard and Greg: You'd get slagged.

Interview, P6, M, NPS, 13/12/02

Frequently, such focus on appearance is associated with girls. Yet, from the above example it is clear that to these boys hair is an important aspect of how they, as males,

present themselves to others. Furthermore, as the boys point out themselves, presenting the wrong image can result in negative remarks from others (getting “slagged”). Besides grooming, the boys in this age group also showed a keen interest in clothing and jewellery. However, it proved vital for the boys to ensure that others did not misinterpret their consumption as anything feminine, as Andrew explained to one of his classmates:

Andrew: I'm wearing my best...no my next best shirt with my chain on it.

Andrew shows me. James comes over.

James: What's that? (points to Andrew's chain)

Andrew: It's a chain.

James: Where you get it?

Andrew: I'm not telling you

James: In Argos?

Andrew: No, in the toon. In a jewellery shop. For laddies! No lassies.

Fieldnotes, P6, M, NPS, 7/2/03

In the passage above, Andrew reveals he does not want his jewellery associated with girls, by stressing that his necklace is designed for boys. Therefore, consuming masculinity is very much an issue for Andrew. Consequently, older boys and girls appear to engage in consumption which is more similar or gender neutral than for younger age groups. However, it is clear that gender is still a key resource in the construction of identity, albeit the way children use consumer goods to define themselves as boys and girls changes with age.

So far, it has been revealed that for certain product groups a large proportion of girls (especially younger girls) prefer feminine stereotyped consumer items. Furthermore, boys (particularly younger boys) are more extreme and disassociate from/are disgusted by feminine objects. On closer examination, such disassociation is partly grounded in the construction of male power. Therefore, even as young children boys use consumption to reproduce gender stereotypes. Throughout the data there was evidence of boys from all three age groups constructing male gender identities of power. That is to say, exerting power and dominance over girls was an aspect of childhood which manifested itself in several ways, not least through consumption. However, the production of male domination and male roles was apparent in other aspects of consumption. Boys in all age groups were keen to present masculinity and male roles as something to be valued over femininity. In the following passage, Fergus and Ben signify the importance of what men do (save people) over what women do (look good):

Fergus has been playing with the Barbie and doing her hair. He is then singing a pop song "Don't stop moving..." (An S Club 7 song). He looks at the Barbie and then says help! pretending it is the Barbie that is talking.

David: (Is holding an Action Man) I know you're a Barbie Fergus but I've got to try and save people.

Fieldnotes, M, SN, 9/8/02

In this example Fergus (who is often disciplined by the other children for playing with female stereotyped toys) and David are both producing stereotypical roles for the Barbie and Action Man. The Barbie is concerned with looks whereas the Action Man is strong and involved in the more important issue of saving people. Therefore, already at this early age children have clear ideas of stereotypical gender roles. Such portrayals of woman as weak were evident in other age groups as well. For instance, when talking about films, the P2/P3 boys were keen to talk about being brave and fearless of horror ("scary") films whilst girls were perceived to be frightened of such films.

In the P6 age group, male domination was more subtle as the boys did not as openly reject girls and their participation in various activities. However, upon closer inspection there was evidence of boys excluding the girls. For example the P6 boys described girls as unknowing with respect to sport (Interview, P6, M, WPS, 10/06/03). Furthermore, in games such as football, the girls were permitted to participate; however, they were rarely if ever given the ball (Fieldnotes, P6, F, WPS, 17/6/03) – much to the girls' frustration. In the case of birthdays, boys only occasionally invited girls to their birthday parties. Girls on the other hand invited boys to *their* parties. Upon questioning the girls why this might be, the following response was given:

Gail: Boys think that if they are seen with girls that they've invited they look uncool but if they're seen with girls that have invited them, then they can say: "Oh they invited me so I had to come".

Interview, P6, F, WPS, 17/6/03

This passage provides some insight into the dynamics between the sexes in the P6 age group – at least from the girls' perspective. It is clear that the boys do not wish to be perceived as weaker i.e. in actually inviting girls to their parties. In other words, they participate with girls in birthday rituals, but only upon being asked to attend. Therefore, from the youngest to the oldest age groups the dynamics between girls and boys changes. However, it is clear that gender remains a key issue in consuming and the production of power roles through consumption.

5.11.2 Conclusion

Throughout this section we have seen that gender is a highly significant aspect of consumer behaviour. Girls and boys have a tendency to prefer toys they associate with their own gender – at least those toys which are gender stereotyped. However, there are a range of objects which are gender neutral and, therefore, when interacting around such consumer goods, gender becomes less important. Furthermore, being boy or being girl matters more in some circumstances than others. The data indicated that spaces influence children's gender relationships – outdoor activities or home versus school setting being two examples. When examining the children's attitudes toward consumer goods targeted at the opposite sex, it is clear that boys in particular distance themselves from feminine products. This is grounded in boys reinforcing power stereotypes and constructing male identities. In this sense, the data found that many boys disassociate with what they perceived to be weakness and the softer values so often attributed to females.

5.12 The independent developing child consumer segment

It has previously been discussed how children strive to become more mature, display competencies and demonstrate how they master certain tasks. Consequently, as key features of children's everyday lives, consumption competencies and consumer independence are critical concerns of growing up. Therefore, children as independent and developing child consumers emerged as a theme in itself. In this respect children are analysed as consumers who become increasingly competent at interpreting and understanding consumer goods, the market place and, not least, the marketing machine. However, the independent developing child consumer is about more than children's understanding of consumption. It is children's own perception of their competencies with regard to consumption. It especially involves children's critical evaluation of marketing – addressing the implied claim in much literature that children are passive recipients of marketing messages.

This section will start off by examining data concerning the youngest age groups and these children's perception of advertising and marketing. It moves on to discussing children's critical views of marketing and how they display their knowledge, competencies and mastering of marketing. Next, it examines the meaning of economic

resources to children. Lastly, it looks at how children develop as consumers and use their independence to consider the positions of other (sometimes less privileged) people.

5.12.1 Children as independent developing consumers

In an attempt to address some of the shortcomings of research to date, the childhood studies literature is concerned with children's agency and has predominantly focused on how children construct their micro cultures. However, as a result, childhood studies has produced a body of research which has paid little attention to how children develop and mature over time. Yet, one can presume that a younger child (with little experience or exposure to consumption) is not likely to have the same understanding of marketing as a child several years his/her senior. It has been reiterated that the primary approach of this thesis is to explore children's lived experience of consumption. Yet, to examine children's developing ideas of consumption over time is still consistent with this approach – whilst it simultaneously addresses some of the criticisms of childhood studies. Therefore, it is clear that this segment fits-in neatly with the underlying philosophies of the childhood studies approach.

With regard to the youngest children, this study found that within the nursery and P2/P3 age groups children's knowledge, understanding and attitude towards advertising varied greatly. Some children proved to be most competent and rather savvy in their understanding of the market place, advertising and its place within the media in general. The data indicated that the nursery (pre-school) children did not display much critical thought towards advertising in their daily interactions. This is not surprising given children's relative inexperience of consumption at this age. However, several were knowledgeable of the purpose of advertising. In the following example from the nursery, the children were watching a video and viewing trailers before the main film commenced:

Interviewer: So what are adverts?

David: They tell you which videos you can rent.

Norman: No, they tell you which video you can buy.

David: Yeah that's right, which ones you can get OR buy.

Fieldnotes, M, SN, 5/7/02

Although the boys do not initially agree on the purpose of the adverts (in the context of a video film), it is clear that they understand that these provide information about other

video choices. Therefore, as this study found, even at pre-school age several children have insight into the purpose of marketing. With respect to the next age group, the children in P2/P3 saw advertising primarily as an entertainment and information source – where one could learn which products were available. Yet there proved to be some difference in the critical attitudes towards marketing in WPS compared to NPS – even in children as young as seven (P2). This may be linked to the variations in socioeconomic backgrounds (most particularly parental level of education) of the two schools; NPS being located in an area which is considerably more deprived. In this sense, it was much more common to hear critical statements pertaining to products, organisations or advertising in WPS. Therefore, some children in P2 (WPS) displayed a critical attitude towards certain aspects of marketing, as in the following passage:

Lesley: We went to McDonalds.

Andreas: McDonalds?

Lesley: To get chicken nuggets.

Andreas: Uoorhhhh. They've got recycled pet food in them.

Lesley: No they don't.

Andreas: They do. I've heard in the newspaper once.

Lesley: Well they taste nice.

Andreas: I know but they've got recycled pet food, d'ju like pet food?...I don't go to McDonalds anymore. I don't like it anymore.

Lesley: But I don't take the toys.

Interview: D'ju not. Why do you not take the toys?

Lesley: I don't know, because they ones that were there, I had hundreds of them already. Betty Spaghetti, but I don't usually play with them anyway.

Interviewer: I see.

Andreas: I know, they don't work.

Interview, P2, M, F, WPS, 19/5/03

In this example Andreas is demonstrating to Lesley that he knows what is really in chicken nuggets. Furthermore, Andreas has decided that he will no longer eat at McDonald's. Towards the end of the passage Lesley and Andreas are both critical of the McDonald's toys, describing them as boring and saying they don't work. Whilst the children are displaying a developing critical ability towards consumption, the passage above reveals some further interesting aspects of children's cultures of consumption. In the first instance Andreas is keen to display knowledge and communicate a critical attitude, demonstrating that he is in control. Later in the extract, the children's scepticism towards McDonald's toys enables them to express experience and a sense of becoming older, wiser and therefore, more mature. Therefore, the children are using consumption experience/knowledge to display control and construct mature identities.

Children in all age groups used retail outlets and advertising (especially television and catalogues) as important references for new and available consumer goods. Furthermore, children acknowledged that one could learn important lessons from advertising (most notably social marketing). For instance, one P6 boy spoke of an advert teaching him how to cook your food in order to avoid food poisoning (Interview, P6, M, NPS, 13/12/02). In another example, a boy from P6 explained how he had regretted hitting his dog after seeing an advert which addressed the issue of animal cruelty (Fieldnotes, P6, M, WPS, 3/4/03).

However, by P6 it was common to hear children being critical of marketing in general and products specifically. Undoubtedly this is linked to children at this age being relatively experienced consumers who have encountered a range of purchasing disappointments – often a result of expectations from advertising. In the following example Tim expresses such disappointment:

Interviewer: So do you think that people are ever influenced by adverts?

Luke: Occasionally.

Tim: Yeah sometimes they can be if they watch something on TV and it looks good. The problem with adverts is that, say something's on TV that's good, but when your buy it's crap...rubbish.

Interview, P6, M, WPS, 28/5/03

This critical attitude towards advertising, as in the above passage, has been termed “reality questioning” (Bartholomew & O’Donohoe, 2003). In other words, Tim is questioning how products are represented in adverts. He concludes that they are essentially misrepresented and promise a better product than that actually delivered. Having experience of marketing, the children were also aware that advertising and sales people did not always have the children’s best interest in mind, but their own agenda. For instance, children would talk of bothersome telephone calls from sales people and discuss tactics for getting rid of sales people (Fieldnotes, P6, M/F, WPS, 20/5/03).

So far, this section has focused on children’s critical views of marketing and how these develop over time. It is clear that children demonstrate critical opinion in order to communicate skills, mastery and control of consumption. However, a key aspect of maturing and growing older entails increasing consumption independence. It has previously been seen that children use consumption to gain control over their lives. Being gradually more autonomous with regard to consumption choices and having one’s

own money to dispose of, proved to be significant features of maturing and becoming independent as in this example:

Interviewer: What about money. Is it important for kids your age to have money?

All three boys: Yes.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Cameron: Cause like/

*Graeme: You don't **have** to have money, I only like money to get stuff. I get pocket money and that/*

Cameron: Yeah.

Graeme: And that's just to spend in my free time. It's like I can just go and buy something, like just a Play Station game or something, if you save up enough.

Cameron: Yeah. Like if your memory card runs out you can go and buy that.

Graeme: Yeah, just buy something.

Interview, P6, M, WPS, 10/6/03

In the above passage it is clear that the boys consider it to be important for children to have money. Having money, essentially becomes part of growing up, learning about money and making purchase decisions. Thus by having money, they gain increasing freedom to have a say over their own affairs and negotiate their own desires. In doing so, they construct identities of maturity and independence. Therefore, for these boys, money means more than getting items that they want – it provides them with a sense of freedom.

Yet for some children, growing up can entail discovering that parents have insufficient economic resources. Such realities may lead to worries for some children. Many of the children at WPS had parents who were relatively well off. However, other children were acutely aware that everyday life involved, at best, being careful with money or at worst being highly stressed/worried about money. In the following example, Patricia (P6, WPS), who is one of five sisters, enjoyed the pleasures of consumption, yet found consuming was fraught with worries over cost:

Interviewer: Do you think money is important to kids?...

Patricia: Okay, ehmm well with me I think money is important because I like spending money but I don't like spending money cause I wish that money would just appear in your hands and go away cause sometimes we get really...you know we don't have enough money. That's why I don't like going to restaurants, well I like going to them but I don't like seeing how much it is. I hate that cause like sometimes it's ninety pounds or eighty or something like that.

Interview, P6, F, WPS, 18/6/03

In this passage Patricia explains that she likes spending money but is clearly concerned that her family do not have enough. Patricia's family have limited economic resources, which means that eating out is a rare treat. Therefore, Patricia finds herself having mixed emotions when going to a restaurant. On one hand she enjoys it, yet on the other hand is worried when the bill arrives. Consequently, part of maturing and becoming more financially independent can also involve children feeling concerned or worried.

Thus, children mature and gain more experience with marketing, money and consumer goods which means that they become increasingly knowledgeable and informed about their options as consumers. Yet another side of maturing and exercising power is when children take an interest in how consumption can impact on other people. That is to say, some children express ethical concerns with regard to consumption. In the P2/P3 age group, children thought about the fact that what they had/owned may in relative terms be a lot. For instance, in conversations, children discussed being rich and that they might be rich compared to others who had nothing e.g. street children (Fieldnotes, P2, F, WPS, 19/5/03). As they grew older, the children were able to translate their thoughts into action. By P6 some children used their maturity, independence and increased freedom to express ethical concerns, as in the following two passages:

Rachel: My mum doesn't buy at Gap.

Interviewer: Why's that?

Rachel: Because their clothes are made by children who only get paid £1 a week. It's such a shame.

Interviewer: It is...

Rachel: I mean they all work all day for about a penny!!

Fieldnotes, P6, F, NPS, 27/11/02

Rachel told me this morning she is going to be organising a charity concert at the school in aid of Domestic Abuse. Rachel explained that she had arranged to have a meeting with Mrs McDonald (head teacher) about it. It turns out Rachel has seen an advert on television for Domestic Abuse which sparked the idea.

Fieldnotes, P6, F, NPS, 14/1/03

In these passages it is clear that Rachel is concerned about the exploitation of children and how some organisations may profit from this. She considers this to be unethical and states that her mother does not purchase at Gap. Later (in the second passage) Rachel has actually taken steps herself to raise money for a charitable organisation. Having seen an advertisement for Domestic Abuse, Rachel herself has decided to take action to do what she can to help. Therefore, it is clear that whilst (at least some) children want to have the freedom to spend money and purchase things they want, they become ethically aware at

a relatively young age. This means that children are not the rampant consumers who spend their time just wanting. They are, like many adults, complex consumers who have different facets to their consumption identities.

5.12.2 Conclusion

Throughout this section it has become clear that children in the independent developing consumer segment become increasingly aware, knowledgeable and critical as they mature. However, this does not mean that the youngest children are unsophisticated in their use of consumer goods; on the contrary. These findings have shown that even the youngest children transform or attribute their own meanings to consumption. Despite this, it is clear that more experienced (often older) children have more all-round knowledge about marketing and the market place. It has also been seen that children in this segment are keen to be independent and increase their economic freedom. However, such independence can come at a price when children find themselves being aware of parents' limited funds. Yet, despite limited resources, the children in this segment were able to consider their own position in relation to others who were worse off.

5.13 Part three: Bringing together the findings

So far, several significant features of consumption in childhood have been examined. It has become clear that consumption in childhood is highly complex and depends greatly on context. Consequently, public discourses which stereotype children into static categories such as materialistic, victims, brand seeking, greedy etc. are much too restrictive and fail to provide insight into how different child consumers actually are. Therefore, in this final part of the findings chapter, some broad conclusions will be drawn and a model presented, based on the findings. Prior to this, some key principles of children's cultures of consumption will be discussed.

5.14 Key principles of children's cultures of consumption

Now that the data has been addressed on two levels, it is worth taking the analysis one step further. The cultural expressions and the child consumer segments have been represented as levels of analysis of children's cultures of consumption. Based on these

levels there is a third layer which emerges from the analysis, one which represents some overall features of consumption in the childhood groups that were studied. This means that they were not specific to cultural expressions or even child consumer segments. Rather, these were overriding principles in children's cultures of consumption, which provide a fundamental basis for understanding what consumption means to children and how these meanings are constructed.

The overriding principles are essential and integral to gain insight into how consumption as a process unfolds in children's everyday lives. Essentially, the principles function as a thread which runs through the data over and above the cultural expressions and child consumer segments. That is to say, these principles stand as some of the key consumption values that children hold. They are outlined below:

Key principle 1: The meanings children associate with consumption are not necessarily the same as for adults, and vary amongst children.

The main concern in scientific socialization research has been to further understanding of how children learn culture. Essentially, this has been seen as a process through which culture is reproduced/internalized. That is to say, a person is socialized when they have taken on the values of a culture. However, it has been suggested throughout this thesis that children do not merely learn/reproduce culture – they produce/construct culture. Herein lays the assumption that children are active social actors who do not necessarily attribute the same meanings to consumption as adults. In other words, children appropriate consumption symbols into their worlds and creatively adapt, change or transform the meanings of these symbols. Therefore, this first key principle of children's cultures of consumption is consistent with the underlying philosophies of childhood studies.

Throughout the entire findings, examples have been seen of children disagreeing with adults/other children about what consumption means. Most especially, there were various examples of this principle in the resistant, communicative and independent developing child consumer segments. The quote, which has been used previously, below provides an example of the different meaning that one P6 girl and her mother have about appropriate footwear for school:

Carlie: But my mum makes me always wear school shoes and I hate school shoes.

Interviewer: I see. So would you rather wear something else?
Carlie: Yeah, I'd rather wear trainers but she doesn't like me wearing trainers.
Fieldnotes, F, WPS, 10/6/03

The extract (and surrounding discussion the interviewer had with Carlie) highlights how Carlie wants to fit in, be like the others and wear trainers, however her mother considers school shoes to be more appropriate. In another example one mother (of a pre-school child) finds it hard to understand why her son is keen to buy tinned spaghetti with cartoon characters on them, when he does not even like spaghetti:

I: Why do you think it is that children so much want to buy these products...as you say, he doesn't particularly like spaghetti? He just wants it because...why do you think that is?

Katrina: I think it is because he likes the cartoon so much and he...can have the picture then...I don't think they think about the contents inside it. I think they are thinking of the picture on the tin...I think it's to say: "Look at this tin of spaghetti I've got, look at this tin, isn't this a good tin?"...You will watch, and he does go straight for the things that have got the special...that have got the special pictures that something you can relate to and that's he'll head for first. I mean, I don't know maybe it's something they maybe feel familiar with and that's why they go to it.

Parent interview, M, SN, 17/9/02

Therefore, as the quote above illustrates there is a great difference between the meaning that a mother and her son ascribe to a tin of spaghetti. Other examples of children and adults associating very different meanings to consumption were evident in various rituals of resistance, where it became clear that consumer goods took on a new meaning as they became symbols of rebellion. Some consumer goods which were considered utterly tasteless by adults were viewed as cool by the children (e.g. swearing badges as in the resistant child consumer segment). Moreover, the meanings that children attributed to consumer goods used in sleepover rituals and swapping rituals contrasted with the meanings these goods have for most adults. For example, whilst midnight feasts (during sleepover ritual) might consist of entirely mundane food products, the context in which they were consumed gave them rebellious meanings.

In several cases, adults acknowledged that children attribute entirely different meanings to various consumer goods compared to themselves; however, it seemed quite clear that they did not fully understand why. This was particularly evident in symbols as a cultural expression and the communicative child consumer segment. For instance, in the case of brand characters on food packaging, parents did not appear to understand the role that

such characters had for children. In the maze of products in the supermarket these became symbols of familiarity – something they could relate to. Yet, parents considered child requests for such products as instances where they should convince/explain to children that the contents of the packaging did not taste very different from many other products.

In addition to the contrast in consumption meanings between adults and children, it soon became obvious that children are not one homogenous group of consumers, segmented by gender and age. The diversity within groups of children meant that they disagreed on the meaning of consumption. One such example is the meaning of fashion. Whereas some children were highly focused on clothes, grooming, jewellery etc., others found such attention to fashion and appearance utterly ridiculous (see communicative child consumer segment). There were even cases of individual children transforming the meaning of advertisements (example of KitKat advertisement in the resistant child consumer), thus constructing new symbolic meanings. Here, children not only resist meanings conveyed by marketers but go against those constructed by other children.

In conclusion, it is plain that this overriding principle of children's culture of consumption is significant in our understanding of consumption in childhood. Firstly, the findings have indicated that even the youngest children are not passive recipients of culture. They are active in producing/constructing consumption meanings – often very different to those advocated/communicated by adults. Furthermore, children's consumption worldviews are sufficiently sophisticated and interesting that they question and even challenge traditional models of childhood development.

Key principle 2: Children from a very young age use consumption to communicate and relate to others.

This second key principle has been partly addressed as a separate child consumer segment (communicative child consumer segment); however, it is sufficiently central and dominant that it constitutes a key principle in itself. Here, the focus is on how children use consumption as a means of communicating with others – even from a very young age. Whilst such evidence emerged throughout the entire findings, it was particularly evident in the communicative, gendered and independent developing child consumer segments. In these segments, rituals and symbols proved to be particularly important aspects of relating to others through consumer goods.

Despite an acknowledgement that children are savvy and demanding consumers, much research still treats children as rather simple and incompetent consumers. For instance they are not considered able to understand brands at a conceptual level prior to around eight years of age (Achenreiner & John, 2003). However, the findings of this study indicated that, from a young age, consumer goods present a key means by which children, relate to others. Furthermore, even the youngest children demonstrated that they attribute meaning to consumer goods. The following extract is one such example where John, who is only three years old, is explaining what the Nike logo means:

Earlier today I noticed John had a Nike T-shirt on. It had a small Nike logo on the left hand side of his chest, but otherwise it was navy blue.

I: John what does that mean what is on your t-shirt (as I pointed to the logo)

John: It means sport.

Fieldnotes, M, SN, 18/6/02

Whilst children at pre-school age are not likely to have the same experience or wide knowledge of consumption as older children, this extract reveals an understanding of consumption symbolism beyond what previous research would suggest. It tells us that even the youngest children of this study (at least sometimes) attribute meaning to consumption generally and brands specifically. Naturally, therefore, the above passage throws into question the findings of previous studies within the field of scientific consumer socialization.

The fact that this study found that consumer goods are highly important to children is hardly surprising. Growing up in consumer culture means that children's lives are inextricably embedded in consumption. However, what children do with consumer goods over and above mundane/necessary consumption is the interesting aspect of children's cultures. The research revealed from the outset that consumer goods are socially significant to children in all age groups. One might expect the social nature of consumption to be difficult to spot in institutions - however, this was not the case. Precisely because children are separated from many consumption references in institutions (for instance their toys, bedrooms and homes), they appeared to seize opportunities to communicate their identities through consumption. This was particularly evident in sharing time at the nursery.

Sharing time at nursery, as a common ritual, has previously been discussed as an important weekly moment for the children. At sharing time children brought to the

nursery personal items which they showed off/shared with others. In the nursery, children were generally not permitted to bring personal items, therefore, the ritual of sharing time was highly significant to the children. It meant they were able to construct/express their identities by putting their own possessions on display. In so doing, they provided other children with important cues for how they could relate to each other.

Throughout this overarching principle, the social nature of consumer goods and how children use these to communicate and relate to others has been discussed. However, there was evidence throughout the data of instances when consumption and consumer goods become unimportant and trivial – this we turn to now.

Key principle 3: Consumption does not wholly define children in their life worlds. Sometimes other things are much more important and at times consumption pales into insignificance.

The findings have shown again and again that consumption plays a powerful role in the lives of these children irrespective of age, gender or socioeconomic background. Whilst this may come as no surprise given the intense amount of marketing aimed at children in UK society, such data - as does most literature on consumption - neglects to analyse moments when consumption becomes unimportant. In other words, the moments when children avoid or even reject consumer goods. These are moments when children construct or invent their own cultural symbols. As previously pointed out, children are sometimes portrayed as excessive and even obsessive consumers. Therefore, this third overriding principle of children's cultures of consumption is important to address.

The interesting aspect of this principle is that it concerns issues which have not previously been discussed as such. That is to say, the focus has not been on consumption as a non-issue, but has addressed its importance *as an issue*. Often when being probed about their life worlds, the children clearly indicated when consumption was unimportant. Furthermore, there were times when certain identities (not relating to consumption) were highly important to children. For instance during maths contests in P6 (WPS) one particular girl, who generally had a lower standing in the class was ascribed high status as she had excellent maths skills (Fieldnotes, P6, PPS, 7/5/03). Therefore, during such moments other aspects of her identity (e.g. consumption) were unimportant – sometimes insignificant.

The data suggests that children are not swept away with consumption values – there are some who are relatively disinterested in consumption and yet others who, at certain moments, choose to reject consumption. In many respects this deals with the imaginary, inventive nature of childhood – i.e. children constructing their own symbols, as in the following passage:

Adelle: Harry Potter is probably our favourite at the moment.

Erika: Ahh right.

Adelle: And Bridget went to see the film as well. And you know, really got into it...Harry Potter was not, you know even at Christmas when it was out it was not something that: "Have a look at this golden snitch" You know she was very much aware that it was in the shop but none of them..

Interviewer: Yeah.

Adelle: And in fact the bouncy ball became our golden snitch that we had.

