The Invisibility of Children

Papers presented at an international conference on anthropology and children
May, 1997

Edited by
Jean S. La Fontaine and Helle Rydstrøm

1998:6

LINKÖPINGS UNIVERSITET

Working Papers on Childhood and the Study of Children
Department of Child Studies/Tema Barn
Linköpings Universitet
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The Invisibility of Children: Introduction

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A Conference on Anthropology and Children
Although an increasing number of studies on children in non-Western and Western contexts have been conducted during the last twenty years, the field of anthropology and children still remains at an early stage. On the 5th and 6th of May, 1997, the Department of Child Studies (Linköping University, Sweden) organised an international two-day conference called the "Invisibility of Children".

The Department of Child Studies is very grateful to Jens Aagaard-Hansen, Pia Christensen, Eva von Hirsch, Don Kulick, Jean La Fontaine, Olga Nieuwenhuys, Karin Norman, Alan Prout, and Christina Toren for agreeing to participate in the conference. Their papers concerned children’s agency, local assumptions about children, and methodological and theoretical questions with respect to anthropological studies on children. All the papers appearing in this publication were read at the conference.

Unfortunately, not all the papers presented at the conference could be included in this publication. Don Kulick’s paper on Western understandings of adolescence as related to interpretations of Brazilian transvestites’ memories of their early sexual experiences was committed to the Journal of American Anthropologist (Kulick 1997; see also Kulick 1998). Alan Prout’s paper on a theory of social structure with regard to studies on children in Western societies is being prepared for publication elsewhere. Christina Toren’s paper on children’s cognition and the human "embodied mind" was already committed to the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (Toren in press).

The organisers of the conference and the editors of this publication wish to express their gratitude to all contributors for presenting papers at the conference and/or for producing written papers for this publication. Don Kulick, Jean La Fontaine, Annika Rabo, and Bengt Sandin are acknowledged for chairing sessions at the conference. All the participants of the conference are thanked for providing stimulating discussions on the field of anthropology and children.
The Field of Anthropology and Children

The topic of the conference at the Department of Child Studies is inseparable from the history of anthropological studies on children. During the 1920s and 1930s, the American anthropologist Margaret Mead initiated the field of anthropology and children with her studies on Samoan (1959 [1928]) and New Guinean (1963 [1930]) children. Although Mead's studies remain pioneer work, she is merely concerned with the end-result of children's socialisation due to her focus on children's "enculturation." Mead does not emphasise the ways in which a child, through daily processes of social interaction, produces abilities to act appropriately within her or his local setting. Rather, Mead's work is concerned with how "enculturated" children develop culturally determined personalities (Langness 1976, Mead 1959 [1928], 1963 [1930]).

In particular British anthropologists have criticised Mead for assuming universal interrelatedness between a child's behaviour and personality (La Fontaine 1986). Jean S. La Fontaine, for example, stresses that children are individual members of their kin groups and as such they hold certain roles, positions, and status. If children's special kinship position is ignored, crucial information will be missed concerning various local kinds of expectations to and assumptions about children. The problem is, La Fontaine argues, to outline how locally constructed social structures encourage certain collective and/or individual behaviours in members of a local community (La Fontaine 1970, 1986).

La Fontaine's argument draws on the tradition of British anthropology. This tradition pays special attention to the meaning of socialisation and, in this sense, challenges the work of Mead. The concern about socialisation is especially clear when one of Mead's contemporary scholars, the British anthropologist Audrey I. Richards, discusses Mead's work. Richards states that it is not possible to identify so-called "basic or modal personalities" (Richards 1970: 15) by cross-cultural psychological comparisons as if they were related to a homogeneous value system. Richards says that anthropologists have shown through their fieldwork that values and personalities are multiple and heterogeneous factors and hence not single conceptual units. Furthermore, when multiple personalities are constructed, the meaning of education is crucial, according to Richards. She argues that educational systems as practiced in various local fields encourage and dictate what locally is assumed to be appropriate child behaviour (Richards 1970; see also Firth 1970 [1936] and Fortes 1970 [1945/49]).

Christina Toren examines in a Fijian setting the meaning of kinship, social hierarchy, and the human mind. In this sense, Toren's work develops the tradition of British anthropology. She outlines the complexities of the ways in which kin structures and
human minds reciprocally influence one another. Cultural meaning, as expressed in and through kinship hierarchies, is always the product of particular children's and adults' minds. Toren stresses that such cultural meanings are expressed and constituted through individual behaviour. Through a cognitive approach to kinship structures Toren illuminates that the daily learning processes, which Fijian children go through, is a matter of acquiring cognitive knowledge about social role, status, and position (Toren 1990, 1993).

The meaning of children's learning is also emphasised in the work of Charles Stafford. He focuses on the Taiwanese educational system and illustrates how this system is pervaded by Confucian ideas about becoming a so-called proper human being. According to Stafford such ideas are reiterated and transformed within pupils' households. Stafford's studies demonstrate how the meaning of proper child behaviour, as defined by Confucianism, remains unchallenged within the sphere of the household (Stafford 1995; see also Rydström 1998).

Eyal Ben-Ari similarly discusses the significance of official educational and pedagogical ideas when children are socialised. He explores the ways in which Japanese kindergarten pupils verbally and non-verbally learn to adjust themselves to teachers' pedagogical assumptions. Hence, through play, singing, eating, and sleeping routines Japanese kindergarten pupils are taught about appropriately modest bodily and verbal behaviour as a way of - also in this case - becoming a human being in Confucian terms (Ben-Ari 1997; see also Hendry 1976).

Similarly Karin Norman examines the meaning of education. Norman focuses on kindergarten pupils' socialisation in a German community. Norman shows how kindergarten children through daily playing routines are expected to interact with one another in what is considered to be a social way (Norman this publication). Anthropological considerations concerning children's socialisation inside and outside their households are also reflected in the work of Allison James, Alan Prout (James & Prout 1990), and Pia Christensen (Christensen this publication) but from a different viewpoint. These scholars are concerned with Western child-rearing considered as a more philosophical phenomenon. They analyse the ways in which child-rearing is enmeshed with typical Western ideas about rationality and universality. They argue that such ideas pervade children's upbringing in Western societies which means that children learn about the rational and moral Western individual.

Even though the studies referred to above clearly document children as active agents within their local setting, children's behaviour is simultaneously restricted to various
extent depending on particular local contexts. Eva von Hirsch, for instance, emphasises that children within a British orthodox Jewish community (von Hirsch this publication) are considered to be passive recipients of adult stimuli. According to von Hirsch, children are not expected to act as individual agents but to obey the moral values transferred from adults (1996).

Within contemporary research on children and anthropology the mutual inspiration between British and American traditions of anthropology is obvious. Mead’s efforts to identify cross-cultural personalities cannot be recognised in contemporary American studies focusing on children. This tradition has examined the ways in which minor routines of daily life reflect local expectations regarding appropriate child behaviour and, in turn, complex local cosmologies.

Don Kulick, for example, elucidates how Papua New Guinean Gapun children’s language acquisition (of the vernacular Taiap and/or Tok Pisin) is not limited to a matter of language learning. Kulick shows that through social processes of language teaching and learning, Gapun children become capable of acting appropriately in their local world. In this sense, Gapun children acquire competences with respect to local, fundamental, and abstract oppositions such as Taiap versus Tok Pisin, child versus adult, woman versus man, femininity versus masculinity, bad versus good, and individualism versus collectivism. Hence, Gapun children’s socialisation and language learning are inseparable factors (Kulick 1992).

Bambi Schieffelin also focuses on language socialisation in her research on Kaluli children of Papua New Guinea. By analysing various kinds of speech acts, Schieffelin illuminates how Kaluli mothers use non-verbal action, indirect speech, games, teasing, recruitment of siblings, and direct commands to instil in their children gender and context appropriate acting. Mother-child and, in addition, sibling-sibling interaction is, according to Schieffelin, of great significance when Kaluli children are socialised. This fact reinforces the point made earlier that children themselves are active agents with respect to their own and their siblings’ socialisation (Schieffelin: 1986, 1990).

Elinor Ochs analyses the ways in which Samoan children learn their vernacular language. Ochs demonstrates how child-mother interaction is crucial in order to understand how children learn to manage their local language and, in addition, local social values. Ochs, for example, describes how Samoan mothers encourage their children to focus on their mother by expecting that a child, which is praised, in turn praise the praiser (i.e. the child’s mother). In this way a Samoan child is expected
learn how to interact appropriately with other adult female members of its local community (Ochs 1986, 1992).

Jean L. Briggs is not concerned with children's language learning but about children's learning of emotions. Briggs analyses how Canadian Inuit's understandings of aggressive outbursts in children lead to restriction of children. The purpose of such restrictions is, according to Briggs, to avoid any production of what is seen as contemptuous, hostile individuals (Briggs 1970). In a similar vein, Helen Morton, has more recently described the ways in which Tongan children are expected to incorporate locally appropriate emotional values such as love and respect. These emotions are particularly taught by the means of encouragement and punishment, Morton shows (Morton 1996).

From a completely different angle, namely from the perspective of development studies, the situation of children has been discussed by, for instance, Olga Nieuwenhuys. She is concerned with the ways in which Western values and assumptions are transferred to non-Western contexts without further considerations. She argues that local values, in particular gender values, are important to take into account if any kind of development processes are initiated by Western aid organisations (Nieuwenhuys 1989, and this publication; see also Blanchet 1996). Nieuwenhuys' point has, as Jens Aagaard-Hansen describes, been taken into account in a Danish development aid project (Aagaard-Hansen this publication).

The papers presented in this publication are in various ways related to the above considerations regarding anthropological research on children. This point will be clarified below through a more detailed presentation of the papers appearing in this publication.

The Papers
Jean La Fontaine stresses that children throughout Western history have been regarded as objects to transform. According to her, this tendency has also influenced the tradition of British Anthropology and means that children generally and historically have been recognized as human material "to be moulded by adults into replicas of themselves [i.e. adults]" (La Fontaine this publication: 15). Considering children as merely objects is interrelated with Western ideas concerning the notion of the person. La Fontaine argues that in Western thought, personhood is defined in terms of individuals' agency within a wider sphere than the domestic. To be a person therefore means to fulfil a role in public affairs. From this argument follows that Western children are not seen as capable and autonomous individuals who exercise independent actions. Rather, children are
associated with an adult in the sense of being considered as belonging to some one adult, La Fontaine notes. In this sense an adult and a child become the antithesis of one another. This point is reiterated within the sphere of the educational system because children are classified as pupils who are related to an adult teacher.

La Fontaine says that children's capacities for action are limited by adult domination. Such domination is based on inequalities between children and adults with respect to social resources and power. Socially defined roles emphasise the implications of being an adult or non-adult. In such terms, children are considered as non-persons. She illustrates this point by stressing that children are excluded from a host of activities within Western societies that define adults as social persons such as the act of voting, being engaged in business, employment, and so on.

Such societal exclusions of children do not, La Fontaine stresses, automatically entail that children are passive individuals. They establish relationships and friendships as well as they experience the world around them differently from adults. Children develop their individual selves through a reciprocal process of interaction with their kin and others. Hence, she concludes that "children's individuality is not merely created by those around them but in interaction with them" (La Fontaine this publication: 20; italics in original).

Ideas about the child as an object to be moulded by competent adults are the focus of Eva von Hirsch's paper. Within the orthodox Jewish community in Gateshead (Great Britain), parents are highly concerned with ways in which their children can be transformed into what is perceived to be appropriate moral human beings. A Gateshead child is understood to be an individual who needs to be heavily stimulated by adults. Von Hirsch shows how local and highly complex assumptions about the human mind are fundamental to understand the ways orthodox Gateshead children are brought up to become appropriate moral individuals.

Gateshead inhabitants believe that a child's mind is a field of ongoing contests between constantly struggling "evil inclination" (Yetzer hora) and "good inclination" (Yetzer HaTov). A new-born baby does not, however, incorporate any "good inclination", but a "soul" (Neshomo). "Good inclinations" in a child have to be produced through directed and external adult stimuli, according to Gateshead adults. Since the "evil inclination" is perceived to be fully mature, ever-present, and pervasive, and the "good inclination" to be a substance which needs continuous nourishment and encouragement, adult moral guidance of a child becomes crucial.
Through adult guidance a child is, von Hirsch says, assumed to achieve access to its "character traits" (Middos). The outcome of such external adult stimulation of a child is assumed to be the correct moral actions of that child. Since the Gateshead child, moreover, is considered to be able to think and perceive already from birth, a child is expected to be malleable and receptive to intellectual knowledge. Von Hirsch stresses that knowledge in Gateshead is perceived to be the major means through which a child can learn self-control over its "evil inclination" and, in turn, generate appropriate moral behaviour.

The theme of adult definitions of appropriate ways of behaving oneself - if one is a child - recurs in Pia Christensen's paper. Adult's and children's ways of interpreting the world around them may contradict one another, as she shows. Adult norms and values regarding children's behaviour are especially clear with respect to the field of sickness. Christensen examines how Danish children and their parents interact whenever a child feels sick.

Christensen argues that parents due to their expectations may classify their child's claims that it is sick as not being reliable and/or incompetent. Such scepticism towards children's claims of sickness is reflected in taking medicine, opening a bottle of medicine, taking the child's temperature, and interpreting what a certain temperature indicates. She concludes that children's diseases become a field within which a child's intuition concerning its own physical condition is opposed to adult rational assumptions about how to define various kinds of typical diseases. The relationship between what could be a sick child and its parents signals "important values of biomedical practices: that is, to keep rational control over and distance from bodily and emotional experiences" (Christensen this publication: 47).

From a different angle Karin Norman also discusses child-adult relationships. Norman evaluates her own relationship - as a female anthropological outside observer - to the children that she has observed when conducting anthropological fieldwork. She is especially concerned with whether and how anthropologists may or may not succeed in employing anthropological participant observation among children.

In a German village called Linden, Norman observed a class of kindergarten children in order to explore local understandings about children's upbringing. Her own position was, she says, well-defined and repeated throughout her two-year long period of fieldwork. Although Norman, besides observing and taking notes, talked and played with the kindergarten pupils, she defines herself as a "fairly detached observer" (Norman this publication: 62). The major reason for her particular position as a "fairly
detached observer" was, according to Norman, that she had no specific task to perform when visiting the Linden kindergarten class.

Norman describes how fieldwork, however, became much more complicated when she conducted a study among Albanian refugees from Kosova (former Yugoslavia) who live in Sweden. Norman believes that "children's interaction with others must also include interactions with the anthropologist" (Norman this publication: 73). Though, it became increasingly clear to Norman that due to age, sex, and culture there was a gap between herself and a 10-year-old boy whom she wanted to establish a closer relationship with. The differences between the world of the 10-year-old Albanian refugee boy and the adult female anthropologist were too overwhelming. Norman notes. She therefore concludes that "certain things children are not willing to reveal to the anthropologist and so we are kept out and must stay out (...). What we [i.e. anthropologists] need to do is to reflect over what meanings an 'outsider' has in different situations" (Norman this publication: 73).

One important aspect of anthropological fieldwork on children is the fact that children become visible as a heterogeneous group consisting of both girls and boys. In this spirit, Olga Nieuwenhuys explores girls' and boys' daily burden of work within the poor Poomkara village located in Kerala (southern part of India). Nieuwenhuys shows that children's participation in daily income generating activities is inseparable from social principles such as sex, age, social class, and economic conditions.

In Poomkara making coir yarn is carried out in connection with fishing. It is a typical task of girls and women, Nieuwenhuys shows. When a Poomkara girl is about six years old she helps women by peeling and beating coconut husks to produce fibre and by winnowing and turning the spinning wheel. Poomkara boys, on the other hand, begin at the age of about six to pick up fallen fish from the beaches as a supplement for the economy of their households. Nieuwenhuys says that boys gradually become engaged in small-scale fish vending which progressively leads to becoming members of an adult male fishing crew.

Nieuwenhuys considers contemporary debates on child labour and she distinguishes between two kinds of child labour. One category of child labour is the kind of labour when children support the subsistence of their household. Such labour is, according to Nieuwenhuys, a "labour of love" because children fulfil certain kinship obligations by working. Another category of child labour is labour which is not a result of children's love to their kin. Rather, this kind of labour is a result of the fact that children are exploited as a labour force within profitable business industries. Those two kinds of
child labour are, however, not always clearly separated from one another, Nieuwenhuys
notes. She emphasises that children's subsistence activities, or "labours of love", such as
Poomkara girls' production of coir yarn and Poomkara boys' engagement in fishing, is
no hindrance to large industries' exploitation of such "labour of love".

Nieuwenhuys's discussions concerning the living conditions of the poor Poomkara
inhabitants points towards the paper of Jens Aagaard-Hansen. His paper is an
introduction to a Danish development project in western Kenya and in the appendix of
this publication, Aagaard-Hansen describes the aims of a Kenyan-Danish Health
Research Project in Siaya District established in 1994. The project focuses on children's
health and is especially concerned with providing data on children's perceptions and
practices with respect to worms, malaria, and nutrition.

Anthropologists involved in the project pay particular attention to the ways in which the
inhabitants of the district attempt to cure various diseases. These anthropologists want
children to "speak for themselves" (Aagaard-Hansen this publication: 103). Aagaard-
Hansen states. He argues that within development projects "either [children's] bodies
[have] been the objects of various physical examinations or their guardians have been
approached to report on the children's behalf (e.g. on incidence of diarrhoea episodes,
etc.)" (Aagaard-Hansen this publication: 103). By collecting in-depth data through
anthropological inspired methods it will be possible to obtain knowledge about how
children and adults perceive health and disease, says Aagaard-Hansen.

Anthropological research on children is thus considered from various angles in this
publication. The papers to follow represent the vivid discussions carried out at the
Linköping conference in May and will hopefully encourage to further debates on
anthropology and children.
References


\*Acknowledgements: I thank gratefully Jean S. La Fontaine for most enriching criticisms of earlier drafts of this introduction. My great gratitude, furthermore, goes to Jeana for her very warm and friendly senior co-editor support. Also many thanks to Anna Khannadan for offering professional lay-out assistance.\*
In recent years there have been at least two occasions in Britain on which well-known people have felt constrained to make a point of stating that children are persons. In the first instance an eminent lawyer, writing in her report on a judicial enquiry into a series of allegations of the sexual abuse of children, stated: "The child is a person, not an object of concern"; in the second, a distinguished folklorist and collector of children's folklore and games entitled the book in which she published her field diary: *The People in the Playground*. She did this because, she said, that is what the children she studied called themselves, although they knew that adults did not. Clearly Lord Justice Butler-Sloss (1988) (as she then was) and Iona Opie (1993) felt the need to counteract what they saw as general opinion. The former was concerned to state what she felt had been neglected in the situation under review, in which children were treated as objects, things. The latter wished to show that the children she studied in the 1950s saw themselves differently from adults. Indeed the phrase *People in the Playground* does have something indefinably odd about it, which supports the view that adults do not normally see children as people. It would seem that to these two eminent individuals that in England children, at least in the eyes of some people, may not be considered to be persons. This paper considers whether children are persons or not and identifies some assumptions of which we must be aware if the anthropology of children is to be successful.

There is ethnographic evidence that supports the idea that children are not considered to be people. Ribbens' (1994) study of mothers and children in England in the 1990s identifies three different views of children: little angels, little devils and small people. The mothers might reflect more than one of these views in what they said, but the view of children as small people was expressed less often than the other two and
might be described as the minority view. The first two can be traced back to the Enlightenment, to the initial attempts to distinguish between society and the natural human being. Children (and those other objects of anthropological thought, 'savages') represented nature in its presocial state, although whether that was represented as original sin, or as the innocence before the Fall depended on the particular writer. (The third I shall come back to later).

