Representing Children's Play in Documentary Film

Grethe Mitchell

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Declaration

I, Grethe Mitchell, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the work.

Abstract

This thesis considers the representation of children's play in documentary film, adopting a creative practice methodology. Using a practice/exegesis model and placing equal importance on both the written and visual outputs of my research, this thesis should be considered alongside my 40-minute documentary film *ipidipidation my generation!* which records the playground cultures of two English primary schools between 2009-2011.

My thesis examines and contextualises media representations of children, using these to identify and explore the discourses around children, childhood and play. In doing this, it examines how these media representations are positioned within these discourses – both shaping and shaped by these wider debates. It notes how the child adopts a "muted" position in these debates, which claim to value children but exclude children's voices.

As I situate my film practice within documentary and ethnographic film, the wider debates within these fields are also mapped out and considered, before considering a sample of documentary and ethnographic films featuring children's play and conducting a comparative analysis.

This analysis will explore the extent to which the films acknowledge and engage (whether consciously or not) with the discourses about childhood and how this is expressed through their film language and other means. I draw upon this material in Chapter Four where I analyse my own film using a multimodality approach, but also placing it within the context of ethnographic and documentary film practice.

Impact Statement

This study shows that children are routinely represented as problems in documentary films and non-fiction programmes, and that whilst research has shown that children have the competences and ability to express their views on how they are represented in non-fiction and documentary film, they are rarely asked.

My research argues for a reset of the representation of children in non-fiction film, video and television by demonstrating through the production of a documentary on children's play, the proficiency and aptitude of children to express their views and expertise on camera, without adult interpretation or commentary.

Considering the representation of younger children through the lens of their play, this exegesis - a companion to the 40-minute film *ipidipidation my generation!* - examines and contextualises documentary and non-fiction representations of childhood culture, using these to identify and explore the discourses around children, childhood and play.

Produced as part of a two-year grant funded large-scale ethnographic study led by UCL IOE, the film: *ipidipidation my generation!* is an intervention and experimentation in the documentary representation of children and play. It features many instances of play and games, along with conversations and interviews with children talking directly about their play and lore.

Made with a view to both academic and public presentation, *ipidipidation my generation!* has had screenings at the British Library, the International Play Association Conference and the V&A Museum of Childhood. The film has been well received by these audiences and will be of interest to children, schools, educators, filmmakers and the general public interested in children's play.

Contact has also been made with the education department of the BFI for the film to be screened as part of a day-long symposium on children's play in

documentary film, organised in conjunction with UCL Knowledge Lab. The unedited recorded material is due to be deposited at the British Library and then made available to researchers through this archive.

The film and accompanying exegesis are likely to be of interest to scholars, academics and educators in a wide range of disciplines including education, child and play studies, social sciences, visual anthropology, cultural, media, film and television studies. It will also be of interest to practitioners and scholars in the fields of journalism, documentary and ethnographic filmmaking.

Further dissemination of the research will be sought through submission of the research to relevant journals and submission of the film recording to suitable festivals or symposia.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Andrew Burn and Dr. Sara Hawley. Professor Burn has been a great source of help, support and guidance throughout the period of this research and I wish him a pleasant and well-deserved retirement. I am grateful to Dr. Hawley for agreeing to take over the supervisory duties.

I would like thank the AHRC for funding the original Beyond Text project *Children's Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age*, which included the production of my documentary film *ipidipidation my generation!*

I would also like to express my gratitude to the students and staff at the London and Sheffield schools for their collaboration and support in making the film.

Dedication

I am forever grateful for the continuous love and support that I received from my late parents, Alexander and Lilian Mitchell – and for the curiosity and adventure they nurtured in me. I would also like to thank my husband, Andy Clarke, for his unending support during this research.

Notes to Readers

1. My doctoral submission consists of two equally weighted components: this written exegesis and a separate 40-minute documentary film titled *ipidipidation my generation!*

2. Screenshots from my film have been removed or anonymised in this version of my thesis and appendices.

3. Personal identifiers in this version of my thesis and appendices have been anonymised or removed where necessary or appropriate.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My doctoral research investigates the documentary film representation of children's play, using a creative practice methodology that combines a documentary film with this written exegesis, both of which form part of this submission.

Drawing on the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 2015a, p. 6; Mayall, 2013) and the view that concepts of "child" and "childhood" are not fixed, but are produced and reproduced according to changing socio-political and cultural norms and aims, my thesis considers documentary film's participation in the wider discursive formations of children and childhood, through its enunciative practices about children's play. Buckingham outlines two kinds of discourses about childhood, both produced by adults: those produced for children (media, literature and entertainment produced for consumption by children) and those produced about children, including professional and academic discourse as well as novels, television programmes and advice literature (2000).

My research concerns the latter - and in particular, documentary film representations of children's play by adults - and what these say about childhood and childhood play and how this is communicated. My enquiry therefore investigates how children and their play are constructed in selected documentary films, including my own film. Of course, in making a film about children's play culture and producing this exegesis, I am likewise contributing to the wider discourse on children's play and childhood generally. However, in doing so, I also aim to critically investigate and intervene in the representation of children's play.