Parent interview, SN, F, 19/9/02

At the time when the above Harry Potter film was released in the UK, there was a great deal of hype surrounding the film. Furthermore, a vast range of Harry Potter merchandise was apparent amongst the children in this study. Yet, Bridget's mother explains that her daughter, whilst fascinated with Harry Potter and the snitch (symbol from the film), invented her own snitch rather than asking to purchase one. Therefore, in this case, a purchase was not necessary in order to simulate the film Bridget had so enjoyed.

Notwithstanding that individual children differ greatly, it was clear that context impacted on children's attention to consumption. Nowhere was this more apparent than when the children were outdoors. There seemed to be a changing of the rules and structures of children's cultures. Whilst indoors, children tended to centre round consumer goods of various kinds – most notably toys. Yet, as soon as they moved outdoors, the way they used space, their bodies, their voices and the objects at their disposal changed radically (Fieldnotes, SN, 21/6/02). The children played games where running, jumping and hiding were involved – much of the time with no objects being used. They imagined stones, rocks, pieces of wood and whatever they could find to be something – despite having access to outdoor toys. Furthermore, the nursery children were greatly fascinated with insects, lifting up stones to reveal whether anything was hiding underneath.

Addressing such moments as in this third overriding principle in children's cultures of consumption reveals that children are not greedy overly materialistic beings – as they are

often portrayed. More importantly though, conducting further analysis into moments when consumer goods are unimportant may tell us equally as much about actual consumption as non-consumption.

Key principle 4: Adults set up structures that categorise children, most especially gender. Yet once outside formal structural settings, children frequently construct culture very differently.

At the heart of this fourth overall principle is the idea that children are categorised and even compartmentalised in schools, nurseries and many other institutions they attend. In other words, children are grouped in such a way that it can be difficult for them – at least whilst they are located within institutional structures (institutions) to resist stereotypes. In this study there was clear evidence that children, when given the opportunity, often try to break free from the categorical structures imposed on them. Although this was observed on a general level, it was especially evident in the resistant child, the gendered child and to some extent in the communicative child consumer segment. Nevertheless the key argument within this overall principle of children's cultures of consumption is not new. In their studies on children's play cultures, Opie and Opie (1994) pointed out that the structure of children's groups on the street, which they observed, was quite different to common gender and age stereotypes.

It follows that categorizing children according to age and gender may well result in unnatural divisions between children. Such categorisation of children is certainly also true for the marketing machine which employs strong stereotypes – especially gender stereotypes – which have been discussed previously in this thesis. More specifically, within the nursery there were aspects of the layout of the room which meant that children frequently were divided by gender – a point previously discussed in the gendered child consumer segment. For instance in the nursery, one area (the home corner), was walled off and included a kitchen, dolls and other items associated with the female homemaker role. Consequently, there were seldom any boys present in this area of the nursery. Therefore, the home corner was a strongly gendered (and closed off) area which created barriers to boys entering. On occasions when boys ventured into the home corner the children sometimes disciplined each other - pointing out that boys were not “meant” to be in the home corner. Other times, when playing in the home corner, boys took on more gender neutral roles e.g. being pets as opposed to taking on home-keeper roles as the girls did. Therefore, such layouts essentially presented barriers to children crossing gender stereotyped boundaries.

Observations clearly indicated that children were most likely to play with same age children in the school playground. Yet, interviews with children revealed that play mates outside school frequently belonged to different age groups. This is in part related to the localities in which children live – where they play with those living in the vicinity. In this respect children's groups are more structured by the neighbourhoods in which they live. Nevertheless, mixing with various age groups outside school in less formal settings, undoubtedly, provides different/less rigid conditions for children in constructing their cultures.

Key principle 5: Children strive for increased independence and control which impacts on their consumption choices and how they consume.

In many respects this feature of consumption in children's cultures is the most powerful principle. Throughout these findings it emerged time and time again that independence, control and power are at the heart of much of children's consumption. In particular we saw in the protected, resistant, independent and gendered child consumer segments how children fight for autonomy and control over their lives. Since they are a group in society which holds low status, they find themselves continuously struggling with those who *do* hold the power – adults. When comparing the protected and resistant child consumer segments, one caught sight of some of the conflicts which are present between children and adults, most especially their parents/guardians. Adults attempt to suppress rebellion/resistance from children by maintaining control over what children consume. Several times, adults expressed frustration as they found themselves losing control – an indication of the internal conflicts and difficulties parents are faced with as they are forced to let children grow up. Furthermore, there was data suggesting that parents try to maintain control by withholding consumption information from children (as in the example of a mother wanting to keep her son ignorant of consumption choices).

As a consequence of feeling powerless, children resist parents by making consumption choices which parents often find tasteless (as for instance in the case of the swearing badges, discussed in the resistant child consumer segment). That is to say, they take pleasure in being anti-authoritarian. However, children are acutely aware of their social status and know that if they resist/rebel too much it can result in them losing privileges and having less freedom. Therefore, children work against the power imposed on them by adults, albeit within certain boundaries.

With respect to money, the data revealed that children enjoyed being able to make their own consumption decisions, to have their own money and choose how to spend it. Furthermore, children anticipated times in their lives when they would have greater freedom - fully aware that their behaviour in the present might impact on future liberties. This was evident in one example of a P6 boy explaining that in secondary school he expected to have earned sufficient trust to choose not to go straight home from school (resistant child consumer segment). Thus, it can be concluded that growing up and becoming independent are key features of childhood which have profound implications for children's consumer behaviour.

In this third part of the findings, the five overriding principles of children's cultures of consumption have been identified and discussed. This means that throughout the chapter the three levels of understanding children's cultures of consumption have each been addressed. Each of these three levels (cultural expressions, child consumer segments and the key principles) provides additional insight into the subject matter and is important in piecing together what consumption in childhood means to children themselves. Now, before the presentation of a model of children's cultures of consumption, there will be a brief review of the overall findings.

5.15 Overall findings

Overall, it is clear that children are anything but passive recipients of consumer culture. It has been demonstrated many times that children of all ages are competent interpreters and constructors of consumption meanings. Yet, the consumption values children hold are fluid and are greatly affected by context. This means that questions such as who is present, when, where and how is the moment played out, are all of significance to the meanings constructed. Therefore, children's cultures of consumption are not fixed and static but comprise moments where a whole host of factors determine the composition of consumption meanings and indeed the degree of significance consumption has at that particular time.

With regard to cultural expressions, it has been seen that rituals, symbols, power and identity are four highly significant vehicles through which children's consumption values are manifested. That is, these are the processes through which children's cultures of consumption become visible. Upon identifying and examining these expressions the

researcher started to gain sight of key issues that concern children. Therefore, while they were going about their daily lives, it became possible to start understanding which rituals, symbols, identities and types of power are of importance to children. More significantly though, a pattern started to emerge of why, how, when and where the cultural expressions were important. That is to say, it is not sufficient to draw conclusions about children's consumer behaviour based on age, gender, socioeconomic background and so on. Rather, children find themselves thrust into situations where the relative importance of cultural expressions varies tremendously. Subsequently, the meanings attributed to consumption change with time and place.

In Section 5.2, a model (Figure 5.1) was presented which highlighted the integral role that symbols play in children's culture of consumption. These symbols come in various shapes from brand logos and names, heroes, brand characters and products. Therefore, children find a range of symbol types through which they construct consumption meanings. The centrality of consumption symbols in the model may come as no surprise considering that these function as a principal resource used in consumption rituals, identity construction and power interactions. Importantly though, the meaning that children attribute to consumption symbols is impacted greatly by factors such as age, gender, product grouping, personal interests/hobbies and status.

From the findings it is evident that in using a range of consumption symbols, children set about constructing and performing rituals within their cultures. The magnitude of these rituals varies; however, their importance is clear. For children, the rituals help maintain stability within their cultures and enable them to communicate certain boundaries - gender and power boundaries to name but two. Consequently, rituals tend to be predictable in nature and their performance is relatively fixed.

In terms of power processes, it has been seen that consumption is pivotal in different types of power whether it be status, control or conformity. Furthermore, consumer goods were repeatedly found to be at the centre of children's power interactions. In this respect consumption becomes a vital ingredient in the process of power in children's cultures both in adult/child and child/child interactions. For instance, the data reflected that popularity was associated with clothing and appearance. With respect to the final cultural expression, identity, four types of identity which were found to be significant to children were addressed. These are gender, age, performance and appearance. In constructing identities, there is little doubt of the central role that consumption played

for all of the children irrespective of socioeconomic profile. That said, it is clear that the manner in which consumption was used varied greatly between the children – also within same gender and age groups. For example, some boys liked girl stereotyped toys and vice versa. For others, being socially mature was less important than for others.

Yet, having indicated the importance of consumption in cultural expressions, it is paramount to point out that there are moments when the centrality of consumption in children's culture either diminishes or even pales into insignificance. Children have plenty of moments when they are more concerned with other aspects of being human – rather than being wholly defined as consumers. There are moments when they either deny consumption or focus on other aspects of being a child. For instance, being academically competent may at times be more important in gaining status than having the latest consumer objects.

In Part Two of the findings, five key themes were identified – here named child consumer segments. The cultural expressions emerged as the prime ingredients in these child consumer segments; yet, the relative weight of rituals, symbols, power and identity varied between the segments. This provides some indication of the fluidity of children's cultures of consumption. That is to say, moments in children's lives were examined when the dynamics surrounding consumption changed, depending on context and the actors involved.

It has previously been pointed out that consumption symbols function as the foundation of children's cultures of consumption. Therefore, consumption symbols are central features both within the cultural expressions and child consumer segments.

Notwithstanding the significance of consumption symbols, power in particular, emerged as an important cultural expression in the protected and resistant child consumer segments. These two segments proved to be somewhat opposite sides of the power relationship between adults and children. Essentially, consumption was used by both adults and children as a resource to construct control - adults over children and children over themselves.

In the communicative child consumer segment, it became clear that even the youngest children are competent interpreters of consumption. They are keen to use consumption to communicate their age, gender, affiliations as well as various facets of identity. Furthermore, children even proved to be skilled at interpreting adult consumption,

although it was not primarily aimed at them. Yet, children do not necessarily adopt those meanings conveyed through marketing, demonstrating that they are active constructors of meanings themselves.

The gendered child consumer segment demonstrated that there are moments when gender is the most important identity to children, most particularly the two youngest age groups. Thus children were often absolute in their statements about gender appropriate consumption. However, there were children who did not adhere to these stereotypes and had their own ideas of what were gender appropriate consumer goods. Yet, it soon became clear that boys are under more pressure to stay within gender consumption boundaries. This resulted in boys engaging in pollution rituals of feminine items and a continual process of using consumption to exercise power over girls.

The independent developing child consumer is an important segment in two respects. Firstly, it addresses the issue of children developing as consumers through experience and time. Furthermore, it touches again upon the centrality of power, especially control, in children's lives. The data presented in this segment reveals that consumption knowledge is crucial in growing up, becoming independent and exercising control. Therefore, children are keen to demonstrate consumption competence by being critical and demonstrating experience and expertise of consumer goods and marketing.

In the third part of the findings, the key principles of children's cultures of consumption were addressed. These are aspects of consumption in childhood which transcend the cultural expressions and the child consumer segments. These represent important concerns for children and are at the heart of their consumption values. The first of these key principles discussed, show that children actively and creatively construct their own consumption meanings – often independent of adults. This counteracts much previous writing on children and consumption which tends to assume that children passively internalise cultural values. The second key principle discussed how children already from a very young age use consumption to relate to each other. That is to say, consumer goods and personal possessions are imbued with symbolic meanings albeit they might not be the same as for adults. Therefore, children use consumption and consumer goods in their own ways to communicate to others something about themselves.

In the third principle, the issues of children, marketing and materialism were addressed. Throughout the findings, it was seen several times that consumption is highly significant

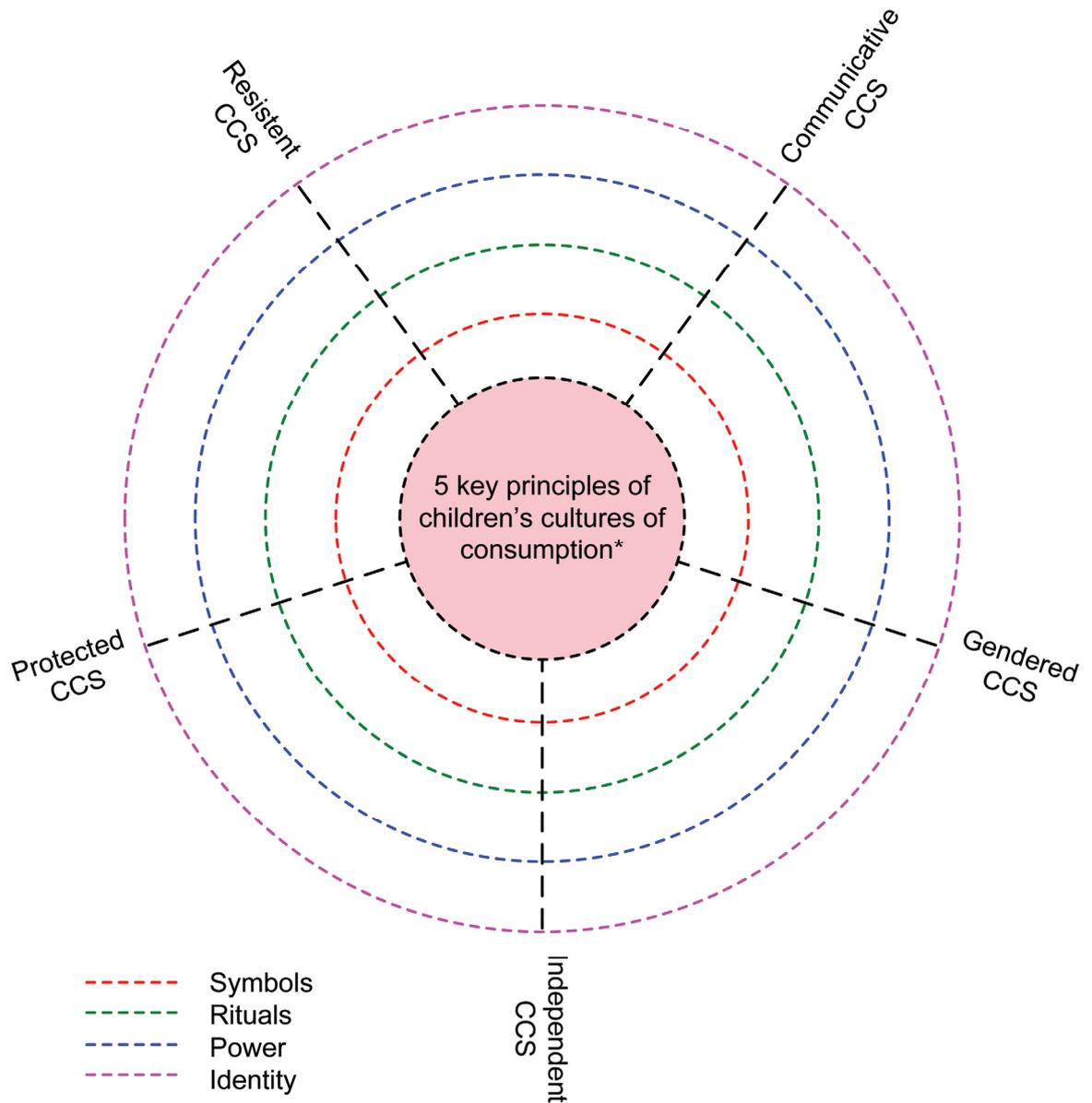
and integral to children's lives. Yet, sometimes children decide that consumption is unimportant. This means that children are fully capable and willing to prioritise matters of importance in their lives and not the cultural dupes many moralists would suggest. In the fourth principle, it was discussed how the spaces in which children move contribute to the reproduction of stereotyped behaviour amongst children. In the fifth and final key principle, independence and control represent a driving force for children's consumption choices. That is not to say that children never wish to be controlled or that they do not want to be childlike. This final principle merely suggests that independence and gaining control over their own lives are crucial concerns for children.

5.16 A model for children's cultures of consumption

Following the process of constructing a picture of children's cultures of consumption, it is appropriate to demonstrate how these three layers of analysis are linked. To illustrate this, Figure 5.3 is a model which brings together the cultural expressions, the child consumer segments and the key principles. It is, essentially a model which illustrates how these three layers are linked and interrelated – together forming children's cultures of consumption. Being of an exploratory nature, the findings of this study cannot as such be generalised. Nevertheless, the model provides the reader with the opportunity to transfer/apply/evaluate the findings in different contexts with different data sets.

It has been seen that children's cultures of consumption are highly complex. Therefore, a model which can illustrate a range of interlinked facets is necessary. To illustrate such complex processes, it has been argued, the spider's web is an appropriate metaphor for theorizing about children's cultures (Corsaro, 1997). Therefore, in constructing a model of children's cultures of consumption, such metaphors have been drawn upon and adapted here.

Figure 5.3 A model of children’s cultures of consumption



*** The five key principles of children’s cultures of consumption are:**

<p>1. The meanings children associate with consumption are not necessarily the same as for adults and vary amongst children.</p> <p>2. Children from a very young age use consumption to communicate and relate to others.</p> <p>3. Consumption does not wholly define children in their life worlds. Sometimes other things are much more important and yet other times consumption pales into insignificance.</p>	<p>4. Adults set up structures that categorise children, most especially gender. Yet once outside formal structural settings children frequently construct culture very differently.</p> <p>5. Children strive for increased independence and control which impacts on their consumption choices and how they consume.</p>
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In the model, the centre of the web (key principles of children’s cultures of consumption), the arms (child consumer segments) and circles (cultural expressions) are always and everywhere in a constant flow/relationship with each other. Furthermore, the lines have been stipulated to illustrate that no sections are closed-off or separate from

one another. This means that any part of the web is in constant interaction with any other part of the web.

Firstly, the centre of the model represents the very foundation upon which the rest of the web is based. The centre of the model holds the key principles of children's cultures of consumption – five of which have been identified in this study. These key principles flow to/from, by means of the stipulated lines, the rest of web both to the cultural expressions (circles) and through the spokes (child consumer segments).

Next, the coloured circles are the cultural expressions which are the core components in children's cultures of consumption⁴¹. Each has been coloured to illustrate that the line itself represents one cultural expression. Whilst the rings appear to be placed separately from one another, they are in constant interaction, through the stipulated lines, with the rest of the web and therefore, always interlinked. These cultural expressions i.e. rituals, symbols, power and identity are thus the basic ingredients (or tools) with which children construct their cultures of consumption.

Lastly, the arms of the web each represent one of the five child consumer segments. These arms run from the centre and outwards (and back) and are in constant interaction with the rest of the web by means of the stipulated lines. Therefore, the child consumer segments model some of the key concerns that emerge as children find themselves going about their everyday lives and growing up at the same time. These segments are each contained to a greater or lesser degree within and between children. That is to say, specific circumstances, people, times, locations etc. trigger the segments. Therefore, the child consumer segments are not isolated groups of children but facets, or even moments, of children's cultures of consumption.

5.17 Conclusion

This chapter has adopted a three stage approach to present, explain and analyse the data. Firstly, the cultural expressions (rituals, symbols, power and identity) of children's consumption were discussed, providing an overview of some of the "raw" ingredients of children's cultures of consumption. This led onto the second layer of data analysis – the

⁴¹ It is worth pointing out that this model does little to incorporate the importance of mundane repetitive consumption. This is due to the fact that non-mundane consumption is more instrumental in social behaviour and thus in the construction of culture.

five child consumer segments. These are 1) the protected child consumer, 2) the resistant child consumer, 3) the communicative child consumer, 4) the gendered child consumer and 5) the independent developing child consumer. Thirdly, an additional layer of analysis revealed five overriding principles of children's cultures of consumption. These were the most important features of the findings which were not specific to certain segments – rather they figured as a thread throughout the entire data. The chapter concluded with the construction of an overall model of children's cultures of consumption which emerged from the findings of this study. There follows a discussion of these findings.

Chapter Six: Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings in light of previous research and provide some possible explanations for these findings. It starts by examining the findings more generally and relates these to scientific consumer socialization and the guiding paradigm of the thesis; childhood studies. The chapter subsequently, turns a more specific focus on the results from the three tiers adopted in the findings chapter. To maintain clarity, a structure has been applied which mirrors the previous chapter.

6.1 General observations

The most important factor which emerged from the findings is that children are, in many ways, more competent, savvy, proficient, knowledgeable and skilled in the world of consumption than previous research would seem to suggest. Much child-centric research has focused almost exclusively on cognitive abilities and the development of consumer knowledge in children. The findings from this study contradict some of the assumptions from such research, as the reader will see throughout the chapter. However, there are also a range of similarities between the findings from this study and previous research within scientific consumer socialization. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that children's, as with adult, consumer behaviour, cannot be predicted in a law-like fashion. Instead, the findings indicated that people, time, place, situation, setting to name but a few, impacted greatly on the concerns children had with respect to consumption. In their cultures of consumption it is clear that from a young age children actively constructed symbolic meaning – a feature which is consistent with the childhood studies approach. Such insights can perhaps lead to a greater use of alternative/multidisciplinary approaches to researching children's consumer behaviour.

Whilst these observations are based on small samples, there is clear evidence to suggest that prior conceptions of children as consumers, as marketing interpreters and social communicators must be re-examined. If the field of consumer behaviour is to further understanding of children and consumption, to construct appropriate consumer policies, protect, enable, empower and inform child consumers, it is necessary to adopt child-centric approaches in research. With these general observations in mind, the cultural expressions, which the reader will recall are the basic ingredients in children's cultures of consumption, will now be examined more specifically.

6.2 Cultural expressions

The cultural expressions (rituals, symbols, power and identity) emerged through a continuous process of moving backwards and forwards from the extant literature and the data. The literature pertaining to culture in general, children's cultures specifically and consumption, to name three main groups of writings, was consulted. This literature was subsequently, analysed in light of the collected data and vice versa. It was clear that cultural expressions in children's cultures are by and large the same as amongst adults, however, the values and concerns which emerged were often rather different. These cultural expressions are now examined in view of the literature.

6.3 Consumption rituals

For the field of consumer behaviour, one key finding which emerged from this study is the centrality of rituals in children's cultures and the significance of consumer goods in these rituals. It follows that children's ritual performance, as opposed to much everyday behaviour, should not be ignored. That is to say, ritual behaviour is more scripted and children are less tolerant of variations to this script than in other life events. Tolerating changes to ritual scripts depends, as Rook (1985) also pointed out, on how rigid or formal the ritual is. The rituals found in this study were not all equally formal or rigid – some even bordering on casual. Nevertheless, insight into the consumption rituals of children has implications for the study of children as consumers. Therefore, consumer behaviourists must recognize the key features of ritual values/behaviour when marketing to children. In other words, when marketers target ritual events, an alternative marketing approach may be required.

Importantly, evidence has been provided which suggests children are active constructors of rituals – as Thorne (1993) also found. This means that children are not passive recipients of culture passed through generations. Rather, rituals are in part adopted, worked on, interpreted and in some cases created by the children. It is clear that the meanings children associate with rituals are not necessarily the same as those of adults. Furthermore, meanings even differ among the children themselves. That is to say, not only are rituals (or elements of rituals) *enacted* differently by children – children construct their *own* rituals. Precisely this point is the most important feature of children's rituals of consumption.

Common rituals especially, were ritualized by the children rather than adopted from adults – examples included lunch/snack breaks, sleepovers and swapping. The swapping ritual is similar to Thorne's ethnographic study in schools, where she found evidence of what she called the "the underground economy of food and objects" (Thorne, 1993: 20). Therefore, if rituals are, as Rook (1984: 279) argued: "...the symbolic expression through which individuals articulate their social and metaphysical affiliations" then the importance of such ritualization by children cannot be overlooked. That is to say, both the field of study and adults in general, start to gain a better understanding of whom/what children identify with. This means that much valuable insight can be gained about children, their values, their relationships and their culture, by examining rituals.

Power proved to be a central issue in some of these constructed rituals where children were essentially challenging adult authority. In other words, through the performance of rituals, children found ways to cope with their lack of power and at the same time tried to gain control over their worlds – albeit for short periods of time (as for instance during sleepover or swapping ritual). In a similar vein, Valentine (2000) found that children at school enjoyed having more freedom to decide what they ate. This, she argued, was a process of breaking down the categories of (controlled) child and (controlling) adult. Consequently, consumer goods as vital ingredients in ritual performance are key instruments in children's fight for autonomy.

Yet another ritual where children could resist or escape adult power was the lunch/snack break. Valentine (2000) distinguished between two worlds at school - the formal world of the institution, which is overwhelmingly adult controlled and the informal world of the children (playground for instance), where children are freer to interact in peer cultures. Therefore, it is suggested here that the importance of lunch/snack break rituals is rooted in the need for children to have moments when they are less rigidly controlled by adults i.e. getting away from the formal world of the institution. This is consistent with Lee (2001a) who studied the morning tea break ritual amongst nurses. Lee found that the tea break ritual was paramount in gaining support from colleagues, ventilating feelings and relaxing. A definite parallel can be drawn with children as they also need to escape the formal world of the institution from time to time.

Age was one of the overriding factors characterising children's ritual behaviour. The study found that children of different ages have different rituals and scripts. That is to

say, ritual performance varies between groups of children. This is similar to the findings of other authors (McKechnie & Tynan, 2006; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991), who identified great variation in the performance of collective rituals (e.g. Christmas) – which are often considered to be universal in nature⁴². Therefore, another central feature of children's cultures of consumption is the change/difference in rituals between children. For instance (and not unexpectedly), body grooming rituals became more important with age – also amongst the boys.

Possession rituals proved to be yet another example of variations in ritual behaviour amongst children of different age groups. It has been argued by other authors that children take great pleasure in talking about their possessions (Kline, 1993). However, this study found that such possession rituals (e.g. showing friends newly acquired/special objects) changed with age. For the youngest children (nursery and P2/P3), bringing items to nursery/school for display/sharing was important. Later though (P6), this practice was not so readily observed. There may be several reasons for this. Firstly, children are likely to rely more on conversation abilities as they grow older and can simply tell their friends about possessions. Furthermore, this change may be due to the increased interest in appearance (e.g. clothes, hairstyling) with age, thereby taking the focus away from other possessions.