Both the two main views of children see them as fundamentally different beings from their parents, as requiring a process of change before they can become adults. The concepts of childhood and adulthood are opposed yet inextricably linked by the process of development that changes one into the other. Jenks (1982) sees adulthood as defined in contrast to childhood but childhood is also defined as 'not-adulthood'. In fact, like many such oppositions, the linked terms define each other. But he is right in the implication that in Western society it is childhood rather than adulthood that has been the focus of attention.

By the latter part of this century a concern with childhood had become generalised through much of Western society. As Jean Comaroff (1994) has pointed out; "the image of the child is the plausible innocent in whose name moral claims can be made" and by which the consequences of disaster are brought home to the supporters of charities aimed at alleviating human suffering. It is also, as Judith Ennew among others has pointed out, the image of childhood that is exploited to attract attention in advertisements for commercial aims. In the academy there has been a growing concern with the meaning of 'childhood' and with a description of its variation in time and place. However, neither Ariès (1979), who provided the initial stimulus, nor those who have either followed him or criticised his history, seem to have been concerned with children themselves, as much as with how they have been conceptualised by adults. What Boas labelled the Cult of Childhood has not changed perceptions of children themselves.

Anthropology has only just begun to question Western cultural assumptions about children. To begin with: a view of culture as inculcated rather than innate required a
The concept of children as the raw material of social reproduction, the 'empty vessel to be filled' in another telling phrase (James & Prout 1990). Arguing against those who would claim a genetic basis for the different behaviour and 'customs' of peoples other than their own, or would interpret them as indicating a lower rung on the evolutionary ladder, anthropologists insisted that social behaviour was learned. If it was learned, then there must be some stage at which human beings had not yet begun to learn. The physical process of maturation must therefore be accompanied by another process, of enculturation as the American anthropologists called it, or socialisation, the preferred term of British social anthropology. The description of this process of learning and its cultural variations may have been seen as a study of children but in fact children were merely the objects under transformation. What was studied was the process of social reproduction, the transmission of culture to the next generation and the maintenance of society through the process of inducting new members of it. To describe and understand social reproduction and explain continuities of culture is still a valid intellectual concern, but it has the disadvantage of perpetuating a view of children as human material to be moulded by adults into replicas of themselves.

The concept of socialisation depends on the depiction of children as malleable. All the views of the mothers studied by Ribbens (1994) on how to bring up their children varied according to the different conceptions of children they held. But the two main theories both reflected the notion of the child as pre-social, needing to be trained or helped into becoming adult. By contrast the Fulani of Burkina Faso, as described by Riesman (1990) appear not to have considered that children's nature could be altered or influenced by parental efforts, being given by God. Does this mean that in studying socialisation anthropologists were merely reflecting the assumptions of our culture? I do not think so, or at least not entirely, for reasons which can be discussed, but the field cannot truly be called the anthropology of children.

In England, the origins of the concept of children as objects of concern lay in the second half of the nineteenth century. While this period did not abandon the view of children as natural human beings and also saw the production of literature designed to engage the children's own efforts in the project of making them into the contemporary
ideals of what men and woman should be (Rowbotham 1989), the welfare of children became the object of charitable actions (Hendrick 1990). A century later there are similarities in the concern for children's welfare and in efforts to protect them from similar forms of abuse that are once more in the public eye. Moreover, within this field, even where their welfare is ostensibly a dominant concern (Cederborg 1995) and in the heart of the institutionalised process of protecting children (La Fontaine in press), children have remained mere objects, the symbols of adult interests and views or the figureheads for their crusades.

The movement for children's rights, associated with the latter half of the twentieth century but actually starting much earlier, has taken a rather different view of children. Implicit in this is a conceptualisation of children as individuals, whose rights, like those of dependent minorities, diverse religions or categories of the disadvantaged, like women or the poor, require protection by the state. Here children figure as a category of victims, individuals who lack power to support or defend themselves and must be protected from exploitation by the more powerful. It is in this sense that Lord Justice Butler-Sloss (1988) argues the rights of children as persons to have their views considered.

A similar perception of children as individuals is reflected in the third maternal view discussed by Ribbens (1994): that children are little people. She reports that the mothers in her study who took this approach negotiated with their children and protected rather than trained them. But it is clear from her description that the children may be perceived as individuals even by those mothers who, in general, express one of the other ideas of what children 'are'. In fact, she argues in a complex and subtle analysis that the two taken-for-granted and interconnected concepts of 'individual' and 'family' are mutually dependent, and that establishing the child's individuality may be seen as the main task of child-rearing (1994: 52). If children are regarded as individuals, even though individuals who lack power and whose individuality must be encouraged, does this make them persons?
Ribbens (1994) writes of mothers' views of their children: "This is 'the individual', not as an abstract principle, but as the owner of a distinctive set of characteristics creating a specific and irreplaceable person". Clearly, 'person' here means the unique individual and the two terms 'person' and 'individual' are interchangeable here. This supports the thesis of the classic article on the concept of the person by Marcel Mauss (1938), who argued that it is a unique characteristic of Western society that the individual and the person have become identified. MacFarlane (1978) has shown that in England this individualism can be traced back to the 16th century. From this Western point of view children, as individuals, must be persons. Why then does Iona Opie's (1993) book title sound strange to English ears?

Mauss (1938) argued that the person is a social construct, thus distinguishing the notion of the person, a culturally variable concept, from the self, awareness of which he considered to be universal. If individual and person are identified in Western thought, this is not so at other times and in other places. For cross-cultural analysis it is necessary to distinguish the concept of the person from that of the individual. Mauss' contemporary, Radcliffe-Brown (1952), was quite clear on this point. He dismissed the individual from anthropological concerns entirely, defining it as the material, biological entity that is a member of the human species, but claimed the person, as an assemblage of social roles, to be the object of study of social anthropology. The Oxford dictionary gives this approach its sanction in giving, as an alternative meaning for person, "a part played in a drama or in life, hence function, office (...)". The person, from this point of view is the sum of social roles, distinct from both individual and self.

A generation later, in his article on the concept of the person Fortes (1973) argued that; "two aspects of personhood" must be kept in mind: what he called the 'objective' which consists of the identities and roles with which society 'endows' the person and the 'subjective', the individual's knowledge of himself in relation to his social personhood. He then continues; "the individual is not a passive bearer of personhood," thus clearly associating self and individual as opposed to, and distinct from, the person (see also Jackson-Widding, 1990). For him the person, in the tradition of
Radcliffe-Brown and Mauss remains socially defined. (It is of course this 'subjective' view which has been more popular in anthropology recently).

Among the Tallensi about whom Fortes (1973) was writing, personhood consisted of fulfilling the norms of living and was therefore tied to the life cycle. Children could not be considered persons, since they had not yet been able to do this (women could never be full persons because they could not undertake the public roles by which personhood is achieved). Thus there were many Tallensi who might be recognised as individuals but who are not persons. Similar notions obtain in other parts of Africa and also in New Guinea where, as I have argued, there is no concept of the person (La Fontaine 1985). It seems that in other societies personhood is the result of participation in a public sphere of life and hence may be restricted to adult men.

The English term person may in one of its meanings carry similar connotations to the Tallensi concept. The association between individual and person is the result of the development of a concept of the state, or society as being composed of citizens, individuals rather than intermediate categories or groups. Personhood relates to public affairs, and inheres in the capacity for social action, for fulfilling a role. Exercising a function or an office entails being fully autonomous and capable of undertaking responsibility. Personhood is agency in a wider sphere than the domestic.

In the eyes of most parents, the law or the society at large, British children are not considered autonomous or capable of exercising any independent action. The label associates the child with a responsible adult; to be a child is to be a 'child of' some adult. 'Adult' and 'parent' are similarly associated as alternative antitheses to the term 'child'. The meaning of 'child' denoting biological immaturity seems inextricably fused with the kinship meaning so that children are seen almost entirely as the property (in the widest sense of that term) of their parents. Outside the family they have a role as 'pupil' in a school which also serves to seclude them from public life. Otherwise they are envisaged as encapsulated within the family. To complete the picture one can remark that the transition between these two spheres, between home and school, has traditionally been considered an area of danger, which does not mean merely the
practical hazards such as the traffic, but as containing strangers, adults who pose a threat to children.

Children in England are excluded from political and economic affairs by being unable to vote or to engage in business on their own initiative. Their labour is legally limited to what is seen as earning 'pocket-money' or as 'helping' in family businesses. Nieuwenhuys (1996: 238) remarks that; "the moral condemnation of child labour assumes that children's place in modern society must perforce be one of dependency and passivity" and indeed this is just what I am arguing it is seen as. The status of children excludes them from so much that it is reasonable to conclude that they are not full persons or, as it is put in English, people in their own right.

It is this apparent inability to assume socially significant roles that marks the child as a non-person. As a result it may be assumed that in a sense children are outside social life altogether, contained within institutions that are set up to deal with them: the family and the school. In both places they are seen as the objects of the adults' concern: in the family to rear them and in the school to teach them. Yet they have been strangely invisible in both. It is only recently that studies of child labour have pointed out the contributions children make to the household economy by their labour but the interest in children's work abroad is only beginning to make visible the parallels in a post-modern Western society. Yet, as Ginny Morrow (1996) has pointed out, children contribute significantly to domestic labour in Britain and, by freeing parents to engage in wage labour, they contribute to the household economy. Concern with bullying and violence in schools has drawn attention to the roles and relations of children that exist within the official framework of schools, to the politics of the playground and of the streets. In all these areas children are significant actors, but their roles are given no social legitimacy by adults and hence do not contribute to giving them status as persons. They remain, at best, individuals.

Studies like those I have quoted make it clear that children are not merely objects although their capacities for action are limited by the inequalities of power and resources that give adults a dominant position (see Ribbens, 1994: 207-8). New
insights in developmental psychology show how children participate in their own development: children's individuality is not merely created by those around them (Ribbens, 1994: 54) but in interaction with them. Children are ceasing to be seen as objects, they are becoming individuals. They do not therefore have to be persons to be studied as actors in their own lives.

As actors children must also be considered capable of conceptualising and reflecting on their social milieu. As Christina Toren (1990) has shown us they may have a view of society distinct from that of adults, which anthropology of children needs to describe. As individual members of their society children are also engaged in constituting relationships with others, who may or may not be persons. I am not referring to the more visible engagement of children in friendships, although these are often significant for children's life, but to their place in a kinship system. From the moment of birth, the individual is part of a network of reciprocal relationships extending beyond the confines of the domestic unit. If children develop their individual selves in interaction with those around them (Ribbens 1994) then siblings, cousins, uncles aunts, grandparents as well as parents, step-parents and half-relations of all sorts must considered as among them. These roles are not shed at adulthood but remain part of an individual's identity.

Yet the kinship network does not obliterate distinctions between child and adult. The kinship roles that are critical for personhood are those of spouse and of parent, and these are precisely the roles from which children are excluded as incompatible with childhood. There is moral outrage in England at the idea of very young mothers or young wives at school. These girls are usually excluded from school, even when they are capable of attending. The roles are incompatible with that of pupil which is an attribute of childhood. Roles thus carry the implication of adult, or non-adult, status.

What are the implications of the status of children as non-persons? As symbols of adult interests and objects of their concern they can be studied, just as other symbols and objects are studied and there is already a considerable literature on the subject. As a distinct category of individual, they offer a new field of study that is also being
explored. However I have argued that our studies risk merely confirming the perceptions of children that are embedded in Western culture unless we are aware of them. Anthropology has always struggled against ethnocentricity and increasing one’s awareness of the constraints of one’s own culture is an important way of doing this. The challenge is to incorporate children into our social analyses, with adults, and not as a separate category of non-persons. Understanding their kinship relations might be a good place to start.
References


1 Mothers and their Children: a Feminist Sociology of Childrearing. London Sage. Gisela Eskhardt drew my attention to this interesting study.

2 The first attempts, during the Enlightenment, to discover the nature of humanity in general as distinct from its manifestations in particular places and times, took children and 'savage' (as they called them) to be examples of the pre-social being. As is well-known, two diametrically opposed views of this nature came to exist. For convenience, one can call them the Hobbesian and the Rousseauian: the former characterising human nature as fundamentally aggressive and anti-social while Rousseau characterised it as innocent and altruistic until distorted by social life. The two approaches underpinned fundamentally opposed views of the process of education for children, both as it was and as it ought to be. In the first, the task was to restrain innate behaviour and control innate impulses so as to make society possible. In the other, it was to encourage 'natural' growth without harming or distorting the child's essential character. While children are thus seen as different from adults, the content of that difference varies.

3 Ribbens also refers to work by the Newsoms and by Hallidén on the nurturing of individuality within families.

4 In Britain in the past, entering the world of wage-labour was a critical marker of the assumption of adult status, particularly for working-class boys. Adulthood is still associated with wage-labour, political status (the right to vote) and with that most critical of social rights: the right to become a parent. Marriage and particularly motherhood were rites of passage between childhood and adult status for British women as for women in so many other societies.
The orthodox Jewish community in Gateshead, a town situated a mile outside the city of Newcastle, consists of approximately three thousand Jews who live their lives in strict accordance with the rabbinic laws and the Jewish philosophy of Mussar. Having gained a foothold in the community in the last fifty years the philosophy of Mussar rests on the conviction that through daily preoccupation with ethical Talmudic knowledge, meditation and introspection a person can restrain his/her emotions as well as resist the evil inclination believed to be inherent to each and every person. Mussar also requires that the person seeks self-discipline and self-denial as a course for self-improvement and of serving one's fellow men. This community's almost fifty years dedicated interest in Mussar and its insistence on daily introspection and self-scrutiny has caused the community to renegotiate and gain an increased awareness concerning the composition and functions of their particular construct of human nature. The consensus in the community and the extent to which people are committed to the "highest standard" of inter-personal ethics, moral conduct and their preoccupation with the "reproduction" of those behaviours in their children implies that we need also to consider how Mussar affects the common-sense understanding that people have of the world around them. More specifically my contention is that the imperative which pedagogy and child rearing have been provided with in Gateshead in the last fifty years is partly a reflection of peoples' increased awareness of human nature brought about by preoccupation with Mussar.

I shall in this paper, using mainly ethnographic data, describe the "inner" structures and interactive system which make up the image of human nature in Gateshead and consider the particular affects which this cultural model has on indigenous pedagogical ideas.
My theoretical point of departure is in line with that of D'Andrade's (1987) who presents the Western folk model of the mind as a cognitive schema which is intersubjectively shared among members of a socio-cultural group. As constituent of cultural models such cognitive schemas may, D'Andrade argues, be part of and underpin various other cultural models. Although this permits scope for much individual differentiation, competent members of any culture must have a basic knowledge of at least those cultural models which are widely incorporated into other models. Consequently cultural models which are generally shared intersubjectively by members of a given group need not be made explicit when people deal with each other. Rather people make their common interpretation and interact out of 'obvious' but frequently unpronounced assumptions of the world around them. One such widely incorporated cultural model which is an intrinsic part of various other models is the construct of the mind. Usually cultural models of the mind, as part of the human nature, are one of which people in the western world have, if at all, a very vague awareness. Although they do show considerable proficiency in the daily use and practise of this model they are largely unable to provide a comprehensive or detailed description of the model's structure and functions. This is, however, where people in Gateshead differ.

The understanding of, insight into and ability to relate to the cultural model of human nature is vital to the Mussar philosophy which stresses the need to recognise and effectively curb particular undesirable elements of one's 'inner self' as a means of ensuring ethical and moral conduct. Thus people in Gateshead show a remarkable awareness of human nature's various components, their functions, potentials and limitations and can describe and discuss this interactive system in great detail. In other words Mussar has, with its insistence on introspection, caused people in Gateshead to objectify selectively the concept of human nature. There is in the community an articulated notion of 'what goes on inside' the body matrix not only in a physical sense, but also as the locus of the emotional and mental life of the person. People comprehend the body matrix as the encasement where specific 'inner parts' act within a self-contained and bounded whole. The extent to which the characteristics, potentials and functions of human nature is treated as a viable topic not only
deserving but requiring concern, is reflected in the existence of a high level of distinct, and topic specific terminology concerning human nature. Hence people in the community have made explicit, if not all then parts of their intersubjectively shared ideas and beliefs concerning human nature. Furthermore their indigenous theories concerning the functions of the various 'parts' or structures that make up human nature and their inter-related processes as they interact 'within' themselves, help people produce states of moral consciousness and do, in effect, 'shape' moral agents (Parish 1991) in Gateshead. By way of their specific concepts and beliefs concerning their 'inner lives' people are able to see themselves as, and to take on, the religiocultural obligation of being moral agents.

What are then the 'inner' structures that jointly provide the person in Gateshead with the opportunity to act as a moral agent? The brain is the locus of the conscious part of the person's 'inner life'. Residing in the brain the conscious-self is the site of cognition, memory, decisions, perceptions, evaluation and self-control. Regarded as the 'filter' whose task it is to decipher, negotiate and adjudge 'external' and 'internal' stimuli, the conscious-self is actually the cultural image of the 'part' or structure which organises the mental process of self-monitoring. The conscious-self has the capacity to monitor specific other 'parts' of the 'inner' but there are also those parts which it cannot reach, which are inaccessible. The heart is one such 'part' (fig. 1). Some emotions do arise in the conscious-self but most emotional states arise in the heart. Emotions that emerge in the heart are independent of the conscious-self. One such emotion occurs when the heart signals to the conscious-self that its actions are objectionable or improper and the person experiences that which Jews and Christians alike recognise as a 'bad conscience'. In other words the person experiences a faint self-reproach which it does not have the means to fully regulate. A 'bad conscience' is the outcome of the heart's evaluation of what the conscious-self thinks, believes and decides. It is the heart that evaluates the outcome of the never-ending process whereby the good and the evil inclination attempts to gain control of and govern the person's conscious-self. The inclinations, residing in the chest, are entangled in a constant battle to gain dominance and control over the conscious-self residing in the brain (fig. 1). The evil inclination -
Yetzer Hora- is a free agent whose singular objective it is to entice the conscious-self to fulfil and satisfy its

**Figure 1. Human Nature in Gateshead**

limitless selfish requirements. It is an innate and fixed structure of the infant's 'inner' body matrix at birth. In fact it is the child's only inclination at birth and remains so until the child reaches adolescence. Its 'opponent' the good inclination -Yetzer HaTov, on the other hand, requires time and purposeful input to mature. The evil inclination is a distinct, fully matured, pervasive and ever-present force whilst the good inclination is neither a fixed nor a static structure but a 'substance' that is in need of constant encouragement and nourishment. There can be no let-ups as moral behaviour stems from the good inclination's capacity to influence or 'persuade' the conscious-self to ward off the ever present and persistent enticement of the evil inclination. This particular version of human nature with its beliefs in the functions of and the interactions between various 'inner' structures places the responsibility for and the locus of moral behaviour firmly within the person's conscious-self. The conscious-self is the scene of personal and individual responsibility. In other words the individual possesses the means to instigate, control and maintain moral conduct. Whether it is
rejecting, generating or sustaining moral conduct the conscious-self is perceived as being involved in a relentless psychological 'tug of war' between the inclinations. The 'battle' between the evil and the good inclination is regarded as an unequal 'match' since the good inclination is neither self-sufficient nor structurally 'rigid'. Unlike the self-sustained, persistent and unyielding evil inclination, the good inclination is essentially a vulnerable, fluid and non-static entity that is dependant upon constant external support for its continued existence. Inherent to this logic is the belief that the condition of the good inclination is determined by the quality and quantity of the stimuli provided by the conscious-self whilst the evil inclination exists as an independent and self-sustaining agent that is inaccessible to the conscious-self (fig. 1).