As a constructed artefact intended for an audience, a film uses a range of medium-specific and other techniques and conventions that together constitute the utterance or communicative act. Much of film theory has relied heavily on the visual aspects of film, theorising cinema as a visual language of the conscious (and the unconscious, if one considers the tradition of film

analysis that drew on psychoanalysis) and regarding the finished artefact as a "text" which, like its literary forebears, is to be read and dissected in a similar fashion. However, while I attend to the filmic codes and conventions that support meaning-making and interpretation by both filmmaker and audience, my discussion is also attentive to the embodied, affective and sensory dimensions evoked through and by film, and which contribute to make watching a film different from reading a text.

My doctoral submission consists of two components: a documentary film and a written exegesis to which this is the introduction. Together these elements constitute a "creative practice research" methodology which I discuss in the following chapter (Chapter Two) and reflect a concern with the processes and outputs of moving image representation, being work "with the visual as an object of enquiry" and "as a medium of enquiry" (Silverstein in Piault et al., 2015, p. 174). In this article, the author refers to these two elements as an often-considered divide in visual anthropology – with researchers coming down on one side or the other. However, as this submission aims to show, my investigation combines both aspects of this so-called dichotomy.

Dealing with documentary film, children and play, my research is framed by perspectives in the fields of documentary studies, childhood and play studies, and media and cultural studies. I have also drawn on visual ethnographic approaches in producing and editing my film and in the discussion, interpretation and analysis of the filmed data. The framework of multimodality and the idea of motivated signs, initiated by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1998, 2001) and further developed by Jewitt (2009), Kress (2010), Burn (2014) and others is used in the analysis of my own film.

In my discussion, I use the word "film" as a short-cut, generic, all-encompassing, term to describe motion pictures - whether they present as celluloid film, videotape or digitally – and I likewise refer to my practice output as a documentary film to distinguish it from a fictional film (imaginary narrative). In my thesis, I explore documentary film representation and discuss some of the complications and ambiguities inherent in the genre.

Nonetheless, in many respects my film is also an observational and ethnographic film, a record, description and representation of children's play and a "rendering of an account of the experience of fieldwork" (Henley, 2000, pp. 217-218) in the playgrounds of two English primary schools. I describe the schools and their populations in Chapter Four.

Defining a child by age can differ widely depending on social, legal and cultural variants. The children in this research are between the ages of five and eleven years – that is to say primary-school age in England, at key stage one and two of the (English) national curriculum. The age range of the children in this research also coincides with the period in which children are most active at play activities (Bergen & Fromberg, 2009; Blatchford, 1998; Pellegrini & Smith, 1998).

In my exegesis, I refer mainly to material (film, literature) and activities (games and play) originating or located in the Global North (notwithstanding two exceptions discussed in Chapter Three). This locus also informs my analysis and interpretation of the underlying cultural discourses about childhood play in documentary film. As my documentary film was shot in England (London and Sheffield), it features children immersed in the educational and social culture of that country, even though they (or their families) may have been born elsewhere or not have English as their first language. I can see great value in a future broader study that would be more global in its investigations of documentary representations of childhood play, however that is outside the scope of this doctoral research project and it must therefore wait for another time and opportunity.

Background to my Research

Professional Practice

I started my doctoral research relatively late. However, my interest in media practice and theory developed early, taking my first degree in Photographic Arts at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster), the first in the UK to combine theory and practice in equal measure and where I majored in film. In my subsequent eighteen-year career in the film and TV industries, I worked mainly in post-production on documentaries, news programmes, TV dramas and feature films. As the film industry began to move from analogue photo-mechanical processes to digital technology, I became interested in the possibilities of digital media and I took a Master's degree in Design for Interactive Media at Middlesex University, where the degree requirement was again a combination of written exegesis and practice. My MA degree led to an academic career where I developed a research interest on the relationship between film and interactive entertainment, including videogames. The research into videogames also led to an interest in children's games as both drew upon the theories of play. Overall, my research activities have always reflected a strong connection with media practice and with how meaning is made, articulated and theorised in film, photography and interactive media, taking into account the socio-cultural, technological and economic ecologies of these practices and their discursive and interpretative channels.

The AHRC Project: Children's Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age

My background in film studies and production, my research into videogames and my interest in children's games led me to enrol as a part-time doctoral student at the UCL Institute of Education, in the UCL Knowledge Lab, under the supervision of Professor Andrew Burn. I was in the process of scoping and refining my topic when the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) released its Beyond Text call emphasising "non-textual

communication and creativity" (*AHRC Beyond Text Research Programme Specification*, pp. 2-3). The call seemed to present an ideal opportunity for my doctoral project, given my research interests in games and media.

The concept of youth cultures, seen in terms of the creative and "resistant" autonomy of adolescents and applied to their material, symbolic and consumption practices, is one that is familiar - and has been discussed in the social sciences and among cultural and media theorists since the late 1970s including, for example, Brake (1980), Hebdige (1991), Hall and Jefferson (2006), and Buckingham at al. (2014). "Youth culture" had also attracted mainstream media attention from the 1950s onwards, as the increasingly independent consumption and social practices of teenagers and young people grew in social and economic importance. However, the same concept of creative autonomy was, until relatively recently, not applied to the cultural practices of primary school-age children and there was historically, little mainstream interest in the idea of this cohort of children as cultural actors and agents in their own right - participating in, reflecting and reproducing cultural systems within their own social nexus, even though support had been building in the academy from the 1980s for the idea of children as "active agents" in learning and in interactions with friends and family (Mayall, 2013).