Children's increasing autonomy as they grow older can serve as a mediating factor of how ritual change can come about. For instance, for younger children (P2/P3), a mid-night feast was considered an important element in the sleepover ritual script and caused great excitement. However, P6 children never spoke of this and whilst they would favour something nice to eat for sleepovers, a mid-night feast did not invoke the same degree of excitement. This may be due to the increased freedom older children possess rendering a mid-night feast less anti-authoritarian than for the younger children.

Another point worthy of mention is the claim (by parents) that the sleepover ritual is heavily influenced by American television. This process of media influence is similar to Otnes and Scott's (1996) findings of the ritualization of diamond engagement rings which was brought about by continuous advertising. In these adverts, diamond rings

⁴² Clearly, not everyone celebrates Christmas as it is a Christian tradition. However, universality is here taken to mean that there are relatively fixed ideas of how Christmas ritual is performed amongst those who celebrate this tradition.

were continually linked to romantic engagements; so much so that it has become an integral part of the ritual.

Various authors (e.g. Belk, 1979; McCracken, 1986; Sherry, 1983) have examined gift-giving behaviour as an exchange ritual. Writings on gift-giving as a consumption ritual have highlighted the meaning attached to the gift itself, its appropriateness, its value and the symbolic messages communicated between the giver and receiver (Belk, 1979). Whilst gift-receiving proved to be one of the most important factors of birthday and Christmas ritual, the findings indicated that in many cases gift-giving as an exchange ritual had less ritual behavioural qualities than for adults. Children simply had less input into gifts they gave others. There are two explanations for this. Firstly, these children – especially at WPS, were geographically far away from shopping areas. Therefore, it was common for parents to purchase a gift on behalf of their child on the way home from work, for instance. Secondly, children do not have economic power and therefore, exercise less control over the gifts they give. Children's lack of economic power, therefore, has implications for gift-giving as ritual.

6.4 Consumption symbols

Through the process of model-building, consumption symbols emerged as a central feature on which the cultural expressions of rituals, power and identity are based. It became clear that children use consumption either as a form of social communication or as integral ingredients as they go about constructing culture. Therefore, the most important finding to emerge was that consumption symbols are highly significant for children – even from a young age. There were clear indications that children from all age groups used consumption symbols in their play, conversation and self expression – albeit in different ways. Furthermore, the study found that those symbols which were important to the children varied primarily between age groups/gender but depended less on background variables such as socioeconomic status.

In the literature review, the developmental approach to childhood consumer socialization was challenged for failing to provide an understanding of what brands mean to children in their everyday lives. The findings from this study contradict many previous claims about children's (lack of) abilities and use of consumption symbols generally and brands specifically. Children are, in fact, much more sophisticated than previously believed in

their use of consumption symbols. Furthermore, context was found to alter the meanings attributed to consumer goods – providing evidence that the meanings children construct are not fixed but ever changing. For instance, evidence was provided in the communicative child consumer segment of how children avoided telling the outside world of some aspects of their consumption; thus avoiding hurtful remarks from other children (as in the example of watching “babyish” cartoons). This is somewhat similar to the findings of Richins (1994) who pointed out that objects may have a very different public meaning than in private.

Most studies examining children and their relationship with brands have focused primarily on older children i.e. those from around eight years and upwards (e.g. Achenreiner & John, 2003; Belk et. al., 1984; Clark, 1999; Elliott, 1994; Hogg et. al., 1998). Nevertheless, a few studies have acknowledged children’s ability to recognise and distinguish between brands from as early as two years of age (Hite & Hite 1995; Derscheid et. al., 1996). It has been argued that although younger children recognise a range of brands, they use them more as a familiar reference source (Achenreiner & John, 2003). Yet, isolated examples can be found of those who argue that children are skilful in assigning symbolic meanings even from a very young age (Clark, 1999). The findings from the present study found Clark’s (1999) argument to be the closest representation of children’s consumption abilities.

This study found that the youngest children displayed knowledge of brands (most particularly those relevant to *them* i.e. child-directed brands, as well as some adult-directed brands). Furthermore, very young children *do* enjoy purchasing/owning labelled goods with familiar characters. Indeed, Clark (1999: 81) has argued, that much successful advertising aimed at children uses “...expressive symbolism (characters, icons and narratives) to bring meaning through metaphor”. Therefore, as this study claims, children’s relationship with brands is in reality much more complex than earlier research has suggested.

However, in contrast to what has previously been believed, this study found evidence that children as young as three to five years of age proudly show-off brands (particularly brand characters) or use these in other forms of social communication. This may be linked to the adult idea of what constitutes a brand. Whilst marketers are acutely aware of the significance of animated characters and heroes, these have not traditionally been treated/researched as if they were brands. That said, it would appear that the marketing

profession is further ahead in this respect, as animated characters and heroes constitute a large part of marketing towards children. Yet, in previous research, animated characters and heroes have not generally been considered to function in a similar manner for the children as other adult-directed brands do for adults. As this study found; when placed on e.g. clothing the emotions attached to the character/hero transform the meaning attributed to the item of clothing.

The key difference between older and younger children was found to lie not in the importance of consumption symbols but in the manner in which these are used. With respect to older children this study found that especially the oldest (P6) were highly knowledgeable about brands in many product categories. Most of these children had reached a stage where their standing or status within the class was of great importance – as other authors have also found (Hogg et. al., 1998). Therefore, as previous research (Achenreiner & John, 2003) has also claimed, brands were used in a different manner as opposed to amongst the younger children. The present study found that making consumption symbol “mistakes” (including displaying the “wrong” heroes on clothing, bags etc.), can, even at a young age, have social consequences for children. For instance some brands were considered “babyish” and would have negative consequences for one’s status in the group. However, there are certain product categories that are more important than others as far as brands go. The present study found that sports clothing, footwear and bags were categories where children had a strong focus on brands.

Previously, boys have been found to be more brand conscious (Hogg et. al., 1998) – at least as far as sports brands are concerned. Furthermore, Achenreiner and John (2003) found that boys have more experience with athletic shoes and higher levels of brand knowledge in sports brands. The present study supports this point as boys proved to be more focused on branded clothing – both in terms of sports clothing and other general clothes brands (e.g. Rockport and Quicksilver to name but two). Girls, on the other hand, did have clear preferences as regards sports brands, yet they were equally interested in fashion in general, without displaying strong brand preferences as such. They were more likely to mention shops or shopping areas where they liked to purchase clothing.

It is evident that certain product categories in themselves had symbolic properties. Consequently, it must be acknowledged by marketers that some products may be less “brandable” than others. Furthermore, there are times in children’s lives when owning a particular product e.g. a mobile telephone, is more important than which brand it is. This

may further be related to the status obtained by owning a product before it is well established amongst a peer group. Previous research on children and consumption symbolism has overwhelmingly focused on the significance of brand symbolism and neglected the potential for product symbolism. However, as the present study has highlighted, at least for children, brands are not always the most important symbols – the product itself and its features may be more significant.

6.5 Consumption power

The findings of this study indicated that the status children hold in peer groups is important right from the youngest age group. However, it is evident that children's self-reflection of their own status within groups becomes more central as they mature. In other words, children become more aware of their standing within groups and have knowledge of what resources are at their disposal to influence their position. This has implications for which consumer goods the children use and display. Whilst few studies have examined status amongst younger children, previous studies have found that consumption is important in marking status or social acceptance in older children (e.g. Ali, 2002; Lachance et. al., 2003).

In younger children though, status as a means of exercising power has been less recognized in earlier work. Therefore, this study contributes, in particular, to existing knowledge on *younger* children's use of and perception of status in relation to consumption. Perhaps this lack of studies on younger children can be attributed to research efforts being channelled into exploring children from a different angle – namely as a low-status, powerless group vis-à-vis adults⁴³. Yet another reason may be the lack of research (most particularly outside the field of childhood studies) on younger children *per se*. Therefore, current understanding of power relationships *between* younger children in particular, is less well documented.

Some prior research has explored the dynamics of children's friendships (James, 1993), how children use material goods (e.g. clothing) to feel they belong (Ridge, 2002) and furthermore, how perceived negative appearance can contribute to exclusion from peer groups (Evans & Eder, 1993). Whilst these studies are outside marketing, they have all acknowledged the importance of consumption directly or indirectly and, therefore,

⁴³ This stream of research is within the field of childhood studies.

support the findings of this study. In addition, this study found that consumer goods are key instruments for children in gaining control and constructing discourses of maturity. That is to say, children use consumption to communicate social age and level of independence. This point is consistent with Kelle (2001), who found that one of the key methods to demonstrate maturity is through clothing. Therefore, consumption is a central resource in children's process of development and becoming independent.

Another form of power is that of conformity. Some previous studies of children have specifically focused on food and meal times as spaces where children may choose not to conform to adult rules (e.g. Grieshaber, 1997; Valentine, 2000). The present study found that schools in many ways inhibited children due to the restrictions placed on them – most notably in terms of consumption and consumer goods. On the other hand, the findings of Valentine (2000) suggested that this is not always true – as far as food consumption is concerned, children are freer to choose what they eat on the school premises⁴⁴. For instance they may choose not to eat their packed lunch or discard some of it; furthermore, they may choose between different dinner options offered in the school cafeteria. The school as a relatively liberating site of food consumption is consistent with the findings of the present study, most particularly in the context of swapping items on school dinner trays or packed lunches. Therefore, whilst schools as institutions are associated with control over children, there are moments when children as consumers have increased freedom.

6.6 Consumption identity

Overall, the most important finding pertaining to identity in children's cultures of consumption was the contextual influence on identity construction. In other words, there were times when gender was the central identity whilst other times age identity or performance identity became more important – a view supported by other authors (Kacen, 2000). However, the strength of each identity is linked to Jenkins' (1993) notion of primary and secondary identities, as discussed in the literature review. Therefore, the primary identities, gender for instance, were found to be immensely influential in shaping children's consumer behaviour. Yet, this was not merely linked to children's intrinsic consumer choices but indeed to the structures constructed for them by adults. These structures were found to restrict children and even reinforce stereotypes.

⁴⁴ For children who have school dinners in Scottish schools, there are several options to select from.

However, less robust identities, such as performance identity, change to some extent between age groups and vary in importance between contexts. By the time they are older, children prove to be much more aware of their strengths/weaknesses or likes/dislikes and therefore, utilise these in constructing identities. Societal values and expectations mean that children learn which achievements are most praised by adults, such as performing well academically or in sports. Evans and Eder (1993) too found academic achievement to be related to social inclusion. However, this study found that children do not internalise this passively but question parental values (e.g. those professions deemed worthy by parents) – a view consistent with childhood studies theory which maintains that children are not passive recipients of culture.

Not unexpectedly, it emerged from the data that clothes, bags and grooming items were key consumer products in the maintenance/creation of appearance. Furthermore, there are clear links between appearance and gender since “...how we look is an extremely prominent cue for gender definition...” (Kacem, 2000). Therefore, appearance is important for children to communicate a range of meanings, as well as assisting in constructing other identities such as gender, performance and so on. The reason is that appearance is highly visual and something which children carry with them at all times.

The most important finding pertaining to appearance is the insight this study provides into young boys and the emphasis they place on appearance. Much of the research on appearance or related topics tends to suggest that girls in particular are concerned with how they look (Martin et. al., 1999). However, this study presented findings with young boys (P6) talking freely and confidently about grooming products, clothes and similar products. In a similar vein, Boden et. al. (2004) argued that children (boys and girls) are highly aware of the judgement of peers and consume fashion accordingly. Yet, as the present study further indicated, not all children are equally interested in their appearance. To some, other qualities or features are more central in identity construction e.g. performance abilities.

In their research on beauty images and advertising, Martin et. al. (1999) suggested that norms for physical appearance are different for adolescent boys and girls. Furthermore, they have argued that as a result of advertising and other agents of socialization, girls are much more critical of their bodies. Whilst this perhaps may still be true, the findings

from the present study suggest that the norms for boys' physical appearance may be changing.

In marketing studies with children, age is a demographic factor used to compare groups and their social and cognitive development. Not unexpectedly, however, as this study has shown, for children age is an important identity – also within same age groups. This finding is consistent with Kelle (2001), who found children of same age groups talk of mature and more childish identities. In society children are continuously reminded of their lower status and lack of power due to their age. Therefore, for many children becoming older (chronological age) and acting older (social age) have predominantly positive connotations. Whilst the marketing profession may have some insight into the importance of social age in relation to consumption patterns in children, marketing academics have paid too little attention to this identity.

In her ethnographic account, Kelle (2001) examined children's discourses of development and found that children continuously contest the age suitability of various activities. Furthermore, in studying children's fashion consumption, Boden et. al. (2004) found that children evaluated clothing and symbols on clothing based on age appropriateness. This is consistent with the present study where children talked of the age suitability of various consumer goods. In a similar vein, Davies and Machin (2000: 174) suggested the consumption of television to be a clear indication of social age and found that whilst discussing programmes children negotiated "...a sense of no longer being 'babies'". Therefore, growing up and maturing preoccupies children and is likely to be linked to the increased independence which age gives them.

6.7 Child consumer segments

Now that the cultural expressions of children's consumption have been discussed, the child consumer segments will be examined. These will be discussed in turn and related to the literature starting with the protected child consumer segment.

6.8 The protected child consumer segment

The key finding to emerge with respect to this segment was that consumption plays a crucial role in parental control over children. Therefore, children's consumer behaviour in essence can tell a considerable amount about cross-generational relationships. As previous research has focused on cognitive development in children there is still inadequate insight into the tensions/negotiations between parents and children (Hill and Tisdall, 1997). Such research has resulted in discourses of children being out of control and thus a threat to the adult order (Kenway and Bullen, 2001). On the other hand the marketing profession has identified children as savvy, clever consumers (Lindstrom, 2003), who hold a tremendous amount of pester power. Either way, such discourses seem to perpetuate the gulf between the generations as many adults are left with feelings of having lost control. Consequently, by analysing consumption as an important feature of intergenerational relationships, one can come closer to understanding the dynamics between adults and children.

As seen in the findings, parental attitudes towards consumer society varied. However, several of the parents experienced a sense of losing control as they observed what they perceived to be overly materialistic values in their children. Such values may be related to societal pressure and childhood discourses constructing children as innocent, clean and carefree – something that does not sit comfortably with consumer culture. This, Seiter (1993: 3) has argued, is:

“...a middle-class delusion – though one often propagated by child experts – that children can be shielded from consumption, that proper parenting will nip children's interest in toys and television in the bud. Rather, I believe that we need to accept that contemporary parenthood is always already embedded in consumerism.”

It is clear therefore, that consumption can be a site of tension between children and their parents, not least as far as mealtimes are concerned. This finding is consistent with Grieshaber (1997), who found that food and mealtimes frequently became a site of power tensions between parents and their children. Furthermore, consumer goods as instruments of control, are frequently blamed for being inherently negative and the cause of conflict in families and amongst children (Kenway & Bullen, 2001). Yet, as the findings indicated, parents talked of their own childhoods of consumption as a source of reference. Therefore, these parents may be experiencing unease as they enter new or

unfamiliar territory *in addition to* feelings of being unable to control their children's desires and identity construction. However, whilst there are likely to be parents who feel under considerable financial pressure to provide for their children, might not some adults be overemphasising the threat of consumer culture? For if we accept that for children gaining control over their lives is a central feature of growing up, then consumption and consumer goods may simply be a natural component in this process.

Another facet of the protected child consumer is the reality of physical and/or mental harm. Throughout children's lives, spaces in school, at home, clubs, the playground etc. are constructed to control children's learning, movement and experiences (James et. al., 1998). Yet, it is clear that children cannot (and should not) be protected at all times. Therefore, whilst consumption may be considered a necessary evil, adults utilise consumption at the same time to protect children from harm. In this sense children's movements can be restricted and they can be under surveillance as e.g. with the mobile phone. In their study on children's safety products, Martens et. al. (2005) questioned whether contemporary childhood is overprotected. Whilst the evidence from this study is not conclusive enough to make such suggestions, it is clear that children's freedom of movement and liberties to consume are at the core of parental control over children.

6.9 The resistant child consumer segment

Essentially, the resistant child consumer segment is the child's eye view of the intergenerational tensions between parents and their children and how these become manifested in consumption. Perhaps it is appropriate to point out that far from all of children's consumer behaviour is a result of resistance/tension towards adults. Rather, it is claimed here that power and control are *frequently* at the centre of children's (lack of) consumer choices. Others too have pointed out that children's consumer choices become strategies to resist adult control (Boden et. al., 2004). Therefore, whilst children are highly creative in resisting adult consumption values, there are many other factors which shape children's consumption. Nonetheless, some understanding of the role of consumption in the tension between parents and children can provide consumer behaviour with important insight into child consumption.

Of key importance from the analysis is the centrality of rituals in the process of resistance. The findings of this study indicate that consumption rituals are central to

children's fight to gain more control over their lives. However, these findings may not come as any great surprise if we consider firstly, the purpose of consumption rituals i.e. as the process by which meaning is imbued or derived from consumer goods (McCracken, 1988). Secondly, children's relative lack of power is a fundamental aspect of the childhood experience. Therefore, it stands to reason that such power concerns will become manifested in children's consumption rituals.

Whilst authors in other fields of study have previously connected rituals with resistance (e.g. Grieshaber, 1997), rituals as vehicles of resistance have rarely been examined in the context of childhood consumption. Ritson and Elliott (1999), however, have studied the ritualization of advertising text amongst teenagers. They found that youths re-enacted advertising texts in the playground as a type of verbal ritual. In doing so, the advertising script frequently changed meaning throughout the process of ritualization. That is to say, the teenagers adopted their own meanings. This is similar to the findings from this study which showed that resistance to e.g. advertising, product or gender meanings was manifested in the children's consumption. The children were not prepared to passively accept stereotypical meanings of consumption. Rather, they found themselves resisting these meanings and constructing their own.

Most research on consumption and resistance has been confined to youth groups, most notably within youth subcultures (e.g. Griffen, 2001; Hebdige, 1984). Such research is concerned with consumption as symbols of rebellion – often manifested as rather extreme styles of hair and clothing e.g. Goth and Punk to name but two. Yet within this stream of research, children have been forgotten. Perhaps this is because it has been assumed that children are more controllable and less expressive in their rebellion. The findings from this study indicate that the reality of children's consumption lives is much more complex. Children do resist and even rebel through consumption – continually. However, when consumption becomes too rebellious, children turn to consuming icons who dare what they do not; pop singers for instance.

To conclude this section, it is worth pointing out that the resistant child consumer segment bears many similarities to what Gabriel and Lang (2002) named *the consumer as rebel*. That said, children's low power status in society and their continuous struggle with adults presents an added dimension to this segment as opposed to the consumer as rebel. Nevertheless, when Gabriel and Lang (2002: 138) describe some acts of

consumption as “gestures of defiance” or “symbols of rebellion”, this is precisely what children do as well.

6.10 The communicative child consumer segment

Whilst it is often acknowledged that (preadolescent) children are confident, knowledgeable and savvy consumers (e.g. by marketers, consumer researchers, psychologists, media specialists and so on) one is sometimes left puzzled as to why so little research has actually been conducted with children as consumers. Certainly, the findings of this segment indicate it is timely more research is conducted into the communicative nature of children’s consumption, most particularly younger children. One of the most important issues which arose in this segment is that even young children understand that consumer goods are important features of social communication and self-expression. Furthermore, many of the children in this study were acutely aware of what kind of signals they wished to convey through consumption.

Debates on the communicative nature of consumption are nothing new to the field of consumer behaviour. By now, a vast number of studies have examined the meanings that (adult) consumers attribute to goods (Gabriel and Lang, 2002). Despite this, children have not really been taken into consideration – as has been argued before in this thesis. In all likelihood this is, at least in part, due to the common (mis)conception that children are incapable of understanding the symbolic nature of goods. Subsequently, a whole range of potentially valuable consumers are not adequately understood. Following on from such misconceptions, this thesis has shown that children not only understand the symbolic meanings associated with consumption – they are creative, sometimes critical in how they adopt, use or even reject these meanings.

Another key finding pertaining to the communicative child consumer segment is the significance of consumer goods as age signifiers. For the field of consumer behaviour, this means two things. Firstly, it means that consumer goods are instrumental for children in communicating to others matters they consider to be important. Secondly, these findings tell us something about the importance of disassociating from consumption aimed at younger children. In their study on children’s fashion consumption, Boden et. al. (2004) produced very similar findings to this study. Specifically, they claimed that (22):

“...the construction and performance of gender identity is related to age in the sense that children's consumption of clothing echoes the phases of childhood development.”

Therefore, one must assume that consumer goods do play a critical role in children's self-definition and the manner in which this is conveyed to other children. This is not to say that all consumption amongst children is of a communicative nature. Plainly, children do not always have a choice in what they consume. Ger et. al. (1999) expressed a similar view when they argued that structural conditions can prevent people from actually making a choice – as is precisely the case for children due to their lack of power. That is to say, the findings indicated that children own/consume items which might not be their personal choice – sometimes far from it. Still other times consumption is of a mundane nature, functional, not thought through and without a deep-seated meaning – a view advocated by Campbell (1997). Yet, what appears to be clear is that consumer goods become central as communicators when they make statements about matters of importance to children.

6.11 The gendered child consumer segment

To start with the youngest children, the data presented evidence highlighting that nursery children already displayed clear gender-based stereotyping of toys. In addition there was a general consensus on what constituted gender neutral toys. As the children matured somewhat, the boys in particular tended to demonstrate strong feelings of disgust towards dolls and anything they considered to be overly feminine. In a similar vein, studies outwith marketing (Aydt & Corsaro, 2003; Corsaro, 1997; Ritson & Elliott, 1999; Thorne, 1993) have demonstrated so-called pollution rituals between the genders. Furthermore, Aydt and Corsaro (2003) have highlighted that gender segregation peaks at around six to eight years of age. This corresponds with the present study and suggests that gender segregation in the middle group of this study (P2/P3) was at its peak – explaining the sometimes extreme revulsion the boys demonstrated towards, what they perceived to be, girls' products.

Yet, the present study highlighted that those boys who do not conform to stereotypical gender norms and who prefer toys considered appropriate for the opposite sex were subject to negative remarks from other children. Therefore, it is evident that gendered

consumer behaviour can – already at nursery age, lead to negative reactions from others. Earlier studies have found that, over the longer term, violating stereotypical gender norms can even lead to isolation. For instance, in their study of social isolation among early adolescent groups, Evans and Eder (1993) found one of the three factors which led children to be isolated, was violating gender norms.

For consumer behaviour, this presents insight into the importance of gender amongst children. However, one of the most significant findings of children's identity construction was that identity is fluid. Which identity is important at any given time varies according to context. That said, gender was found to be the least fluid aspect of children's identity. The reason for this harks back to Jenkins' (1999) concept of *primary* identities (i.e. more enduring, less changeable identities) of which gender is one. In the context of consumption this means that gender influenced, structured, enabled and restricted much of what the children consumed.

However, if a wider perspective is applied than merely consumer behaviour, these findings present a range of consequences to the experience of being a child in a gender-segregated (patriarchal) consumer society. In other words, children's worlds of consumption are heavily structured into what toys, clothes, books, heroes, interests, colours etc. they *should* like. Subsequently, they are deprived of a whole host of experiences that fall within the remit of the opposite sex. Therefore, children might, given half a chance, enjoy the toys, activities etc. of the opposite sex; however, they have restricted access to these experiences through a whole host of societal controls. This, without a doubt, has implications for the skills children develop and the knowledge they accumulate. In addition to this, children, especially boys, find themselves under a great deal of pressure to engage in gender-appropriate consumption – that is, what society (including marketing) has defined as gender-appropriate. Such reproducing of gender stereotypes was clearly visible throughout the data analysis. In this vein, Kacen (2000: 346) has argued that "...gender identity is about hierarchical differences between men and women". Therefore, essentially what was observed within these nursery/school settings was to a large part children reproducing patriarchy.

6.12 The independent developing child consumer segment

This child consumer segment has investigated some of the traditional concerns of scientific consumer socialization, namely children's consumer development. However, because these questions were posed from the childhood studies perspective, the findings have produced answers which offer a complementary angle on children's consumer development. In other words, light has been shed on how children use consumption knowledge in their cultures. That is to say, it has been highlighted how children use knowledge to indicate a sense of control in relation to their world in general and marketing specifically. This is precisely the most important finding to emerge in this segment – namely that the display of marketing knowledge in children abounds with messages of power, control, social age and independence. Therefore, one could argue that children are more *in* control of their relationship to advertisements than previously thought – rather than merely being the *controlled*. Consequently, displaying such marketing knowledge is a means of displaying control in life as previous research has also indicated (Bartholomew & Donohoe, 2003; Davies & Machin, 2000; McKendrick et. al., 2000; Ritson & Elliott, 1999).

Another key finding within this segment involves the pleasure and pride children, from an early age, take in displaying knowledge of products, services and the marketing machine in general. This is consistent with the findings of Bartholomew & Donohoe (2003), who further suggested that traditional socialization theory has restricted marketers in gaining a deeper understanding of children as critical, competent consumers. Therefore, in considering one of the main tenets of childhood studies i.e. that children are competent social actors, the findings from this research strongly suggest precisely this point.