The belief in the conscious-self's accessibility to the good inclination is essential to child-rearing practices and aims in Gateshead. It is a belief which provides parents with a pedagogical framework which deems it possible to manipulate the child's 'inner' structures in such a way as to enable it, in the future, to behave as and take on the responsibilities of behaving as a moral agent. This, the optimal goal of child rearing in Gateshead, is a process which focuses predominantly upon the manipulation of the child's various character traits. The person's personality, residing in the chest area, is the outcome of a particular and complex composition of Middos⁴, or character traits. Every person has his/her own composition, mixture and amount of character traits. Albeit unequally distributed all humans are born with both 'good' and 'bad' Middos. Furthermore the Middos are perceived to be expansive and highly receptive to external stimuli. The evil inclination is engaged in a constant and relentless quest to gain support from the bad Middos whose dominance will help lure the conscious-self to satisfy its insatiable selfish demands. That both the conscious-self and the evil inclination have direct access to a person's Middos means that the process of promoting or restraining each Middah⁵ is susceptible to pressure from internal and external agencies. Whereas the pressure from the internal agency -the evil inclination- is difficult to curb or keep at bay the external stimuli provided by the surrounding social environment can be manipulated, exploited and controlled. In other words the quantity and quality of the input presented to the conscious-self is decisive to the shaping of the person's various Middos. This means that providing the type of stimuli
that will fortify the good whilst denying the bad Middos the same favours, will allow the good inclination to gain strength and vigour. Consequently the conscious-self does hold the potential of monitoring resistance against the evil inclination, via active projection and promotion of good Middos. It is a venture made possible due to specific cultural beliefs which present the good inclination as highly susceptible to socialisation, whilst the evil inclination is perceived as somewhat resistant or even immune to socialisation or as a reservoir of unsocialised force within itself.

Inherent to this particular cultural version of how moral conduct is achieved is the concept of an 'internal-dilemma' caused by the conscious-self's dual role of being both 'giver' and 'receiver' of stimuli within the same processual chain (fig. 1). The conscious-self is the passive receiver of pressure from both inclinations. In other words it is a passive object of both external and internal manipulation. However it also operates as an active inlet to the good inclination -via Middos- and therefore represents a pedagogical opportunity of fortifying and strengthening this inclination's power. Herein lies a socialisational goal as well as a pedagogical challenge.

These beliefs in Human nature provide parents in Gateshead with a well-defined socialisation agenda; they must first and foremost live up to their parental duty of 'preparing' the child's good inclination for the task of counterbalancing the evil inclination. Exposed to influences from both the evil and the good inclination, the conscious-self eventually has to make a choice between the two. It is when the conscious-self decides -supported by the good inclination and in spite of the evil inclinations constant pressures- to behave in a culturally sanctioned manner that the individual acts as a moral agent. Being a moral agent, in other words, pertains to the decision of the conscious-self to comply with the good inclination whose 'instructions' are fuelled by good Middos and to reject the persistent and forceful 'temptations' presented by the evil inclination and supported by bad Middos. Although stimulation of good Middos must continue throughout life -since Middos are not static- it is particularly important in the years preceding the occurrence of the child's good inclination.
In Gateshead the belief is that the baby, from birth, possesses a *Neshomo*, *Middos* and a *Yetzer Hora*. Unlike the adult—the fully developed and 'complete' human—the child does not possess a *Yetzer HaTov*; a good inclination. The concern is therefore that since *Yetzer leiv HaOdom ra minuro* the evil inclination will, if left unopposed, take control of and govern the conscious-self and thus dissuade the child from acting in a morally condoned manner. At the age of twelve for girls and thirteen for boys the good inclination enters the child’s body. In practice this means that the child is now equipped with all the 'inner' structures required to operate fully and independently as a moral agent. The fact that the child might at times act morally 'correctly' is seen as the outcome of 'chance' or parental guidance and control. However when the child's 'human nature' is complete it is not only able to, it is expected to behave in ways that are culturally defined as morally 'correct'. For boys the 'completion' of his *human nature* is marked by an important and much celebrated *rite de passage*—his *Bar Mitzvah*. For girls, on the other hand, the transfer from one stage to another—her *Bas Mitzvah*—receives little attention in Gateshead. Common to beliefs concerning the development of boys and girls though is the conviction that their human nature is now 'complete' and consequently they are able and expected to abide by the 613 Halachic Laws. In short the 'completion' of human nature also marks the child's entry into adulthood.

However a structurally complete human nature in itself does not create an adult who is able and willing to act as a moral agent. Moral action is the outcome of an acquired sensitivity to one's 'inner' structures and more specifically to the *interaction sequences* which take place between various 'inner' structures/functions of human nature. Every adult in Gateshead must 'know' how to intercept and redirect these 'inner' interaction sequences in ways that bring forth moral behaviours. In other words parents, who bear the prime responsibility for ensuring that the child is 'transformed' into a socioculturally competent adult, must ensure that the child acquires competence in the governing of these 'internal' interactions and are thus able to act in socioculturally sanctioned ways.
Pedagogical Consequences

One could claim that socialisation is an obsessional activity in Gateshead. It is most certainly a goal-oriented process which is given much time and intense interest. The topic of children, how they are best handled, how specific results are achieved, the balance between reward and punishment, children's 'characters' and their 'abilities' are the focus of constant concern. Convinced that moral and ethical behaviours originates from and relies upon the individual's awareness of and willingness to govern its own 'inner' self, the ultimate and expected 'outcome' of child rearing strategies in Gateshead is to 'create' individuals who have competence in and are willing to cooperate in this undertaking. Negotiated, defined and articulated through Mussar members of the community hold beliefs and ideas concerning human nature which greatly influence the way in which children are perceived and dealt with. In the words of a mother of nine children:

We are so lucky, we never have to worry or doubt that we want the wrong things for our children, like many of the Goyim do. What we want and do is what Hashem wants us to do. To help us He has also provided us with the proper guidance so that we may succeed. This is why the Torah tells us what to do and Mussar guides us in how to do it. As you know, Hashem has created man in a particular way and we, Jewish parents, must act accordingly. We know what it is that we must deal with and so we know how to get the results He wants. So you see, unless we ignore His instructions or give in to the child's many whims, how can we go wrong?

This mother's comments demonstrate that inherent in discussions concerning children in Gateshead is an explicit understanding of which rearing methods bring forth the expected results. There is little uncertainty or ambivalence in terms of which of the child's 'inner' structures that must be addressed, how this may be done and what results one may achieve through which intervention schemes. Consequently children in Gateshead live their lives surrounded by adults who behave towards them in strict accordance with perception of human nature that defines expected outcomes and practices. It has created a rearing agenda where the incorporation of the cultural model of human nature into the model of how to go about the process of 'shaping' children into competent sociocultural members -indigenous pedagogy- is explicit, minutely
detailed and structured around the following three well defined and inter-connected activities:

- **Character assessment**
- **Stimuli control**
- **Objectification of perceptions of Human nature**

These activities are carried out simultaneously and start while the child is still an infant and goes on till adolescence, the child's bar or bas Mitzvah. Character assessment pertains to the process of defining and evaluating the child's personality or character.

Character traits -Middos- are innate, largely inherited and thought to surface and reveal themselves in the child from a very early age. Around the age of one the child's various 'measures' are believed to be 'detectable' in its behaviours and reactions. This is the time when parents start involving themselves in identifying and assessing their child's various character traits. The child's behaviours, reactions, preferences and habits are closely monitored by the parents who are constantly seeking clues or signs that reflect the 'quantity' and 'quality' of the various character traits that each particular child has been endowed with. The intense interest in the child's character traits is a way of mapping out and determining: a) which traits does the child possess that may be beneficial or detrimental to the child's future success as a moral agent, and b) what 'measure' or quantity of each particular Middah has the particular child been endowed with? It is the duty of parents to detect and adjudge the 'weaknesses' and 'strengths' of each particular child's Middos spectrum as a means of stimulating those Middos that might support the child's struggle against its evil inclination and consequent moral behaviour. Middos assessment and consequent Middos targeting is fundamental to child rearing practices in Gateshead. Thus the conviction that Middos are unequally distributed means that each child provides his/her parents with a specific or even unique socialisation task that demands individualised rearing adjustments. The following mothers' comments reveal this understanding:
Some people have Middos that are better or larger than others. This means that they have less battle. For instance if a child gets too angry in situations, this is part of this particular Middah. His measure of anger is large. So for this child to control his anger it takes a lot of effort, much more than for the child who is laid back, who has a small measure of anger.

The second mother argues for individualised socialisation needs in the following way:

One of my sons has got a great difficulty in sharing with others whenever he's got something nice, whilst my younger son will give all he's got away. The older one has a restricted Middah in terms of generosity so it is harder for him to share. He has to work on this constantly. Now we are helping him, showing him how, making sure he sees a lot of generosity so that one day, hopefully, he will be able to control his selfishness himself.

Being a child in Gateshead is to be the focal point of endless amounts of 'evaluative attention'. Whether as part of the mundane hum drum of every-day life or set up particularly to provide an occasion for observing particular actions and reactions, parents are constantly appraising and categorising each individual child's Middos spectrum. This is quite a formidable task for parents who, in average, have eight children. However theirs' is an indigenous pedagogical theory which allows for no generalisations since individualised Middos assessments is regarded as the first step in the process of shaping a moral agent.

However the process of shaping moral agents also requires Stimuli control. In the years before girls are twelve and boys are thirteen they are regarded as 'incomplete'. Lacking in certain of the structures that are inherent to the 'complete' human nature they are not equipped to undertake responsibility for moral actions. It is a stage in life when the various structures of human nature are thought to be highly flexible and particularly receptive to environmental stimuli. In fact early childhood is thought to be a period when the individual is uniquely responsive to its environment. This sensitivity diminishes progressively with time and exposure, hence early childhood in Gateshead is a time filled with non-negotiable expectations, a high level of control and strict indoctrination. Convinced of the pedagogical importance and potentiality of
this period parents invest much time and efforts into planning and organising their children's childhoods.

As is the case in classical socialisation theory the child rearing methods that prevail in Gateshead children are based on the assumption that children are 'immature, irrational, incompetent and incomplete' and that socialisation is the process whereby they are magically transformed into adults that are 'mature, rational, competent and complete'. This is a pedagogical theory in which the child is regarded as a passive object whose 'transformation' into adulthood it has no means of contributing to. It is a 'transformation' which depends upon stimuli which is external to and uncontrollable by the child. Yet it is precisely the shape and form of this external stimuli that dictates the 'outcome' -the emerging adult- of the transformation process. Children are the 'learners' to whom adults transmit sociocultural knowledge. It is a relationship which makes for a 'provider' and a 'receiver', and where the former -the adult- is active whilst the child remains the passive recipient of the expert adult's guidance. It is furthermore a pedagogical understanding which is based upon the metaphor of 'moulding. Notions of moulding include notions of 'imitation' and assume that children are infinitely malleable and that they learn by way of external pressures.

It is in Gateshead a parental duty to actively address the process of casting the child, shaping it into something different from that which its incomplete spectrum of 'inner' structures would generate if left uncurbed. In early childhood then rearing practices are not predominantly directed at cognitive development, but at a ceaseless 'manipulation' of the child's various Middos or character traits. Character 'moulding' also draws on the notion of 'expansion' or 'growth' through the selective suppression or inflation of Middos. The access to the child's Middos offered by the conscious-self's provides parents with pedagogical possibilities as well as behavioural restrictions. Since Middos manipulation is inherently dependant upon stimuli received by the conscious-self - that which is heard, seen, smelt and felt - the child's environment must be carefully vetted. Access to Middos, through the conscious-self means that such manipulation can be achieved through demonstrating to and surrounding the child with 'correct' and 'good' behaviour. However the child's Middos is equally
receptive to 'bad' stimuli. Hence parents must organise their lives in accordance with the axiom of being consistently good examples for their children. They 'know' that the void of 'good inclinations' in the child will, if not counter-balanced, inevitably cause the evil inclination to excel.⁰ It is an image of socialisation as the casting of the child, shaping it into something different from that which its natural 'instincts' would generate if left uncurbed. However here lies also a pedagogical challenge and opportunity in that the child can, in spite of its 'innate' and ever-present evil inclination, be shaped and moulded in ways which are beneficial to social requirements. This, however, will only happen if the child is provided with 'correct' or 'good' behavioural models and appropriate rewards and punishments. It is this understanding which underpin this mother's comment:

We must always as parents be aware of how we conduct ourselves in life. Never forget that children are watching us. They pick up things so quickly, also - no, especially so - bad habits! Of course techachot⁴ is one way to direct them in the right direction, but the better way is to do things, even the slightest of things, correctly yourself. By seeing how we behave and not being exposed to the wrong ways, I believe, makes much more of an impact in the long run. We are, actually, strengthening the child's good Middos - that is we make it easier for the child to resist the wicked ways of the Yetzer Hora but we are also showing the child how things should be done the right way. So what Jewish parents must do is not only to tell the child what it must do but also how it must do it. I mean make it understand what selfishness is and how to avoid it. This is not easy you know. And the child cannot do this without being prepared for it. We, their parents, must prepare them. Make their good Middos strong so they will have less struggle. So it is no good if we, as parents, simply give the child the tools it must also be shown what the tools are to be used for!

Parents must, at all times, demonstrate and accentuate what is 'good' and eschew that which is 'bad' since the child's conscious-self will, like a sponge, absorb and process all surrounding impressions. Since the child is unable to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' stimuli this vetting must be undertaken by the parents whose responsibility it is to censor the content and quality of the child's environmental stimuli. It is a task which is taken very seriously, and children's environments are at all times scrutinised and appraised. There are particular streets, shops and people that children are kept
from and radio, television and newspapers are banned from the community. In the presence of children parents are at pains to underline or exaggerate culturally defined behavioural preferences. Parents are at all times aware that they represent a behavioural 'blueprint' which the child is unable to evaluate and which it will indiscriminately imitate. Hence parents emphasise the kind of behaviours which they wish the child to acquire, making use of every possible opportunity to demonstrate behaviours which reflect 'good' Middos.

It is, however, not enough to simply demonstrate 'good' Middos they must also be objectified. Objectification of human nature perceptions is an activity which is given much importance. People in Gateshead believe that apart from monitoring an 'inner' interactive system the human being can also think about the effects of these interactions, that which is thought and felt. It is the conscious-self -the locus of thought and perception- that can carry out the activity of self-reflection. In other words it is possible to think about the presence of both the evil and good inclinations and the behaviours they seek to engender. This human ability to reflect upon 'inner' experiences also means that a person can intervene and reject thoughts and feelings that lead to sins or non-sanctioned behaviours. Inherent to the philosophy of Mussar is the belief that a person who is aware of the behavioural effects of his or her inclinations - including all their interactive activities -is better equipped to exercise self-control and hence has the potentiality to govern and generate moral behaviours. This is why introspection -the activity of analysing one's 'inner life'- is a vital component of the religious philosophy of Mussar. Regarded as being vital to a successful and continual rejection of the evil inclination the activity of introspection is perceived as a process that is based upon an in-depth understanding of one's 'inner' interactive system and the structures and functions it encompasses. Thinking about ones thoughts and feelings permits self-control. Moral behaviours will not come about by simply ensuring that the good inclination -supported by 'good' Middos- can 'outweigh' or at least 'counter-balance' the formidable evil inclination, but are dependant upon the person's ability to take an active stance against the 'inner' structures and interactions that organise unacceptable behaviours. People in Gateshead are convinced that thinking about and understanding the functions of and the
interactions between various 'inner' structures generates and makes possible the process of mental intervention\textsuperscript{19}, or that which we often label \textit{self-control}. Self-control, in other words, is highly dependant upon \textit{perception} and \textit{thought}.

All 'inner' structures and faculties needed for cognition are believed to be present as well as activated at birth. Born with the capacity to \textit{perceive} and \textit{think} the child can also 'understand' from a very early age. In the words of one mother:

\begin{quote}
We might not always realise it but children understand a lot more than we give them credit for. That is how it was intended. You see, He meant for us to teach our children from an early age His Laws and their special duties as Jews. This He made possible by way of equipping our children with early understanding. It is there already, we must simply just show them and guide them.
\end{quote}

Regarded as able to \textit{think} and \textit{perceive} from birth children in Gateshead are also thought to start life as infinitely malleable and receptive to 'knowledge'. To parents, whose ultimate objective it is to rear moral agents, the content and form of this 'knowledge' is of great importance since it organises the process of \textit{thinking} and consequently the child's ability to exercise self-control. Thought of as inherent to the process of self-control and subsequently generating moral behaviours it is a parental duty to ensure that the child acquires 'knowledge' of the various and detailed structures and functions that combined make up the concept of \textit{human nature}. The conviction that for children to master the mental intervention of \textit{self-control} they must also have an understanding of their own 'inner' interaction system, is apparent in the next mother's comment:

\begin{quote}
Even if the child's Yetzer HaTov is not ready, we must still make sure that it knows from the beginning that it must try not to give in to the Yetzer Hora. It must know that when it wants something very badly for itself, its is the Yetzer Hora that's at work and that it must reject its temptations. This is why it is important that the child knows about his Middos. In this Torah community\textsuperscript{20} all parents know this and this is why we spend a lot of time explaining this to our children. The child might not have a Yetzer HaTov from the beginning but instead it has the capacity to learn, when guided, what is right and what is wrong. So Hashehm\textsuperscript{21} provided the child with a mind in order that parents may teach the child from the very beginning. Knowing comes first!
\end{quote}
The next mother expresses the same conviction:

For my son to live as a Torah Jew he must know what he is dealing with. He must come to realise that the immense power of his Yetzer Hora can be dealt with and how this can be done. So when it (evil inclination) raises its ugly head he can take care of the situation. One day he'll know how to turn to his Yetzer Hato. For now he deals with temptations the way I tell and show him to but eventually he will do so because he wants to and knows how to.

In practice this means that when parents have shown the child morally sanctioned behaviours this is frequently accompanied by explanations, questions and instructions which are intended to highlight the 'inner' interactive process which generated the particular sanctioned behaviour. These 'instructive' sessions are intended to make concrete or to 'objectify' to the child the various structures, functions and interactive systems that make up human nature. 'Objectifying' to the child its own 'inner life' is done by persistently presenting the child with combinations of Middos narratives and self-assessment images. The former, Middos narratives, are presented in conjunction with parents' demonstrations of appropriate and expected moral behaviours. Having provided the child with a behavioural 'blueprint' this is, as a rule, followed up by anecdotes or 'stories' which are intended to emphasise the kind of Middos which are perceived as inducing and underpinning the demonstrated behaviour. Frequently biblical or referring to life in the Shtetl these Middos narratives represent endless and vivid stories of Jews who have rejected their own needs and longings and endured great sacrifices for their fellow men and who have shown such Middos as compassion, patience, kindness, unselfishness and generosity. Pointing to the pain and sacrifices which the rejection of their own selfish desires caused the persons in these stories whilst explaining how their 'inner struggle' and consequent moral behaviours originated from the various 'inner' structures involved in the process of self-control, parents in Gateshead use these narratives as a means of 'objectifying' or materialising perceptions concerning human nature to their children.

Before the child goes to sleep at night its mother ensures that it takes stock of the number of 'good' and 'bad' deeds that he/she has carried out in the day. Each child
has its own pair of scales hanging on the wall in the kitchen or the bedroom. Made out of cardboard and assembled with paper fasteners\(^9\) these scales are intended to make the child reflect on how they managed to cope with its evil inclination in the course of the day. It is a task which is taken very seriously. The number of 'good' and 'bad' deeds\(^1\) carried out in a day represent the conscious-self’s preference for corresponding inclinations\(^9\) and are thus placed on the scale, respectively. The ultimate goal is that the 'good' outweigh the 'bad' deeds. Whenever this is the case all the other family members are informed and the child is praised and rewarded.\(^9\) During the day the mother on numerous occasions 'offers' the child an opportunity 'to make a mitzva’\(^1\) and at night she reminds and helps the child to recollect and count the numbers of mitzvot or averas\(^9\) which it has 'collected' in the course of the day. The pedagogical importance of making sure that the child acquire competence in the activity of assessing one's own ability to organise the process of mental intervention - to perform self-control - and to reject the evil inclination was explained by a mother in the following way:

We need to make quite sure that he doesn't walk out into life thinking that he will automatically be a good Jew. He must be taught that being kind and generous is a choice, a choice that he, alone, must make. It is something he must work on and that it is at times hard to do. He must come to realise that our sole purpose in life, as Jews, is to live in accordance with the Covenant and that this means carrying out the Mitzvot. Every night I talk to him about this. You should see his little face when his scales come out good. You can just see that he is starting to realise how important this is!