The reason for this dominant myopia with regards to younger children seems to have been the general assumption that they lacked the necessary ability and agency, and that their play activities and choices were mainly a result of developmental and socialisation processes – given that children's identity "is incomplete and is being formed *for* them rather than *by* them" (Buckingham, 2011, p. 46) - rather than, as Vygotsky (1978) and Corsaro and Eder argue, an intrinsic "shaping and sharing of developmental experiences through participation in cultural routines" (1990, p. 199). Yet the work of Iona and Peter Opie (1993; 1959, 1984, 1985), the writing of anthropologists Hardman (1973, 1974) and Schwartzman (1976; 1978), the later work of Goldman on children's pretend play (1998) and that of child and play scholars, folklorists

and ethnomusicologists such as Sutton-Smith (1959, 1997), Knapp and Knapp (1976), Thorne (1993); Bishop and Curtis (2001), Gaunt (2006), Beresin (2010), Willet et al. (2013) and Burn and Richards (2014) have demonstrated that the social and cultural world of younger children is as complex as that of their teenage siblings and that despite the view that that younger children lack independence and agency, they too carry out inventive and resourceful activities and that these can also be autonomous, transgressive and "resistant" to adult power.

Also, as the Opies and others have shown, the creative autonomy of children is most evident in their lore and play and, as mentioned above, this is at its most active in the childhood years coinciding with primary school. Therefore, as had been the case with adolescents, it seemed important to also give consideration to primary school-age children as an active cultural constituency and - like the Opies had done in the 20th century - to record their play and lore as a manifestation of this culture, as it presented in the new century and "new media" age. Responding to the Beyond Text call, I devised and pitched the idea of researching children's play cultures to colleagues at the UCL Knowledge Lab - and as a peer Co-Investigator, assisted in developing the project into a successful large grant application comprising three HEIs and the British Library, under the leadership of Professor Andrew Burn.

A primary objective of the AHRC *Children's Playground Games and Songs* project was a two-year ethnographic study of children's play and their relationship with media cultures. One aspect of this ethnographic study was conceived as traditional fieldwork with four "participant observer" researchers (two in each school) conducting written and video observations, interviews and surveys (Willett et al., 2013); the other aspect was my documentary film produced as part of my doctoral research, which recorded children's play culture in the two school playgrounds, together with children's views and explanations. My documentary film therefore had similar goals to the other (more traditional) ethnographic study - observing, chronicling, commenting

on, and communicating the significance of children's play – though I adopted a different theoretical framework and approach to the other researchers and worked with different film equipment (I discuss these aspects in Chapter Four). The recordings for the documentary thus provide additional data on the playground activities and broaden the range of voices, accounts and perspectives in the investigation.

Research Rationale

The two-year AHRC project *Children's Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age* and its constituent parts, including my documentary, consciously bound itself to the work of Iona and Peter Opie, updating (albeit modestly) their extensive research into children's culture which took place over more than thirty years, from the late 1950s to the mid-1990s. The project components, including my film, were also informed by their approach to children's lore as an important form of "anthropology at home" (Bishop, 2014, p. 207) and I was particularly inspired by Iona Opie's egalitarian interaction with her tape-recorded interviewees (now available as the *Opie Collection of Childrens' Games and Songs* at the British Library).[1]

An Absence of Children

While reviewing film and other material about children's play as part of my preliminary research, I was surprised to note that, whereas one finds numerous non-fiction and research films that address children's play from a developmental, therapy or pedagogical perspective (for example, the work of Siren Films in creating training resources for the study of child development or the pedagogical films of Elinor Goldschmied featuring the importance of play for babies[2]), there were relatively few documentaries or ethnographic films that investigated children's play and games on their own terms, as cultural practice. For example, the documentary and ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall (2005, p. 85) has commented that in most sociological or anthropological films, the appearance of children has almost always been

incidental or in a subsidiary role because, in the past, little attention was paid to children other than as adults-in-waiting. Although children feature in many genres of non-fiction film and television, the sparsity of films about children's own cultural worlds seemed confirmation of a lack of interest in younger children as cultural actors.

For example, a study by Ambert (1986) cited by Mayall (2013, p. 7) discovered a "near absence" of studies on children in mainstream sociology in North America, other than in work on socialization. In anthropology, Hirschfeld (2002) maintains that children have been marginalised due to a view that both overestimates the role of adults and underestimates the contribution of children to cultural reproduction, as well as to a lack of awareness of the extent and vigour of children's culture, including its role in shaping adult culture. Hirschfeld also argues that despite numerous studies of children, this research did not coalesce into a "sustained tradition" or succeed in bringing children "in from the margins" and indeed was a pursuit that could be safely ignored. Another explanation for the historical absence of children in social and anthropological research may be found in the well-known article by anthropologist Edwin Ardener (1975), who argued that although classical monographs feature anthropologists who claim to have "cracked the code" of the society being studied, they contained no mention of any direct contributions or explanations by women. In writing up ethnographic observations into interpretation, the world presented is almost entirely masculine and whilst women have may have been the subject of the same exhaustive observation in the field as men (on, for example, marriage, rituals, economic activity), their voices were rarely heard.