Whilst researchers within scientific consumer socialization disagree it has, nevertheless, been argued that understanding advertising intent, and the use of cognitive defences against advertising, emerges in children who are at a certain age/developmental stage (John, 1999a). Clearly, very young children do not have the same insight into advertising, however, this study does not support the argument that such skills (cognitive defences) emerge at a specific developmental stage/age. Indeed this study found that the way children related to consumption, advertising and marketing varied greatly between children of same, as well as, different age groups. Furthermore, socioeconomic

background proved to be a factor which impacted on the display of critical statements toward advertising – a finding supported by others. Such display of critical discourse towards advertising, Buckingham (2000: 153) noted was much more “fluent” amongst middle-class children, compared to working-class children. However, the findings of this study (and that of Buckingham, 2000) merely suggest that socioeconomic background impacts on how children wish to *display* critical knowledge of advertising tactics and products in general. That is to say, working-class children may equally well understand the persuasive nature of marketing. For as Buckingham (2000: 153) has argued:

“Knowing that advertisements have designs on you does not necessarily mean that you will always reject them; and a generalized cynicism about advertising clearly does not preclude the enjoyment of particular ads.”

Consequently, it makes little sense to study children’s understanding/critical statements of marketing – at least if carried out in isolation from cultural aspects of consumption. Rather, the findings of this study indicate that the role of consumption in children’s lives is much more complex than some previously held.

6.13 Overall principles of children’s cultures of consumption

This section in the findings chapter represented a third layer of analysis which identified certain key principles which emerged within children’s cultures of consumption. These principles helped shed light on some issues which were not specific to the ingredients of the child consumer segments. Rather, it was seen how they were overriding concerns that children have within their cultures. At the beginning of this discussion chapter some more general observations with respect to the findings, have been touched upon. Therefore, these overriding principles will be briefly commented upon to avoid repeating what has already been pointed out.

Banister and Booth (2005) have advocated the use of child-centric research within consumer behaviour studies – something which this study has indicated is central to understanding children as consumers. In as far as the meanings that children attribute to consumption are often different to those of adults, it is clear that research with children must be child-centric. Thus, upon entering children’s life worlds, it has been possible to gain sight of the meanings that children attribute to consumption.

Children have been identified as consumer literate from a young age; therefore, it is clear that children are far from incompetent consumers. Thus the view of children as inventive, creative and active consumers is consistent with the childhood studies paradigm which considers children to be dynamic constructors of their life worlds (Prout & James, 1997).

It is often advocated by moralists and is a populist view that children are materialistic and over indulgent consumers. Consequently, the key principle that consumption does not wholly define children is of great importance to these findings. Whilst it is clear that consumption is of crucial significance to children in their everyday social lives and in the construction of identity, there are other aspects of being a child which are equally critical. In many respects, this reveals the creativity and diversity of children's cultures. That is to say, there are moments when children choose to let consumption matter and other times when they choose to render it unimportant.

Nevertheless, the immense impact that adults have on children's lives cannot be ignored. The structures created by society to manage, control, teach, inform, protect and shape children are fundamental boundaries within which children are confined. Such structures inhibit and categorise children according to the dominant values in society – gender and age were specifically pointed out in the findings. These structures were found to influence how children play, interact and consume. Yet, we also know that through resistance and rebellion children attempt to break free from such barriers. The reason for this is children's fight to gain independence and control over their own lives has a great impact on their consumption choices and how they consume. However, we should not assume that the structures constructed by adults to control children are inevitable. On the contrary, by questioning the taken-for-granted power that adults have over children – and the means by which it is exercised, it is possible to start changing attitudes. For it is conceivable that children fight all the more for independence and control precisely because they have minimal input into matters that affect them. Therefore, might it not be that children's consumer choices/behaviour would change if their status within society changed?

6.14 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, the key findings which emerged from the data have been identified. Furthermore, these have been examined in light of previous research with children as consumers and compared to the philosophical underpinnings of childhood studies. Overall, it seems clear that the findings of this study have contradicted, and in some cases been similar to, the general findings of the scientific consumer socialization literature. In other respects, this ethnography has helped shed new light on children's cultures of consumption. Moreover, while experience and development are factors which cannot be ignored, it has certainly been established that children are active, creative, skilful consumers for whom consumption has an important function, both socially and practically.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This final and concluding chapter commences with a review of the key arguments and central thesis of this study. Subsequently, the aim and objectives will be revisited and discussed. The chapter concludes by providing an overview of the debate concerning children and consumption with references to areas of importance in this field. As a result, suggestions for future research are put forward.

7.1 Key arguments of study

Within the field of consumer behaviour (and the social sciences generally), researchers have predominantly studied children from within the scientific consumer socialization paradigm. From this perspective children are understood as *developing* consumers. In other words, the active nature of children's participation in consumer culture is not fully understood. Furthermore, there has been too much focus on children as consumers who are unknowing and who lack insight, understanding and critical ability. This thesis acknowledges that children, as they mature, go through various phases of development and move from relatively inexperienced to experienced consumers.

An alternative child-centric paradigm was necessary to enable the researcher to gain insight into children's consumption experiences from a different angle. Conducting child-centric research involves, from the outset, structuring every aspect of the study (including one's frame of mind) such that insight is gained into the meanings that *children* attribute to their life worlds. In doing so, it calls for more pluralistic approaches to research on this important issue, thus providing an alternative dimension to interpreting children's consumption experiences.

Outside the field of consumer behaviour, recent developments in the social sciences have led to a burgeoning field of enquiry subsumed under the title of childhood studies. Given the important role that consumption plays in the everyday lives of children, one would expect this topic to have received attention in the social sciences. Surprisingly though, references to consumption are scarce and few studies have explored the issue (isolated examples include Buckingham, 2000; Martens et. al., 2004; Wærdahl, 2005).

To contribute to the gap in knowledge on children and consumption, this thesis sought:

To study children's cultures of consumption using a child-centric approach to establish how consumption manifests itself in children's everyday lives. The thesis focused on children's consumption values, behaviour and attitudes and how these were expressed through children's cultural symbols, rituals, identities and their power relationships.

Therefore, the fundamental basis of this study is that a child-centric approach was adopted. In other words, the traditional developmental understanding of children was challenged from a philosophical level right through to methodology and analysis. In doing so, the methods applied in the study made every attempt to catch sight of consumption through children's own eyes. Children were thus not seen in terms of what they are not, or cannot do, but as social actors who themselves are active constructors of meaning.

Cultural values can be deep-seated and taken-for-granted which means that values can be difficult for researchers to "see" and indeed for children to express. Therefore, by examining the more visible aspects of culture i.e. symbols, rituals, identity and power relations it becomes possible to extend understanding of children as consumers. Now that the principle arguments of this thesis have been discussed, the objectives outlined in the introductory chapter are examined.

7.2 Objectives and research evidence

This section of the conclusion chapter will revisit the research propositions and examine each objective in light of the research evidence – starting with the research propositions.

In the introductory chapter the research propositions demonstrated what the researcher expected to find throughout the study. The first of these expectations was that children are not passive recipients of consumption meanings but are competent interpreters who negotiate and construct their own meanings in their cultures. Precisely this has been pointed out on numerous occasions throughout the findings. Thus the first research proposition has been met.

In the second research proposition gender, age and socioeconomic background were expected to have some impact on how children consume and the meanings they attribute to consumption. As the study unfolded, this too was found to be the case. Yet, gender as

a structural variable and significant identity proved to have the strongest impact on how children consumed. In addition, context, as an influential factor, was established as more significant than originally expected.

The third research proposition expected consumption meanings to influence/be influenced by expressions of culture. In other words, expressions such as the symbols children consider to be important, the rituals they enact, the power relationships between children/adults and children/children, as well as their identities, are factors which *influence* consumption and which are *influenced by* consumption. Whilst this expectation of the study was found to fit well with the actual findings other important issues emerged. One such issue was that symbols were identified as being central to processes of ritual, power and identity. Furthermore, power was found to be much more significant than originally thought.

Lastly, the researcher proposed that children use consumer goods in many diverse ways. That is to say, in some situations, consumption was expected to be highly significant, whereas in other contexts consumer goods and their associated status would be less important and even irrelevant at times. This research proposition has relevance to children as dynamic constructors of culture. In other words, the fact that children may choose that consumption does not matter, raises questions concerning popular assumptions, that children are greedy overly materialistic consumers, who are controlled by the marketing machine. Thus, this expectation, as with the previous three, was met.

Objective 1

To explore children's cultures of consumption through the structural features of age, sex and socioeconomic background

The study provided clear evidence that children are more competent as consumption interpreters than previous literature would suggest. Young children, as well as older children used consumer goods in social settings in rituals, in constructing identities and as resources in power interactions. Throughout the entire research process, it was clear that children were by no means passive recipients of meanings conveyed or “fed” to them through advertising and other agents of socialization. However, the manner in which children of different ages used and expressed their consumption interests varied. In other words, the significance of developmental factors cannot be ignored – yet it was clear that children’s abilities cannot be neatly categorised into stages, cognition and age.

Furthermore, consumer behaviourists must recognize that children's abilities are not always the only point of interest. This is due to the fact that children's *knowledge, abilities, understanding* and *insight* are not naturally/necessarily linked to their choice, preference or interpretation of consumer goods. In other words, conducting research on children's (age) development may not be sufficient to predict children's consumer behaviour.

The meanings that children attributed to consumption were highly diverse. Time, place and situation impacted on *whether* consumer goods or indeed *which* consumer goods were important/highly valued by the children. In many cases, socioeconomic background proved to be less important than social context, age, gender and individual differences. In fact, despite different socioeconomic backgrounds, the degree of similarity in the toys, heroes and possessions the children consumed was surprisingly similar. Yet, children with more affluent backgrounds sometimes displayed a greater scepticism towards consumption and marketing in general. Furthermore, children with relatively deprived backgrounds proved to have more restricted access to consumption opportunities which required car transport. However, this study did not find clear indications that the meanings that children attribute to their *ordinary* everyday consumption varied greatly between the two different socioeconomic backgrounds.

For children of all ages, there were differences in terms of gender. Boys and girls consume differently, have different consumption preferences, and use products to construct their gender identity. However, care must be taken not to over-generalise this point. Children's gender behaviour is diverse. Some children construct strong (here meaning stereotyped) gender identities through consumption whilst many children floated in-between. Yet, it is important to point out that it may not be correct to define boy/girl as opposing continuums.

Age, as a significant factor in children's culture of consumption, was found to be important on two counts. Firstly, age (chronological and social) is a significant identity for children. In this respect children displayed clear boundaries and norms of what they deemed to be age-appropriate consumption. In public, therefore, most avoided consuming products which were considered inappropriate for their age. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that the relationship between age and development cannot be ignored. Becoming older often, but by no means always, followed hand in hand with

increased consumption experience. Thus, in general, older children were more knowledgeable and critical of consumption.

It is clear that Objective One has been met and the study has, in this respect, offered insight into the meanings that children attribute to consumption. These diverse meanings have been investigated but also presented in terms of certain commonalities in the structural features of age, gender and socioeconomic background.

Objective 2

To examine children's cultures of consumption through the cultural expressions of symbols, rituals, power and identity.

During the study it soon became clear that symbols, rituals, power and identity are, for children, highly significant expressions of consumer culture. In other words, as children go about their daily lives, such cultural expressions are of crucial concern to them. Therefore, symbols, rituals, power and identity function both as resources and processes through which children construct their cultures of consumption. This means children use such cultural expressions as channels through which their concerns are displayed. Yet, at the same time, cultural expressions become integral to the processes through which these very concerns are constructed.

The data has pointed to the diverse ways in which children use consumption as an expression of culture. Symbols were found to be at the heart of children's cultures of consumption and were integral to processes of ritual, power and identity. Whilst consumption symbols proved to be central to children's social interaction, the data also revealed moments when children reject consumer goods. Thus, they are both critical and creative when constructing their cultures of consumption.

Findings pertaining to cultural expressions were presented through an examination of each in turn. However, children's cultures are highly complex and to separate four such intertwined and interlinked cultural expressions was in some respects artificial. That is to say, symbols, rituals, power and identity are processes which rarely, if ever, unfold in isolation from the other expressions. Therefore, through a second layer of analysis, five child consumer segments emerged: the protected child consumer; the resistant child consumer; the communicative child consumer; the gendered child consumer and the independent developing child consumer. These segments are fluid and contextually

based, as opposed to being static. In other words, they are not fixed groups of children but rather represent moments of children's everyday lives. These moments give rise to a specific mix of cultural expressions.

Through a process of analysing the cultural expressions and child consumer segments, certain key principles became clear. In essence it can be concluded from these five key principles that children are diverse, creative and competent consumers. Yet, children are also highly controlled consumers, who are compartmentalized in segments which may not necessarily represent their needs and desires. Lastly, the key principles tell us that power, control and their striving for more independence characterise much of children's consumer behaviour.

Objective 3

To apply and evaluate the usefulness of ethnography as a methodology for the study of children and consumption.

In arguing for a child-centric approach to studying children as consumers, ethnography proved to be an appropriate choice. Outside the field of consumer behaviour, authors have suggested that ethnography is highly useful for studying children; however, rarely if ever, has it been applied in the study of children's consumer behaviour. In this study, ethnography as a methodology, provided access to children's life worlds in a manner that few other approaches do. The longitudinal nature of ethnography allowed the researcher time to experiment, gain cultural knowledge and establish invaluable experience. Such insider cultural knowledge presented the researcher with different frames of interpretation. That is to say, events were interpreted in light of knowledge that could only be gained through accessing children's cultures.

Not least important is the reducing of power barriers and trust relationships that can be established through ethnography. For this reason, ethnography is particularly appropriate for studying children – who are a low-power, low-status group in society. Furthermore, to create knowledge on a micro level, a methodology is necessary which delves into the micro level of children's cultures. Therefore, whilst consumer behaviour is at an exploratory stage in theorizing consumption in childhood, ethnography presents a prime opportunity to understand what goes on in children's groups.

Notwithstanding the advantages of ethnography as a methodology, there are drawbacks/difficulties. Firstly, ethnography is immensely time-consuming and most demanding for researchers. It requires sufficient time spent in the field to develop many new relationships – which is in itself demanding. This is in addition to the time spent on fieldnotes, ongoing analysis and transcribing interviews. Furthermore, researchers are continuously faced with the challenge of reflecting on whether they are representing the children's realities, or their own. To overcome this requires that ethnographers are mindful about using a reflexive approach throughout the research process.

To conduct an ethnographic study with children and, therefore, adopt roles which reduce power barriers is opposed to many taken-for-granted assumptions of children's status in society. This can meet with disapproval from other adults – who are often in a position to obstruct the research. Therefore, conducting child-centric ethnography sometimes involves communicating as much with adults (to gain their understanding) as with the children being studied. All things considered though, despite the challenges which ethnographers are faced with, there is no doubt that this study has found ethnography to be a highly valuable methodology for studying consumption in childhood.

Objective 4

To extend knowledge of children as consumers and outline the implications for practitioners including marketers, social policy makers and other groups involved with children.

Marketing, consumer policy, globalization and social inclusion are but a few of the issues which are of key concern in public discussion. It is therefore, all the more confusing why children as consumers are not more prominent in such debates. This thesis has posed a series of questions and the findings point toward a need to re-examine several assumptions about children and consumption. These include social policy concerning children, marketing to children and not least children's rights as consumers.

This study has shed light on a range of issues which have practical implications. One of the overriding themes throughout this thesis has been to repeatedly question the unequal power relationship that exists between children and adults. Throughout the findings it became evident that power and control are inextricably linked to many aspects of children's consumption - in some shape or form. This is hardly surprising given children's low status position in society. Whilst many adults invariably consider children

to be their most important emotional investment, the research indicates that children are not really heard in society. Consequently, this study indicates that a greater understanding between generations may be achieved by listening more to children on matters that affect them – a point very applicable to consumption. Therefore, if children were consulted, might not better relationships between adults and children be established? That is to say, if children are taken more seriously and *given* control, they may be less concerned with *taking* control. For instance, in school children could have more input into what equipment, food and other consumption objects are purchased. This could even extend to having a say in school-based groups which are concerned with ethical consumer considerations. Whilst these are mere suggestions for working with generational asymmetries, this thesis holds that the unequal power relationships between adults and children present a wrong that must be righted – to do this, consumption can play an integral role.

In society there are ever-present voices which are concerned with children's protection *against* marketing. It is such concerns which have given rise to the type of age-based research seen within scientific consumer socialization. Yet the findings of this thesis have indicated that such research has not been particularly helpful in understanding children as consumers. Whilst it must be acknowledged that children are more vulnerable as beings than adults, it is important to accept that consumption is a reality of life. Thus it is unrealistic and impossible for adults to stand as guardians screening off marketing towards children. Rather, it might be fruitful to shift the focus when researching children as consumers from the *protected* child to the *prepared* child - enabling them to navigate through a commercialized world.

For marketing practitioners this study can provide more specific insight into alternative methods to conducting market research with children. Thus the need to enter children's worlds is important. However, even more significant are the methods, which can be applied in research to reduce the power barriers evident in child-adult relationships. Furthermore, from a consumer behaviour point-of-view this study can provide insight into alternative approaches to constructing theories surrounding child consumption. One of the most significant finding is pertaining to the complexity and fluidity of children's cultures of consumption. Whilst this finding may come as no surprise, it makes the task of furthering knowledge of children's consumer behaviour even more complicated. However, as more such studies are conducted, consumer behaviourists can start to piece together findings to establish what common themes emerge – thus providing new

evidence for marketing practitioners. Therefore, it is evident that such alternative paradigms to researching children should complement existing ones in the field of consumer behaviour. Consequently, at this stage, marketing practitioners can use the findings of this thesis to inform their own market research methods as well as being applied in child marketing strategies.

Another important implication for marketers is the need to acknowledge that children are highly diverse and not easily segmented. Whilst age and gender proved to have implications for children's consumer behaviour, context and individual differences were often more important. The child consumer segments were seen to represent moments or contexts as such – not static groups. Therefore, children are many things; not one thing or the other. This means that marketers, and not least consumer behaviourists, must cease to think of children as groups which are purely segmented into gender, age or socioeconomic backgrounds. This study has shown that whilst these variables do impact on children's consumer behaviour, the contextual influences on children's consumption are fluid and ever changing.

7.3 Limitations of the study

The strength of this thesis is the attention to micro processes in children's cultures. Yet, this very strength can also become a weakness. In other words, the in-depth focus on small groups of children forms a narrow basis for constructing theory. Nevertheless, the thesis, which is based on data from three age groups of children in three locations, has been written such that readers have sufficient insight to transfer the findings to other settings – satisfying the evaluative criteria of *transferability* used in qualitative research.

One further limitation of the study pertains to the research setting. Most data was collected in schools. Whilst the author arranged home visits and interviews with parents, there are few observations on children's cultures of consumption outside the school setting. The data is, in the main, children's lived experiences in school settings and their reflections of their own consumer behaviour outside school. This means that direct observations of children's bedrooms and home life are somewhat limited. Furthermore, other forms of consumption such as television viewing and the use of computer technology, most notably the internet, do not figure strongly in the data.

It must be acknowledged that whilst gender, age and socioeconomic variables are important, there are other significant features which affect children's consumption. However, within the groups of children in this study there were no disabled children, few if any ethnic minorities and scarcely any (detectable) variations in religious background. Consequently, the lack of data in this thesis on such variables presents a limitation.

Since culture is at the heart of the thesis the study has explored the meanings that children attribute to their worlds. However, this focus and the lack of insight into children's different personalities can represent a limitation. That is to say, it is conceivable that children act/respond to various stimuli and situations in part due to their personalities rather than merely owing to factors such as context, friendships, power, gender and so on. Therefore, it would be interesting to draw more on personality theories in conjunction with cultural theory in future research.

Whilst reflexivity has been built into the research, it is evident that all researchers see/interpret the world through tinted lenses. That is to say, the background and experiences of the researcher have some bearing on how the children's realities were perceived. Therefore, although every effort has been taken to address such biases, it should be acknowledged, that there are certain limitations within the study with respect to the researcher's own circumstances. There are three in particular which are worth pointing out. Firstly, the fact that the researcher herself is a mother has implications for her views of children. Secondly, the researcher's gender is an important category which not only affects how the researcher sees the world but indeed how others see the researcher. Thirdly, the researcher had little or no experience with the British primary/secondary education system due to most of her upbringing being in Scandinavia. Consequently, she viewed/interpreted child consumers within the British educational context, partly as an inexperienced outsider. However, it can be argued that this can also represent a strength in the data. That is to say, casting a "strangers" eye on what it means to be a child consumer in the British educational context may even *reduce* certain biases.

7.4 Areas for future research

Being an exploratory study, light was thrown on a range of important issues pertaining to children's cultures of consumption. This has revealed a range of areas for future research – the most important of which will be addressed next.

As was pointed out several times throughout the findings chapter and the discussion chapter children actively construct their own cultures. They are not passive recipients of cultural knowledge passed from generation to generation. Furthermore, it is clear that this has provided a new dimension from which to understand children's cultures of consumption. Consequently, this means that there are still gaps in knowledge on children's consumer behaviour. Therefore, from a more general perspective, it is timely that more research is conducted into children's cultures of consumption.

More specifically, power proved to be of greater significance in children's consumption than the literature had initially suggested. Much literature on consumption is heavily concerned with symbolism and identity construction in consumption – however, power as a central feature of children's consumer behaviour, is under-researched and warrants further investigation. For instance, does the nature of child/adult relationships impact on the degree to which children resist adult control through consumption? Would children's consumption patterns change if they were consulted more? What are children's perceptions of their consumer rights?

This thesis focused primarily on the cultural expressions of rituals, symbols, power and identity. Each of these is sufficiently important to warrant further research independently. Yet, these are not the only vehicles through which children express their cultural values. Therefore, it might be interesting to explore the role of consumption, in other cultural expressions - such as health, family and work. Whilst this thesis calls for research in a range of factors pertaining to children's cultures of consumption it is particularly amongst younger children that further research is necessary. Conducting research with young children is significantly more challenging than with older children as younger children communicate quite differently and rely less on conversational abilities. To overcome such difficulties researchers conducting ethnographic research have at their disposal a greater variety of methods and the "luxury" of time – a most valuable factor when learning how to communicate with young children.

On another note, more research is necessary to explore children's cultures of consumption from an ethnographic perspective – in a range of social settings including home, clubs, playgrounds as well as schools. The findings from this study have revealed that it is timely more research is conducted from a child-centric perspective – of which ethnography is an appropriate (albeit not the only) approach. Such micro-analysis provides a greater understanding of the dynamics and interactions that take place amongst children. Furthermore, micro-analysis enables the gradual construction of recurring patterns that emerge as significant in children's cultures of consumption. Whilst these recommendations for future research point to a need for micro-analysis of children's cultures of consumption care must be taken not to ignore overall similarities which may exist between groups of children. Therefore, micro-analytical insights should be complemented with certain macro-statistical research which can shed light on more general features of children's consumption worlds. Now that suggestions for future research have been mapped out, this chapter – and the thesis – are brought to a conclusion.

7.5 Final conclusion

This thesis was commenced by pointing to the lack of understanding of children as consumers. This was partly attributed to children having been overlooked by researchers and partly due to the adult-centric approach which has been applied in studies on children's consumer behaviour. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to venture outside the field of marketing in search of an alternative child-centric paradigm. Thus, childhood studies emerged as a natural and useful option; one that could complement scientific consumer socialization theory by posing different research questions.

To further knowledge of child consumers, ethnographic methodology was applied to explore the meanings that children themselves attribute to consumption – thus overcoming some of the criticisms of previous research with children as consumers. Consequently, based on the findings, it can be concluded that this study has contributed to knowledge on a theoretical, methodological and practical level. On a theoretical level, it is evident that much has been learnt about children's cultures of consumption – from various angles. Furthermore, the understanding of children as dynamic, creative, capable consumers has been extended. Methodologically, ethnography has been brought into the field of consumer behaviour as a alternative to studying children's consumer behaviour.

In this respect, ethnography has proved to be highly useful in providing an entirely different perspective on children's cultures of consumption. Lastly, from a practical point of view this thesis has contributed to knowledge by questioning many taken-for-granted assumptions about consumption in childhood. This means that on a societal and personal level there is every reason to instigate change in our approach to children as consumers.

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UN Convention on the rights of the child, UNICEF, United Nations,
<http://www.unicef.org/crc/>

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Appendices

Appendix 1a

Access strategy to nursery

Sunny Nursery

Sunny Nursery is a privately run nursery with children from 6 months to school age. At the time the nursery comprised two nurseries (it has subsequently expanded further). Whilst the owners were active in the running of Sunny Nursery they were more involved in the running of the other nursery. Therefore, a member of staff had recently been promoted to manage Sunny Nursery.

Being a private nursery there were fewer formal procedures in negotiating access. The researcher was able to approach the general manager directly and discuss the subject. Owing to the fact that the researcher's son attended the nursery (in the so-called *junior room*, which encompassed younger children than in the pre-school room) the management and the researcher had already spoken on several occasions. This proved to be an advantage in gaining access. On a few separate occasions the prospect of conducting research at the nursery had been discussed informally. Subsequently, a more formal meeting was held between the owners, the manager and the researcher. During a later meeting the pre-school room supervisor was included.

The managers included information to parents in the monthly newsletter and a subsequent letter was written (from the researcher) to parents informing them of the research. Furthermore, a synopsis of the research proposal was sent to the nursery. See Appendix 1b for both of these documents.

As the nursery comprised a mixture of children from various socioeconomic backgrounds the parents were given a short questionnaire asking them for their postcode (for the Carstairs Deprivation categories as discussed in the methodology chapter on sample profile) and their occupation. This enabled the researcher to gauge approximately what kind of background the children had. Included with this short questionnaire was a letter from the nursery to parents as well as a letter from Napier University documenting that all information is treated confidentially and according to the Data Protection Act 1998. See Appendix 1c.

Appendix 1b

Dear Parent

As was mentioned in the April newsletter Erika, whose son Jonathan is in the pre-school room, has been in the nursery doing a study on children's social development. This is part of her PhD and she has spent 3 days a week in the pre-school room and has really enjoyed working with the children.

The study has focused on how children communicate and interact with other children and the teachers. Erika has joined-in the activities in the pre-school room and generally tried to understand what type of things children talk about. To fully learn about children's lives, she would like to see how children communicate in other settings and with other people. The family is obviously such an important group and therefore, Erika was hoping parents would let her do a home visit with the children – providing the individual children also are happy with this.