The intention of this paper has been to show that indigenous pedagogical theories in Gateshead, the ideas that underpin their child rearing procedures, are not randomly chosen but are highly structured strategies founded upon their specific indigenous ideas concerning human nature. Peoples’ unpronounced understandings and 'knowledge' of human nature are seldom made explicit in any culture. Yet in Gateshead events in post-war years have caused an increased awareness of and ability to objectify them.
References


1 Hallachah: Generic term for the whole legal system of Judaism, embracing all its detailed laws and observations.
2 Talmud is a massive and monumental compendium of sixty three tractates embracing everything from theology to contracts, cosmology to cosmetics, jurisprudence to etiquette, criminal law to diet.
3 The Hebrew word for evil inclination is Yetzer Horo, and the good inclination Yetzer HaTov.
4 Middos is the Hebrew word for character traits and it also means measure.
5 Singl. of Middos.
6 External stimuli is provided by the social environment and internal stimuli by the evil and good inclination.
7 This takes place when the girl is twelve years and the boy thirteen years old.
8 Hebrew for soul.
9 Translated: The imagination of the heart of man is bad from his youth (Genesis 8:21)
10 It is believed that girls mature, in every way, earlier than boys.
11 The lit. translation of this is: son of Commandments.
12 The lit. Translation of this is: daughter of Commandments.
13 There are 613 Hallachic Laws of these 248 are positive and 365 are negative.
14 Yiddish word for Non-Jew.
15 Hebrew word for God.
16 A Middos can be either 'large' or 'small'.
17 This is especially so with mothers. They spend the most time with the child.
18 Before their Bar- or Bas Mitzvah.
19 It should be noted that this belief also is a considerable source for the feeling of guilt in parents in Gateshead.
20 Hebrew for: rebuke.
21 Since it has no 'good inclination'.
22 This is how self-consciousness is explained in the community.
23 This is one of the explanations as to why introspection plays such an important role in the community.
24 A community where the hallachich Laws are minutely followed.
25 Hebrew for: God.
26 A Jew who lives in accordance with the Torah.
27 Eastern European villages in the eighteen and nineteenth century that were primarily occupied by Jews.
28 This is a vital ingredient of Mussar which focuses on inter-personal ethics.
29 This ritual is overseen and controlled by parents from the time the child is about four till the girl is twelve and the boy is thirteen.
30 They allow the scales to be adjusted. To be moved up or down.
31 The Hebrew word for 'good' deed is the same as for Commandment: Mitzvot. A 'bad' deed or 'sin' is in Hebrew Avara.
32 Although the 'good' inclination is not present in the child, parents strict control ensures that the child do Mitzvot until he has all the structures that will enable the child to perform this on its own accord.
33 A small reward in the form of a sweet or biscuit.
34 Mitta is singular of Mitzvot.
35 Hebrew for: sin.
Difference and Similarity:
The Constitution of Children in Illness and Therapy¹

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Claims about the 'lack of visibility' of children within academic disciplines have been made, particularly in recent years (Hardman 1978; Alanen 1988; James and Prout 1990; Quortrup 1992). These claims may seem superfluous in view of the apparent centrality of children in European and North American cultures, exhibited in the highly staged material and symbolic worlds of childhood. The aim, however, has been to contest some traditional perspectives that have neglected children or left them little influence over their own social representation, the importance of which is emphasised by Dyer's statement that; "how we are seen determines in part how we are treated, how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation" (1993: 1).

The Cultural Constitution of Difference and Similarity
Within the social and cultural sciences various efforts have been made to re-examine the conceptual frameworks that influence the ways that children are represented. For the purpose of this section I will start from Jenks' investigation (1982) of the ways children are constituted in social and cultural theory. Jenks revealed what could be seen as a continual paradox. He writes:

The child is familiar to us and yet strange, she/he inhabits our world and yet seems to answer to another, she/he is essentially of ourselves and yet appears to display a different order of being (Jenks 1982: 9).

The child cannot be imagined without an idea about what an adult is, just as it is impossible to picture and adult and his or her society without positing the child. Ambiguity in the relationship between the child and the adult is encapsulated in the notion of 'difference'. This perception of 'difference', Jenks suggests, may be attributed to a theoretical focus on the social processes of over coming it - that is, on socialisation. It is an underlying Western premise that "people are made, not born"
(Riesman 1990). In this view, people are made what they become through the influence of their parents and education, which is seen as essential for their successful development and future life. The emphasis is therefore put on understanding children in terms of 'becoming' rather than as 'being' a social person. Thus at the same time as child and adult are seen to form the poles of a continuum, there is an implication of a socially and culturally constructed opposition, an opposition which designates not only difference but also hierarchy. Crawford's suggestion that "stigmatising images of the other are founded in a social self which needs this other" (1994) may, in regard to children, suggest that to establish the norm of the 'adult' in terms of an independent, responsible and competent person necessarily constitutes its opposite, which at the same time is its complement, through notions of the vulnerability, dependency and incompetence of children.

But, as is implied in the notion of 'becoming', the relationship between the categories of child and adult, while depending on the construction of difference, cannot be simply characterised by this alone. For difference is only one side of the processes through which social and cultural relations are made, maintained, reproduced and transformed. As Douglas, in a large body of work on cultural theory (for example 1975), has continuously argued, cultures can be understood by what they do and do not allow to be brought together. There is always, therefore, the possibility that cultural categories are enmeshed in relations of sameness as well as difference. This point can be taken further when the possibility that social relations might be constituted precisely through "partial connections" (Strathern 1992): a formulation that allows for more fluid, mobile and heterogeneous sets of difference and similarity than Douglas's more static conceptualisation. In this sense, social and cultural relations might be thought to involve both bringing items in its repertoire together and keeping them separate. The contradiction is only apparent. Sameness and difference (i.e. the work of making connection and disconnection) might go on in different times and spaces, at different points in a process - or, as also seems likely, be held in tension through moment by moment interaction.

It might be noted that in the above discussion, an implicit shift has been made from culture as the moving force (that does something) towards culture as a less solid phenomenon that is constructed through the situated activities - practices both discursive and non-discursive - of connection and disconnection. Latour refers to one side of this equation as the work of purification - by which he means the work that goes into keeping things apart - for it is not reified culture that does this but social actors (Latour 1993). On the other side we might speak of the labour of connection by which things or persons (such as children and adults) are brought into proximity made
to interact and through which, it might be suggested, they are made to be more similar (or at least less different).

This paper draws on a Danish ethnographic study in order to examine the various practices through which children's and adults' competence are made similar or different. In a cultural approach 'competence' is understood not as the psychological property of an individual but as a relational constitution or attribution that is socially constructed and negotiated. In the every-day illness of children these attributions centre around therapeutic practices, particularly in the use of pharmaceuticals. Through these practices children learn not only the instrumental and other contingencies of how to perform sickness in a particular, Danish, context but also how to enter into broad social relations concerned with age hierarchies. This engagement is, however, not constituted as a simple hierarchy, in which children are always and to the same degree in a position of subordination. Rather, child-adult relations are constituted in more varied and mobile ways on a continuum of difference and similarity. This is partly because there is a divergence between cultural categories and real actors everyday experience and practice. Children and adults do not belong to a fixed category of 'child' or 'adult'. Eventually children are going to grow into the category of adult, a transition which is not fixed in time or place. Furthermore in everyday interactions both children and adults observe situations and contexts where adults exhibit incompetence and children act competently and skilfully. This again leaves scope for interactions and negotiations which may obliterate or demarcate the accepted categorical positions.

The Study
The study is based on 14 months ethnographic fieldwork over two years in a local district of Copenhagen in Denmark. The focus was the experiences and (inter)actions of 6-11 year old children during episodes of illness and minor accidents that occurred. The study was carried out among children, their families and professionals in different situations and contexts of children's daily life at home, in school and after-school centres. The study used participant observation, ethnographic interviews and additional data production methods such as children's essays, drawings, drama, and adult diaries.

Children as the Incompetent 'Speakers of Fact'
Therapies, therapeutic actions and articular medical examinations during illness constitute a field which engages both children and adults in producing difference and similarity in their competencies. In general, adults constitute themselves as competent by drawing on 'rational' knowledge and mediating devices (such as a thermometer) to
classify children's mental and bodily experiences as 'real' illness. This simultaneously entails the suspension of children's competence: their subjective experiences of their own bodies do not qualify them as 'speakers of fact'. Adults accomplish this in a number of ways: the first lies in the significance given to temporal aspects such as 'duration' in adult definitions and in the classification of a condition and its severity. Both in the accounts of mothers, teachers, and staff in the after-school centres and in my own observations of child-adult interactions, 'duration' was an important point of reference for adults in deciding whether a child was 'really ill' and whether his or her complaints were to be taken seriously (Christensen 1997). A general theme in adults' accounts revealed, for example, that "children might have a high temperature, 39 or 40°C without being really ill" (ibid.). Adults related this normalisation of children's symptoms to what they perceived as rapid changes in children. In adult experience, a child could seem to be very ill with a temperature for a couple of hours one night and the next morning wake up without it, refreshed and well again. Duration thus acted as an important boundary marker between a well or an ill child. A common adult response (both at home and in an institutional setting) when a child said they were ill or felt unwell was: "Go and sit down for twenty minutes and let's see if you'll feel better". From the adult's point of view, time would reveal whether the child's claim was dependable and the child was "really ill". Duration of symptoms also constituted a point of comparison with adult illness. If the child's symptoms endured over a period it validated, for the adults, the claim that the child was ill. However, if symptoms did not endure the child's claim was proven wrong and consequently they were not ill. From an adult's perspective the child's rejected claim signified the unreliable and contestable aspects of children's illness and, ultimately, of children themselves.

The unreliability of children's claims was understood by adults to be the result of one or a combination of the following reasons: first, children may, in order to gain adult attention or be let off some demand made of them, deliberately fake illness. However, the expectation was that children were not able to persevere in such pretended performances for any length of time; the passage of time and 'passive waiting' seemed an appropriate test of the child. A second reason given was a psychosomatic explanation: if children felt neglected or lacked adult attention and care they would tend to express their psychological and social needs through claiming to be ill. Thirdly, children might make false claims of illness because of their inexperience and incompetence in the interpretation and classification of mental and bodily experiences. In this situation the child expressed a momentary bodily sensation but they were still unable to distinguish the common experiences of healthy bodily processes and illness. Accordingly, temporal contradictions in the subjective experiences of the 'natural course' of children's illnesses epitomised the differences between children and adults.
in transactions and social negotiations between them (Christensen 1993). For adults children's expression of subjective experiences expressed as "I don't feel well" was translated into the task of answering the question "Is there a disease?", an answer they sought prove objectively through the child's body, rather than engaging with the child's expressive statement in itself. In this way the performance of the child-adult relationship mirrors what Kirmayer identified as the important values of biomedical practices: that is, to keep rational control over and distance from bodily and emotional experiences (Kirmayer 1988).

Another important symbolic marker in the classification of an illness is temperature taking. A general understanding among 6-7 and 10-11 year old children interviewed for this purpose was that they were the first person to recognise it when they were ill. However, there were also differences in the accounts of children in the two different age groups. Six to seven year olds would generally describe being ill as 'natural' and rather unspecific. One frequent phrase was: "It does not feel very nice" or "I did not feel well". The youngest children would rarely attempt to label their condition specifically and the process of the illness would appear as almost uniform. For example, Tina described her last episode of ill like this:

I was lying in bed for three days reading Donald Duck, then I got well again and went back to school.

Even though none of the children in either age-group expressed doubt in their ability to recognise that they were ill, 10-11 year olds acknowledged that have a temperature was a determining factor in being accepted as ill by parents or teachers. Anna described her latest illness as; "I felt ill, then my Dad took my temperature and he said: 'Yes, you are ill'. Anna's father thus confirmed and validated Anna's own experience. Children also recognised that practices such as having one's temperature checked acted as the explicit confirmation of being well again. Charlotte, aged 10, wrote her an essay:

I yawned and got out of bed. I took a glass of water because I was thirsty. Mummy shouted at me to go back to bed, but I said: 'I feel well now'. Mummy looked at me and said: We must take your temperature. It showed 37.2. Mummy exclaimed: 'But, you are well. Run out and play with the others but wrap up well.'

Accounts such as these suggest that, on the one hand, children recognise that they have to go through the 'tests' but on the other they express no doubt in their own judgement. However, children also learn that their own views are less 'true' until
confirmed by higher status adult action. Children cannot make this judgement on their own and their claim is not seen as evidence a priori. These examples demonstrate that the examination of the child's body temperature was an important marker of illness or well being for children. When illness or health was established it facilitated other steps in the process of illness of recovery. For Charlotte, for example, her mother's recognition that she was well again meant that she was allowed to play outside.

It seems that adults subject themselves to rational measures that objectify children's condition. However, this was not only of significance in parental practice at home, but was also important in the interactions and negotiations of children's illness at school. The overall importance of establishing children's status as 'well' or 'ill' lies in the fact that illness literally places children outside the domain of the school: to be ill is not to be at school, but at home. In Prout's ethnography of an English primary school he pointed to the powerful role of the school secretary as gatekeeper in children's episodes of illness (Prout 1986). When confronted with a child's complaint of illness the school secretary took their temperature to find out whether they were 'really' ill and consequently unable to stay at school, a procedure she conducted more or less separately from the accounts of their illness given by the children. Thus the school secretary established what she perceived as a reliable diagnosis. The typical practice of taking the child's temperature in the course of illness thus reveals itself as not only an instrumental act accomplishing a practical objective, but, at the same time, as an expressive symbol of the location of competence in adults (parents or professionals).

Situations such as the ones described above communicate important elements of difference in the social relationships between child and adults. The classification of illness indicates the position of the child as incompetent (as well as dependent, passive and subordinate) while the adult is seen as competent, active and in charge. These typifications are embodied and encoded in practices of surveillance and regulation. When a mother, staff at school or in an after-school institution check a child's temperature, it is implicit that the adult acts as a competent and responsible carer. For example, if a professional does not find out that a child is ill, they may appear irresponsible and neglectful in the eyes of parents (and eventually from and official or organisational perspective). Likewise if a mother/parent does not carry out tasks, such as taking the child's temperature at the doctor's request or giving the child its medication, it calls in question the adult's ability and competencies and ultimately their status as a 'good mother' or 'good parent'. On the other hand the successful handling of the means and practices which serve to determine children's health and illness demonstrate adult skills and competencies over and above those of the child.
Through their authority adults conduct procedures that inevitably exhibit various competencies: keeping time, taking the temperature and reading the thermometer, opening the bottle of medicine (indeed the specially secured screwcap lids for 'child protection' mean it cannot be opened by a child), determining the dose and making the child takes the medicine (even when it tastes disgusting).

Many of these procedures, however, may also be acknowledged as practices that cannot be carried out by the adult single-handed. They may involve a number of persons and, at the very least, they involve the cooperation of the child for their successful completion. This was recognised by children in their accounts of their own active participation in taking medicines. Most children emphasised that they took medicines by themselves when they referred to incidents such as described by Lasse, aged 7: "First my mum pours the medicine into a small glass and then I drink it".

In addition children would often stress the unpleasant taste of the medicine, but they were simultaneously able to describe how they explored different kinds of food and techniques that they used to cover the taste and make it easier to swallow. These accounts emphasise the interactional aspect of curing illness and the important of children's active participation in it. However, in adults' accounts children's cooperation would often appear as taken for granted. It was children's different attempts to control, or their objections to, adult practices that, although regarded as common experiences, were acknowledged as significant, even provocative, challenges to the adult's sole competence and authority. An infant or a young child might scream, cry or fight to avoid an unexpected, unpleasant or even possibly painful procedure. As Nina, aged 7, said, giggling: "I don't like having my temperature taken. I scream".

Parents who want to persist in conducting this test or in giving a medication therefore have to hold the young child firmly, or try to persuade or negotiate with the child to obtain his/her consent. In and through these situations of potential conflict that may occur in the home and at school (for example, in the chaotic turmoil following an accident in the playground), adults exhibit their competence in keeping order and control and in taking calm strategic action. Thus an episode of illness in a child acts as a medium for adults to express and confirm their competence and their position in relation to children. A school nurse echoed the views expressed by some of the other staff and the teachers in the after school centres, when she said: "When I help them [the children], they know I am a nurse. And I'm quite pleased when they are grateful". She laughed and continued thoughtfully: "I like children to know that they can always come to me for help. Because if they can come with a minor problem, they'll also know to come back when they've got a bigger problem".
On the other hand, any doubt about a child’s health and welfare could potentially challenge the status and position of the adults charged with protecting and being responsible for them. Of course the adults did genuinely want to safeguard the health and well being of the children. But in the institutional settings adults also had to protect their own competence through their routine advice to children. This was: “If you need help remember to go and find an adults”.

Although teachers and other staff expressed this in general terms, they meant specifically those situations when a child got involved in a conflict, a fight or an accident (i.e. those situations were children were seen as particularly vulnerable). Despite its open and helpful tone, this advice communicated to children a view of their incompetence in handling these sorts of situations personally and undermined the idea that they might be able to help each other without adult intervention. This was underlined when children were scolded if they failed to call an adult, whether or not their own actions had led to a successful management of the situation, a fact that was defined as incidental by the adults. In such ways ill and accidents become strong symbolic events for the display and confirmation of the child-adult relationship. One important element of this relationship is that its solidarity is intertwined with the constitution of difference between them.

The Competent Affectionate Child
The above discussion shows that children were generally constituted as incompetent in speaking ‘the facts’ of their own body, that is of translating a bodily experience into a disease state or condition. I have also shown how the processes of everyday life emphasised the important for adults of constituting their competencies in opposition to or through children’s constitution as incompetent and dependent. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret this as meaning that children were constituted as incompetent in all respects. The incapacity of children to understand or judge the facticity of illness can be contrasted to the special capacity children were seen to have in the sphere of emotions, especially the giving and receiving of affection.

Let me first return to the situations where the meaning of therapeutic and similar practices was not shared by children and adults. These are powerfully exhibited in a the battle between the views of parents (and by implication the doctor) and children, which may lead to a child’s being forced into collaboration through being held firmly, for example to make him/her take an unpleasant but necessary medicine or undergo an examination. These incidents would most likely be resolved in the parent’s gentle comfort of the child and this forms part of children’s experiences of illness. The love
affection and care, however, which formed part of adult interactions with children does not alter the basic hierarchy of the relationship.

The reason for this is, as Kirmayer notes, in the western world rationality takes precedence over affect (Kirmayer 1988). Both children and their parents emphasised that children's episodes of illness and their time off from school represented an opportunity for child and parent to spend time together. This aspect was regarded by adults as having increased in importance because of the large proportion of mothers in the labour market in Denmark. In the context of their hectic and daily working life, a child's episodes of illness may thus be providing families with an opportunity to express and maintain the affective bonds between children and adults.