Hardman (1973) claimed that like the women described by Ardener, children occupied a "muted" position in society and that, as with feminist studies and approaches, what was needed was an anthropology of children - where children would be the informants about their social world. Citing Alanen (1992), James (2007) also recognizes an equivalence between the feminist and women's studies struggle of the 1960s and 1970s to have women's

voices and views heard and more recent attempts in the academy to do the same for children. In the same article, James does however ask, citing Roberts (2000), why it is that in spite of these advances and having the right to be heard embedded in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, "little of what children say is heard outside of the academy" (p. 262). MacDougall discusses how assumptions of staged progress in conceptual thought from child to adult cultivated the idea that children's thinking had little to offer because it was "undeveloped" or "deficient" and that this undervaluing inhibited the study of thought processes that adult life closed off and therefore rendered inaccessible – as well as limiting the anthropological study of children in other domains (2005, p. 88). In an analogous vein, Sutton-Smith (1970) writes about the "triviality barrier" to the study of child lore. He argues that in a society that allocates importance to the adult activities of work, sex and eating, the activities of child lore are considered nonserious and trivial – and that because of this "triviality barrier", scholars shy away from studying these activities even though "children's play is often serious and purposive" (Thorne, 1987, p. 100).

Children's Culture

Like the adult activities of work, sex and eating mentioned above, child lore and children's play are a "set of practices" (Hall, 1997, p. 2) as well as concrete examples of what, in an anthropological sense, is distinctive about children as a social group separate from adults. In both senses, lore and play are constituents of children's culture. This is not to say that child culture, play or lore is universal or uniform (far from it), but rather to emphasise the sustained and distinguishing activity of cultural production, transmission and reproduction that exists among children. The idea of child lore has nonetheless been contested on the basis that it is concomitant with an idealised and romanticised view of childhood as a "separate haven" in which children lead carefree lives untainted by the concerns of the brutish adult world. For example, in their discussion on representing childhood, James and Prout liken this "walled garden" depiction of childhood to a form of

romanticised primitivism where "the child as primitive adult is in harmony with nature, set free from the ravages of the time driven modern world" (2015a, p. 212). They critique the collection of child lore by the Opies as an "ideological representation of this model of childhood" (ibid) in which the culture of childhood is timeless and separate from the adult world – though later in the chapter, they nonetheless acknowledge that the Opies readily recognized that children were fully aware of the contemporary world and quick to comment on it – and make use of it - in their games and songs .

Although the study of children's play and lore has expanded substantially since the 1970s when Sutton Smith wrote the above-mentioned article, a "triviality barrier" nonetheless appears to have persisted in some quarters. For instance, it has been attributed, by Alasdair Roberts as the cause of a lack of serious study into children's playful language (1980, p. 117) and the ethnomusicologist Kyra Gaunt has put forward a similar argument to Ardener in her discussion of how black girls' musical games have been overlooked as an ethnographic resource, particularly in black music studies and those relative to the study of popular music culture. Gaunt claims that a reason these musical practices were overlooked was precisely because they were children's games (and girls' games at that) and therefore unable to be considered "serious" music (2006, p. 86).

Problem Children

It seems a "triviality barrier" also continues to operate in documentary film, which rarely gives attention to children's creative autonomy and play cultures while at the same time regularly emphasising more problematic aspects of children's lives. As Thorne notes "children rarely appear on *public* agendas unless they are defined as a social problem" and it is adults that do the defining:

> [U]sing imagery that vacillates between two sometimes
> interrelated poles: children as a threat to adult society and
> children as victims of adults. In both views, the

experiences of children are filtered through adult

concerns. (1987, p. 89 author's emphasis)

Thus, adult perspectives and concerns, coupled with the fear that some subjects (such as play) might be considered "trivial", may help to explain the frequent emphasis on "problem" topics in documentaries featuring children. Sutton Smith (1970, p. 4) argues that childlore appears to be "a systematic part of the human repertoire" and therefore considering it trivial or unimportant might be a mistake. However, a filmmaker seeking funds or a commission may wish to avoid perceived "trivial" topics such as children's play cultures and concentrate instead on what is seen to be more "serious" topics for documentary production. A comparable issue has also been identified by Moran-Ellis who reflects that sociology of childhood research topics are "not entirely free of the need to be looking at 'a problem' in order to gain funding" (2010, p. 192). In other words, adult agendas and concerns, rather than child-centric ones, seem to be the main drivers of documentary topics about children (and of some grant funding applications).

Sometimes the same problem topics about children get repeated film treatment. For example, *Warrendale* is a film made in 1967 by the Canadian cinéma vérité filmmaker Allan King, about emotionally disturbed children and adolescents, and the "holding" or "restraining" techniques used when dealing with them. *Hold Me Tight, Let Me Go* (Longinotto 2007) is also about emotionally disturbed children in an institution where restraining techniques are used. Further examples of a repeated focus on problem issues are the two series - one for Channel 4 in 2005 and one for BBC3 in 2011 – both called *Kids Behind Bars* and featuring the detention of young people. Repeated filming of the same problem topics could be seen as a recurrent desire to address an ongoing issue or to challenge "baked in" preconceived ideas and institutional practices (Bennett, 2006). However it also seems to indicate the above-mentioned and familiar but contradictory duality in how children are constructed, including in the media, as commented on by Messenger Davies (2004) – that is to say, the two-fold perception of children

as victims (for example of parental or institutional neglect or abuse, or of conflict) and as threats (knowing, precocious, feral, or criminal children).