It must be stressed that the child's abilities are in no way being assessed and children will not be compared. This is a general study about children's social development and one of the main areas Erika is focusing on is toys and play activities. Any information provided in a home visit is confidential and will not be made available to any other sources, including the nursery.

As part of the visit Erika would like to speak to parents, as these are the people who understand the child the best. Furthermore, siblings play important roles in children's lives and would also be valuable to speak to. A visit should take no more than 1 ½ hours and is very informal. Obviously, parents are busy and if 1 ½ hours is considered to be too long it can be shortened.

If you have any questions or are generally unsure please do not hesitate to speak to Erika who is in the nursery on a Monday, Tuesday and Friday. Alternatively, you can contact her on telephone number 455 5031 (work) or 07967 537575 (mobile). She will be happy to speak to you about her research.

Appendix 1b

Synopsis of Research Proposal

Aim of research

Briefly the overall aim of the project is to study children's social development and their interaction with other people and how agents such as family, peer groups and the media influence this process. There will be a particular emphasis on studying the impacts of consumption. The research approach for this project will emphasise the way in which children interact with one another, therefore, observational methods will be particularly suitable.

Gathering the data

The specific type of observational methods to be used for this project can be classified under the heading of ethnography. Ethnography, which is the study of culture and social groups has essentially as its central feature to understand the nature of social interactions between people in everyday life. By integrating into children's everyday lives the researcher attempts to identify patterns of action that are cultural and/or social rather than cognitive. This approach will involve spending a few months studying the children in social settings (schools and nursery) as well as in their homes.

Methods to be used

As I am using ethnography, as previously mentioned, much time will be spent observing the children and attempting to make sense of/understand their interactions with one another. There will be no formal interviewing, however, I would appreciate opportunities to talk to the children. These will be in the form of conversations, talk during play etc. – sometimes individually and other times in groups. Children, particularly younger groups often respond well to other methods of getting information. Techniques such as grouping items according to preference has been used successfully in the past to gain an understanding of children's attitude towards different issues. However, the research will be designed to fit the various ages of children taking into account their varying abilities and stages of development.

Ethics

I have studied the ethical implications in-depth and am very aware of these issues. I have a deep respect for children and the research will be conducted in a manner based on what I believe to be best practices – as identified from the experience of other researchers. I will highlight some of the main issues.

1. Children will be given privacy in anything that is said to the researcher. However, should the child indicate they are in any danger (e.g. physical abuse) the matter will be taken further according to the procedure used at the institution.
2. Children will be guaranteed anonymity. No names will be included in the thesis.
3. Children may associate being removed from their classmates as punishment (e.g. for an individual interview elsewhere in the school), therefore, conversations etc. will take place in the classroom, playground or other social settings.

Appendix 1b

4. Children will never be forced to participate in the research. They may at any time withdraw their participation.
5. The research is non-commercial.

Disruption to classes

The role I wish to adopt with the children is one that involves reducing the power barrier between children and adults. As the research entails entering children's world and understand how they learn to get on with other people, from *their* perspective, I will adopt a role with the aim of being considered (by the children) more like a "big friend" rather than an adult. Therefore, I hope to play/interact with them and otherwise spend time observing. However for such an approach to be successful it is necessary to try to break down the unequal power relationship that exists between adults and children.

Since much time is spent observing and picking up points made in general conversation the disruption will be minimal. I appreciate the time schedule each day and the research will be done to fit-in with the room in question.

Experience

My first degree is a BA (Hons) in Marketing and a Postgraduate certificate from the Chartered Institute of Marketing. As part of my PhD I have attended two courses at Edinburgh University: Philosophy of the Social Sciences and Sociology of Scientific Knowledge.

I have spent over a year researching children, child development and methods for researching children. I have attended a seminar at Stirling University on ethical issues when researching children. Additionally, I have attended a conference on ethics and child social research at Glasgow Caledonian University. My research proposal has been refereed by several academics including Professor Richard Elliott at Exeter University, who is a specialist in my field and Dr John M Davis who has conducted similar research with disabled children.

Practically, I have experience with children of different ages. I have a son who is almost three years old. Furthermore, during my undergraduate degree I spent a year doing voluntary work assisting in classrooms – student tutoring as it is referred to. One afternoon a week I assisted at Dalkeith High School. In the latter semester I spent one afternoon a week in a primary school in Edinburgh.

What will the research achieve

By attempting to close the gap in our lack of understanding of children (as highlighted by many writers) those who are making decisions *for* children *affecting* children, such as social policy makers, will be better equipped with an increased understanding and more information. Furthermore, more directly the research aims to raise awareness of how the process of consumption manifests itself in interactions between children e.g. does it lead to any children feeling socially excluded because of wearing particular brands.

Appendix 1c

Letter for Parents

Dear Parent

As was mentioned in the April newsletter Erika Hayfield has been in the pre-school room doing observational research for her doctoral degree. She is looking at children's social development and has spent three days a week in the pre-school room since May. The work has gone well and Erika has really enjoyed working with the children.

It is standard practice that research at doctoral level needs to specify details such as age and sex of children in study as well as parental occupation and geographical spread of the children (see attached letter 1). Therefore, Erika was hoping that you could help her by providing the information below.

Please be assured that details provided are seen only by Erika and dealt with in the strictest confidence. All information is treated in compliance with the Data Protection Act (see attached letter 2). This means that no children, parents or the nursery will be identifiable in the thesis as names and locations will not be used.

Name of child: _____

Full postcode (where child resides) _____

Parental/guardian occupation: If either of parents are homemakers (housewife or house husband) please state this. However, it would be helpful if you could also specify occupation before leaving employment.

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Appendix 1c

NAPIER UNIVERSITY
EDINBURGH

DM / Napier University

30th September 2002

Dear Parents

DOCTORAL RESEARCH

I would like to confirm that research at doctoral level is required to address demographic information of people involved in the study. This includes age, sex, occupation (and for children, parental/guardian occupation) as well as geographical information. However, it must be stressed that all information is STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL and retained and processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Should any parents/guardians wish to inspect the thesis prior to submission they are welcome to contact Erika Hayfield (phone number at Napier University: 0131 455 5031).

Yours sincerely



Dr Dave Marsden
Lecturer
School of Marketing and Tourism

Appendix 1d

Access strategy to first school

Northern Primary School

Gaining access to schools proved to be more time consuming and more difficult than with the privately run nursery. The researcher sought advice from two experienced researchers – one who was experienced in studying hospitalised people and one who had experience in researching children. A letter was sent off to the director of education in the local authority. However, it turned out to be difficult to obtain a response. In the end, after a lengthy wait, the researcher approached another council director (through a personal channel) in the local authority to establish whether there was a problem. The researcher was subsequently, told that the proposed methods i.e. filming and taping the children were considered too invasive.

On this basis the researcher took up negotiations with the authorities advising that should this present a problem the proposal could be adjusted. Through these negotiations the secretary to the director of education proved to be an important gate-keeper. She was helpful in providing the researcher with information on the status of the application. In the end the director accepted that the local schools co-ordinator could take over the negotiations. A meeting was set up with the co-ordinator where Dr John M. Davis and the researcher attended. During this meeting the local schools were discussed and it was concluded that Northern Primary School would be an appropriate choice of school. The researcher was advised that providing the school agreed, the study could take place at Northern Primary School.

After Northern Primary School was briefed by the local co-ordinator and the researcher had spoken over the phone with the head teacher a subsequent meeting was set up. Here the head teacher, the primary 3 and primary 6 teachers attended. The research was discussed and the teachers were provided with an information sheet explaining the research. See also Appendix 1e. Following this meeting access was granted to Northern Primary School.

Appendix 1e

Information Sheet for Teachers

Dear Teacher

My name is Erika Anne Hayfield and part of my doctoral degree at Napier University I am interested in studying child development and how children learn to get on with others. Therefore, I am hoping to be able to observe/talk to/film the children in your class.

I am very aware of the pressures facing teachers in their everyday difficult job. Therefore, I wish to point out that the research I will be doing will be designed to fit in with your work plan and cause minimal disruption. For the purpose of my research situations where children are interacting socially will prove most useful to me. Consequently, you can be assured that whilst any classes are taking place children will not be disturbed and any data gathering will be restricted to unobtrusive observation.

Specifically some of the issues I would like to talk to the children about are e.g. what toys they play with when they are with other children, what they talk about with other children, how they chose who they wish to play/talk with. Naturally for older children (i.e. teenagers) the topics will be more related to what they do with their friends, what they talk about etc.

As a teacher you undoubtedly have a good understanding of children and therefore, I hope to be able to talk you as well as the children. This, I can assure you will not take up much time and will be planned to fit in with your working schedule. Obviously, there is a wealth of knowledge relating to children, however, in a rapidly changing world our understanding of children can always be improved. Therefore, this project will set out to make a small contribution to already valuable research.

I hope we can plan together to achieve my research objectives to fit in with your schedule. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at Napier University on 0131 455 5031.

Yours faithfully

Erika Anne Hayfield
Napier University
Craighouse Campus
Craighouse Road
Edinburgh
EH10 5LG

Appendix 1f

Access strategy to second school

Waterside Primary School

Gaining access to Waterside Primary School proved much less time consuming with fewer barriers. Furthermore, the researcher had gained valuable experience in negotiating access from the previous school. The researcher had come to learn that the structure of councils in the area meant that directors are busy people who receive many requests. Therefore, the head of education (rather than the director of education) was contacted. It soon became clear that this contact person was more closely involved in the running of the schools. As a result the process of negotiating access was faster and smoother. The researcher spoke over the phone with the head of education. A meeting was arranged and outline of the research submitted. The study was discussed and two schools were proposed as being suitable and which fitted the research criteria. The first school was spread over two geographical locations – both of which would involve substantial travelling on part of the researcher. The second school, Waterside Primary, which was proposed, was equally suitable but closer to the researcher's home, therefore, this school was selected.

A meeting was set up with Waterside Primary School. The head teacher was open and welcoming to the study. However, she advised that due to staffing issues the researcher could be granted access to Primary 2 instead of Primary 3 – as well as Primary 6. Upon discussing this with supervisors it was decided to accept this offer. Whilst the researcher was not required to write a letter to parents informing them of the research (the school did this) the researcher was required to be checked by the Scottish Criminal Record Office to establish that she did not have any convictions. See appendix 1g.

A visit to the school was arranged approximately two weeks before commencing the research. This provided the children (and researcher) with an opportunity to meet and pose questions.

Appendix 1g

STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Disclosure

SCOTLAND

MS ERIKA ANNE HAYFIELD
14 ST DAVIDS
NEWTONGRANGE
DALKEITH
MIDLOTHIAN
EH224LG

250332

Applicant Personal Details

Surname: HAYFIELD
Forename(s): ERIKA ANNE
Date of Birth: 18/02/1972

Convictions

Date	Court	Offence	Disposal
NONE			

Reprimands, Warnings and Cautions

Date	Court	Offence	Disposal
NONE			

Other Relevant Information

NONE
END OF DISCLOSURE

ENHANCED DISCLOSURE

APPLICANT COPY

Disclosure Number: 120100002502045
Date of Issue: 14/03/2003
page 01 of 01

A copy of this Disclosure has also been sent to:
MR PAUL TRAVILL
NAPIER UNIVERSITY
REGISTRY SERVICES
10 COLINTON ROAD
EDINBURGH
EH107DT

Appointment Details

Position Applied For: RESEARCH STUDENT
Name of Employer: NAPIER UNIVERSITY

Countersignature Details

Registered Body: NAPIER UNIVERSITY
Registered Person: MR PAUL TRAVILL
Disposal



SCOTTISH CRIMINAL RECORD OFFICE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE BT

0254366

Appendix 2

ERIKA TIMETABLE

Tuesday 25th

Before break P2

After break P6

Afternoon P2

Wednesday 26th

Before break P6

After break P2

Afternoon P2

Thursday 27th

All day P6 trip (remember packed lunch!)

Tuesday 31st

Before lunch P2

After lunch P6

Wednesday 1st

Before lunch P6

After lunch P2

Thursday 2nd

Before lunch P6

After lunch P2

School starts 8.50

Playtime 10.30 - 10.45

P2 Lunch 12.00 - 1.15

P6 Lunch 12.30 - 1.15

P2 Finish 2.45

P6 Finish 3.15

Sort out a proper timetable for after Easter holidays.

Appendix 3



Appendix 3



Appendix 3



Appendix 3



Appendix 3



Appendix 3



Appendix 4



Appendix 4



Appendix 4



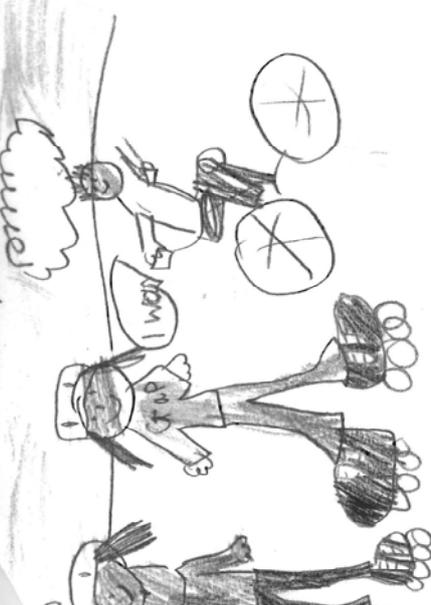
Monday 9th September 2002

aturday night I
 On my bike and I went my
 l with my dad on the I found my cusos in my hous
 and I neery sid because they were strange ower
 e way to estinton night my mummy didn't tell
 me so it was a sprays in the morn

How exciting

cusos
 cusos in my house

Appendix 5

<p>3rd September 2002</p> 	<p>Monday 30th September 2002</p> 
<p>Saturday My Cousins Ponde, ME^{she} and Her went to the woods when my sister and the cousin was giving her the through the scooter and bike ton. They went home. we Elisha var presents</p> <p>Well done 😊</p>	<p>Last night I didnt no that the Cousins (a guinea pig and a pot (they went home. (because) I was sleeping because it was 10 o'clock nerly.</p> <p>That is very late, Rebekeah. Where do the rabbit and guinea pig stay when they are at your house. 😊</p>

Appendix 5

Monday 7th October 2002

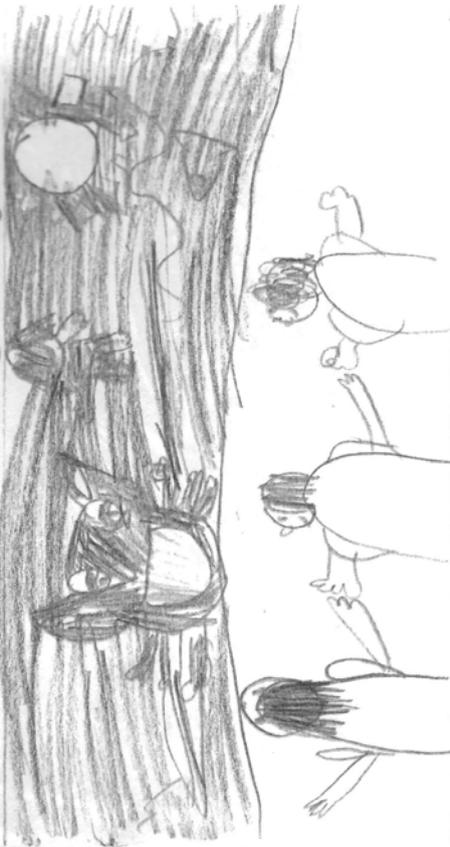


Saturday I went to
ch and I had my
ch. (and it was nice.
Fun and then we
home later.

did you have for lunch, [redacted]?

Well done 😊

Monday 14th October 2002



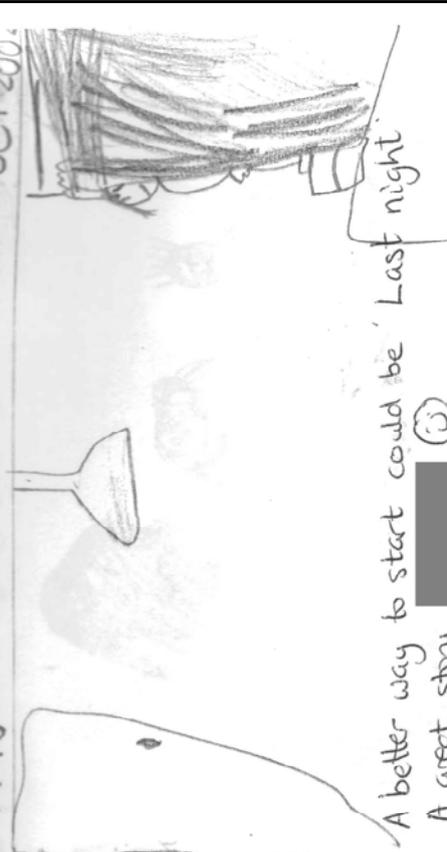
Yesterday I went to see Lilo and
Stich. It was funny. Stich was
blue and Lilo was brown
scind. (and) Nere the end
there house crashd down
and Stich sees evrything.
(and) The aalains 'came
too and trayd to Cact.
him but in the end he
got to Stay. What an exciting film.



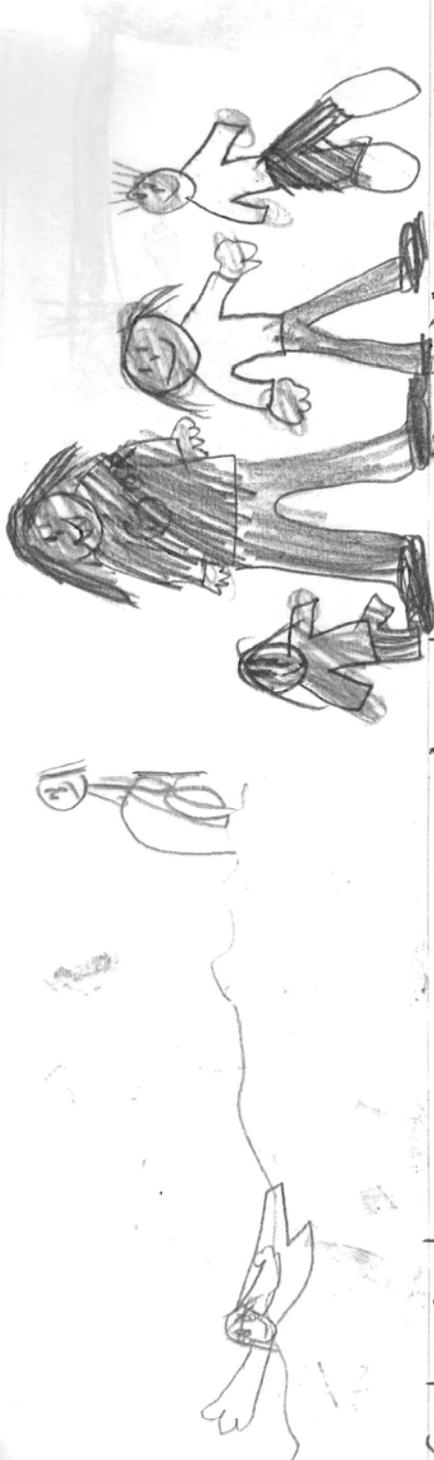
How exciting!
The holidays I went to Dobbies and bought a toy it was a Barbie was dressed up a raindeer. I went with my friends and Mum and Eilidh. It was fun. I was happy and then we went to see Lilo and Stitch.



On Saturday I went to the fire works display and got a lot. I went with my cousins and my mum and dad my sister and my aunt. A mad lunch it was fun?
Well done. Remember full steps,

<p>11th November</p> 	<p>Monday 2nd December 2002</p> 
<p>Saturday morning</p> <p>went to swimming and the teacher and I good go and swim the big pool for swim I was happy and we went home</p> <p>ld made bacan fols y-remember, to use full steps!</p>	<p>A better way to start could be 'Last night' A great story</p> <p>Yesterday night my cosens came to my new house. It was fun. We played hide and seek. I hide in a cabinet no one good find me then I got out and sprayed them. we went back home. It was fun.</p>

29 25th November 2002 Monday 6th January 2003



Saturday morning
 had my first day
 the big pod. It was
 and Swath bressrock
 the way across the
 when it was fishd
 had a ice-cream
 I went home

Excellent

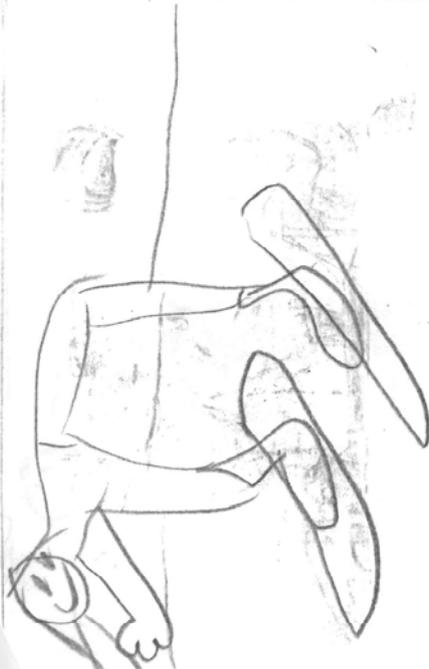


In the new year Rosie
 and Josh came to my
 house and we played
 for a long time. It was
 fun and then we
 went to our friends
 house and we staid
 till 11 o'clock.

I bet you were tired the next day,

Look out for capital letters! Well done 😊

15th January 2003

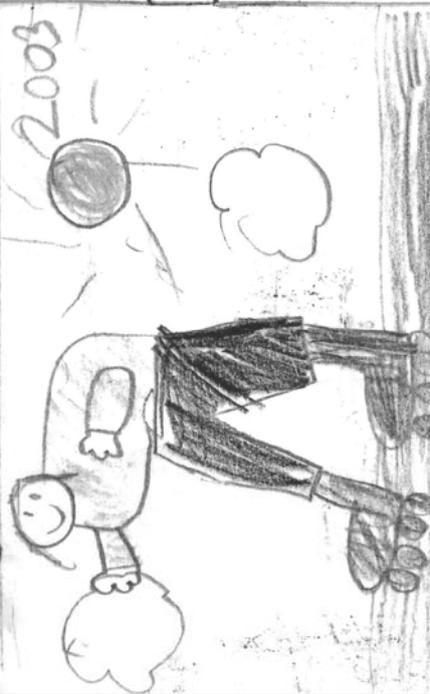


Saturday I went
 ing at hill end.
 ent with Rosie!
 Josh. I had never
 seeing beef
 I was good at it.
 ved it. It was!
 t fun then
 went for lunch.
 Went. well done [redacted] ☺

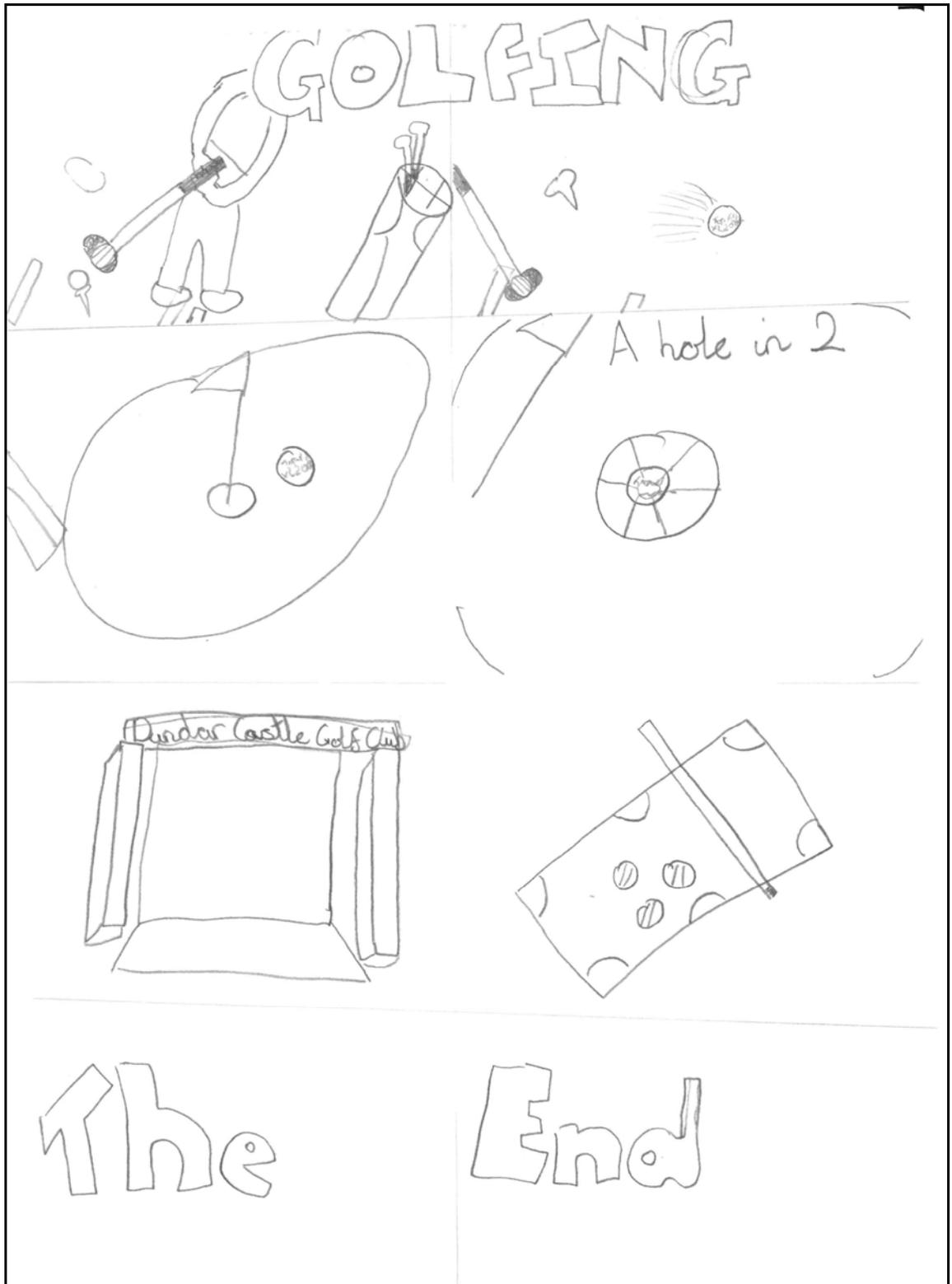
Monday 20th January 2003



On Saturday I stayd
 at home. I Playd and
 then Bosie and Josh
 gran and unkel sen came.
 It was his birthday.
 We had lunch and
 then we had Kaks. It was
 fun) and we plaed on
 the punk bed and they
 went home. ^{Good} [redacted] ^{Look out}
 for those full stops. ☺

<p>My 27th January 2003</p> 	<p>Monday 3rd February 2003</p> 
<p>Sunday I went to church and we sang and learnt about. I went with mum and Dad. Sister. I felt py and when got home I went my roller blads. [redacted] 😊</p>	<p>On Saturday I went to my swimming lesson and when I got home James in pl and his brother came (with) their mum and dad. We played for a long time then we had lunch. When we played again it was fun then I went for a walk. 😊 good. walk.</p>

Appendix 6a



My Holiday

When I was at my dad's during the holiday my dad happened to find a two for one ticket to Johnny English at the UGC, Soccer were it was really funny. So after that on Saturday after my football training I went to Glasgow to see Heares play Partick thistle. It was only one all. It wasn't that good a match but it was ok. When I went back to my mums I

Appendix 6a

22/4/03

My Holiday

On my holiday I helped to build a greenhouse, nearly finished painting my room and went swimming. What I would have liked to have done was to have gone horse-trekking and gone shopping. I would have liked to do these things is because I would like to improve my riding skill and I need more clothes.