This was reflected in the type of therapies used in episodes of children's illness. The families used a wide range of home remedies and other means of healing as well as pharmaceuticals. Home remedies and therapeutic practices such as special clothing, baths, food or drinks, methods of regulating the temperature, massage and relaxation usually involved several persons. Parents and staff in the after school centres related the use of home remedies to their knowledge of traditional healing practices and to their personal and familial experiences. Although parents, teachers and other staff may be recommended to use a simple home remedy by the school nurse or by their general practitioner, these remedies were generally used independently of any involvement by health professionals. Home remedies were seen by the families as time-consuming both in preparation and application and their effect may be slow or diffuse. However their appeal was in concordance with the general (perhaps Danish) principle of using non-invasive therapies on children. According to this view intrusive medical practices, such as medicines, injections and radiotherapy are to be avoided or at least monitored carefully where children are concerned, to avoid inflicting unnecessary harm or pain. An ideal image of child health is characterised by elements such as purity, naturalness and simplicity. Basic essentials such as food, drink, sleep and activity further supported by adult sensitivity to the psycho-social aspects of child health feed into the very same model of the importance of adult attention and care. Most importantly these therapeutic practices offer ways of expressing the affective bonds between child and adult which, together with their engagement in sociable activities such as playing games, reading aloud and watching television together emphasise reciprocity in their relationship.

However, the emotional expressiveness of children was a double-edged quality. In my conversations with children and their parents, I asked what children did when somebody in the family was ill. In conversations with the children they pointed very
specifically to some exclusive action and would, more generally, list the various activities they engaged in to help and comfort a parent or sibling. Examples were: fetching things for the sick person, making tea, getting sweets or ice-creams, picking flowers, comforting, playing or reading aloud with a sibling; the list also included going shopping, helping with domestic work and assisting parents in looking after a younger sister or brother. Gitte, aged 6, told how she had helped her mother by staying at home and looking after her two-year old brother when he was ill while her mother 'nipped out' to do some shopping.

In contrast to the precision of the children's replies, the most frequent response from their parents to this question was hesitation, eventually followed by a statement about the child's affectionate personality of character. For example Lena, six year-old Gitte's mother, said: "Gitte, she is a very caring and helpful Child".

For most parents it was difficult to point out the actual actions the child engaged in to help and comfort a family member. In this way the competence of children to give and receive affection rendered their capacity to give practical help and therapy invisible. This was possibly underlined by the importance of common childhood illnesses as providing parents with an occasion to express key parental values such as affection, protection, care and responsibility, which ultimately leave children at the passive and receiving end.

**The Negotiability of Children's Competence through Pharmaceutical Practices**

These understandings are associated with cultural conceptions of children as particularly vulnerable beings which supports the idea of keeping children away from the use of pharmaceuticals. In this final section I will suggest that pharmaceuticals are embedded in a biomedical hierarchy. When they are used in the household this hierarchy is 'imported' in a way that delegates authority for the use of medicines to parents and constitutes children as less competent. At the same time however, grounds are created for children to negotiate access to and the use of medicine; which may ideas of their competence and status.

From the viewpoint of society as a whole, pharmaceutical use is subject to both market structures, such as the range of available pharmaceutical products and official regulations about their distribution and cost. The pharmaceutical market is also a domain of powerful social gatekeeping. It is the doctor's prescription that forms the essential access to a drug, thus detaching it from any subjective experiences and judgements on the part of the patient. The decision by which medicine can be bought over the counter is condition by government legislation but drugs are further
supervised or may even be subject to the control of a pharmacist. In the family and household, the use of pharmaceuticals again forms part of a set of social relations and interactions including parental gatekeeping.

In their encounters with medicines children came to understand their special character. Children from 6 to 11 years old could map in more or less detail the route by which drugs were obtained. Their accounts emphasised the social organisation in which pharmaceuticals were embedded. They told me about how the doctor was consulted to prescribe the medicines, about the pharmacy where they subsequently bought it and the persons involved in the transactions. They explained where pharmaceuticals were kept in the house and how and when they were used by family members and by whom. They also acknowledged that medicines were kept away from children in the household.

However, the children did not distinguish between a therapy and the social interaction surrounding its use. In particular, children described therapies as inseparable from the person who provided care, for example: their mother, a general practitioner or a teacher. They described different therapeutic actions, simultaneously identifying the roles and positions of the persons involved in the episode of illness. A general practitioner was most commonly referred to by saying: "The doctor prescribes medicine (my emphasis).

On the other hand, mothers were identified with home remedies. Many children's descriptions were similar to that of Marian (aged 7): "When I am ill, my mother always puts a cloth with cold water on my forehead (my emphasis)". In this way children sketched out the social organisation of everyday illness through an understanding that a therapeutic action defines the status of the person involved.

The fact that children were not systematically told about the use of pharmaceuticals did not prevent their use implicitly communicating to children cultural conceptions of hierarchy. In dispensing pharmaceuticals, both the formal hierarchy of competence and negotiating status on this ground were made possible. This was illustrated by ten-year old Alice, who explained:

Usually I get those headache pills for adults - it says not take under 16 [years old] but I only get a half. Then once when I was ill, my mum went to buy some for children. I could not swallow one, then I got sick. Oh, it was disgusting.
Most ten-year-old children described Panodil® in terms of "adult pills", adding "You know, prohibited for children under 12" or "under sixteen". However, in their everyday experience children found that tablets restricted to adults were divided and given to them as a smaller does. Through dividing a tablet, the 'once prohibited' was made accessible and this supported the idea that therapy is negotiable. At the same time, the division of the tablet confirmed the child's position in relation to adults in its symbolic portrayal of the child as metaphorically half the size of an adult.

Access to medicine and the ability to use it independently is suggested as one of the 'charms' of pharmaceuticals (Van der Geest and Whyte 1998). The flexibility of pharmaceuticals makes it possible to act privately or to engage socially in different exchanges within families and other social relations. This contributes to the process of deconstructing and distributing medical power and status from the doctor and the pharmacy to the level of family and peers. The use of pharmaceuticals is thus embedded in a set of hierarchical relationships which may, for children, indicate the achievement of independence and personal control. Most importantly, pharmaceutical use may represent to children the scope for independent actions within the constraints of different social relationships.

These elements of control, privacy and independence, here exemplified in the use of pharmaceutical therapy, have been suggested as cultural values at the core of European and American understandings of personal health. If an important aspect of growing up for children is to achieve the competencies, and be recognised as having the controls, of adult life, then pharmaceutical use may symbolise important relations of power and hierarchy in children's everyday life. My data suggest that, as well as communicating their general position as subordinate to parental and professional adults, for children, getting access to medicine or using medicines independently could also contribute to their sense of an improvement in social status. For example, a mother related this story to me about her two sons, Thomas and David. David who is 14 had been suffering from asthma since he was very young and had to use an asthma inhaler everyday. However, when Thomas, who is 9, was ill recently, he was given a nasal spray to relieve his cold. During his illness he said to her: "I am just as big as David now". She was bewildered and had asked him what he meant. Thomas explained that now he used an inhaler just like his old brother David.

Parents, teachers and staff in the after-school centres saw themselves as competent and in charge of care and treatment. Responsibility and protection of the child were seen as adult domains. Even though this approach emphasised the dependent and more passive role of the child, there were, in fact, differences in the degree to which...
they permitted the child's active involvement. Adults tended to take responsibility and
to take action over acute conditions. This limited in some ways the scope for
children's competence. However, a child suffering from a chronic condition, or one
who was in need of a treatment for a longer period, was often taught how to use the
treatment (more) independently. Thus control and responsibility were actually
delegated from the adults to the child. In regard to long-term conditions such as
eczema, warts or blister, children said that they would apply the cream themselves.
Children with asthma kept the asthma inhaler in their school bags and used it without
consulting an adult. Linda, aged 10, explained:

When I have a big attack (of asthma) I have difficulty in catching my breath, that
is mostly, when I get breathless. Then I do not go to school, then I am at the
doctor's. But if I bring the 'turbohaler' over here (to school) then I just continue to
play.

Linda used the turbohaler when she felt it was necessary and at the same time she was
able to continue her activities without any unwanted interruptions. However, the
actual competence and control that children with chronic illness achieved would
confirm their status as different from other children, rather than exemplifying the
potential capacity of children to administer and use pharmaceuticals independently.
This means that in 'bracketing off' these children as different from other children, their
competence was discounted, as not part of childhood itself.

Conclusion
This paper has suggested that, in the daily illnesses of children the idea of children as
incompetent is relationally constituted. It cannot be separated from the ways in which
adults render themselves as competent. This depends not only upon general cultural
assumptions of adult 'competence' and child' incompetence' but is accomplished in
everyday social interactions, in this paper those specifically dealing with children's
illness. Here we see the points at which actual difference and similarity between
children and adults are made more or less visible and stable. Here we see the points at
which actual differences and similarities between children and adults are made more or
less visible and stable. In common children's illnesses, interactions between
children and adults at home or in school draw on the traditional hierarchies and values
of biomedicine in various ways: parents and teachers are delegated the responsibility,
competence and right to intervene; rational methods are employed in preference to
children's subjective experiences; children's ability to give and receive affection (as
part of health care) is both valued as part of the reciprocity of human relationships, but
remains subordinate to other competencies and children's actual contribution to
practical care is often rendered invisible to adults. In relation to pharmaceutical use, which children saw as embedded in social hierarchies, I showed how children within these 'rigid' relationships found scope for negotiating independent social status and competence. However I suggest finally that even in the case of chronic illness, where children are seen as capable of using medicines, their competence becomes constituted, not only as different from adults' but also as different from their peers, which again distances them from 'ordinary' childhood.
References

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1. This paper is a longer version of the paper presented at the Conference entitled The Invisibility of Children, held at Linkoping University, Sweden in May 1997.
2. i.e. medical treatment.
3. In Denmark children’s temperatures are still generally measured rectally.
4. In Denmark, Panodil is a brand name for paracetamol (an analgesic). It can be obtained as over the counter medicine from the pharmacy in two forms. One, the most commonly used, is intended for adults, the other is provided in a weaker dosage specially for children.
Experiencing Children: Reflections on Method

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In most field contexts, children of all ages are quite noticeable and while doing fieldwork many anthropologists will have a great deal of contact with children. Many times children may become cherished companions; perhaps in some special way easing the loneliness one may feel in the field, sometimes sharing their ideas and insights with you. An anthropologist may even feel that he or she understands, and is understood by, the children while unable to attain the same feeling with the adults. Such feeling may rest on the implicit assumption that children have a universal nature and developmental schema that transcends all cultural barriers or differences, as if one does not need to know their social world in order to understand them. As it happens, however, children more often than not tend to slip out of sight/site when it comes to the presentation and analysis of the ethnographic material. They are seldom, if ever, included in one's collection of 'informants' or denoted as such. What happens? Why is it that general theoretical issues about the constitution of social relations, 'society', seem to exclude children? It is commonly deemed necessary to have a specific focus devoted to the study of children for them to be included and problematised as part of the 'constructions of social life'. Why is this?

If we continue to separate out 'child studies' what kind of conceptualisations of children and social life do we bring into the field and into our notes and finished texts? In other words, what makes us distinguish a person as a child? What does the distinction entail? When and how does a person transform into an adult? It is unlikely that we would find any society where people do not make some kind of distinction between a child and an adult, but how this distinction is made and on what cultural ideas and social experiences it rests is an issue that must be addressed ethnographically. Conventional assumptions among Western scholars, bolstered by the essentialisation and politicisation of pedagogies, have been that children go
through particular developmental phases and are socialised into society by the
endeavours of adults who have the means and the authority to see to their needs. Yet
neither the reification of 'society' which this implies nor how these 'needs' are defined
by adults in various contexts are critically analysed.

In later years, the question of how children are included or focused in a study has been
raised and there are now recurring calls for taking the perspective of the child/children
and seeing them as socially active subjects and not just as passive recipients of
socialising measures (e.g. Schildkrot 1978; James 1993; Stephens 1995). But how do
we go about doing this? This latter issue raises the more overarching question that
keeps troubling anthropologists, namely, how we can know what others experience, if
we are ever really able to take the perspective of the other in our studies. Studying
children underscores the difficulties we are up against. How do we elicit children's
meanings? And what do children's ways of knowing the world have to say about their
'society' and particular practices and ideas of adults? In this brief paper I wish to
consider such issues by way of my own experiences of children in the field and my
queries, or worries, about the extent to which I include or exclude them in my
knowledge about particular social worlds.

Constituting a 'Person' in Germany
I shall begin by reconsidering material from an earlier study on the ambiguities of
child upbringing in a German village, close to Frankfurt am Main, which I have called
Linden. My concern is to highlight aspects that are relevant for the present
methodological discussion and I shall take some of the ethnographic examples from
that study (1991). My initial focus was on the meaning of German 'cultural identity'.

More concretely, and experientially, I wanted to know what it meant to 'be German'
for particular people. I had not anticipated that fieldwork would rotate around the
'socialisation' of children as much as it finally did. It turned out that adults in Linden
were greatly concerned with how a child is 'made fit to live', lebensfähig, and formed
into what can be translated as a 'good person', ein richtiger Mensch. It appeared that
almost everyone was, from different vantagepoints, engaged in the project of
Erziehung, upbringing. In extension, this had to do with their ideas about being German and living in a Rechtstaat, 'a state of law/justice'. Such concerns influenced the direction of my study into a focus on the institutionalised practices of education and upbringing and the cultural ideas about what constitutes a person.

Lernen (learning) is a key concept in the discourse about upbringing. It rests on the cultural notion that children do not become good orderly persons on their own account through their everyday relations with kin and peers, they must learn by instruction and conscious example. People of Linden did not consider that children learn adequately, or the right things, unless tutored. This aligns the thinking of Lindeners with a long development of pedagogical thought in Western tradition. The Linden children were in varying ways engaged in trying to make sense of this 'personforming project' in their own terms and they appeared to experience and put educational events to use differently from what their parents and teachers had intended. The children filled in 'gaps of meaning', as it were, continuously sensitive to unspoken meanings conveyed in adult actions. There are various forms of praise and punishment attached to the notions about learning and attempts to teach. However, the children did not passively adjust to these methods, they put them to work in their own ways, incorporating both each other and the punishing adult in their interaction. As I see it, the fairly frequent occurrence of tell-tailing and bragging among the children in kindergarten is one way the children tried to make sense of world and the meanings conveyed to them by what adults do.

Experiences from a Kindergarten
At the age of three children in Linden start attending kindergarten and they go there until they are six when they move on to school. Parents and teachers motivate the benefits of kindergarten by stating that children must learn to be in a group, to play and work with others and take consideration of the wishes of others. The idea is that a child cannot really learn to be a responsible social person without adjusting to a group outside the immediate family.
During my two years in Linden I spent many weeks in kindergarten as part of my fieldwork. I sat on one of the small chairs watching and listening, took notes, walked around, played some games with the children, talked to them about what they were doing and, moreover, questioned the teachers. It was a seemingly well-defined activity which at times turned out to be overwhelmingly boring, something I ascribed to the minutely organised routines of the kindergarten which felt repressive and the fact that I had no structurally meaningful role in this context. In retrospect, at least, I must also acknowledge my feeling of confusion as to what was 'really' going on and what I was 'really' supposed to do there. What was I looking for? I had not realised how very difficult it can be to study young children if one does not have a specific relation to them or a concrete task to perform. In many situations I had to accept the role of a fairly detached observer to at times quite painful situations.

The children were organised into two groups with about 25 children each between the ages of three and six. Each group was led by one teacher with an additional junior teacher alternating her time between the two groups. Throughout the day the children were given various assignments of drawing, working with clay, using scissors, doing gymnastics, playing the flute, and tidying up - a central activity, highly valued by both teachers and parents for its particular educational worth. Putting back things 'where they belong' was said to teach the children to take responsibility for what they do, whereas the children seemed more concerned to do it to please the teacher and get a reward.

The children spent most of the time in the main room assigned to each group, a room with small tables and chairs, bounded areas called 'corners', for doll-playing and building-blocks respectively. In these 'corners' only four children were allowed to play at a time. This meant that there were always some children hanging about on the outskirts waiting for a chance to slip in. As they stood there they commented on what the others were doing, sometimes annoying them or nagging to be let in.

In the following I shall use a brief example from my study (1991: 139-142) to show some of the 'unintended consequences' of the educational activities in kindergarten, or
put otherwise, how children seem to interpret situations differently from adults’ stated intentions and thereby reveal their potentialities.

One day in kindergarten, Beate, who was five at the time, came over to the teacher to tell her that Sabine was chewing gum. "Oh, go away and draw a picture or something, Beate!" the teacher sighed, and she told Beate to stop telling on the other children. "Why do you do it?" she asked her not expecting an answer, at least not one she would accept. And what could Beate have said? The little girl knew that it is not considered 'nice' to tell on someone else. But she also knew that chewing gum was forbidden, and she had experienced that rewards and praise were hard to come by and could be bestowed for the ability to keep order, which she was doing by telling about the gum. As Beate moved on, not having attained anything, the teacher said to me that; "she is a real tattle-tale, always telling on the others".

At other times, the telling was used by the teacher as information reliable enough to scold or punish a child. The older children, those five to six years old, were at one time supposed to draw flowers. They were working on their own while the teacher was busy with another group of children in an adjacent room. After a while she came back and one after another of the children told her that Walter, who sat on a chair in the middle of the room, had folded a flyer/aeroplane of sorts, of his drawing. The teacher sighed, asked Walter why he did a thing like that, that he should know better, and that he spoiled their work. As this was going on, Tina came over to me and complained that Ulrike had ripped off her name from her crayon, "on purpose she did it!" My question as to why she thought Ulrike had done that, if she had talked to her, did not elicit an answer. Instead, Tina went over to the teacher whom she correctly assumed would take some kind of action. The teacher went over to Ulrike and asked her why she had done that. Ulrike said nothing. As she was standing there the teacher made a much graver discovery, that Ulrike and Anja had been cheating. They had got some small pictures of different flowers and used them to check against so that their own drawings became as correct as possible. "How could you?! Now the whole task is invalid! Shame on you, Ulrike! You are always doing things like that! Now you stay put right here until you know how to behave!".
The teacher did not yell and scream at the children, which perhaps has to do with her personal disposition, but its cultural significance is that it would be unpedagogical, just a sign of 'old-fashioned authoritarianism'. In this way kindergarten teachers would differ from many parents, who were more likely to yell at their children when angry or perhaps slap them. But the restrained anger is more of the modern pedagogical way of handling misdemeanours: talking calmly, explaining, punishing in accordance with the offence as it may, in different situations, be interpreted. This was deemed more correct and even admirable than a show of 'blind anger'. The teacher controlled her actions in order to make the children understand why they were punished or reprimanded. But the children experienced the situation differently than she did and they drew their own conclusions, which defied the 'good conduct', the teacher was trying to instil in them. They would brag, tattle, and cheat, but she did not see their actions as related to her own.

When Beate had difficulty making a paper flower and was nervously trying to understand how it was to be done, asking the teacher again and again, some of the other children began to brag, contrasting themselves to Beate, wanting the teacher to praise them as she was reprimanding her for not listening, not being attentive, that is, not being capable and orderly. A situation like that was fairly common. When a child was being reprimanded, especially sternly, some of the other children would always start telling the teacher of their own good accomplishments, or perhaps add to the 'story' of the child being in negative focus.

The teacher reprimands and punishes and praises, and the children work on this model. They have a situation to cope with which recurs, not identically, of course, but recognisably in terms of the model for learning, praise and punishment. These seemingly straightforward educational situations stir up different feelings in the children, I would assume, of fear, anger, revenge and rivalry. The teacher need not to do or say very much for the children to start reassuring themselves of her good-will, and they will appeal to her through their own means, by bragging and tattling.
Teachers would often use tattle as 'information' to control and reprimand or punish a child. However useful, teachers saw children's tattling as 'typical' of certain (bad) children or just typical of children in general. They did not like it and they could not see any such intention in their own actions. It was as if the children were 'dragging in debris' from outside the situation, for no one encouraged tattling or bragging. Instead children were taught to be orderly, helpful, obedient and polite.