Good and Evil Children

This duality between "good" victim and "evil" threatening children, reflects what Jenks (2002, pp. 62-65) refers to as the Apollonian child (innocent, good) and the Dionysian Child (evil, corrupt). These powerful concepts refer back to the 18th century Enlightenment or Romantic view of childhood innocence (in the case of the Apollonian child) or further back to early Christian doctrine and the notion of original sin (in the case of the Dionysian child). However, they nonetheless continue to maintain their hold, even in contemporary discourses and representations of childhood (James & Jenks, 1996; Mayall, 2010) – though this is not universal. For instance, Gollop et al. (2000, pp. 7-8) citing Franklin and Petley (1996) noted that the Norwegian press coverage of the killing of a five year-old child by three six-year old boys was markedly different to that that of the Bulger case in the UK as it avoided sensationalism and the attribution of inherent evil. Although the trope of the "evil child" is ever-present (ready to be invoked when expedient), more commonly occurring media tropes about children are the "endangered" child and the "victim" child'.[3] The victim or endangered child is mostly construed as "Apollonian" and innocent - characteristics of the Romantic imaginary of childhood that endures as an ideal of a "true" and "natural" childhood – framed (by adult society) as a timeless place separate from adult existence and devoid of adult complications such as class or sexuality. James and Prout argue that timelessness "contextualises the themes of innocence and purity as the essence of childhood" (2015a, p. 212) and innocence remains a prevailing marker of the contemporary imaginary of childhood: the child is innocent by definition and the "Dionysian" or "evil" child is therefore "other" and excluded or even banished from childhood.

Buckingham (2000, p. 11) reminds us that ideas of childhood are not neutral, but informed by an ideology: "a set of meanings which serve to rationalize, to sustain or to challenge existing relationships of power between adults and

children, and indeed between adults themselves".[4] Buckingham argues that the figure of the child invoked by ideological positions can then be recruited - for example by campaigning groups of different persuasions or by government - to engage the attention and sympathy of readers, viewers and audiences for a variety of reasons and causes, not all of them concerned with children. In her article discussing the use of children in media news stories, Moeller supports this claim:

> Even apart from policy areas resonant for children, such as public education or abortion, children have become an entry point for the media to discuss any event or issue considered to be overexposed, merely boring, or of only tangential interest to an audience. …children are perceived to be one of the few surefire ways to attract eyeballs on-line, in print, and on television. In debates over such diverse issues as foreign policy, Internet regulation, healthcare, the environment, and control of tobacco and alcohol, children have become proxies for all sides. (2002, p. 37)

Threatened and Victim Children

The figuration of the threatened child is often encountered in moral panics relating to the media (for example, cinema in the 1920s, video in the 1980s, videogames in the 2000s, and social media in the 2020s) or homosexuality (which is sometimes conflated with paedophilia and child abuse).[5] The alarm surrounding a perceived "stranger danger" augments many of these fears, curtailing the threatened child's independence and agency, despite the infrequency of occurrence – see, for example, Zogba (2004). As Buckingham suggests: "…invoking fears about children provides a powerful means of commanding public attention and support" for all manner of campaigns (2000, p. 11). The familiar trope of the "victim child" is an influential and hard-to-ignore figuration that has been regularly used in the West since the late 19th century, for mobilizing child-saving support, donations and political

action – see, for example, Marshall (2012) and (Wells, 2013). In this formation, the (powerful) adult as protector is concomitant with the (powerless) victim child.

Although children clearly need protection in certain circumstances, an insistent defining of the child as victim and the adult as their protector obscures the agency of children themselves, while absolving adults of complicity in the events or structural issues that give rise to situations in which children can come to require assistance or aid. The "victim" child who survives only through the protection and care of adults is a persistent figuration, despite being belied by the agency of children themselves - for example, those children who participated in humanitarian efforts (Marshall, 2012, pp. 475-476); those facing terminal illness (Bluebond-Langner, 1978) and those caught up in the most harrowing events such as the Holocaust, and who "saw everything grown-ups saw" (Eisen, 1988, p. 58) - and by their objections to the manner of their representation (Messenger Davies, 2004).

The Victim Child

The victim (regardless of their age) appears frequently in documentary film. In his critical analysis and discussion of the Grierson-led British Documentary Movement (and its long-running legacy), as "running away from social meaning" Winston suggests that one way of achieving this was the Documentary Movement's portrayal of the working class as social victims and the development of what he suggests could be considered "victim documentaries" saying that "[t]he victim documentary is the Griersonian's most potent legacy. Social victims are the realist documentary's staple subject into the present" (2008, p. 47).

Of course, this is not to say that documentaries should avoid dealing with serious issues such as social justice, deprivation, serious illness or conflict. Nor is it intended to imply that concerns about children are unfounded. The biological materiality of children (physically smaller and less strong) and their relative inexperience and immaturity, render them vulnerable and therefore in

need of protection. However, it is worth considering what discourses and narratives are being promulgated when only a small percentage of non-fiction output shows children in a non-problematized light. It is also important to recognize that the long-standing, recurrent and dominant subject positions for representing children in documentary - though undoubtedly well-intentioned - can also serve to emphasise a rhetoric of the child as helpless, thus obscuring other aspects of children as social actors in their own right. Children represented mainly as victims are likely to incur pity and promote humanitarian action, but as the filmmaker MacDougall argues, there is also the risk that:

> [I]n the process they become objectified and dehumanized, seen as passive, ill-equipped and interchangeable in the public imagination. In such an atmosphere it becomes rather difficult to represent children as ingenious, capable, and productive. (2020, p. 223).