Appendix 6b

Name: [REDACTED]

1. Tell me five things about yourself

I go skiing every christmas to Switzerland

I go out ^{horse} riding with my mums friend in

I am very shy and LOVE athletics (the country!)

I love art and at home I have my own art cupboard

2. What belongings are important to you? Why are they important to you? where

my rabbit! = just because I can sit and paint.

my 2 hamsters: Just because

my guinea pig: Just because

3. What places do you like to go? Tell me about these places, what is it about them that you like. Why would you choose to go there?

black pool pleasure beach; pepsi max

Switzerland = Ski-ing (roller coaster!)

adventure parks (abseiling)

France

4. Are there any special events you enjoy or like? Tell me about these events, what is it about them that you like.

athletics = running & jumping

horse riding : love galloping

ski-ing = going fast

Appendix 6b

name: Alex

1. Tell me five things about yourself.

1. I go to school every day to learn.

2. I have a lot of friends.

3. I like to play sports.

4. I like to read books.

5. I like to go to the cinema.

5. What do you think makes a person popular or well liked?

nice, fun to be with have lots of friends and good looking

6. What are adverts for? Give me 5 reasons (or as many as you can).

to try and get you to buy things.
to give you a break to do something inbetween programs.

7. What is your favourite brand? Why is it your favourite?

cadbury = yummy
addidas = things to keep you cool-
while running about.

Appendix 6b

Name: [REDACTED]

1. Tell me five things about yourself

1. I love ballet
2. I have two brothers dancing
3. I ~~do~~ do 5 types of
4. I like football
5. I support CELTIC!

2. What belongings are important to you? Why are they important to you?

photographs of my granny & grandma
because they remind me of them

3. What places do you like to go? Tell me about these places, what is it about them that you like. Why would you choose to go there?

My room because it is peaceful
and calm and I get privacy
Outside because I feel free
to do what I want

4. Are there any special events you enjoy or like? Tell me about these events, what is it about them that you like.

I like doing ballet shows
because I love to dance.
Football because I grew up
in a family of football

Appendix 6b

5. What do you think makes a person popular or well liked?

A Kind person that doesn't
exclude anyone.

6. What are adverts for? Give me 5 reasons (or as many as you can).

1. To persuade you to buy the product
- 2.

7. What is your favourite brand? Why is it your favourite?

addidas because it is
stylish and comfortable

Appendix 6b

Name: [REDACTED]

1. Tell me five things about yourself

Always Organised

Calm

like playing football

Motivated

I like reading

2. What belongings are important to you? Why are they important to you?

My teddy timmy because I got him when I was born.

A little bracelet I got from my great granny.

3. What places do you like to go? Tell me about these places, what is it about them that you like. Why would you choose to go there?

I like to go to the fort because there's lots of clothes shops. I like to go to flamingo land in Yorkshire where there's lots of rides, rollercoasters.

4. Are there any special events you enjoy or like? Tell me about these events, what is it about them that you like.

I like christmas because I'm spending time with my family.

I like doing shows for dancing on wednesday which is riverdance and on fridays which is modern

Appendix 6b

5. What do you think makes a person popular or well liked?

Well being kind helpful if Im upset they comfort me
and cheer me up.

6. What are adverts for? Give me 5 reasons (or as many as you can).

to persuade people in bying things
to make up time

7. What is your favourite brand? Why is it your favourite?

kylie becuse they have fashionable clothes
vodafone there good nokia phones
Oz becuse you take pictures.

Appendix 6b

Name: [REDACTED]

1. Tell me five things about yourself

I have been fostered twice and then adopted

My favourite subject is Science

I am hoping to be an inventor when I grow up

I would like to go to the Knox academy for my holidays

My best friends are Stuart Melnes and William Kelmisley who has moved school to George Herriots.

2. What belongings are important to you? Why are they important to you?

My bean bag teddy Sandy because I got him from Spain on a holiday with my foster family.

My photo album because it has pictures of my other life

3. What places do you like to go? Tell me about these places, what is it about them that you like. Why would you choose to go there?

My tree house den

It is nice and quiet

4. Are there any special events you enjoy or like? Tell me about these events, what is it about them that you like.

birth day.

September 24th day I was adopted.

Appendix 6b

5. What do you think makes a person popular or well liked?

don't know

6. What are adverts for? Give me 5 reasons (or as many as you can).

to make people by their
stuff,

annoying.

To make ^{always} in cinemas
pop up always in airports

7. What is your favourite brand? Why is it your favourite?

Fars

Because I like Fars Glacier mints.

Appendix 6b

Name: [REDACTED]

1. Tell me five things about yourself Sunny, Sportie, energetic, motivated, and always up to doing stuff

2. What belongings are important to you? Why are they important to you?

teddy: I have had it for 10 years

cusion: I think it's the best I like it everywhere

PS2: I love it

3. What places do you like to go? Tell me about these places, what is it about them that you like. Why would you choose to go there?

golfing: because I like having a nice day out and playing a sport I like

4. Are there any special events you enjoy or like? Tell me about these events, what is it about them that you like.

Soccer, golf, Swimming, hockey, tennis
and lots of other sports just because I like sport

Appendix 6b

5. What do you think makes a person popular or well liked?

being good at something
or having lots of friends

6. What are adverts for? Give me 5 reasons (or as many as you can).

to advertise something
or to make people buy stuff

7. What is your favourite brand? Why is it your favourite?

Quicksilver I love baggy jeans
adidas T-shirts
White trainers any make

Appendix 6b

Name: [REDACTED]

1. Tell me five things about yourself

football

good at maths

funny

I like making things

good drawer

2. What belongings are important to you? Why are they important to you?

Mum & Dad because I love them

3. What places do you like to go? Tell me about these places, what is it about them that you like. Why would you choose to go there?

America because I get to see
my cousins and my uncle and my
auntie

4. Are there any special events you enjoy or like? Tell me about these events, what is it about them that you like.

golf because it is fun.

Appendix 6b

5. What do you think makes a person popular or well liked?

that they are nice and helpful to others

6. What are adverts for? Give me 5 reasons (or as many as you can).

to make people buy them

7. What is your favourite brand? Why is it your favourite?

Nike and Quicksilver

Appendix 7

Extract from fieldnotes from the morning of 26/11/02

P6, Northern Primary School

Today is the day of the NSC elections for p6 and p7. On Friday the amount of candidates had been narrowed down to 4 from p6 and 2 from p6/7. This was done in the classroom.

So the final candidates were Ester, Julie, Richard and Natasha K.

The kids were quite inventive with their self-promotion. They had posters, badges, balloons etc. I had agreed to go up during the speeches and help with holding the banners, posters etc. As we were waiting in the gym Mandy laid down (onto the floor) the banner she had made for Ester's campaign. It was made by computer and had various prints on it eg. Butterflies.

Dawn: Mandy's poster is babyish.

Mandy didn't hear/respond straight away. There was some talk going on.

Dawn: Mandy's poster is babyish!

Mandy: (a bit hurt/annoyed) Everything I do is babyish!

Dawn: Only kidding.

The speeches were presented and I've got to give it to the kids, they were brilliant. They're only around 10-11 and, I would say, quite confident (well the ones that did a speech), especially the p7s. The kinds of things the candidates promised were:

- To get more footballs
- To get proper goals
- To get back music in the dinner hall
- Someone suggested no uniforms
- All said they would ensure bikes could be brought to school
- Mobile phones in school was mentioned
- Doing up certain toilets
- 'an inside' could mean playing in the gym

At the end Mandy stood up and tried to say something to Russ (the teacher). The way I understood the situation was that because Mandy had stood up p6a were not chosen to line up first.

Dawn: Mandy – well done!

Mandy: What??! No wonder nobody likes you!

Dawn and Melanie (together) No wonder nobody likes you.

On the way out of the gym Mandy said to Ester:

S: Are you okay?

B: yeah

Me: Are you okay?

S: I think I was the only one who voted for you.

B: I know. Well I voted for me so that's two. Everyone's voted for Richard.

Me: Why's that?

B: Cause they think he's funny and smart it all to do with the speech.

Me: Is he popular?

B: Yeah

Appendix 7

I sat for few minutes and had a coffee in the staff room – just to wake up a bit then went outside. I played toilet-tig with some of the girls. They explained the rules to me. There are so many know/taken for granted rules/systems in the school environment e.g. queuing for lunch (As/Bs) (packed lunches/school dinners) I just don't get it yet.

During milk Russ (the teacher) asked for news. This is a routine where people /pupils get to share some news with the rest and Russ (the teacher). The girls often talk of sleepovers. Ester: Me and Mandy are best friends. And I'm going to sleepover at her s and then she's going to sleepover at mine.

Russ (the teacher): When is this going to be?

Ester: (shrugs her shoulders)

Russ (the teacher): How long is it going to last this time?

Ester: Well it's been since/Mandy gets involved:- Friday!

Russ (the teacher): Well that's a world record for you two then.

Miram was speaking of an up and coming sleepover; Rachel spoke of a sleepover and so did someone else.

The big topic though was the fire at Northern Leisure Centre. Julie went into quite a lot of detail about how she was there etc. Apparently, it was started by some little boys putting rubbish in the hairdryer. It is to be closed for 2 weeks.

Afterwards Julie had done with her pal Stephanie and her (Julie's mum and dad) (possibly her brother too) to HMV at the retail park. After that they went to Warren Bros. They were then going to go to MacDonald's for their tea but went instead to ASDA.

It was time for some maths and problem solving. I sat at Rachel, Davie, Ester and Richard's table. Ester gave me a bookmark.

Me: Oh that's lovely Ester, thanks.

B: My mum made it.

Me: Did she! Is your mum good at that kind of thing?

B: yeah she's an artist.

Davie: My brother's an artist, but he works at MacDonalds.

Me: What does he paint?

Davie: He draws football shirts, Mickey Mouse (and he mentioned a few other things).

I think this week my presence is less exciting. Maybe that's also a reflection of how I'm feeling. Anyway, that's good because the more of a novelty I am the less 'natural' I suppose the kids will be around me.

Back to maths or problem solving. This was good because Davie was clearly very very good when it came to figures. Richard was not bad either. So it was an opportunity to bond with the boys a bit. Davie seemed chuffed when I said he was clever. But he is. Richard threw in a wee remark.

CB: I'm in the top groups and I can't even get this (referring to a problem question he did not quite 'get').

At lunch I sat with Rachel, Melanie, Dawn and Ester. Someone (can't remember) came to our table and asked if they could swap their cup cake with something.

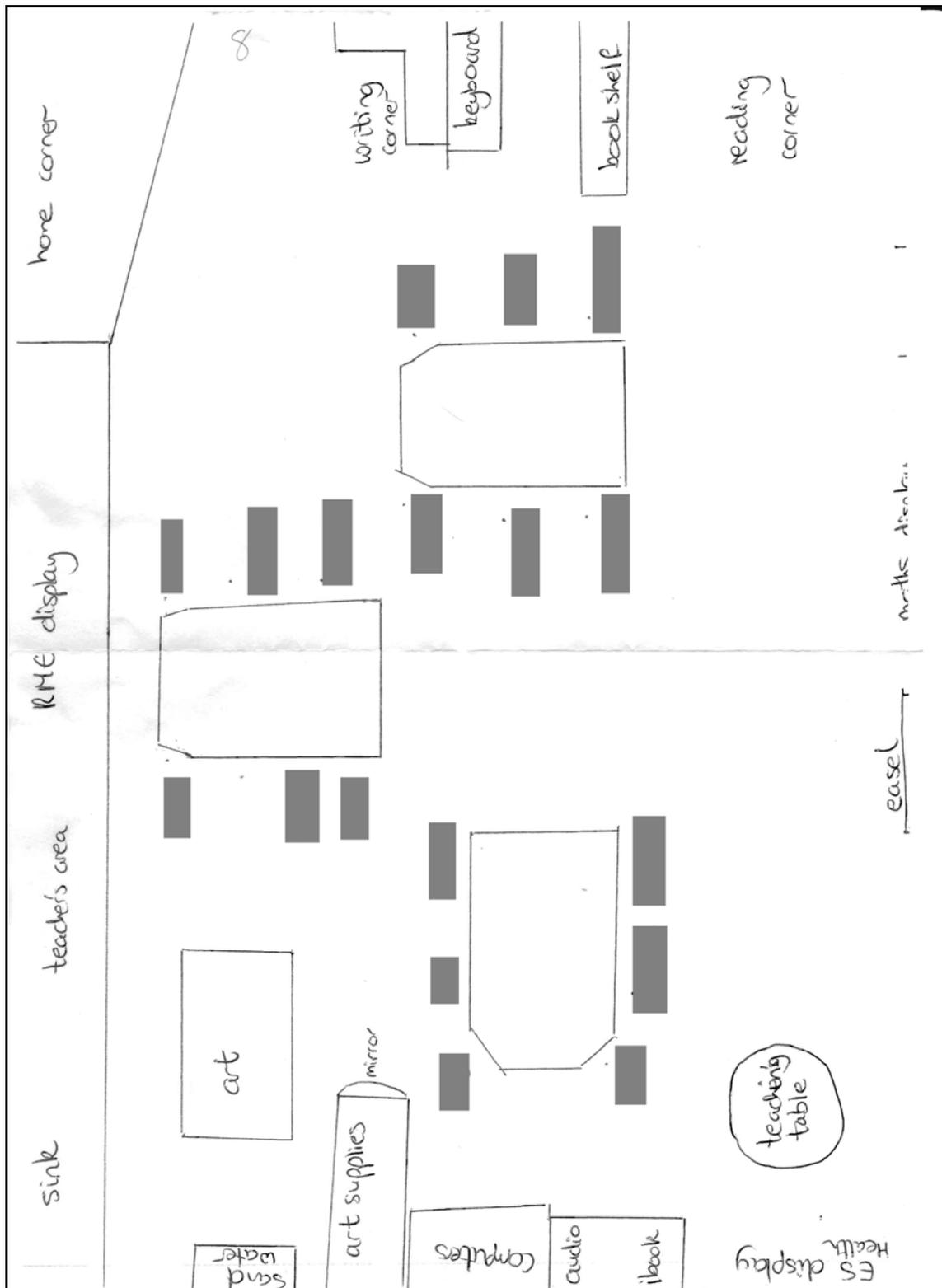
Dawn: I've already swapped all my stuff.

Appendix 7

Some of the kids from other classes are starting to get interested in my presence asking who I am etc. Also the p6s have today been asking about my note-taking. I keep responding that I am learning about kids and am writing down stuff that I'm learning.

I refer to the P6s as kids. I have tried to feel the water a bit and really get the impression they are happy about being called kids. I tried adolescence once but got a strange look. Also, I say kids, because of the way they view themselves in relation to adults. It seems to take them a bit a back that I line-up with them, eat with them, play with them, queue with them. They keep on pointing out (I guess they think they should teach me the rules and norms) my adult privileges and when I decline they accept but you can see they are thinking and wondering.

Appendix 8



Appendix 9a

Interview P6, Waterside Primary School

17/6/03

Kathy, Gail and Martha

Interviewer: Okay, just before I start what I wanted to say was that, you know, it's very informal, just about your life. It's not hard, it's not school questions or anything like that and just answer as honestly as you can. It doesn't matter if you don't have the same opinions, that's fine. And remember I don't tell anyone what you said. Just in case you think: Oh gosh I hope Erika doesn't say that to anyone that's fine. Nobody else will get to see this. What was the other thing...yeah I think that was all. So first of all what kind of things do you like to do when you're not at school?

Gail: I like to dance a lot. Sometimes I like going outside and playing football with my brother and stuff.

Interviewer: I see. Which sports do you go to?

Gail: Which sports, well I did do football until, like it was stopped at school.

Interviewer Oh, it's been stopped? The one with Miss Newington?

Gail: Yeah, that one. That one's not on any more really.

Interviewer I see.

Gail: I play netball.

Martha: Ballet's sort of a, you do ballet.

Interviewer: You go to ballet?

Gail: Yeah.

Interviewer: Where do you go to ballet?

Gail: Newfield.

Interviewer: What about you, what do you like to do after school?

Martha: I like to go out and play. Just play with my friends and cycle about and that.

Interviewer: You live in Waterside?

Martha: Yeah.

Interviewer: I see.

Kathy: I like to dance but I don't go as many dance schools as Gail. I just go to the one but I like it as well. And ehmm, so I go to a youth club, where we play lots of football and that.

Interviewer: Which youth club is that, is that the one in Waterside?

Martha: Yeah.

Kathy: And there's also this one that me and Gail go to, it's on a Thursday night and we play a lot of football there. It's in East Salton.

Interviewer: I see. So what kind of stuff do you do when you are in the youth club.

Martha: There's an upstairs and like most people go up and paint and there's a music room with a CD player and you just, lots of cushions so you just sit and listen to music.

Interviewer: I see.

Kathy: I like to do drama as well.

Gail: Yeah, we do drama as well.

Interviewer: Is that at the school?

Gail: The drama class is on a Saturday.

Interviewer: I see. So you've got quite a lot of activities on.

Kathy: Yeah.

Interviewer: So what do you do when you're indoors either with your friends or on your own.

Appendix 9a

Gail: When we're indoors ehh...

Kathy: I play the Play Station.

Gail: I watch tellie...I don't know what else I do when I'm indoors.

Interviewer: Are you not indoors very much?

Gail: Not really, but sometimes if I'm indoors I like to make things like extraordinary materials.

Interviewer: What about you Martha?

Martha: I usually draw or paint or watch TV or I make an assault course for my pets or something.

Interviewer: Oh I see right. Ehmm, now you've got a dog.

Martha: No, but Gail's got two dogs.

Interviewer: Right, I'm getting it all muddled up. What pets have you got?

Martha: I've got two hamsters, a rabbit and a guinea pig.

Interviewer: Am I right in saying you *want* a dog?

Martha: Yes, definitely.

Interviewer: And you said you'd give up your teddy for a dog.

Martha: Yeah, one I've had since I was born.

Interviewer: Yeah, that's right I knew that there was something to do with a dog. Right, so what are your favourite things, your favourite possessions? It doesn't have to be your favourite but some of them.

Kathy: Like in school?

Interviewer: No your favourite things that you own. It could be your CDs, clothes, it could be games it could be/

Kathy: My dog.

Interviewer: You really like animals.

Kathy: Yeah.

Martha: My magic paint brush. It's very very good, it can go flat, it can go big, it can go small.

Kathy: But I do like doing this thing that I got a wee while ago and it's like ehmm, ?? but it's not quite, it just like you paint a bit. It comes in a set and you know how you get those sun catcher type things?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Kathy: Like them, I like to do them.

Interviewer: I see.

Kathy: So that's quite important to me cause I like it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Gail: I'd have to say my favourite things are my dogs and...my photographs of my family when we were younger.

Interviewer: I see. So why are they your favourite things?

Gail: Well, because my dogs mean a lot to me. I've had them since like, I was four and six and photographs of my family, like I've got ones of my granny and stuff and they just remind me of her cause she's not here anymore.

Interviewer: I see. So is family important to kids.

Kathy: Yeah.

Gail: Yeah.

Kathy: Definitely.

Appendix 9a

Interviewer: So do you see a lot, I mean I know you're very busy but how much time do you spend with your family doing stuff?

Kathy: Like your mum and dad?

Interviewer: Yeah or brothers and sisters.

Kathy: Ehmm, quite a lot of time.

Martha: Not very much.

Kathy: I spend quite a lot of time with my mum and dad and brother and sister.

Martha: I don't. As soon as I get, if it's a nice day, as soon as I get home from school ehmm, my mum's not in straight away, I have my snack, get changed, write a note, I'm away out and I come back for my tea and I come back again and I come back again to go to bed.

Interviewer: Ahh right.

Martha: So I don't really see them much. And I don't see my dad cause he goes to work at half six in the morning and comes back about half seven so I've only got a bit of night time to see him.

Interviewer: What does he do?

Martha: He works Scottish Power.

Interviewer: Ahh right.

Martha: So he's always away fixing things down in London.

Interviewer: What does your mum do?

Martha: She's a teacher in Townsend.

Interviewer: Whereabouts?

Martha: Bridge primary.

Interviewer: And your mum's a teacher as well isn't she?

Kathy: Yeah, she's just moving to a different school now but I'm not sure what it is but she's like a teacher that teachers like class but she's not like permanent in that school. She was gonna be permanent with her last one but it was a Catholic school and she's not a big fan on Catholic things.

Interviewer: I see. So what does your dad do?

Kathy: He's like a manager for like building stuff and all that. He's like a manager for/
Gail: For building sites and/

Kathy: He tells all these people to go and do things and he's got these flats that he's made and he's got all the keys for them.

Interviewer: Ahh.

Kathy: So he's like the one that takes care of all that.

Interviewer: I see. What about your parents Gail?

Gail: My mum's like house wife, my dad's a lawyer so I don't see him much. Cause he goes away at about eight in the morning and he comes back at about half ten at night/

Interviewer: Oh does he.

Gail: So I'm usually in bed at that time.

Interviewer: I see.

Gail: But I see him a lot on the weekends.

Interviewer: Yeah. What kind of stuff do you do at the weekends, incidentally?

Gail: Play with friends, sometimes go shopping.

Interviewer: Where do you go shopping?

Kathy: Ocean View and the retail park.

Interviewer: I see. So do you like going to the retail park and that?

All: Yeah.

Appendix 9a

Martha: On Fridays I go to a dancing class at the Prevace Hall.

Gail: Oh yeah.

Martha: And on Saturdays usually/

Kathy: We go to drama.

Gail: We go to drama.

Martha: Normally, just like go to Tesco's with my mum in the morning. If it's a nice day we might go shopping to the retail park in the afternoon and then Sunday I usually spend most of the day cleaning out the pets.

Interviewer: I see.

Martha: It takes quite a while to clean it all out.

Gail: And I also do a ballet class on a Saturday.

Interviewer: Do you.

Gail: Yeah, so I've got to be in Morstown for half nine so I'm up at seven o'clock and then I come back and then at three I've got a drama class.

Kathy: I've got a drama class at three as well and then like I just chill out for the rest of the weekend. Sometimes a Sunday four till seven I go snowboarding...Forresthill.

Interviewer: Aahh, that's right. We spoke about this before didn't we?

At this point the tape recorder cut out so around five minutes were not recorded.

Interviewer: Go on just say that thing again about the adverts, what you were just saying.

Kathy: Oh the adverts.

Interviewer: So which adverts do you like to watch again?

Kathy: I like the shampoo adverts. "L'oreal, because you're worth it".

Gail: I like the lipstick adverts.

Kathy: Have you seen that advert where they're thinking about their hair. "Oh maybe I should cut me hair. Maybe I should dye my hair red. Maybe I should grow my hair".

Martha: Ohh that one ?? This man's in the toilets, it must be in a restaurant or something and ehh there's a soap he's just come out of the toilet and he's looking in the mirror, gelling up his hair and he looking all cool and this soap's inside, these people jump out of it.

They're like saying: "Oh come-on" and they're betting each other and saying: "Oh come-on". He can't hear them. "Oh come-on is he gonna wash his hands. Oh he's far too busy just looking at himself" and they're just like going on about it. Then at the end you find out if he's a washer or walker and he's a washer. And he gets the soap and it's really funny.

Interviewer: Ahh yeah. Now what was the other thing you said? Go on and say it again, just for the tape, why do you think it's important for people to get away?

Kathy: Because like jus to get away from where you are, just have a holiday. Like adults, you know how adults need to get away, they need to get away from all the things, you know.

Martha: Cause you're just stuck in the same place and you're just fed up of looking at the same things everyday and going to school, same house, boring.

Kathy: You just need to clear your head, just get away from everything and then when you come back, you need holidays once in a while.

Interviewer: What would happen if you didn't get any holidays?

Gail: I think I'd probably go mad.

Kathy: I'm the same.

Martha: So would I.

Interviewer: If you had to go to school every day except at weekends.

Kathy: Ohh I'd go mad.

Appendix 9a

Gail: Cause that's the one thing I look forward to, the end of school.

Kathy: Yeah, that's the one thing that I work towards to get everything out of the way and to get to a holiday. It's like my reward.

Gail: Cause like, a holiday's like cause you've been working so hard, you can't just continually work. It doesn't work.

Kathy: Right, now I just getting really tired and like stressed and all. I just need a holiday.

Interviewer: So what can happen if people get stressed and that?

Kathy: You just start to/

Martha: In the Simpson's their hair falls out.