Children have to find their way through a maze of ideas adults have, of which only parts are stated directly. While learning to 'make nice things', schön basteln, the children are also learning something about the meaning of subordination. These little children are circumscribed and controlled in many ways, spatially, behaviourally, but in their interactions they also form the social contexts in which they are situated. The world is in some sense already there for them yet its reality is dependent on their own experiences of what the social relations they engage in mediate. And these experiences become part of how they constitute and transform their particular social world.

This is an institutional aspect of child life, the kind of environment we often turn to when studying children in Western societies like our own. In specific ways it dominates children’s lives, but perhaps we tend to problematise the situation too little, reducing it more to a setting or a frame. It gives easy access to children’s activities, but perhaps viewed too much from afar, as it were.

Not knowing Najm: Children in Family Contexts
What does it take to study children? Why can it be difficult to include them? A completely different context from the kindergarten in Linden, is my current fieldwork among Albanian refugees from Kosovo in former Yugoslavia, who now are spread out in different parts of Sweden. There are a few families with whom I have had close contact for a number of years, among them the mother and older siblings of Najm (Norman 1997). Najm is a ten-year-old boy. He was five when his family came to Sweden.
Najm goes to school, he spends a great deal of time in front of the TV or outside somewhere. In this family and its constellation of households, my attention is most often not directed towards Najm. When I visit the family we hug, I ask him how things are going, and sometimes I bring him sweets or a comic magazine. When he teases his tiny cousins too much, I intervene and tell him to stop if no one else does. I witness his angry arguments with his older sister. I sometimes join him in front of the television, and I play cards with him once in a while. But often he takes his jacket and goes outside - gone for hours. Recently he asked me to tell him some Swedish words he did not know. While trying to think out some nice weird words for him, I was reminded how little I know about him, his thoughts and activities. I did not know what words he knew or not, or rather, I did not know what words would interest or amuse him. We interact in ways that are set within the family context. He has a life of his own that I know next to nothing about. Some things his mother gets to know and she tells me. For example, that he during one period used to visit an old man who gave him money and sweets. She did not want him to go there because it was as if he was begging. When she understood from his accounts that the man also had pictures of naked women she was worried and forbade him to go and see that man. But she never contacted him and could never control if Najm went there or not. And I was kept outside of the whole matter. Najm guards his secrets carefully.

Najm is a likeable boy who wants to manage, wants something beyond the burdens of his family, but he obviously has his difficulties. His teacher has called his mother, wondering if she knows that he often does not come to school, that he is 'unconcentrated' in class. I also got the impression that he does not have the friends he would like to have. I have begun to wonder if his Swedish is less fluent than it should be given his age and the long time they have been in Sweden. He has spent many years of his life in an atmosphere of uncertainty, fear and sadness. However, he keeps things to himself, I am not one of his confidants like I am to his sisters.

Why don't I know Najm? I concentrate on his mother, his adolescent siblings, their friends, his infant cousins, but somehow he tends to glide out of focus. I do not problematise his presence, his person. What would I have to do to get access to his
own world? Long talks with him would give me some insight, but I would also have to accompany him outside, visit the places he visits, take part in his interactions with others, spend time with him in school. In other words, I would have to redefine the boundaries of the relevant context and probably lose sight of the other family members. I think part of the problem is the quality of the attention he gets from his own close environment. His presence is required by his family, but at the same time no one has the 'energy' to bother with him too much. If he can fend for himself the others can engage in their lives undisturbed. They have too many troubles with life in exile while he is trying to make this new place into his own place. I may be a source of some interest and a break in everyday routines but I am definitely 'family', and as far as he appears to be concerned should best stay that way.

In another family I have established a similarly distant relationship with the children of the house. I never get to know the two small girls of the family beyond the superficialities of greetings and small talk. Their father is strict and patriarchal and neither he nor his wife and mother let me talk and associate with the girls on their terms. They are always afraid that the girls annoy me, since they themselves are so easily annoyed by them and hush at them or send them out of the room. For quite some time I felt embarrassed by the whole family performance and I have not been able to find the chance to show the girls any real interest. When I give it a try they giggle shyly and the youngest, now six years old, starts jumping about until her father, if he is around, angrily snaps his fingers at her or her mother nags at her to leave me alone. So I end up being a disturbance and the seeming cause of the suddenly unpleasant situation. Of course, I could just announce that I am going to study children and that requires that I associate with them, talk to them, and follow them about. But, as I see it, this would also cut me out of the family context. The parents demand control over their children and I am not in a position to make them accept any changes to this condition. I would then have to turn to the school and the nursery that the girls attend, and in a way return to an institution-oriented study. In the end, this need not be the only option, but for the sake of the implicit argument in this paper, I shall leave it there and conclude with some reflections on method.
Studying Children, Problems of Method

With these examples borne in mind I shall briefly consider some methodological problems that they raise, but first yet one more question: Why should we study children? Since it is not taken for granted as an aspect of all anthropological work to include children's lives in ethnographic descriptions and the subsequent analyses, this question becomes particularly pertinent. Different suggestions are offered to explain why the interest in children has been and still is relatively meagre: that children tend to be seen through a developmental lens and conceptualised as 'closer to nature than culture', and so are not really treated as 'informative informants' until they have reached adolescence young adulthood; that socialisation is seen as a means to form what we already know and study: adults. In addition, I suggest that for many of us, children, especially young children, are felt to be particularly hard to work with: it is difficult to comprehend and interpret what they say or what they are doing when they play and interact with each other, as if one need be a psychologist or biologist to understand the social life and culture of children. Yet another, not unimportant, aspect of the overall lack of interest in children is that it gives lower academic prestige than studying other issues or social categories. And since children are not valued as 'objects of study' then neither can their experiences and ways of knowing inform theoretical issues.

But there are good reasons for studying children. In a recent article on "The Significance of Childhood Cognition for a Comparative Anthropology of Mind", Christina Toren (1993) declares that she does not plead for more "ethnographies of children", but instead sees the study of children as theoretically necessary for the understanding of "what adults are doing and saying", and thereby as an indispensable route to understanding social relations, how children and adults experience and constitute the social world (Toren 1993: 462), while at the same time transforming it. Marjorie Goodwin (1997), in a recent brief article makes a stronger appeal for the study of children as such, through their interactions with peers, to give us knowledge about how children's lives are shaped "to give voice to their social worlds and concerns" (Goodwin 1997: 5). Although the emphases differs somewhat, it is clear to many anthropologists that we will never acquire deeper knowledge of social life if we
do not acknowledge the presence of children as active subjects in a world they form and are formed by. Children, like all other people, are capable of social interaction and the creation of meaning. Their experiences and knowledge of the world are integral to its constitution and transformation. Children do not engage in social relations, with either adults or other children, unreflectively and they are not on their way to becoming exactly like the adults with whom they may grow up and on whose love they depend.

To the extent that studies of children and their worlds have met with greater theoretical and practical interest in later years, focus is still more on child-adult relations than on interactions between peers (outside the classroom), as Goodwin notes, (1997). Others have made the same point (e.g. Prout and James 1990; James 1993; Stephens 1995), but less is being said or discussed about how we should go about studying children's interactions with other children and the problems that arise in attempting to do so. Considering that we may impute ethnocentric meanings to children's acts, because we implicitly ascribe to them universal features that we cannot account for or because we may confound our own childhood experiences with those we wish to study, methodological issues need to be continuously discussed. As Kathleen Barlow states in a short presentation of her work among the Murik of Papua New Guinea, "My ethnocentric expectations about childhood were among the more difficult to ferret out because they involved deeply implicit features of my worldview", (Barlow 1997: 15). In light of this situation, how should we go about studying children? Where should our foci lie given the different issues that may concern us and the different social worlds we meet?

Studying children need not in principle be so different from studying adults and it does not necessarily justify specific child studies, set apart from a "concurrent study of relations between people in the collectivity at large" (Toren 1993: 462), since children, just like adults, are continuously engaged in making sense of the world from their particular yet differing social and cultural vantage points. There may, however, be practical and cultural limits to what is possible to study given the immediate social world of children and the way adults conceptualise children and interact with them.
Studies of children in institutional settings are perhaps the most common in industrialised/Euro-American societies as they also make up a large part of children's daily life. There are significant problems of participation and observation in such field sites. Institutions of varying kinds, such as nurseries, schools, orphanages, voluntary associations and so on give access to interactions between children that other 'settings' do not offer. But interactions between children cannot be understood independently of these different contexts, which one may perhaps not really include in an analysis. Children's interaction in school, or in a workplace, for example, does not have the same meanings as when these same children interact in their homes or out in the streets among each other. In some of these contexts adults are always present, in others they are never present. This creates a difference that can really make a difference.

Studying children in institutions gives different emphasis to observation and participation than in other contexts. But the kind and degree of participation and the frames for observation are not static, they change over time and in relation to different situations and actors, and the relationship the anthropologist establishes to different persons. In an institution, staff may feel sceptical or disturbed by one's presence, but they may also come to appreciate the company and find that the anthropologist is someone they can confide in and perhaps get help from. Children may have difficulties conceptualising one's presence and role. The anthropologist is neither part of the staff, nor a parent, local friend or acquaintance. Some children may be intrigued by the anthropologist and make her into a special friend and confidant. It is not possible to have full control of the form and content of one's participation, but in whatever way it turns out, 'good' or 'bad', it will always generate knowledge if one is willing to see the process as related to one's own ideas and actions and to the social world of 'the other'.

A common, sometimes uncomfortable, problem is how adults may mobilise one's involvement in their institutional work. In the Linden kindergarten, for example, I was at one point asked by the head teacher to stand in for her during a two-week period when she would be away on a course about modern pedagogics. In the name of
reciprocity, I found it difficult to say no although I felt quite uneasy about the prospect, yet also intrigued by the opportunity. In a more naive vein, I imagined that I would in that positron be able to come closer to the children and get a chance to abandon my more observational role. I felt I would have something concrete to do. However, my hopes that I would get to know the children better, even let them know me better, were not fulfilled in the way I had thought. I was checked by the other teachers and the children did not acknowledge that I was anything else but a teacher, although a teacher they could not really rely on. So I ended up being superficially like the other teachers, only less able and more peripheral. I lost my freedom to move about, listen and talk to the children as I had done before. This experience gave me a 'sensory knowledge' about how the relations between adults and children were constituted, what it was like to be an authority in kindergarten. "(S)ensory knowledge cannot be the direct reflection of reality" (Okely 1994: 47), but it is a means of understanding how others experience and live their lives which no utterances alone can convey. Something happened to me, was done with me, that made me sense 'mechanisms' and emotional dimensions of how relations of authority and subordination are upheld in ways I had not quite come in contact with before.

Participating in family and household life, however it may be organised, raises other issues in relation to children. In their homes, in the context of their families (or guardians), children are usually under more direct control by their parents or other adults, older siblings, than in many contexts outside the home where they meet their friends and peers and can look up places of their own making. Like Najm, he is careful with letting me get too close to him. Should he let me go with him out, which he probably would, with some surprise, polite as he is, he would nonetheless see to it that it would be on the same level as when he goes fishing with his uncle. He would not take me to his peers, or his friend or the old man. He does not want that part of his life, the world he has created for himself, to be open for scrutiny by any adult, especially one who is associated with his mother and sisters, on whom he is very dependent. In the family he is under the control of those senior to him and they have the power to forbid him to do things he wants to do, even if he does not always obey. As far as I can see, I am confronted with the choice of either being associated with the
older siblings and adults in Najm’s life or with Najm himself as he forms his life away from home. The one context can be experienced directly, sensually, whereas the other is transformed into answers to questions or as parts of longer narratives. How it will turn out cannot always be decided on beforehand, it depends to a large degree on the varying social life of children and their different ages.

It would perhaps be possible to some extent to pass back and forth over this boundary. The other family members would accept it if I persisted, even if they would find it odd and perhaps a little disturbing (cf. Barlow 1997) and I would lose the close relationship I have to his adolescent and adult sisters, which I would very much regret. However, the greatest problem, which also has an ethical dimension, is how Najm himself would experience the situation. I would burden him with a conflict. Being an adult and a visitor to his home, he would never really know if he could trust me and would, as far as I can understand, refrain from doing things and going places that he would like to do, ‘just in case’. As soon as we would be back in the house with the rest of the family, roles and relations would take on their old form and content. If Najm was older, less dependent, the situation would be different and could be handled differently, or if I had met him first, started associating with him before I knew his family.

Calls to study children’s peer interactions to establish better insight into how they organise and experience their mutual relations in different contexts, such as work, child-care, play, are increasing. Although this is important and should be attempted to a much greater degree than hitherto, it does present methodological limitations. Through our own presence, as adult anthropologists, we are no longer just studying ‘children’s interactions with other children’, unless we believe in the completely detached, asocial observer. Just like we cannot become the playmates of small children nor the chums of adolescents, we cannot observe them unnoticed. Of course, we see and hear things children do and say that they direct to each other uninfluenced by the presence of an adult. But this can hardly comprise the bulk of one’s ethnography if one is claiming to study the social life of children. We must, at some point, engage in communication with the children, for it is after all our own
experiences in the field, through our interactions with others, that shape our anthropological knowledge. And children's interactions with others must also include interactions with the anthropologist. However, certain things children are not willing to reveal to the anthropologist and so we are kept out and must stay out. As with Najm. But then again, we are always outsiders of sorts, it is part of our perspective. What we need to do is to reflect over what meanings an 'outsider' has in different situations.

So, the question remains, how can we and do we study and interpret the experiences of children? As a category, children are the objects of much research of different kinds, by psychologists, sociologists and so on, who arrange experiments with children, or, as is more common in the case of anthropologists, have them draw pictures or write stories in relation to particular topics, or tape and video record activities. What does this mean? Why do anthropologists select children for such forms of investigation and not adults? Without questioning the analytical value such material potentially may have, one rationale behind a reliance on controlled data gathering may be that it gives us a sense of certainty and confidence in our assumptions, which more loosely held forms of interaction and reflexive observations do not instil in us. Young children easily evade our understanding because they do not verbalise like adults or because they do not 'know' and we cannot interact with them as we do with adults. We resolve this by asking children to do things for us that are implicitly deemed relevant in relation to their developmental stage. One problem that may be overlooked, however, is how 'the asking and the doing' relates to the situation in which it is done and in particular to the anthropologist, as the child perceives her or, less often, him.

A brief analogous example taken from my very first fieldwork in Northern Sweden many years ago, can illustrate my point. During my fieldwork I found good company among some of the younger children and every Tuesday evening I joined them for an hour of 'Sunday school' of sorts. The Pentecostal Church arranged a 'children's gathering' in the village for all of the younger children. The young male leader, who was a newcomer to the village, played the guitar and taught the children songs, mainly
religious; he read stories with a Christian moral, played guessing games with them, gave them sweets, pictures and little booklets to take home. During a guessing game he posed a riddle: "I burn but I am not hot, who am I?" After a while a little girl of five called out, "Jesus!" as answer. Somewhat taken aback, he shook his head. When the leader started giving hints and said the word started with a 'b' one of the school boys called out "Baboon!" Finally, the leader had to give them the answer: brännässa, (a nettle that burns), stinging nettle. As I understand it, since the leader and the context was associated with the church, the little girl stuck to this as if the leader, whenever he spoke, would be assumed to refer to Jesus or some other religious personage. If the bit about burning and being hot made her hesitate, the situation and the person and social position of the leader were enough to make her disregard this and in a sense comply with his overall image and ambition, and his material resources to give prizes. She may also have wished to show him that she too knew about Jesus. The boy, who could read and write, chose what came into his mind in relation to the letter b and as a means of teasing the leader, which the older boys often would do.

To understand results of questions we ask children and tasks we give them in the field, we must take into account the wider social and cultural context in the analysis and especially the implications of the relations to powerful others. In our various educative and investigative endeavours we may not count on the emotions such actions elicit in the children, and the meaning of emotions in relation to the capacity to think, if I may venture to separate the two in this context. If adults may ignore the significance of the ongoing social situation and instead appeal to ideals and moral values, as the teacher in the Linden kindergarten does, the children do not. They are continuously attending to the current situation from their subjective perspectives and in so doing constitute it differently. Such critique has also been launched against Piaget's assumptions about children's capacity for logical/numerical and moral thinking. Similar tests to those conducted by Piaget have in later years shown the significance of the experimental situation for the specific achievement of children. Children do not perceive or think uninfluenced by their experiences of the person(s) asking them to do so. "Children think about the experimenter's questions as well as about the reasons they may have
for asking them. This is why we observe different responses according to whether we question them or invite them to participate" (Mehler and Dupoux 1994: 118).

Although children's experiences and their ideas and feelings are not independent of their relations with adults, neither are they determined by them. In other words, what makes a child cannot be seen as a result of adult activity, nor are adults a product of the actions of elders from their childhood. Should that be the case then social life would be nothing but repetition and we would not need to try to understand how it works. Like adults, children interpret and make sense of the world with the means they have at their disposal, based in their changing experiences and prior knowledge. Children and adults may experience and understand events or ideas differently, but they both share a dependence on experience and the knowledge that grows out of, and into, it (cf. Toren 1993). Shifts and changes of knowledge are not just a consequence of some outer impact of 'a rapidly changing world' or the result of conscious instruction but rather an aspect of the nature of human social relations and experience. All social activity has meaning, and it is in that sense intentional. From that point of view, there can be no meaningless events or acts, social life is not determined by chance. And like the people we study, whether children or adults, anthropologists interpret meaning in social life through embodied experience and reflexivity. Given the 'inexactness' and the subjective and corporeal nature of experience and the interpretations on which it rests, expresses or transforms, one cannot postulate any final or indisputable meaning of an event, act or idea. Anthropologists who have such a special opportunity of acquiring knowledge of the other through interaction, reflection and empathy, which participant observation entails, should not deny the value of such knowledge and rely too heavily on 'controlled data'.
References


1 This is a slightly revised version of a paper held at the Symposium on Children and Anthropology: The Invisibility of Children. Dept. of Child Studies, Linköping University, May 5-6 1997.

2 Informant is on the whole a questionable term, being both too mechanical/rationalistic and too imprecise given the relationship the anthropologist tries to establish with people she or he studies. It has, however, usually been retained as a convenient way of circumscribing the subjects of a study.

3 Intentionality in this context concerns meaning in a total sense, and does not only pertain to voluntary purpose or goal nor just to wish or desire. Intentionality or meaning implies analysis through interpretation and not causal explanation. This in turn presumes that actors are subjects.
On Being Invisible and Wanting to be Visible: 
Anthropology and the Child Labour Debate

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We have of long been accustomed to think of children as divided into those who 'receive' an education and those who remain illiterate, those who have 'everything' and those who go hungry, those who spend their time agreeably and those who live by the sweat of their brow. The recent resurgence of the child labour debate has added to this way of thinking a new moral dimension: we can now congratulate ourselves for having made children the object of a deep devotion enshrined in a Convention on the Rights of the Child that stands for the global community's intention to put the sanctity of childhood at the top of its agenda; we can also deplore, more than ever before, that in the South, children not only continue to be deprived of their most basic necessities, but are also increasingly robbed of their childhood.