Nonetheless, ascribing agency and competence to children can also overturn the view of children as vulnerable. The view (and representation) of child soldiers crystalises this dilemma, as Rosen points out:

> [T]here are thousands of children and youth caught up in armed warfare who are committing horrible crimes. How should we see them: as innocent victims of political circumstance who should be protected and forgiven, or as moral agents who should be held responsible for their actions? (2007, p. 304)

Other Representations

As mentioned above, the portrayal of the "evil" Dionysian child is relatively less common, compared to those of the innocent or victim Apollonian child. Nonetheless, a "softer" portrayal of the Dionysian child – viewing them as "wild", "mischievous" or simply "behaving badly" – has been a mainstay of

television entertainment. This trope is well represented in the familiar factual TV format in which audiences are invited "to find entertainment in the disturbances or eccentricities" of child subjects (Lawson, 2015). These shows often feature a "difficult" child (and their "end of tether" carers) whose behaviour is analysed and "solved" by a child expert – see, for example, *The House of Tiny Tearaways* (Channel 4, 2005), *My Violent Child* (Channel 5, 2014) and *Born Naughty* (Channel 4, 2015). The popularity of this format could be because it invokes recognition (tinged with *schadenfreude* or gratitude) in its audience – and although a gloss of scientific or academic respectability is provided by psychologists or other qualified professionals offering expert opinion or analysis, these programmes exist primarily as entertainment.

A related reality TV format places children in artificial situations and observes what happens. *Boys and Girls Alone* (Channel 4, 2009) was a four-part series – reprising the earlier *Boys Alone* (Channel 4, 2002) – in which two groups of boys and girls aged 8-12 are housed separately for five days purportedly without adult supervision. Labelled as a "mini *Big Brother*" (Glass, 2013), a "social experiment" and "a bit *Lord of the Flies*",[6] *Boys and Girls Alone* aired after the 9pm watershed and was therefore classified as adult entertainment. It attracted an audience of 2.4 million on its first night and is described as "a gladiatorial circus" (Thomas, 2009) and "appealing to a kind of visceral voyeurism akin to reading *Heat* magazine, or watching a car crash" (Glass, 2013). The series caused controversy as it showed children being bullied and in distress, triggering many complaints. More than 180 viewers and organisations, including the NSPCC, complained to OFCOM, precipitating an enquiry. In the *Times* newspaper, Michael Morpurgo and thirty-five other eminent child specialists claimed that the series contained "child abuse and cruelty" and accused Channel 4 of "plumbing new depths in broadcasting".[7] The subsequent OFCOM investigation cleared the production company (Love Productions) from breaching child welfare issues[8] but also revealed that, despite the title and sensational marketing claims, the children were not in fact alone and that

there were chaperones and others (including parents) ready to step in if matters got too fraught – causing one commentator to quip that the programme title should have been "Boys and Girls Apparently Alone" (Thomas, 2009).

Messenger Davies and Mosdell also discuss the trope of the "wild child" who is "anarchic, 'rumbustious' and with a relish for trouble and mayhem" (2001, p. 48), pointing out that these set of assumptions are particularly seen as a feature of British children's television. Their report looks at the ITV series *Mad for It* (1999-2000), made for children of between 4 to 11 years old, whose title indicates the aspiration to anarchy and whose content was described by the programme publicity as "racy-rudery" (ibid, p. 46).[9] According to the authors, the programme bordered on adult sexual innuendo, featuring parodies of adult programmes such as *Blind Date* (as well as the more childish obsession with gunge). They make the additional point that this model of childhood is also used to serve tabloid outrage at "contemporary children as a wild, uncivilised tribe, needing to be controlled and curfewed" (2001, p. 48) – in other words invoking similar "monster" children to those depicted in the "difficult" child and *Boys and Girls Alone* TV reality shows.

Another similarity between these programmes is that what has been shown to audiences and labelled as "reality" TV or "live" children's entertainment, diverges from the actuality that children's appearances on-screen in these shows are planned, rehearsed and staged, although this is not generally made known to the viewing public. For example, the OFCOM enquiry into *Boys and Girls Alone* revealed that chaperones and other adults were a constant presence in the houses where each group was ostensibly alone (OFCOM, 2009). Likewise, Messenger Davies and Mosdell's report discusses how the "raciness" and "liveliness" of children's actions in *Mad for It* was not spontaneous as featured on-screen, but carefully "produced" (2001, pp. 47-48). While it goes without saying that the safety of children is essential, it is also interesting that programme-makers seek to construct and re-construct the familiar "wild child" tropes, while at the same time

maintaining an illusion of naturalness. That the veil is not drawn back on "reality" or "live" entertainment is of course an essential part of these genres of television. However, these examples nonetheless also provide an illustration of how representations of children and the associated discourses, are reproduced and circulated.

Nevertheless, children from a young age have demonstrated their competence to evaluate and express opinions on how they are represented in factual media – see, for example, McCrum and Hughes (1998), Messenger Davies and Mosdell (2005), OFCOM (2007) and Messenger Davies (2008) . McCrum and Hughes, for instance, have indicated that children dislike it when their earnest comments are treated as comic, when images of children are used as "tearjerkers" or an image of a "cute" child is used to heighten appeal, when children are made to perform like "circus animals", when adults "show up" children's ignorance, when children are made to look passive when they are not, when children are grouped together as a "problem", when adults speak for children even when the children know more about the subject in question, or when adults put words into children's mouths or interrupt them (1998, p. 4).