Kathy: That's funny.

Martha: Marge has big holes in her hair.

Kathy: She's like "Are you ??"

Gail: When I get stressed I get really moany and I snap at people.

Kathy: When I get stressed I just...I just I don't put my best in. Like, when I'm working and I'm stressed I don't...I practically don't work. I just like, I usually am quite enthusiastic and all that. Now I'm just getting a bit stressed. Sometimes I do go a wee bit mad, I do.

Interviewer: In what way?

Kathy: Like if my brother starts to annoy me a wee bit I like, go screaming and shouting about the house with my hands like that. I just need to get a holiday.

Interviewer: So what I also was going to ask you was, I've got two things to cover ?? First of all I was wondering if somebody, people who are popular what kind of people do you think are popular?

Martha: In the class?

Interviewer: Or just in general, people who/

Martha: Well, they have blond hair.

Kathy: What they should be like?

Martha: Blond hair.

Interviewer: Oh blond hair.

Interviewer: Biblican???

Martha: Nice.

Kathy: They have to be nice, kind.

Martha: Fast runner, cool, in the latest fashion ehmm.

Gail: That's why I'm very offended by people who say stuff like that because I don't have blond hair.

Martha: I don't have blond hair either. You do (to Kathy).

Interviewer: So how does it make you feel?

Kathy: But sometimes brown haired people are like, quite popular sometimes. Like Gail's quite popular and Martha's quite popular. You are!

Gail: It's just like everybody says that you have to have blond hair to be more popular.

Martha: Graeme.

Kathy: You have to have people to like you, to be popular. You have to be kind to others for people to like you, to be popular.

Martha: I'm not mentioning any names but some people who are popular in our class aren't nice to everybody. They're like the people that aren't that fast runner, they're younger, they're smaller, they're maybe not fashionable, they're not that nice to them. They're only nice to the people that hangs around them.

Kathy: Like them and that run after them and like you know/

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Martha: Not mentioning any names.

Interviewer: So it sounds to me what you are saying is that some people are more in the in-group and some people not so much.

Gail: Some people are excluded for no reason.

Interviewer: How does it make people feel who are excluded?

Martha: Horrible.

Kathy: It's really sad, cause I've had it.

Martha: I've had it. I've had it.

Gail: It's horrible.

Kathy: It's really really just/

Gail: It's like they go round and give out invites to/

Kathy: Nasty.

Gail: their ? and stuff.

Martha: Yeah invitations to/

Kathy: They go round and they're like/

Gail: Just like talk about it all the time and then like the people who aren't invited they're hurt.

Kathy: They're hurt, you just feel so hurt and different and sad.

Martha: There was somebody's party last night and ehmm not/

Kathy: Quite a lot of folk/

Martha: Like all the boys went, all the popular people went. Like me and Jenny never got invited.

Kathy: I never got invited either.

Martha: Neither did Kathy or me and Caitlyn. I think you got invited didn't you? Just because we never invited them to our party. But it should be people that you like.

I mean fair enough if they don't like you.

Kathy: Graeme and Neil don't invite her.

Martha: I know.

Kathy: Like quite a few boys never invite girls right so but she/

Gail: But the girls always invite the boys.

Kathy: And they exclude some other people.

Interviewer: Why do the boys never invite the girls but the girls invite the boys?

Kathy: Because like/

Gail: Boys think that if they are seen with girls that they've invited they look un-cool but if they're seen with girls that have invited them, then they can say: "Oh they invited me so I had to come".

Interviewer: I see. So how do you know who to invite cause are you allowed to have a maximum amount?

Kathy: Well my mum just lets me have a few of my best friends and one year I did have quite a lot of people but my mum usually just lets me invite two of my friends or three, Ehmm, I invite my next door neighbours Michael and Diana cause well, Diana's my friend and Michael well, he's kind of my friend too and he's Larry's friend and if Larry comes along then Larry will feel a wee bit "girly". You see I just, but I don't like to exclude people cause I just feel it's unfair.

Interviewer: When I was young at school what we did was, you either invited all the girls or all the class. You know, you never had just some of the girls or some of the boys type thing. Either all the girls or the whole class.

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Martha: You sort of feel like, when if you invite say there's fifteen girls in the class, I've got quite a good way of saying this actually. Ehmm cause if lots of people are invited, say that all the popular people were invited and I wasn't and I was left with all like the unpopular people I'd feel like really really horrible cause I'd feel like there was nobody to talk to and say be friends with and play with that night, that day while they were all having fun at that party because I'm left with the unpopular people.

Kathy: I'm not saying that unpopular people aren't nice, just Martha's quite popular and it's just a bit unfair on her/

Gail: And you don't really know them and stuff.

Kathy: You don't really hang about with the unpopular ones cause if you do/

Martha: Cause the popular people turn on you. The popular people turn on you and be nasty to you because you're hanging about with the unpopular people. So you're scared to be nice to them. Cause the popular people will never like you so you just/

Kathy: But you do be nice to them cause/

Gail: People shouldn't like other people cause they're popular or not but because you like them. If somebody doesn't like you then you can't make them like you. You've gotta be yourself.

Kathy: If someone's popular but they're not really actually popular cause all the unpopular folk don't like them. That means that they're not actually popular cause hardly anybody likes them and some of the other popular folk don't like them either. So it's not really being popular.

Interviewer: I understand... What about trainers? Are you into sports gear in general or is it mainly trainers that you're into?

Martha: I'm into sports gear.

Gail: I'm into sports gear.

Interviewer: You're really into sports aren't you?

Kathy: I like sports a lot too.

Martha: For Showstream I went shopping for trainers the night before and/

Kathy: I just like sports but I'm not too good at running.

Martha: I love running, it's my favourite. I was in for two things for Showstream for running.

Interviewer: Were you.

Kathy: I'm not that great at running but/

Gail: You're good at long jump.

Kathy: Yeah, long jump.

Interviewer: So what kind of trainers do you like?

Kathy: I quite like these ones. I like, you know well I like Adidas and Nike and ehmm...

Gail: I like Reebok trainers.

Martha: I like Adidas and I like Nike.

Kathy: I like quite a lot of trainers just if they look right on you. If they're comfy. Not these ones but my outdoors they've got like padding inside and if they're all comfy that/

Martha: I like my indoors.

Kathy: I like Donnay trainers too. They're quite good.

Martha: Puma, they're quite comfy.

Kathy: Yeah, like you need comfy trainers to be able to do sport.

Interviewer: Yeah.

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Kathy: Cause if you have like...like I can't do sport in these cause they're just, you know they're not too comfy.

Martha: And I can't do sport in these at all. I met this man in Sport Soccer when I was choosing my trainers ehmm, I can't remember, it was one shop when I was choosing trainers. The man said that it needs to be flexible at the toes and firm at the heel.

Interviewer: I see.

Kathy: I do do sports but I don't do a lot of running cause I'm not too good at that.

Gail: I like long distance running.

Martha: I can't do long distance, I can only do short distance.

Gail: I was in for 600 metres at Sportstream.

Martha: I was in for the 80 metres and the re-lay.

Kathy: I wasn't in for anything.

Gail: You were in for long-jump.

Interviewer: Right, well thank you very much. You've answered the questions really well and thank you for repeating yourself again.

Appendix 9b

Reflections of home visit to interview parents of pre-school aged girl (interview is transcribed seperately, see appendix 9c)

Thursday 29/8/02 14.00 – 16.00

Phil at the Nursery approached Tanya, Maria's mum and explained to her that I was looking to do home visits. The parents were given a parent letter along with a letter from Napier University specifying the importance of data protection. I had subsequently met Tanya, Maria's dad; Maria and Simon at the swimming pool and Tanya had said I could ring her to arrange a time. I got the phone number from Lewissa, one of the nursery managers, and a time was arranged.

I arrived at the house, which was located at in a suburban new housing estate. The house has 3 bedrooms (from what I saw) and a garage. The house is behind a shopping area and knowing this I have often been able to imagine what Maria is talking about when she is referring to times when she is shopping at a well-known grocer. One of the first things Maria was keen to tell me was that she had got a new lip balm from her gran but now she had been given a grown-up lip balm. I asked her how grown-up lip balm was different to children's lip-balm. She told me that the children's lip balm can be wiped off with your hands whereas the grown-up one smears your face. I took this to mean that the grown-up lip balm had some colour to it. Later when I saw Maria's make-up bag she said: "That's my grown-up lip balm" and pointed to Vaseline.

Maria's mother works for an insurance company and so does her father. Tanya said she was now part-time working Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. After speaking to Maria for a while and seeing her and Simon's bedroom, which she was keen to show me, we went downstairs to the living room. I was given coffee and said to Maria's mother that if it was okay with her I hoped to speak to her – and Maria is she wished together and then see Maria's bedroom. Maria's father, Philip, was home as well so I explained to both of them how long I had been doing the PhD, where etc. I also reassured them that her children in no way were being evaluated or assessed with regard to their capabilities. I had brought along a list of issues I wanted to explain to them as well as the topics to be covered.

I explained that the aim of the research was to understand children's social development (as opposed to physical development) and how this process was connected to what children consume. I explained what I meant by "consume" and said I took it to be the products children want, buy, use, talk about and so on. I also explained what I meant by a product: toys, clothes, food, sweets, programmes, books/magazines, leisure activities etc.

I explained that the reason I was connecting social development and products children use was a "moral" one. I wish to create more of an understanding of the impact of marketing e.g. advertising on children and how manipulative it can be. I highlighted that my purpose for collecting this kind of information was so that it could be used to influence social policies rather than sell more effectively to children. I went on to explain a little about ethnography and the work I did in the nursery.

Maria has just started school a week ago so the talk was on how she was getting on, whether she had made any new friends etc.

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After I had explained the purpose of the research I asked Tanya if she would be okay about myself using a recorder. I reiterated the issue of confidentiality and advised her this was purely for transcription purposes and would enable me to concentrate better on the conversation rather than writing it all down. She was completely at ease with this.

After the interview

I went upstairs with Maria to her room. Simon came up too and we first went into Simon's room. Maria wanted to go in there and asked me to tell her a story. She likes to hear about real life events that people have experienced have happened such as hospital stories. We sat down and Simon wanted to sit on my knee as well. There was not enough room and Maria would not let him share my knee. They started fighting and Philip came and took Simon downstairs.

From what Tanya told me Maria spends time in Simon's room as well. Simon likes to pretend his bed is a boat or other imaginary things. His toys seemed to me, like Maria's to represent a mixture of interests from games to books, cars and so on.

We went into Maria's room. It is lilac and one wall is painted mint green. She has a bunk bed. On the top bed she showed me all her cuddly toys. She had a lot of teddy bears and dolls. She sleeps on the bottom bed. Maria has dressing up clothes a bookcase with many books and a make-up table. The room seemed to me to have a mixture of toys and was not dominated by one particular thing. On the window there are Monster's Inc window stickers as well as on the mirror door of her wardrobe.

When showing me her cuddly toys Maria showed me a teddy bear with a dolls face. Maria: "Beatrice (from nursery) gave me this. She is not very well. She's going for a check-up for her teeth." I am sure she was referring to the doll – in hindsight (18 hours later) I cannot be completely sure if it was Beatrice. Just a few minutes earlier Maria had been telling me about a condition she has in her teeth. I did not fully understand what she was talking about but I automatically linked the dolls (what I assumed to be the dolls) condition to what Maria had told me about her teeth. Her mum had also been saying earlier that Maria had an amazing imagination and had so many pretend plays and had relationships with every single one of her dolls and cuddly toys. So I still think she was referring to the cuddly toy/doll from Beatrice.

Maria showed me her make-up bag, which contained nail polish, "spray for your legs to stop them getting itchy" and other items. She was not that keen on spending a lot of time showing me the contents of the bag.

Me: When do you use make-up Maria?

Maria: Only on very special occasions or for very special birthdays.

I looked at her bookshelf, which contained a couple of videos and various books. I saw a Barbie book and asked her what it was. "Oh that's a Barbie diary" and she put it back. Whilst looking at the bookshelf she pointed to a bag and said: "This is what I use when I play doctors". I then pointed to a case on a lower shelf. It contained a purchased doctors kit. Interviewer: Oh and this. This is for playing doctors.

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I later realized that the plastic bag she had pointed to originally contained baby wipes, which she uses for wiping the skin when she is playing hospital.

Maria showed me some old train tickets.

Interviewer: Do you keep them to remember times when you have been on the train.

Maria: We use it when we play train games.

Interviewer: Do you play train games with Simon.

Maria: Yeah but I have older friends that like me.

Maria was keen for us to play hospital. I was to pretend to have broken my arm. She used the wipes to wipe my arm and some toilet roll as plaster cast. This went on for some time. Then Tanya came upstairs and asked if Maria wanted a bandage she had got at her work. Maria was so pleased. I asked if she was a nurse. I knew she wasn't but had forgotten at that moment in time that she works for Standard Life (I'm sure that is what Maria has told me). She told me no, she used to be a first aider and had found it in her drawer at work. Now we were to pretend that I had broken my leg. The game went on for some time. Eventually I said to Maria, that I had to go. She said that I was to read her a story. I said that I had told her two stories and had to go. Before going I asked Tanya if it would be possible to do a follow-up visit in 6 months. She was fine about this. As I went out the door Maria asked if she could come out and see my car. So she did. She wondered why Jonathan sat in the front and I told her that because I did not have an airbag and because I only had two doors he was allowed to.

Appendix 9c

Interview with parents on home visit with pre-school aged girl

The interview is in the living room where Tanya, Philip, Maria and Simon and Interviewer are present. Although some conversation is going on between Philip and Simon in the background this has not been transcribed, as it is not part of the actual interview.

Question marks represent words I have been unable to pick-up from the tape. One question mark represents one word, two question marks represent two words and three represent anything more than two words. A slash represents an instance when the sentence is not finished and somebody else starts talking or the speaker is interrupted in some other way. Three full stops represent instances when the speaker pauses although it may be very brief.

Interviewer: I'll just put it here...I think that should be okay. I wonder whether it would be better higher up. It's...actually it's/

Maria: Do you want me to do this.

Philip: Maria watch this/

Tanya: Maria! No there's coffee. Right Philip take your coffee and put it at the patio door.

Interviewer: Right I think that might be quite good. It's actually originally got a microphone for it but one of the girls in the uni eh department has got it.

Simon: (sitting with father throughout interview at other side of living room) I done it!

Interviewer: Right. First of all I'm just going to start with a question, sort of quite general. What kind of...I'm specifically thinking of Maria because she has (I say something about Maria's age or something but can't hear on tape because Simon is talking to his dad)...Simon does come into the equation but it is more the effect that, you know, maybe Maria has on him. What kind of things...When I say things I mean toys, clothes you know anything that, you know, Maria would use. What does Maria like and where would you buy these kind of things, or use them and...Yeah, can we start off with those questions? So what kind of things does Maria like?

Maria: Eehhmm. Toys and clothes and (says something here I can't make out)

Tanya: Barbie! You've been influenced by Barbie. ?? doll. Fifteen of them.

Maria: Mummy I want to talk.

Tanya: And it's moved onto Barbie labels. For a while it was Barbie pinafores and Barbie jackets and Barbie pants, Barbie socks, Barbie t-shirts and/

Interviewer: When you say Barbie labels you mean...That's what you mean the Barbie on them.

Tanya: Yeah

Interviewer: Cause I noticed she's got quite a few of those kind of things.

Tanya: Well you know when they begin at nursery...But yeah, by the age of three, you know, she would ask you for these kind of things and she would make a b-line in the shop. Or she could recognize obviously, the name Barbie. I mean by the age of two, Maria, before she knew the letter M, you know, before the time she was two she would recognise MacDonalds when we were around in France. Whereas other times she would come to the letter M and know it was MacDonalds. And Simon is beginning to do that too so that's?? But Maria's always been quite (I did not catch end of sentence).

Interviewer: I think I'll just move it there.

Tanya: Right okay! The other big thing that you loved are all the Disney princesses.

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Sleeping Beauty and Snow White and Cinderella. She's, you know, got the films, got the dress-up outfit so..got various items of clothing in the same. But I think Maria has always loved dressing up so a lot of the stuff is dressing-up and now it's extended to things for her hair and/

Maria: I've got my own mascara, make-up box and everything.

Tanya: Yeah, some of them have been presents for birthdays and things. Body glittering and Simon wears body glittering. They come down stairs and I find him smeared and I see ?? body glittering. It's now completely empty.

Interviewer: When you say Maria makes a b-line in shops, what kind of shops does she see the Barbie things in?

Maria: Ikea...

Tanya: Not so much Ikea but yeah I mean anywhere. Barbie gets everywhere. Even shops like Marks & Spencer do Barbie and Disney stuff for them too so wherever we are, You know if you are like somewhere like the Gyle that has got a Disney shop then the kids make a b-line for the Disney shop.

Interviewer: Do you find it is basically around you everywhere you are?

Tanya: Yeah.

Interviewer: But ehm, when you say you don't like it. Why do you not like it?

Tanya: It's...It tends to be that the quality isn't so good exactly...more tacky. So yeah I wouldn't say I hadn't...but you wear them to nursery darling! You know, sort of thing. Normally a bit bright and garish which when you are three and four and five, you know, you like bright things and garish. Put it down please, put it down!

Maria: Mummy, I want to play??

Interviewer: What I was wondering was, so ehm Maria likes these kind of things. How does it figure...Does she talk of these things a lot. Would she talk about them to others?

Tanya: Yeah, because one of Maria's good friends Hannah, who also, she left Pinocchio's just before the summer. Hannah Fergusson, she's there on a Tuesday afternoon and a Friday afternoon in the pre-school room.

Interviewer: She's got long hair?

Tanya: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Tanya: Maria and Hannah have been friends long before because I went to school with her mum.

Interviewer: Ohh alright.

Tanya: Hannah has never really been into dressing-up in the same way as Maria has. In fact Maria often played with Hannah's little sister Rachael cause she likes dressing up and the two of them would be dressed-up. Hannah wasn't really that fussy but Maria kind of went on and on at her until Hannah was asking for Barbie things as well and where she was not necessarily asking for Barbie clothes. She was dressing up, she got Barbie dolls and Barbie hairdryers ???? for a while. But I mean, it is almost for me, with having a satellite TV Maria has been able to flick from channel to channel. Simon doesn't have a say in what they, you know, what they get to watch and obviously the advertising. And already the Christmas adverts are on and already she as been asking for stuff.

Interviewer: I can't believe that, we've only got August. So the dressing-up where does that come from? Does it have to be something that's bought or can it be anything...

Tanya: It can be anything like putting on her old clothes that she wore when she was younger and things of ours. She's always getting Simon in her old clothes so Simon is more

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than happy to wear skirts and dresses like a girl because he ?? he'll do anything that she'll ask. He just loves her to bits. I mean, he wears toutous and everything. Because you know, he gets a laugh from Maria and her friends. And then he's getting attention, because normally he would tend to get ignored. But no, she will dress-up in anything but it's gotta be really girly not boyish at all.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Tanya: She still not got past that "everything's got to be bright pink please", you know, she's pretty girly.

Interviewer: Yeah yeah.

Tanya: She still likes her skirts better.

Interviewer: So do you think that everything gotta be pink in the wardrobe, do you think that comes from the Barbie thing?

Tanya: Yeah, it probably started it. I mean it was when Maria...Maria...It started with Maria when she went into the pre-school room and she moved in slightly before she was three and she was there two and a bit years. She was in there quite a long time so she met the first kids that were going to school two Augusts ago. Now she was very friendly with all the kids that went last August and she said she would never settle again because she felt she was being left with the babies. And although most of them ended up being around about the same age as her going to school, it took her a while to kind of, accept them because she was friendly with the older girls. She was sort of, doted on. But yeah, the name Barbie just came out of that. She was just approaching three and it was no coincidence that she moved into the pre-school room and she...because the...she heard the four and five year olds talking she was the same. She wanted to be like one of them.

Interviewer: So, when you go for family purchases...When I talk of family purchases I mean anything from going to buy food in the supermarket to buying a TV/

Maria: Do you know what's my ??

Interviewer: What?

Maria: (shows me something)

Interviewer: Oh that's nice...So how much influence does Maria have on that. (question worded towards Maria) How much do you get to decide when you go to the supermarket and you are buying things?

Tanya: ?? Because Maria was quite a difficult eater for a while so there are always choices but it's not that she would buy...you know, likes of the Barbie pasta. She maybe gets that about once every four or five months or something. It tends to be kind of, other choices. If I'm choosing biscuits for the kids coming round then obviously, they'll chose what they want there. Ehm, so it's more a choice, what would you like for tea tonight. You can have pasta, you can have sausages, you can have chicken and...what would you like with it. What salad would you like with it? That sort of thing.

Interviewer: Yeah. So for items that...so if I'm understanding you correctly is it for items that are...to do with her, or for her or affect her ??? and then for other things...

Tanya: ??? there is little choice. It's more like our choice. That means she'll pick the one that kind of gets. I mean I let them pick cereals and things like that. Ehmm, we've got to be careful cause...Maria is not so bad but Simon would have Choco pops or something every morning so...no it's okay Simon you can have a choice between cornflakes or weatabix, like that sort of thing rather than...but they've got their junky ones in there as well, depending on what comes in them.

Interviewer: Yeah.

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Tanya: Like for a while we had eh, the Nestlé's cereals cause of the Monsters Inc. Monsters Inc. kind of hit them big style. Before the film even came out, now Maria knew the date the film was coming out and I think we saw it the first weekend or something. Cause she had heard about it, she'd seen it in the shop. They'd been advertising a lot on the television and ehm, Monsters Inc. products had hit the shop by then as well so we had to collect juice tokens, eh the tops of juice bottles for our Monsters Inc. ?? things like that so she was quite specific that she wanted/

Maria: We saw it on dad's birthday.

Colin: That's right, I know, and that was my birthday present.

Dad remember that, me and dad went to see Scoob...Did I tell you Interviewer, I left yesterday afternoon me and dad went to ?? and he did a big pump!

Interviewer: Who did...Scooby-Doo?

Maria: Yeah

Interviewer: Were you looking at the pictures?

Maria: Nodds

Interviewer: Ahh..

Maria: And he keep pulling in here and he keeps doing pumps!

Interviewer: Did he?

Maria: And and someone ???

Tanya: Simon doesn't even know that Maria went because he's...Maria has made him watch it on the TV and he thinks it will be like, just the cartoon/

Interviewer: That's right and it wasn't

Tanya: And he'd probably be really quite bored but...But he thinks he's No. 1 Scooby-Doo fan but he doesn't really know what he is talking about. He has just heard Maria...and he'll ??

Interviewer: Yeah, Jonathan went to see it as well and I think he was a bit taken aback because it wasn't exactly the same, as you say. So...

Maria: When, mummy when does that like ??/

Tanya: Maria, the other thing that she really likes is sort of arts and crafts and that's...that's not influenced by anybody because we are absolutely useless and not artistic at all. But that's just her. That's something else she spends a lot of time doing.

Interviewer: What kind of arts and crafts?

Maria: Anything.

Tanya: Clothing, making things, drawing, painting, colouring in you know, even if it's a plain pencil and a bit of paper rather than the fact that she likes drawing or something. She's always drawing. She's got bags and bags of things home from nursery.

Interviewer: Yeah?

Tanya: A carrier bag home every week.

Interviewer: So what about...I know a lot of girls are really into baby dolls/

Maria: Can we...Interviewer!

Interviewer: Can we go upstairs afterwards?

Philip: Maria

Tanya: Maria, I'm talking to Interviewer just now darling. You know/

Interviewer: I can't wait to come a see your room afterwards.

Maria: You know what Interviewer (Maria then explains something to me about her room but I could not catch it as Simon was in background).

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Tanya: In a minute Maria okay?

Interviewer: Can I see it afterwards, is that okay? Won't be much longer Maria?

Tanya: Yes Maria started like dolls and like babies. She started it, she got her first big ? when I was expecting him ?? he was born. But then she kind of got a doll that she, funnily enough had seen on the television that laughs and cries and...very annoying. And ehh. Well done (to Simon), well done! She got that so yes, she was back into dolls again. So then of course, Simon had to have his, her old doll ?? But Maria will, she's got hundreds of soft toys upstairs but she actually plays and talks to them all. You know you'll find one on the radiator or on the stairs or rapped-up in a toilet roll, so and so has had an accident today. And she'll give you this big long story about what's happened to this doll of hers.

Interviewer: Right, I see.

Tanya: So it doesn't really matter what it is with Maria but she has a relationship with them all. She has got a vivid imagination.

Interviewer: What about things that maybe you might not be ?? for female, like a car... You know how there is sort of, very strong stereotypes/

Tanya: Yeah, we...when she was a baby we bought her, she had...she had various things like that. She's not interested at all. Ehm, so she's...?? time with Simon because he did like, as a young child there was a difference because he the loved cars and he crawled around the floor with cars for ages even if ?? and Maria was just not interested at all in things like that. She liked, I think because Philip does, she likes football and she likes kicking a ball around and playing outside but things like cars. You know if you go to the Jelly club where the cars are in the middle...

Interviewer: Yeah.

Tanya: ..won't go near it at all.

Interviewer: Is that right?

Tanya: She'll wonder in and out of the booths talking to people on the phone and stuff like that but she's just not interested in/

Interviewer: That's interesting because I tried with Jonathan...to bring out the nurturing side of him. Look here's a little dolly or something. He was not interested. But eh, so what kind of impact, I mean you are talking about the television and how that affects what Maria wants...What about other children, do they have an impact?

Tanya: Yes..it' always, with Maria it's always been older children.

Interviewer: Older, all right I see.

Maria: It's still older.

Tanya: When she first moved to the pre-school room and there was older children. And then when she became top dog at nursery she wasn't interested in them anymore. So when she when she would talk about friends we had that daughters were like seven, eight, nine she wants what they want.

Interviewer: I see.