In this paper I would like to propose an alternative to the basic dichotomy that has dominated our thinking on children, and particularly on their work, and do this by taking a view 'from below', the view indeed which is the anthropological one par excellence. I will argue that children's work, by opposition to child labour, is not only the damnation of the poor but also the way socially valued goods and services are produced and fundamental institutions come about and are maintained. In this sense, work is as much part of the child's world than it is of the adult's, though the conditions under which it takes place may vary widely. I am therefore arguing for the essential continuity between the childhood of the privileged of the North and that of the poor. I will do this by first presenting findings from a fieldwork in a coastal village of Kerala (South India) and evince how children's work acquires its meaning in the articulation of day-to-day practices and their moral valuation in society. I contend that 'invisible' work within the family has unduly been explained away as non-work, and is essential both for the subsistence of the family and for the production of goods for the market. Its being couched in the moral economy of the family, and crucial for its survival, constrains poor children in the developing world to this type of work. This analysis will, secondly, allow me to challenge common
wisdoms that are inherent to the child labour debate. I argue that, as 19th century’s child labour debate established the borderline between morally desirable work on the one hand and exploitation on the other, it urged anthropologists to view children’s work in the colonies as mere socialisation. The recent resurgence of the child labour debate reiterates the impossibility of being exploited otherwise than in the labour market and extends the divide between legitimate and immoral work to a global scale. Far from recognising the role of anthropology in uncovering children’s role in the production and reproduction of value, as I will thirdly demonstrate, this debate reaffirms the primacy of the production of marketable goods as the goal of development and negates the value of preserving both the conditions of production and of social life itself.

The Small Fry of the Fishing Economy

The work of children in Poomkara, a densely populated coastal strip of Central Kerala, is largely inserted in two sectors of activity: the manufacture of coir yarn (used for making coir mats and floor coverings) with manually operated spinning wheels on the one hand, and on the other and fishing with country crafts. The division of tasks between and within these sectors are largely gender and age-specific, with women and girls devoting most of their productive time to make coir yarn, while men and boys engage in fishing and fish vending. Let me discuss the work of children in fishing first, leaving the coir sector for the next section. The country crafts used for fishing are large ones, and they are manned by a crew of 12 to 15 hired labourers. Working is allotted according to a clear hierarchy based on social class and seniority: the most rewarding work, guiding the fishing operations and dealing with wholesale traders in fish are the preserve of the few men of substance who own the country crafts. Propertyless men, which is the fate of the overwhelming majority, fish at sea or engage in fish vending. Their teenage sons are, as long as they are not physically and socially mature, hired seasonally to fish with seines from the shore. There are numbers of tasks younger boys must perform without other reward than a few fishes, before they can be included in a shore crew. A boy starts by the age of six or seven to forage for fallen fishes from the beach, engaging gradually in small-scale fish vending and finally in providing help and assistance to the crew during beach operations. A long process of socialisation marks a boy’s entry in the male world of fishing, and he has to comply, during a laborious period to a subordinate position, to do what the men feel is inferior work. The point, however, is that this foraging and servicing work, though lowly valued and remunerated only in kind, can hardly be said to be economically less necessary than the work of teenage boys who work shore seines or even of their fathers fishing at sea. A boy’s earliest task of picking up fallen fish from the beach provides his family with daily fish and helps later on supplement the family’s diet with the cash earned from
selling fish obtained in payment for petty services. In this way even young boys' activities help the household keep going during the inevitable periods in the year in which the men are either out of work or leave the village altogether to join crews which are often paid only a meal.

The activities of boys are connected to the marked imbalances in labour demand at the various stages of operation that are typical of artisanal fishing. The petty services rendered by the boys are important to the adult fishermen to be able to carry on their activities. The bunch of young boys allured by the prospect of receiving a little fish can, during the short-lived but critical stages of landing the catches in which labour demand suddenly rises, easily be brought into action. These boys also help recovering undersized fish from the meshes of the net and sell it to poor labourers' families living just above the beach. The teenage boys who work the shore-seines, far from threatening their father's work, perform complementary tasks, ensuring the viability of this particular type of net by operating it in the weeks just before and after the main season when the outcome is uncertain. If successful, the owner of the equipment is assured of a higher income from his investment. If the returns are disappointing, the whole operation cost him a trifle anyway, the boys having to be satisfied with a little fish, a snack and a cup of tea for their effort.

Seen against the backdrop of the harsh competition for marine resources that for the past decades has increasingly opposed the artisanal fishermen to those who operate "modern" trawlers, the boys' roles acquire an additional dimension. As the returns from fishing have dramatically fallen, the comparative advantage of artisanal fishing's heavy reliance on cheap manual labour has also become apparent. Without going into much detail here, I would only mention that modern trawlers are now facing the combined effort of higher oil prices, quick depreciation of their equipment and disappointing results due to overfishing. If it were not for generous state subsidies, they would have disappeared of long. The artisanal fishermen's capacity, by contrast, to reduce costs by cutting down on wages seems endless, and allows them not only to face competition but even to increase their share of the market.

There is, however, an end to the privations to which a fisherman can be submitted if he must be able to work and produce: the human buffer to which the wage cuts are eventually passed down to is formed of women and particularly children. The children's combined efforts of foraging, petty trade and hired labour have an important indirect bearing upon labour costs in the sense that they relieve the owners of artisanal fishing equipment from the responsibility of paying the men enough to feed their families and of maintaining them in periods of unemployment and crisis. Having his
sons hired on the shore-seine crew and the younger ones allowed to forage for fallen fish is the only kind of compensation a fisherman can expect from his boss in addition to an ever shrinking share of an insecure catch. In some places competition for resources has now caused the disappearance of shore seines, while even small boys are being barred from the petty tasks they undertook on the beach in order to forage a few fish. Children have hereby been forced to look for opportunities further afield, resorting at times to stealing from the large catches that are landed at the larger commercial centres or to secretly selling shares hidden by the men on board of the crafts. Boys' activities alone are, however, insufficient to provide this basic security and it is therefore important to now turn to the work of women and girls.

**Labour of Love**

Coir yarn manufacture is a typically feminine craft, and among the coastal poor is carried out in complementarity with fishing. The activity is undertaken the year-round by women and girls in the immediate vicinity of their homes. About half of the workers engaged in the cottage industry work on their own account, while hiring additional labour from neighbouring houses if necessary. For both family workers and hired labourers, remuneration is at the same, depressing level. The hierarchical ordering of the work by class, gender and age, though less outspoken than in fishing, is nevertheless there. A few comparatively well-to-do men engage in the exclusive sale of the raw coconut husks, the material used to make yarn, while the not-so-poor draw an income from the latter's sale. In poor households, grown-up women engage mostly in the less tiresome and better-paid spinning of the yarn, while girls, often as young as six or seven, are allotted a variety of preparatory and menial tasks: peeling and beating of coconut husks to make fibre, winnowing and turning the spinning wheel. These tasks demand however a high labour input, one spinner requiring the assistance of two girls.

Being as it is carried on in and between other domestic tasks, girls' work is even more markedly than boys', inconspicuous. Girls are given, ideally at least, as primary responsibility the welfare of the family and are brought up in an emotional environment that values their capacity for self-abnegating love for their parents and siblings. This precludes not only the search for monetary gain through work, but also the conscious separation of productive work from domestic tasks and the care of others. The alternation between highly valued domestic chores with the lowly valued making of coir yarn, heightens parents' conviction that their daughters' work, however crucial for production, is of a value that extends beyond the economic domain. This holds even when girls are hired to work for neighbours, their wages being generally
not directly paid to them, but either reduced from debt incurred at the grocer’s or added to their mother’s wage.

Girls’ work is nevertheless part of a production process that relies heavily on the need of poor women to feed their families, the family relying in times of crisis - when men are thrown out of work or migrate to other fishing areas - mainly upon these earnings and those of boys to make ends meet. Few girls are aware that they actually contribute, as I was able to compute during my fieldwork, between 60 to 70% of the labour necessary to make the finished product. In spite of this, even the poorest household’s yearly income from coir rarely exceeds 10% of the total. The surprising survival of this ancient handicraft in the face of a dwindling demand for coir products in the world market, a development that set in after the second world war, is only possible because of the availability of girls working for inconsequential returns that are acceptable because they are enhanced by the moral value enshrined in the work. But it is not the opposition between the emotions involved in caring and rational calculation in the modalities of gendered work that concerns me here. It is the perhaps hardly surprising fact that the implications of, what can be defined as, girls’ labour of love form no hindrance to the profitability of the business. Investing in coconut husks is just as profitable as any other investment in the rural economy, and enables to realise profits as high as 10 to 15% a month. Interestingly, these profits are only possible because of poor women’s and children’s heavy dependency on the manufacture of coir yarn which compels them, in the absence of alternatives, to buy husks at prices that severely curtail the income they can realising from the sale of the yarn. Not that husks are rare or highly valuable: in parts of India where there is no coir making, husks are used as cheap fuel, and near to worthless. It is then the labour of love that they are capable of absorbing by being turned into coir yarn by the children of the poor and their mothers, that turns husks into alluring objects of investment and enables the local dealers to realise their profits.

If we now look at the huge input of cheap labour that the village economy needs to keep going, it becomes apparent that the virtual exclusion of children from valued waged work is directly linked to the payment of wages to adults upon which the family cannot survive. The economy of the village can clearly not cope without the insertion, on other than purely economic grounds, of children’s free labour in the lowest levels of the work hierarchy. This insertion is itself part of a larger family strategy that supports and favours the successful competition of antediluvian forms of production against the threat posed by the rationality of the market. It is then precisely its being couched in the moral economy of the family, with its preoccupation with subsistence and the
preservation of life rather than with economic gain, that makes for the ubiquitous way in which children's work is embedded and acquires its meaning.

Though in-depth studies have remained scarce, anthropologists have recurrently analysed children's work in terms similar to those presented above. In the early 1980s, Pamela Reynolds worked, for instance, among the Tonga's of the Zambezi valley in Zimbabwe, a starving population whose economy has seriously suffered from the combined effect of a lack of water (due to the construction of a large dam), and the exclusion from the use of commons for hunting (due to the creation of a wildlife sanctuary) (Reynolds 1991: xxiv). Focusing on the ways in which the modalities of children's work are intimately intertwined with those of adults and with the local structure of subsistence farming, she claims that children work not only very hard but:

Provide the adjustable labour during periods of intense farming activity, and that women depend upon their children's assistance. Women and children perform as work units and it is these work units that are sometime called upon by men to provide labour in the field. Women direct children's labour. While many children do not work as hard as adults nor achieve as much, they perform other duties at the fields such as the preparation of meals and guarding of crops that, were it accounted for, might balance the labour accounts. Children under ten are kept busy attending to infants and toddlers (Reynolds 1991: 53).

Other anthropological studies, though not always as rich in detail and methodological reflection as Reynolds', corroborate the view that children's work cannot be understood in isolation from the totality of activities that make up the local economy and that, if analysed in terms that bring out its meaning at the level of the family, it appears far more crucial in the lives of the poor than common wisdom holds it to be. Their studies give also sufficient evidence that employment is not the ubiquitous way the children of the poor are exploited, their work being constrained by hierarchies based on kinship, age, and gender and typically flexible, informal and personalised in character.

The Child Labour Debate
The picture of children's work that emerges from anthropological studies evince a striking absence, among rural populations that are to be reckoned among the poorest in the world, of the images conjured by the child labour debate. While the latter represents the working child in isolation from his/her family and utterly incompetent to face the ruthless exploitation of profit-seeking adults, the former stresses the solidarity of the family group in allotting to children what is the socially most
acceptable type of work. In the former exploitation is direct, measurable and materialises in a product with which the Northern consumer may be all too familiar - the carpet on which we tread, the toys we buy for Christmas, the ball of our favourite baseball team; in the latter exploitation is covered with the mantle of love, is inspired by the needs of subsistence and is realised at the level of society through the exclusion of the children of the poor from an equitable share of food, clothing, education, health, information, and so on. The former speaks of tormented children being chained to weaving looms, sold as cattle into slavery and trafficked for the sexual pleasure of the rich. The latter evokes the feelings of solidarity on which the poor rely for their subsistence.

Being made aware, as a reading of recent publications on child labour cannot fail to do, that our luxuries are the direct product of the sweat and toil of children makes us feel that the intolerable must be combated without delay. Since a couple of years, those who can afford it, have obtained access to the new luxury of buying clothes, carpets and toys bearing a label that guarantees their being 'free of child labour', as if there existed an alchemy that allowed to break down children's work in measurable components that would, as other chemicals, threaten the future of the human race (cf. also Nichols 1993). The knowledge that the children of the poor are not fed sufficiently well, that they have no safe water or medicines and that their schools are not up to the task of teaching them anything useful is of course at the back of the mind, but serves no other goal than to reinforce the belief that something must, can and is done to redress the situation. For this, the past years have seen an alliance being forged among the following stakeholders in the debate:

1. International agencies: ILO, has since the 1970s has been working towards the ratification and implementation of Convention 138; an instrument of international regulation of child work through the setting of minimum ages for employment. Only a handful of countries in the South and non-Asian countries have, however, ratified the Convention. The most vocal departure from ILO's position has come from the Indian government when it introduced a Child Labour Bill in 1986 that recognised children's need and right to work. A number of Asian countries have meanwhile followed the Indian example. To retain its credibility as an agency effectively in charge of setting international labour standards, ILO is now concentrating on a new approach that, on the one hand, supports NGOs in local initiatives to 'rehabilitate' working children (International programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, IPEC) and on the other, seeks to introduce a new convention (on 'The elimination of the most intolerable forms of child labour') which is less far-reaching and should hence meet with less objections than Convention 138 (cf. Bequele and Myers, 1995). UNICEF, which has
traditionally been ignoring how intimately the welfare of children in the South is intertwined with work, has put for 1997 child labour on the top of its agenda, not surprisingly following herein the lead taken by the ILO. Also the World Bank has joined the ranks of international agencies intent on eradicating child labour (World Bank 1995).

2. National governments: The US government instituted in the early 1990's a special commission to inquire, significantly, into the share of child work in exports to the US. The avowed aim was to protect both American exports and labour from unfair competition and the consumers from feelings of guilt the awareness of feasting on the products of children's sweat would provoke. This position is being supported by most Northern governments, though self-interest is generally better veiled by good intentions. Southern governments are caught in the dilemma of being powerless to reject the position taken by Northern governments, while at the same time facing at home the problem that children's work remains essential not only for the livelihood of the poor but also as an instrument of social control (Weiner 1991; Alvim 1996).

3. Trade unions: The most outspoken position has been taken by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions of which most social-democratic unions are a member. Pleading for a social clause as conditional for membership of the World Trade Organisation, ICFTU has endorsed the US position by arguing that the removal of children from employment is essential to preserve adult jobs.

4. Employers: Employers increasingly dislike the association of their products with the exploitation of child labour, which tends to give it a flavour of cheapness, and have sought the added value of advertising them as "clean from child labour" (see also Nichols 1993).

5. NGOs: Though NGOs face dilemma's in many ways similar to those of governments in the South, they are increasingly co-opted by international donors to do what the governments either refuse or fail to do, being drawn hereby to circumvent state structures portrayed as inefficient, expensive and corrupt. To prove their efficiency the fast expanding market for private charity lures them increasingly into addressing extreme cases of exploitation (slavery, prostitution, child soldiers).

In short, the alliance is built around issues that concern labour security in the North, fair competition on international markets and the mobilisation of resources and people to lend credibility to the international agencies' claim that under their command child
poverty will be eradicated soon. The working children portrayed by anthropologists have no place in this debate. To speak in ILO terms:

We have no problem with the little girl who helps her mother with the housework or cooking, or the boy or girl who does unpaid work in a small family business (...) the same is true of those odd jobs that children may occasionally take on to earn a little pocket money to buy something they really want (Quoted in White 1994).

Child Labour Myths
In its latest report, while announcing the beginning of 'a new era for children', UNICEF's director Carol Bellamy confronts us with a depressing description of a factory employing 250 children 'mostly below 10 years' and comments:

The description could come from an observer appalled at the working conditions endured by children in the 19th century in British mills and factories. The world, you feel, must surely have banished such obscenities to the distant past. But the quote is from a report on the matchstick-making industry in modern Sivakasi, in India (Bellamy, 1997: 17).

The reference to the glorious past of the West in addressing child labour, in combination with the ironic use of the word *modern* in congruence with such a disconsolate town as Sivakasi, is significant, and holds some crucial clues to understand why children's work, as described and analysed by anthropologists, has consistently been ignored. Let me first begin with the history of the debate by linking it to the ways in which it affected the early anthropologists' views of children's lives in the colonies. Cunningham has rightly posited the preoccupation with child labour of early 19th century Britain in a peculiar historical climate that was propitious to sentimentalising the lives of children, identifying four interlocking developments: a) the missionary endeavour of philanthropists among the poorer classes; b) the urge to penetrate the homes of the poor to expose cruelty in order to improve the quality of the urban working force; c) the debate on conditions conducive to a free labour market and the abolition of slavery; d) a sense, among the middle classes, that childhood was properly the happiest time of life that should be sheltered from the distasteful and threatening adult world (Cunningham 1991:134ff). The Commissions that investigated child labour during the 19th century did so demonstrate the excesses to which uncontrolled competition were leading, and to argue for an enhanced role of the state (see also Thompson 1968; Walvin 1982; Nardinelli 1991). Cunningham relates how the early decades of the 19th struggled to define child labour as slavery, a
discourse that became the more plausible that the state was able, by the 1840s, to argue that:

It had rescued both black slaves and child slaves within its dominions and was engaged in a similar mission the world at large (Cunningham 1991: 82).

It is within the parameters of this discussion that we must position the divide, so typical of anthropology until the 1960s, between the issue of child labour and the romantic renderings, to use Hull’s expression, of the lives of children in the colonies (Hull 1981). What did these children actually stand for? First of all, they were not portrayed as ‘children’ in the Western, bourgeois sense of the word but as savages, and as such they were believed to be the repository of the earlier stages of the human condition. What contrasted them with modern men was their being timeless and incapable of evolving the enlarged production on which industrialism rested, which also entailed that their relations of production were not liable of leading to free labour and hence to exploitation. Exploitation in its liberal meaning, was (and still is), conceived as harsh treatment of labour on the basis of an innate incapacity (due, for instance, to immaturity) to negotiate a fair wage. Secondly, they were seen as not working. Admitting that there was a link (through the market) between the extortion of colonial revenue and the free work of children in the ambit of the family would have undermined public support for the self-assigned civilising mission of colonialism, which was an essential aspect of the conquest of markets for expanding industry. Thirdly, their activities were portrayed as being, like the air we breathe, of the ‘natural’ order of things. In order to be able to eradicate it, the child labour debate had introduced a normative distinction between industrial child labour and the other work of children. Illuminating the humanitarian mission of the state under capitalism, child labour was a figure of speech meant to contrast the sanctity of childhood with the defiling reality of industrial labour. To ‘abolish’ child labour, it was the work of children, both in the homes of the working class and in the colonies that had to be negated. That modern society was finally able to ‘eradicate’ child labour was hence not so much on the account of effective welfare policies as on the combined effect of a changing labour market and political thinking that narrowed the concept down to exclude the majority of activities undertaken by children.

The issue was seriously affected by the idea that if children were to be ‘freed from labour’ they could easily spill into idleness, and idleness was by the mid-19th century represented as reducing children to ‘savagery’ (Cunningham 1991: 96). A ‘savagery’ that was exemplified by the lives of children in the colonies and by the ‘children of the streets’ as documented by philanthropists in the second part of the 19th century,
and served as a powerful vehicle to convey the cause of compulsory and universal education. As pointedly remarked by Cunningham:

> This constant reiteration of the similarity between children and the subjects of the Empire had a mutually reinforcing effect on their images. Both had a dearth of what had come to be thought of as essential adult qualities; their childishness or savagery consisted in their total absence of forethought, self-denial and self-government. They were described in terms of negatives, of what they lacked, than of any positive qualities. The responsibility, the burden, on adults, was to provide guidance and rule for these children and savages (Cunningham 1991: 128-129).