Research Question

My investigation is based on the hypothesis that in spite of the evidence which demonstrates children's competence and their dislike of ways in which they are often portrayed, documentary and television factual media frequently depict "problem" children, often persisting in a rudimentary framing of children as Apollonian or Dionysian - notwithstanding some exceptions such as, for example, the Chilean documentary *Cien niños esperando un tren* (Agüero, 1988) and the French documentary *Etre et avoir* (Philibert, 2002). Meanwhile, it remains the case that few documentary films have focused on children's play as a cultural activity (outside developmental or socialisation paradigms) and fewer still have enquired into children's own

descriptions and perspectives of their play culture. The dominant depictions
discussed above seem to have left little room for the representation of
children as capable and creative social actors in their own cultural worlds
(such as that demonstrated by the work of the Opies and others mentioned
above) – even though children and play having been subjects of a cinematic
gaze from its inception in the last decades of the 19th century, when the
Lumière brothers tested their invention of the *cinématographe* by making a
short *actualité* of children playing in the street: *Les jeux d'enfants dans la rue*
(1894).

Figure 1: *Les jeux d'enfants dans la rue* (1894)

Moreover, although there is now a growing body of literature on the use of
moving images in research with children – for example, Hackmann (2005),
Sparrman (2005), Flewitt (2006), Aarsand and Forsberg (2010), Potter
(2010), Cowan (2014), Meager (2017), and Potter and Cowan (2020) – there
is still surprisingly scant literature specifically on the representation of

children in documentary or other factual film – despite some exceptions such as MacDougall (2005, 2019, 2022), Golovnev and Golovneva (2016), Bignell (2018), Bruzzi (2018), Cossalter (2018) and (Wells, 2020) – though even then, except for MacDougall who provides a brief mention (2005, p. 86), none of these texts concentrate on children's play. The relative sparsity of studies on children in documentary film contrasts with the more extended literature on the representation of children in other visual practices such as Holland's analyses of child images in advertising, press and commercial image production, (1992, 2004), Higonnet's study of child innocence in fine art, photography and popular culture (1998), Walkerdine's examination of young girls' representation in popular cinema and television (1997) and the publications dealing mainly with children in fiction film and television such as those by Sinyard (1992), Lebeau (2008), Lury (2010), and Hemelyryk Donald, Wilson and Wright (2017).

My investigation is not designed to test the above hypothesis, but rather aims to articulate and address it further, on the one hand, by means of written analysis, argument and theorisation of the representation of children's play in documentary film, and on the other hand, by means of practice, considering methods and techniques for representing children in documentary film, so as to give greater prominence to children's ideas, views and expression about their play culture – enlarging, in the words of Geertz "the sense of how life can go" (1988, p. 139) because:

> [G]iving voice to children is not simply or only about letting
> children speak; it is about exploring the unique
> contribution to our understanding of and theorizing about
> the social world that children's perspectives can provide
> (James, 2007, p. 262).

The issues outlined above led me to the following research question:

> How might children's play be represented in documentary
> film, to give greater prominence to children's ideas, views
> and expression about their play culture?

In this introductory chapter, I have explained the elements of my submission and discussed my professional and academic journey and its relevance to my research. I have also described the background to my study and its rationale leading to the research question. In the following chapter, I discuss my research methodology.

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[1] See: http://cadensa.bl.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=cyvRbWpPHi/WORKS-FILE/107760063/123

[2] See, for example, Elinor's Goldschmeid's first film, made in a Trieste (Italy) orphanage in 1954: *Lasciatemi almeno giocare* (transl: "Let me at least play").

[3] Views of the child as having the potential to be both Apollonian and Dionysian as well as both innocent (and hence victim) and vulnerable or endangered are not only limited to the Anglo or European world, but appear also in, for example, traditional Nigerian (Yoruba) society – see Aderinto (2012, p. 248)

[4] A formulation which Buckingham derived from (Thompson, 1990)

[5] It is arguably the moral panic around the publication of a children's book (called *Jenny lives with Eric and Martin*), aiming to explain different types of family, which resulted in the introduction by the Conservative Government of the day of the (in)famous Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 which "prohibited local authorities from "intentionally promot[ing] homosexuality or publish[ing] material with the intention of promoting homosexuality", as well as from "promot[ing] the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship". The clause was repealed in 2003. See Wilson et al. (2018).

[6] (Petty, 2009)

[7] (*More calls to axe C4 child show*, 2009)

[8] (Plunkett, 2009)

[9] It should be added that Messenger and Mosdell also wrote the following about the programme: "Despite production pressures to control and monitor children"s behaviour and responses to the show, *Mad for It* …could be seen as an example of good practice in the application of regulations; it was aimed at children, children appeared in the show voluntarily and regulations designed both to protect and enable children were referred to and applied at each stage of the production." (2001, p. 56)

Chapter 2: Methodology and Ethics

In the Introduction to my thesis, I outlined the background and rationale for my study, leading me to formulate my research question. In doing this, I also described my investigation as practice-based. In this chapter, I discuss the methodology for my research project, clarifying the ways in which it addresses the research question and my underlying research aims/objectives. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the ethical considerations of my research and, in particular, of working with children.

Methodology

The Practice/Exegesis Model

To investigate the documentary film representation of children's play and childhood and address the research question, my study uses a practice/exegesis research design consisting of two elements.