Tanya: This is where all the... You know they use lip balm, can I have lip balm.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewer: Obviously, I mean I know that is...when they are one or two or whatever it is ?? and it gradually ?? as they get bigger and they ?? more things/

Tanya: You can't...well that's maybe too strong a word but we're talking about the choice in the supermarket. I mean you can give them choices of three or four things and they chose the thing that you don't want...so you can talk them into it. You can still...you give them

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an idea and she likes it and she'll tend to go with it. So we still have some influence on her choice.

Interviewer: (can't hear what is being said here)

The phone rings and Tanya goes to answer the phone.

Tanya: But no we probably fall at number three behind one: friends and two: TV.

Interviewer: That's interesting. And how have you seen that sort of, progress. At what point did you think that you, you know, that TV and friends were having...Is it when, as you said...when she moved into the/

Tanya: Yeah, ? once she discovered, kind of, older children. That is who she wanted to be like.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Tanya: I remember when, you know, children used to try and be their mums by walking up in high-heeled shoes. You know, when we dressed-up as children. You think, I thought then that we were trying to be adults but, you know, Maria tries to be like an older child, I suppose.

Interviewer: Yeah...yeah. And you've sort of, kind of, mentioned that/ You kind of mentioned what kind of influence that you think that Maria had on Simon, with dressing him in tou-tous or whatever, but sort of, in general/ (a conversation goes on between Maria and Simon). So the kind of things that he likes is that influenced by her, by Maria.

Tanya: Yeah, because as I say, before he was influenced by her he really liked the boy side. He liked cars and trains and he liked making noise. Maria was quite sensitive and he made noises. Simon had a drum and he used to absolutely whack it so they were clearly very different in the toys they like...ehm so it wasn't until he was sort of, eighteen months that he was interesting enough to play with Maria. He got her attention and he realized that he could get that best...Maria get that ? out Interviewer's here...was do things she wanted to do. So since then he has played with Barbie's and dolls and babies and things like that.

Interviewer: Does nursery influence him in any way, I mean do sort of, children in the nursery...or do you think that that/

Tanya: I don't think so/

Interviewer: Aha.

Tanya: ...and I don't think that it did with Maria much when she was...was that age.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Tanya: No, Simon talks about the nursery and he goes into a lot of detail about what he has done with the staff, but...and there's a couple of children now in the junior room that he considers his friends...that he sort of, interacts with but he's still at that age where he more ? with the staff. And if you ask him who he plays with outside, now that Maria's away he talks about the staff rather than the children.

Interviewer: So...in a situation...I don't know if you ehh, sort of have these situations in your family, but if Maria has been given some money and she is allowed to go and buy something for herself...what happens if there is a conflict between what she wants and what she is allowed to have?

Tanya: She had her birthday quite recently and she had money but we would basically...when we wandered round various shops at the end of the day we gave her the choice between four or five things but I think if there had been anything we really didn't want...we probably would have avoided it and given her a choice between four or five other things. We would never force her to buy things she didn't like because Maria wanted

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to buy all five things but then she's still at the age where you can influence her.

Interviewer: Yeah...yeah.

Tanya: I mean there probably wasn't much that was totally unsuitable or maybe Maria would like to spend twenty pounds on what she would consider make-up and stuff like that. And there's no point in that. So we wouldn't, if we consider it to be ?? on something like that. Cause we know what happens once used it gets dried up or ends up on the carpet or whatever. Yeah, we would try and talk her out against that or let her buy one small lip balm so...

Interviewer: Yeah, she was telling me about her lip balm earlier on and then she had a grown-up one. Ehmm, and...sort of, kind of, I suppose drawing towards a close here. I know that probably that Maria, you said that she would go straight over to a Barbie product or whatever in the shop, but in general, how familiar do you think she is with branded products, and I don't just mean children's products/

Tanya: Oh definitely. When Maria was...Maria was two when Ikea was opened and we watched it basically being built and Maria used to go to another nursery that has shut down in Roslin. We used to go up that way an..you know, we were looking at the stage of the building and then it finally got the sign up and she ? that that was Ikea. For a while because we knew the extra traffic, I boycotted it for two or three months to start with and then Maria, you know every time we went past it...Ikea Ikea can we go in yet! And you know, they know the difference between Sainsbury's and Tesco's and Simon can recognise the difference between a Sainsbury's and a Tesco's. Simon can recognise a Marks & Spencer's at the Gyle so I think because we...they're there when we shop a lot so that...

Interviewer: Yeah ???(I miss out a whole line here because Simon has broken into song singing Scooby Doo beautifully).

Tanya: ?? it's not that you would ask whether brands, like Kellogg's as opposed to the supermarket own brands, it's basically...it would be more what's inside it for her so yeah, she would ask but if it was something she really wanted then yeah, you would pay the extra pound then to get the kind wanted, but she's not normally that fussy. It's because ??the other ?? she is not specifically saying it has to be certain kind/

Simon: I'm banging

Tanya: I tell you what. You go into the dining room and bang and we will see if we still can hear you.

Maria: (says something to me)

Interviewer: I tell you what, we'll go and read a story. I think I've finished here. I think that's covered more or less ??? Do you feel like, as a dad when you go out with Maria that, I mean obviously I take it ??? things like that. Do you have any different types of influence.

Philip: Ehhh, I don't...no Maria's got her own mind about what she likes and things like that you know. Ehmm, when you go out shopping quite a lot as a family and we go out individually but I don't think it that much different. There clearly is quite strong influence/

Simon: Can you come upstairs with me Interviewer?

Tanya: In two minutes.

Simon: Interviewer, are you coming upstairs with me?

Philip: ..cause we'll see things they've seen on TV or things like that on an advert or whatever you know.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Simon: Come on Interviewer.

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Interviewer: I'm going to come up, I'm going to come up now. I think I've finished talking to your mummy and daddy.

Maria: No she's going to come to see my room and read my book.

Tanya: That one is, that is the longest book ever.

Maria: Only to read a wee bit.

Tanya: A page or something...And Maria likes her books as well and they are not influenced by anything other than a good story.

Philip: Simon, just put it on the side in the kitchen.

Maria: Interviewer, come on.

Interviewer: You can go and chose a book.

Tanya: Places like Borders are quite good because especially when we've got Simon now we can sit down and even the WhSmith down at the Forte, you can go and sit almost like a library and basically, read a few. Because so many books look good like a good story and even two year olds can look at you as if, you know, complete nonsense. So you ?? and even we've discovered when we buy the older books for her, if you just read the back we have no idea at all if, it's going to be good enough. You have to read it a bit.

Simon: Interviewer, come on.

Tanya: But other times if you just buy it on a whim it's because we maybe know the author and the author's books have been quite good before.

Interviewer: What about CDs ???/

Tanya: Simon! That was naughty. Yeah music is another thing...eehm/

Interviewer: I don't know, I don't have ?? but she seems to be into popular music.

Tanya: Again, that started, I think, in the pre-school room at the start of the pre-school. They used to bring music in and play it at nursery so I mean, the year she moved in there STEPS were quite big and she came home being able to do the five, six, seven, eight dance. So she decided she liked STEPS and I think, at that time it was Scub7 as well who were not...ehmm yes, Scub7 that did "Reaching for the stars". And that was another one they did at nursery, which she quite liked, and it's just kind of progressed. And she's told me at the moment...for a while it was the Pop Idol and that was kind of to do with me. Because when I was in hospital I got into that I watched it on a Saturday night. So that was one influence we did have and I mean, I played that in the car because it was the one thing the kids didn't complain about. I have a seventies CD, which the kids really like and Simon was ??he sings in the nursery and everything which is a bit strange. I suppose we still have some but Maria has decided three weeks ago she likes the Sugarbabes now. I barely...barely even know who they are.

Interviewer: Where has she got the Sugarbabes from?

Tanya: I don't know where she got it from but she dances like them and she sings their songs. Atomic Kitten was the other one.

Interviewer: ???

Tanya: She knows the channel that has...cause she used to look for Will and Gareth and Scub7 on the hits channel so she's probably maybe seen them on that.

Interviewer: Right well thanks a lot for that. If its okay then I'll have a go at looking at Maria's toys and I can read her a wee bit...actually I'll/

Tanya: She'll be delighted to have attention for/

Maria: I've got these in case you want to write ?

Interviewer: Right thanks for that Maria.

Appendix 10

QSR N6 Student version, revision 6.0.

Licensee: Erika Anne Hayfield.

PROJECT: Children's cultures of consumption

REPORT ON NODES FROM Tree Nodes '~'

Depth: ALL

Restriction on coding data: NONE

- (1) /CCC theory
- (1 1) /CCC theory/Rituals
- (1 1 1) /CCC theory/Rituals/Food/sweets
- (1 1 2) /CCC theory/Rituals/Celebrated rituals
- (1 1 3) /CCC theory/Rituals/Common rituals
- (1 1 4) /CCC theory/Rituals/Routine
- (1 2) /CCC theory/Symbols
- (1 2 1) /CCC theory/Symbols/Brands
- (1 2 2) /CCC theory/Symbols/Non-brands
- (1 3) /CCC theory/Power
- (1 3 1) /CCC theory/Power/Pester power
- (1 3 2) /CCC theory/Power/Status
- (1 3 3) /CCC theory/Power/Conformity
- (1 3 4) /CCC theory/Power/Control
- (1 3 5) /CCC theory/Power/Peer/other power
- (1 4) /CCC theory/Identity
- (1 4 1) /CCC theory/Identity/Gender
- (1 4 2) /CCC theory/Identity/Ethnicity
- (1 4 3) /CCC theory/Identity/Age/Size
- (1 4 4) /CCC theory/Identity/Anticipatory socialization
- (1 4 5) /CCC theory/Identity/Consumption as identity
- (1 4 6) /CCC theory/Identity/Taking on identities
- (1 4 7) /CCC theory/Identity/Performance/competence
- (1 4 8) /CCC theory/Identity/Other
- (1 4 9) /CCC theory/Identity/Appearance
- (2) /Methodology
- (2 1) /Methodology/Role
- (2 1 1) /Methodology/Role/Physical size
- (2 2) /Methodology/Ethical issues
- (2 3) /Methodology/Ways of seeing
- (2 4) /Methodology/Key informants
- (2 4 1) /Methodology/Key informants/Kids teaching me
- (2 5) /Methodology/Consent
- (2 6) /Methodology/Building relationships
- (2 7) /Methodology/Reflexivity
- (2 8) /Methodology/Methods
- (3) /Structures
- (A) //Document Annotations
- (F) //Free Nodes
- (F 1) //Free Nodes/Transition periods

Appendix 10

(F 2)	//Free Nodes/Shopping
(F 3)	//Free Nodes/Individuals
(F 4)	//Free Nodes/Physical body
(F 5)	//Free Nodes/Media, TV & discourse
(F 6)	//Free Nodes/Kids sharing experiences
(F 7)	//Free Nodes/Space and time
(F 8)	//Free Nodes/Friendship/inclusion/exclusion
(F 9)	//Free Nodes/Other
(F 10)	//Free Nodes/Background

Appendix 11

Main story from shopping.
OK if something for them

QSR N6 Student version, revision 6.0.
Licensee: Erika Anne Hayfield.

PROJECT: PPS, User Erika Anne Hayfield, 11:38 am, Feb 12, 2004.

REPORT ON NODE (F 2) 'Shopping'
Restriction to document: 'P2onlytxt'

```
*****
(F 2) //Free Nodes/Shopping
*** No Description
+++++
+++ ON-LINE DOCUMENT: P2onlytxt
+++ Retrieval for this document: 275 units out of 6830, = 4.0%
++ Text units 108-124:
After finishing their tasks the kids get to do another activity according 108
to a rota on the wall. Olivia and Jennifer decided to do something on 109
the white board. After a little negotiation Olivia drew a line down the 110
middle and Jennifer was to write a story on the right hand side and 111
Olivia a drawing for the story on the left hand side. Jennifer started 112
writing. I asked her if it would be okay if I wrote the story down as 113
part of my learning about children. She said that was okay. 114
The story was: 115
On Sunday me and Olivia went to Tesco and bid (bought) bread and milk and 116
went home and put it into the cupboard. 117
When it came for Olivia to draw the picture - 118
Jennifer: Why don't you draw a sign saying Tesco's up there... Olivia why 119
don't you draw a box hanging from the ceiling. } Shopping 120
O: How do you spell it? } Soap 121
J: T E S G O S 122
O: There's no Gs in it 123
So they ask me and I say I think it is curly C. 124
++ Text units 1515-1520:
I: What about you Rebekah, what do you like to do when you're not at 1515
school? 1516
N: And I like to go shopping. 1517
R: I like playing outside on the } Are they saying they like shopping 1518
N: As long as it's for me. } when for them because they 1519
I: Right. } can chose, evaluate etc. Of a new possession.
++ Text units 1977-2016:
I: Well, what I was thinking was, if you could choose a picture and tell 1977
me about a time when you went to one of these. 1978
N: I hardly go to any of these places. I've never been to any of these 1979
places. 1980
R: You've been to Tesco. 1981
N: Yeah but I've not been to the Delish one Mark has spotted that in 1982
relatively small letters it does say Delish underneath the Tesco sign 1983
that I have photographed). I've been there like once. 1984
R: I've been there millions of times with my cousin. 1985
N: I go to Marks and Spencer. 1986
I: I tell you what. You can tell me about Marks and Spencer and you tell 1987
me first of all about this and then we'll do Marks and Spencer afterwards 1988
okay. 1989
R: I've been here to the sports centre to the training place at the Sp 1990
but none of them were size 13s and my mum didn't like any of them and 1991
there was no 13s or 1s in Nike or anything. Because I was wanting, I was 1992
really really really wanting Nike or Adidas and there was none of Adidas 1993
for any size, I think but there was loads of Nikes for like 3s and like 1994
4s/ 1995
I: So they didn't fit you? 1996
```

Consent
MOVE

BEARD
MOVE

shopping
for me

Tesco is a
chain

Marks & Sp.
brands

Shopping
Soap

Are they saying they like shopping
when for them because they
can chose, evaluate etc. Of a new possession.

Appendix 11

	I: How do you know it's the big one.	2239
	O: Because there's a big one and a small one and I've been in both of them and that's the big one.	2240
	I: How do you know that's the big one?	2241
	J: Because it's got big letters there.	2242
	++ Text units 2522-2527:	2243
<i>Tesco as place she got bunny rabbit</i>	I: Tell me about a time when you were at Toys R Us.	2522
	B: I meant Tesco's.	2523
	I: Oh you want Tesco's right. Do you like to go to Tesco's.	2524
	B: Because I got my big fluffy chicken and Easter bunny.	2525
	I: Is that why you like Tesco's.	2526
	B: Cause it's got lots of fluffy things. And I had a bunny rabbit.	2527
	++ Text units 2840-2862:	
<i>Toys R Us Argos</i>	M: Toys R Us!! Toys R Us!!	2840
	I: Tell me what you do when you go to Toys R Us.	2841
	F: Buy Bayblades.	2842
	M: Buy Bayblades.	2843
	I: Do you like Toys R Us?	2844
	M: Yeah I love it cause it's got/	2845
	F: Argos.	2846
	M: Argos!	2847
	I: Do you ever go there?	2848
	M: Yeah, I go there.	2849
<i>Tesco is boring</i>	I: What do you do there?	2850
	M: I got somewhere, I went there to get a box for Robert's scooter.	2851
	F: Tesco Tesco (Is looking at pictures underneath).	2852
	M: I don't like Tesco.	2853
	F: Every Saturday I go with my granddad to Tesco. And that's Bonbank by the way.	2854
	M: I go there. I go to Bonbank .	2855
	I: How do you know it's Bonbank ? Is a soda	2856
	F: I recognise the trees and everything.	2857
	I: The cheese? Oh the trees. So you go to the big one sometimes. So why do you not like Tesco?	2858
	M: Cause it's all got food and makeup in it. It's got makeup in it. And it's got Bionnicles in it. You get that too.	2859
	++ Text units 2860-2885:	2860
<i>Pizza Hut</i>	M: I've got...Pizza Hut!!! Yeah, I've been there. Pizza Hut, yeaaaahhh!	2861
	F: This is very special because/	2862
	M: That's the one I went to.	2870
	F: On the Friday teatime after my birthday party Keith phoned and said:	2871
	"Are you going anywhere? We were thinking about just going a long to just get a pizza in Tranent. And then he said, why don't we go to Pizza Hut together?" Oh all right then.	2872
	I: Who's Keith ?	2873
	F: Limee 's dad.	2874
	I: I see.	2875
	F: Did you take a picture of Keith ?	2876
	I: Why do you like Keith ?	2877
	F: Because that's where my granny bought me my new remote control car/	2878
	I: Ahhh.	2879
	F: ...that needs new batteries. And we've got them but we've not done it yet. Neil wanted to go but he can't because/	2880
	++ Text units 3209-3233:	2881
	J: That's says Argos.	2882
I: It does, have you been there?	2883	
F: No.	2884	
J: No.	2885	
I: What do they sell at Argos?	3209	
F: I don't know cause I've not been there.	3210	
I: Do you know?	3211	
		3212
		3213
		3214
		3215

Appendix 11

N: But why do sports shops always have to see ones for like the size/ 1997
R: Big people. 1998
N: ...P7s. Apart from once I got some football boots. 1999
R: And I had to go to Marks and Spencer's and get some. ✓ 2000
I: So did you not like the Marks and Spencer's ones as much? 2001
R: I do. 2002
N: I didn't know they sell trainers. 2003
R: They do but they're not like, they're just Marks and Spencer's, ✓ 2004
they're not like (there is a small interruption here). 2005
I: Tell me about Marks and Spencer's. Do you like to go there? 2006
N: No not really. 2007
I: Where do you like to go? 2008
N: I don't know. I get a bit board. What shop was that (points to photo 2009
of trainers). 2010
I: I think it was JJ Sports at the Forte. So why do you get board at 2011
Marks and Spencer's. 2012
N: Cause it's like all the ladies things. 2013
I: So there's not so much stuff for you. 2014
N: No there's loads and loads of suits and these fancy high heels and no 2015
the one of the ~~shops~~ I'm talking about. 2016
++ Text units 2135-2167:
I: I see...So what are your favourite clothes? 2135
O: Ehmm...the clothes that I just got yesterday. 2136
I: What are they? 2137
O: It's for my party I've got (batteries went here so I lost a small 2138
section). The dress is white, I mean light pink with ehmm...roses on 2139
them. Pink roses on them. I got it from Next and I got this sandle from 2140
Next as well. My sister got one as well and it's for my daddy's sister's 2141
party. 2142
I: I see. So is Next a nice shop? 2143
O: Yep. And we got some for my sister but my sister wasn't there because 2144
she was at the beach trip. 2145
I: Who was she at a beach trip with? 2146
O: Ehmm, the Brownies. 2147
I: So which shops do you like to go to then? 2148
J: None really. I don't like shopping. I only like Toys R Us. ✓ 2149
I: Why do you like Toys R Us? 2150
J: Cause it's got lots of toys. 2151
I: I see. Do you like shopping? 2152
O: Umhmm. 2153
J: But I have got some clothes. I've got a wedding dress from Next and I 2154
got a pink with flowers on it and I got some white sandles to go with it. 2155
O: Erika! 2156
I: Yeah. 2157
O: Yesterday I went to Claires Accessories to get a hair band and we got 2158
Sofie a thick hair band. 2159
I: Oh did you. 2160
O: Umhmm. 2161
I: So why do you like shopping? 2162
O: Because I like getting new things. Yesterday my mummy spent a lot of 2163
pounds. 2164
I: Did she? 2165
O: She nearly spent one hundred pounds. 2166
I: Gee, that's quite a lot. 2167
++ Text units 2233-2243:
J: Yeah. Olivia's seven. Tesco's, I love the food from Tesco's. But I 2233
don't like to shop at it. 2234
O: No. I only like shopping to go to the other, I only like the other 2235
Tesco's. 2236
I: Oh right, the big one or the small one? 2237
O: The small one. That's the big one. Tesco as chan' 2238

Can't relate to it

shopping trip

Appendix 11

	J: No, I've never been to Argos.	3216
	I: Have you been there?	3217
	F: Yeah, I've been to Tesco.	3218
	I: And have you been to the one in Haddington .	3219
	F: I don't know cause I've been to lots of them. We get mushrooms, cheese and strawberries.	3220
	J: My mummy always goes there for everything except if she goes for toys she goes to a different place.	3221
	I: So do you go with your mummies or daddies when they go to Tesco's.	3222
	J: Yeah, my mum just tells me to go with her ever when I don't want to. I think it's very boring though.	3223
	I: Is it boring? Why is it boring?	3224
	J: Because you have to get all the food. But I enjoy it when we get something nice.	3225
	I: I see, when you get something nice for you?	3226
	J: Like a sponge cake.	3227
	I: So it's all right when there's something nice?	3228
	J: Yeah.	3229
	++ Text units 4370-4378:	3230
	I: Yeah, I understand. So in terms of consumption and the role that that plays in these events and whatever and in general, how important do you think that parents and peers are and the fact that it's a rural area.	3231
	Basically, what I'm trying to say is where are their influences coming from?	3232
	K: I still think, I mean like you can tell with a lot of them again what they do at the weekends. It's a lot of shopping going on and again I know it's a national past-time these days, shopping. So they do go into town a lot so it is you know, Toys R Us.	3233
	++ Text units 4796-4816:	4370
	I: It's interesting. I've put her, you know when you go shopping whether it be to Tesco, I don't know where you shop but does Jenny like shopping and/	4371
	S: Jenny can shop for Britain.	4372
	I: Oh is that right.	4373
	S: Oh yes! She could shop for Britain.	4374
	I: Could you describe a sort of, typical trip.	4375
	S: Ehh food shopping she'll do but she likes to have some element of control of it. She likes to be pushing the trolley or choosing the things.	4376
	I: I see.	4377
	S: She likes to be, you know exerting herself and that. She's actually very good at packing the shopping as well when it comes down the conveyor belt. She likes to be stood there and she'll pack sensibly. She's learnt how to pack and she packs very very sensibly. But what she really likes is to go off clothes shopping and not just for herself, she'll go off and buy things for other people as well. We had to buy a shirt for an uncle or something/	4378
	I: Yeah.	4796
	S: ...and she likes to know what size you've got to get and then she'll go along the racks and she'll think: No that's the wrong colour, that's not his colour. And she'll chose something/	4797
	++ Text units 4892-4905:	4798
	I: So what is it about shopping that she enjoys then? She clearly is interested in it.	4799
	S: She is, well my mother-in-law, my granny could shop for Britain as well and my sister-in-law, who's doing a PhD, could shop for Britain as well. They're good, they're people who can go for a whole day, it doesn't matter if they buy anything or not. They like to just know what's happening.	4800
	I: Yeah.	4801
	S: To understand what's going on and they're good at spotting bargains as well. Keeping an eye on how stock's moving in shops and then knowing when	4802
		4803
		4804
		4805
		4806
		4807
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		4900
		4901

Foodshopping boring

Tesco as chain

lots of shopping

control

Shopping knowledge

Appendix 11

to go and get them. And I'm hopeless; I couldn't do that to save my life. 4902
She's ehh, yeah she's a serious shopper. 4903
I: That's interesting. 4904
S: I think she'll be very expensive when she gets older. 4905
++ Text units 5889-5899:
I: Yeah. That's interesting...If Aimee asks for anything, you know 5889
whether it's a toy or whether it's anything to do with dogs or whatever 5890
ehmm, where do you think her main influences come from? What might the 5891
information source be? Now you said that she doesn't see much advertising 5892
so maybe that's kind of a wee bit out of the equation but/ 5893
C: I think it would be if you were actually in a shop ehmm and she saw 5894
something in a charity shop, I love going to charity shops, I mean it 5895
really what she sees, is what she wants. You know, it's not that she gets 5896
this idea you know: I would love to have such and such. It's what is 5897
influencing her, the things that are around her. 5898
I: Yeah. 5899
++ Text units 5979-6012:
I: All right, I see. Now you're talking a lot about the charity shops, I 5979
was wondering if you could describe a shopping trip to me, whether it be 5980
to a charity shop or whether it be to a Tesco or wherever. 5981
C: If I go to Tesco we usually start off together. I think the children 5982
are big enough to walk beside the trolley and I try and get them to help 5983
me to put it in. Ocassionally, they say: "Can I have this, can we have 5984
that for dinner". Sometimes I say yes, sometimes I say no. Depends if 5985
it's something we usually have or if it's a fancy ? Ocassionally, if it's 5986
like, when it's near Christmas when there's a whole aisle full of toys 5987
I'll trust them to stay together and they can go and look at the toys 5988
while I get the shopping. 5989
I: Yeah. 5990
C: Same in Toys R Us. In Toys R Us they two of them go straight over to 5991
the kind of, sit-on toys. 5992
I: Ahh. 5993
C: They just sit on them and it's a lot easier cause that's all they want 5994
to do and all I want to do is find the thing, buy it and get out, you 5995
know. 5996
I: Yeah. 5997
C: So sometimes shopping trips we'll actually split up and we'll leave 5998
the shop together but they are at an age now where they won't have a 5999
tantrum, you know. 6000
I: Yeah. 6001
C: You can say: There's five minutes left. And after five minutes they're 6002
happy. I've been really really lucky with them actually because I think 6003
for many years I've been able to go shopping without them realising that 6004
you could buy these things. You know, I could walk past wonderful things 6005
and they'd play with them and never would they say: "Can I have this?". 6006
I: Yeah. 6007
C: That's really only come since ~~when~~ was probably six, five and a half 6008
or six that she's suddenly realised and he's cautioned on to that really 6009
quickly as well. That's probably the most shopping trips. If we go to 6010
Haddington we'll duck in and out of lots of little shops and charity 6011
shops. 6012
++ Text units 6707-6715:
I: Do you ever go shopping with ~~him~~? 6707
T: Me no. 6708
F: He does it all over the Internet. 6709
T: We do our Tesco shopping over the Internet. 6710
I: Oh I see. 6711
T: Just get it delivered, it's just so easy and even when we were 6712
shopping they don't ask for things, they don't carry on, they don't howl 6713
like some kids would do. I don't know why, I suppose we can take some 6714
credit for that. I don't know but/ 6715

shopping
trips