Education was indeed seen as the best way to ensure the supervision of the children of the poor, while allowing sufficient time to serve their families and the economy in domestic work and petty tasks to be carried out outside school hours (Davin 1982; Lavallette 1994). This is indeed also the role of education in the policies promoted by international agencies and their allies. But the parallel does not stop there. Today’s discourse on child labour in the South:

1. Reiterates in more subtle terms, but still in order to demonstrate that it is in need of guidance and control, that the South is the negative image of the North, by highlighting, for instance, the underdeveloped condition of children (and other "vulnerable" groups such as women, tribals and refugees). Harping on the ethnic/racial dimension of children’s exploitation, as remarked by Schlemmer, contributes to represent it as a relic of primitive customs, of people not yet fully modern (from there the idea that education is the cure) (Schlemmer 1996: 12)

2. Lends legitimisation to attempts of supra-national agencies to penetrate the homes and families of the poor by circumventing national states, whose failing welfare and policing structures (ironically the result of Northern economic and financial policies) are used to explain the underdeveloped state of their children.

3. Reinstates a discourse of the desirability of middle class childhood happiness, to be achieved by economic growth, market expansion and consumption. This discourse is particularly relevant to Northern audiences, as it comforts and reassures by conjuring images of what a loss would imply (cf. Burman 1995; Jenks 1996).

4. Appeals to private charity by basing its discourse on a concern to protect the endangered innocence of childhood in the South: what can only with difficulty be maintained at home because of the invasion of childhood by modern media and
consumptive behaviour, can be achieved cheaply by supporting a child in the South (with the advantage of avoiding the pollution of nearness, and defusing the possibility of contention and the need to legitimise the authority of money).

5. Finally, and most importantly, singles out an issue that is both true and false: true because children are exploited in inhuman ways, false because this is not the ubiquitous way children are exploited by the expanding market. The creation of a Disneyland for international co-operation in the South staging the rescue of poor children from exploitation, reinforces the belief that something is done, and that 'development' would bring the abolition of child labour within reach soon. While current economic policies de-humanise the lives of the children of the poor and undermine the very condition for social life (cf. also Meillassoux 1996: 483).

Critical Anthropology

It is then undeniable that the child labour debate revives the old myth of the protection of childhood as the enviable privilege of 'developed' societies, and that its representation of children as pitiful objects of compassion distances the working child in the South from the ideal of the innocent, protected childhood that only modern society would be able to realise. This revival of an old myth may surprise and lead to question why anthropology has had so little impact on both the conceptualisation of the problem and on the interventions envisaged by international agencies such as the ILO and UNICEF. One would search indeed in vain for references to anthropological studies of children's work in the publications on child labour in the South that are currently flooding the market. Is it that these publications are addressing global problems, and one could think in this respect of a sudden rise in the employment of children following upon SAPs and the liberalisation of markets, the seriousness of which anthropologists have failed to see because of their qualitative methods of research? Or is it that anthropologists are so enamoured of the bucolic 'authenticity' they believe to find among the people of 'their' village that they fail to see its injustice and mercilessness towards children? We can hardly deny that until the 1960s anthropology was very much caught in evolutionary paradigms, in which the child, very much like the 'savage' of early anthropology, was studied as the biological mass in which society invested its humanity rather than as an individual with his/her own set of social relationships, representations and beliefs. In its search for the basic elements in human society that are passed on the next generation through socialisation patterns, anthropology nearly entirely disregarded that the child is also actively taking part in this society and contributes to shape his/her own socialisation. Since the 1970s, however, concerned anthropologists have departed from their traditional lack of political commitment, and have addressed issues of poverty, conflict and social change.
contributing for instance to critical demography, peasant studies, the modes of production controversy, the dependentistas debate and feminist anthropology. 16 These areas of interest also provided in their turn fruitful theoretical insights to understand the work of children 17. We can hence hardly accuse today’s anthropologists of having failed to bring out the role of work in localised forms of upbringing or of having belittled its meaning for the subsistence needs of the poor. At the same time, however, we must also recognise that these studies, though extending their analysis beyond the context of the moral economy of the family and exposing how children’s exploitation is set within the economic framework of world poverty, have not addressed the ideology underlying the current political stance on child labour.

But we must as well question development’s presumption to bring Northern childhood within the reach of the poor in the South while systematically slighting, if not discrediting, what anthropology has to say. It is indeed significant, as noted by Rist, that anthropology should be forced to legitimise its very right to be taken seriously by seeking a place within the paradigms of development’s own discourse (Rist 1996). Failing this, there seems to be no way for anthropology to posit itself as an alternative to the hegemonic dualism of children’s work as either ‘good’ (because a useful adaptive strategy of the excluded from the world market) or ‘bad’ (because a threat to the domination of this same market by a few). Both debates about human rights and democracy in the South and the globalisation of the western conception of the child have created a favourable climate for Northern childhood expertise (legal, psychological, pedagogical and medical) and are likely to further undermine the credibility of what anthropology has to say. Current research and debates on children’s sexual exploitation, on adolescent motherhood, on genital mutilations, on ‘the best interests of the child’, on school wastage and educational policy, etc. are based on the unidimensional and stereotyped representation of childhood popular in the North. Far from bringing the childhoods that exist in the South on an equal plane with the one believed to exist in the North, an illusion is created that there is but one desirable form of childhood in the world. As no longer children’s work but child labour resonates in discourses on childhood in the South, a distance on a unilinear pattern of development is affirmed, and overlain with an element of rhetoric. Contrasting the ideal of ‘the child’, evocative of innocent and fanciful play, with ‘labour’, implying suffering and drudgery, conjures the image of the poor as accomplices in an assault, represented by child labour, on what is believed the most precious good of humanity: the sanctity of childhood. The families of the poor are turned into sites besieged by the evils of poverty, ignorance and disease. From the depths of misery, the children of the poor are made to look at the state, and increasingly at supra-national rescue agencies, as the benign knights on whose
compassion and magnanimity their accession to the paraphernalia of a proper childhood ultimately would depend. It is however still up to anthropology to uncover why the good and the bad are faces of the same coin, why remaining invisible may or not be the best option, whether wanting to become visibly exploited, as in attempts at unionising the working children, is a way out of the oblivion in which development thinking may wish the children of the excluded to remain.
References


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1 While child labour is a normative notion applicable only to children who are employed in the organized sector of the economy, children's work is made up of observable activities done by children "which either contributes to production, gives adults free time, facilitates the work of others or substitutes for the employment of others" (Schildkrout 1981: 95).

2 See for parallels between globalization and exclusion (Rist, 1997).

3 The data were collected at various points in time between 1978 and 1992 and are discussed in Nieuwenhuys 1994.

4 To protect the integrity of the inhabitants of the village I have given it a fictitious name.

5 See for a detailed discussion also Nieuwenhuys 1989.

6 For an interesting discussion see Borghgrave and Holter 1996.


8 For a photographic representation see Mitidieri (1994) and for a written account through a filmaker's eyes Lee-Wright (1990).

9 These are the very words used in the titles of recent publications: *Child Labour: Combating the Intolerable* (Geneva: ILO, 1997) and *By the sweat and toil of children* (Washington: Bureau of International Affairs, Us Dept of Labor, 1994).


11 Of the hearings of the Commission on Child Labour of the US Senat, available from Mrs Rosen, head of the commission.

12 As was apparent in most statements by the Ministers of Labour attending the Amsterdam conference on 'The Most Intolerable Forms of Child Labour' of 24-25 February 1997.

13 A number of historians have questioned the assumption that state policies had indeed the so widely acclaimed bearing upon removing children from the labour force. According to Nardinelli (1990) and Stadum (1995), with the rise in living standards, parents themselves withdrew their children from full-time labour, while Lavallette argues that child industrial labour was very limited anyhow (Lavallette 1994). Minge-Kalman (1978) Devin (1982) and Zelizer (1994) however, relate the removal of children
from industrial labour to the effort to gain control over the working class by bringing women back to
domesticity, while Cunningham (1991), Weiner (1991) and Walvin (1982) rather relate it to law and
order considerations of the ruling classes.

14 There is little doubt that the debt crisis and SAPs have both contributed to the collapse of what little
welfare policies states in the South were able to maintain (see Comia, Jolly and Stewart 1987)

15 The expression is Rists', to whom I am also very much indebted for comments on a paper presented
at the VIIIth EADI conference (Vienna 11-14 September 1996) which has particularly inspired the last
section of this paper.

16 See for authors who have contributed to the understanding of children's work, note 5.

17 For an analysis see Nieuwenhuys 1994, chapter 1.

18 Examples are ENDA's work in francophone Africa, MANTOC in Peru, The Concerned for the
Working Children (Bangalore) and Bal Mazdoor (New Delhi), both in India.
Appendix

The Anthropology of Childhood in an Interdisciplinary Perspective - an Example from Western Kenya

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Introduction
The considerations presented in this paper originate from three interfaces:

1. The interface between anthropology and biomedicine which brings in an interdisciplinary perspective.

2. The interface between research and implementation which contributes with elements of applied anthropology.

3. The interface between research and management introducing points relating to a field which one may call research management.

Based on the experiences from the Kenyan-Danish Health Research Project (KEDAHR), the paper serves a double purpose: 1) discussing general issues in relation to interdisciplinarity and research management 2) giving practical examples of how the "anthropology of childhood" has been integrated into a interdisciplinary health research project.

The Kenyan-Danish Health Research Project (KEDAHR)
KEDAHR is a collaboration between research institutions in Kenya and Denmark. It comprises a total of ten institutions (five Kenyan and five in Denmark) which cover altogether six disciplines:
The Anthropology Component:
Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi
Institute of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen

The Health Education Component:
Division of Health Education, Ministry of Health (MOH), Nairobi
Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, Copenhagen

The Health Systems Research Component:
Medical Research Centre, Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI), Nairobi
Danish Bilharziasis Laboratory, Copenhagen

The Nutrition Component:
Medical Research Centre, KEMRI, Nairobi
Research Department of Human Nutrition
Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Copenhagen

The Parasitology Component:
Division of Vector Borne Diseases (DVBD), MOH, Nairobi
Danish Bilharziasis Laboratory (DBL), Copenhagen

The Psychology Component:
Department of Education Psychology, Kenyatta University, Nairobi
Danish National Institute for Educational Research, Copenhagen

KEDAIHR Phase I, which comprises the period from 1 December 1994 to 31 August 1997, has two general objectives:

1) To strengthen the research capacity of the participating institutions within the fields of parasitology, nutrition, educational psychology, social anthropology, health education and health services research.
2) To contribute to the improvement of the health status and school performance of Kenyan primary school children, primarily by control of helminth infections and improved nutrition.

KEDAHFR is funded by the "Danish International Development Assistance" (Danida) within the framework of "The Bilateral Programme for Enhancement of Research Capacity in Developing Countries" (ENRECA). In accordance with this programme there is a strong emphasis on research capacity strengthening as well as applied research and multidisciplinarity as reflected in the general objectives above.

The project started formally 1 December 1994. Subject to approval by Danida, it is envisaged that the project shall operate within a time frame of ten to 15 years. During the first few years, the project has put a lot of efforts into the establishment of a solid project infrastructure. The fact that ten institutions participate makes it necessary to have an adequate system of communication, accounting and transport as well as decentralised responsibility for technical and budgetary decisions.

The study area is Bondo and Usigu Divisions, Siaya District, Nyanza Province in Western Kenya. The population is predominantly Luos - a Nilotic patrilineal, patrilocal ethnic group among which polygyny is common. The Luos who came from Sudan some centuries ago (Gideon, & Wilson, 1996) were originally pastoralists, but now mainly base their survival on subsistence agriculture, migrant work and to a certain extent fishing.

In Phase 1, the "school cohort" has been one of the dominating biomedical research activities. According to the focus on primary school age children, about 1,000 children in Standard Five and Six from altogether 19 schools were selected. They were randomized in four arms combining the interventions of anti-helminthic drugs and continuous micronutrient supplementation or equivalent placebo. The outcome variables have been helminth re-infection, nutritional status and school performance.
In parallel, the anthropologists have carried out a number of studies on various topics:

* perceptions and practices in relation to worms;
* perceptions and practices in relation to malaria;
* perceptions and practices in relation to nutrition;
* health seeking behaviour;
* communication within families regarding nutrition;
* daily life activities of school age children;
* a basic socio-economic survey.

We would like to believe that our anthropological findings have scientific importance in their own right. However, in addition the socio-cultural knowledge will provide a useful contextual frame for the more concise biomedical project data and facilitate the implementation of future interventions. For instance we believe that health information can be given in a culturally more appropriate way based on the anthropological research findings.

KEDAHHR is in a state of transition between Phase 1 and 2. During the first years we have focused our research on primary school age children. In the next phase it is the plan to build on these results and integrate them with experiences from other research projects with the long-term aim to design a sustainable and appropriate school health programme. Various sub-studies will be implemented: A long-term study which will explore the impact of action-oriented health education on the sustainability of a deworming programme in ten primary schools in the study area; an initiative to combine the anthropology and the nutrition component in an effort to improve children’s access to important micronutrients by introducing demonstration plots in selected schools; a study describing school attendance rate, repetition rate and extent of absenteeism in primary schools in the study area with special regard to gender and age differences and the major causal factors.

In addition, we are in the process of initiating a community-based study comprising pregnant women and their newborn babies (the "birth cohort"). It is the idea to
monitor the impact of an anti-malarial drug (given to the pregnant mothers) and Vitamin A (given to the mothers and the infants) on various key indicators of disease. The psychology component will study indicators of early childhood development of the infants in the birth cohort. Another parasitological sub-study in relation to the birth cohort will examine issues relating to geophagia (soil-eating) as a risk factor for infection by geohelminths. The anthropology component will study socio-cultural aspects of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare.

The HSR component will study the operational aspects of these two areas of activities, i.e. the school health programme as well as maternal and child health and look into ways of applying the research findings. The HSR component will also be responsible for a longitudinal surveillance of a sample of the study population regarding vital statistics and infant morbidity.1

Interdisciplinarity and Research Management

Interdisciplinary research poses a number of challenges. Collaboration between scientists from biomedical and social science traditions can in a very general way be expressed as a number of issues which must be negotiated in order to obtain a fruitful result:2

1) Who should set the research agenda? Do the social scientists have a word or are they hired 'simply' to mobilise the community?

2) Is it acceptable to carry out purely descriptive research or is it mandatory to go for causal relationships based on pre-formulated hypotheses?

3) Will the social scientists be 'allowed' to study contextual factors in their own right or do the topics need to be directly disease related?

4) Will it be possible to gain acceptance from the biomedical scientists that not all study populations need to be randomly sampled and of a size allowing statistical significance calculations?
Can a suitable balance be found between the collection of qualitative and quantitative data?

6) Can a compromise be found between the relatively open approach of the anthropologists and the more strict and closed approach of the biomedical researchers when it comes to design?

Is it possible to find a common level of understanding when it comes to the emphasis put on theoretical issues?

Personally, I strongly believe that it is indeed possible to design research in a way so that both parties 'win'. In fact it is crucial for the sustainability of a project that all the involved researchers are given the freedom to carry out their sub-studies according to the best standards of their disciplines although due considerations should be given to the overall themes of the project.

Rosenfield (1992) has provided a theoretical framework for conceptualising the collaboration process between different disciplines:

**Multidisciplinarity:**

| Researchers work in parallel or sequentially from disciplinary-specific base to address common problem |

**Interdisciplinarity:**

| Researchers work jointly but still from disciplinary-specific basis to address common problem |
Transdisciplinarity:

Researchers work jointly using shared conceptual framework drawing together disciplinary-specific theories, concepts, and approaches to address common problems.

Basically, Rosenfield's typology describes three stages of progressive integration of the participating disciplines in terms of theories, methodology and overall conceptual framework, implying that the transdisciplinary mode is the optimal.³

Anthropology of Childhood within KEDAH

Among the anthropological KEDAH studies, two have a particular focus on children:

A Ph.D. student, Mr. Wenzel Geissler, has carried out an extensive field study among primary school children in the study area comprising various aspects of medical anthropology. Firstly, interesting data have been collected on the health seeking behaviours of the children giving new knowledge on children as independent agents with an extensive knowledge of for instance herbal medicine. Secondly, Mr. Geissler has looked into the children's perceptions of worms. Not surprisingly it appears that the children classify worms in ways which are quite different from the biomedical categories. Thirdly, illness episodes have been monitored for a sample of children during a period of several months. Finally, the very prevalent practice of geophagia has been studied in collaboration with researchers from the nutrition and the parasitology component.

Another study (of which I am the Principal Investigator myself) has focused on the daily life activities of a group of children of primary school going age for about two years. Initially, fifty pupils from Standard One through Seven were selected and subsequently followed for between three and twelve months. Depending on their age, their daily activities have been registered either by the means of the children themselves writing diaries or by daily interviews. A number of minor sub-studies have
grown out of the daily activity registration. Thus sub-studies are being carried out on games, illness episodes (as an equivalent to Mr Geissler’s study), school drop out, twins, and other related topics.

**Conclusion**

Firstly, regarding interdisciplinarity & research management, I would like to emphasise five points which in my experience have proven to be important:

* It is difficult, but not impossible.
* It should be based on equity between the participating disciplines.
* The scientists involved should develop compatibility, i.e. learn the necessary minimum about the complementary disciplines.
* The human factor should be taken into consideration.
* It takes time.

Secondly, as to the role of the 'anthropology of childhood' in relation to public health research in developing countries, a few issues should also be highlighted. Within KEDAH, the activities of the anthropology component will be consolidated. Various child-related studies will be carried out focusing on topics such as childcare, the role played by children as change agents, daily life activities of primary school age children, and food security, etc. Apart from generating research findings which have scientific merit in their own right, the results are also expected to serve as a useful contextualization for KEDAH’s biomedical findings and to help formulating recommendations for culturally appropriate interventions.

Thirdly, I would like to make a few references to the title of this seminar, "The Invisibility of Children". In an international public health perspective, the Alma Ata Conference in 1978 constituted a milestone where the primary health care principles were defined giving much emphasis on children’s health needs (The Commission on
Health Research for Development, 1990). In the biomedical statistics children are very visible. Every year millions of children die from diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, lower respiratory infections, and measles. Furthermore, a large proportion of children especially in the least developed countries suffer from malnutrition, intestinal helminth infections, bilharziasis etc. However, I will postulate that in another respect children have (with a few expectations) up to now been invisible in the sense that only few (social) scientists have allowed children to speak for themselves. Either have their bodies been the objects of various physical examinations or their guardians have been approached to report on the children’s behalf (e.g. on incidences of diarrhoea episodes etc.).

Finally, I will like to raise some issues which may be subjects to further discussion during this seminar:

* Are there any particular characteristics of doing child anthropology in foreign cultures?

* Are there any particular methodological issues regarding working with children?

* Are there any particular ethical issues?

* Does the researcher doing child anthropology have a special "position" as compared to colleagues working with adults?

* What can general anthropology learn from the field of child anthropology?

* Now we have "discovered" children. What’s next?
References


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1 In case you would like to know more about KEDAHR, please contact the project at either of these three places:

- **KEDAHR Office**, c/o DVBD, P.O.Box 54, Kisumu, Kenya, tel: +254 35 22 385, fax: +254 35 23 295, E-mail: KEDAHR@ken.healthnet.org
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2 This part of the presentation only gives a sketchy overview. It is planned to expand it further in a separate article.

3 During the discussion it was debated whether the transdisciplinary approach was indeed the ideal conditions. Some participants expressed the concern that transdisciplinarity may dilute the sound core of unique expertise of the individual disciplines. 1 In case you would like to know more about KEDAHR, please contact the project at either of these three places:

- **KEDAHR Office**, c/o DVBD, P.O.Box 54, Kisumu, Kenya, tel: +254 35 22 385, fax: +254 35 23 295, E-mail: KEDAHR@ken.healthnet.org
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