The first element is a 40-minute documentary film of the playground cultures of two English primary schools between 2009-2011 (*ipidipidation my generation!)*, made as part of the multi-institutional, two-year AHRC Beyond Text project: *Children's Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age*. For brevity and legibility, the title of my film will generally be shortened to *IMG* in the remainder of my thesis.

My film is conceived as a record of children's play produced through the reflexive encounter between filmmaker and participants and as an intervention into the documentary genre - with the aim of critically informing documentary film practice and encouraging, through its mode of representation, methods and techniques, reflection on representations of children's play cultures and what these convey about children's agency and expertise in their play and more broadly. As well as being attentive to the sensory, experiential and affective dimensions of film practice, the film draws on ethnographic and observational approaches to documentary filmmaking

while also using a variety of interview methods to contribute knowledge about children's play culture and children's descriptions, expressions and views concerning this play.

The second element of my research is this written exegesis which further addresses my research aim to articulate and explicate the documentary representation of children's play - critically investigating documentary as a medium of representation and as a site of discourse(s) about the child, childhood and play culture(s). It does this through a review, analysis and discussion of sequences from my own and selected other documentary films of children's play and through contextualising and theorising my practice intervention by means of analysis and interpretation that articulates my discussion and findings.

My research aims and question position my study within a constructionist theoretical framework, in which meaning is socially constructed rather than discovered (Crotty, 1998) and is therefore situated and fluid. This position differs from a positivist perspective that assumes objective and measurable knowledge, though it allows for the existence of a "real" world, while nonetheless maintaining that knowledge and understanding of this world is socially constructed and mediated through perspectives and experiences - which are also socially and culturally affected. My investigation is thus conducted within a qualitative tradition which regards inquiry and the observer as situated and contextual rather than value-free or objectivist. Critiques of qualitative research have been made on the grounds that it fails to comply with the criteria of quantitative research – for example that results cannot be scaled up and generalized (Hammersley, 2008). However, such critiques ignore the different approaches required to address different research problems or questions. For example, whereas quantitative research generally looks for instances of specific occurrences, qualitative research aims to focus on meaning-relevant qualities or "differences in forms of things that make a difference for meaning" (Erickson, 2018, p. 36).

Concurring with Denzin and Lincoln's position that qualitative methods involve interpretive and material practices that produce representations of

the world and that qualitative research involves an interpretive approach to the study of phenomena (2018), my project adopts a practice research and interpretative methodology in seeking to investigate the representation of children's play culture in documentary film. It uses filmmaking methods to intervene in the representational practices of documentary and ethnographic filmmaking, contributing knowledge through film practice as a form of research (MacDougall, 2019) and in the exegesis, makes use of analytical and heuristic methodological frameworks such as multimodality to interpret my film – see, for example, Kress (2010), Burn (2014) and Jewitt (2014). In adopting the above framework and methodology, I am also acknowledging the underlying subjectivities and limitations of the observer, as well as their insights. Moreover, although I use some traditional research methods and this exegesis uses scholarly techniques of argumentation and evidence, I make no claim to the universality or replicability of this knowledge production. My research stance in this study is one of exploration and experimentation and as stated in the introduction, my investigation is designed to articulate, draw attention to and further address the research question, rather than testing a hypothesis. I nonetheless retain the goal of contributing useful knowledge and a positive impact within and beyond the academy.

Practice Research

Whilst all research involves practice of some kind, the term "practice-based research" has, in the arts and humanities, generally come to be accepted as describing a research paradigm which incorporates a substantial element of creative practice.[1] Debates have nonetheless abounded on whether creative practice on its own is sufficient to stand as a body of research or whether some form of exegesis needs to accompany the practice output – see, for example, the PARIP symposia and conferences (*Practice as Research in Performance: 2001-2006*, 2006) and the articles by Bell (2006, 2008), Burgin (2006) and Christie (2008). These debates also raised questions about the relative hierarchies of – and biases towards – text-based outputs in the academy, compared to visual and performative outputs. Here disciplinary and institutional traditions also come into play, along with debates on how to

measure and value practice outputs not conforming to the traditional text-based structures of academic dissertations – see, for example, the Australian debates outlined by Fitzsimons (2015). The issues of "peer review" processes in relation to practice and how practice outcomes may enter the public domain, have also been a cause for discussion (Adams, 2007).

Although the issues outlined above continue to be debated and practice-based research still remains a relatively rare paradigm outside of art and design, research that includes a creative practice component has nonetheless become more widely accepted in the academy at large – both in grant funded and doctoral research, with different forms of practice-based research emerging to encompass the requirements of different disciplines, institutions and funding bodies. For example, the *Children's Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age* large grant project led by UCL Institute of Education and funded by the AHRC *Beyond Text* programme, comprised a number of practice-based creative research projects including my documentary film *IMG* and an innovative motion capture system and research tool, the *Game Catcher* (Mitchell, 2014).

A variety of terms now exist to describe methodologies that include creative practice (Skains, 2018). These have different propositions and outcomes for different disciplines and commentators and they continue to be contested and debated – see, for example, Smith and Dean (2009), Kerrigan (2017) and Batty and Kerrigan (2018). For the purposes of my research, however, I have adopted "creative practice research" as a useful term to describe my methodology, borrowing from Batty and Kerrigan (2018, p. 7). The term, although initially appearing somewhat broad, nonetheless provides a helpful designation to situate my documentary film as *creative* practice, situated at "the centre of the research project" (2018, p. 7). As such, it helps to delineate a distinction between my film and others – such as news and current affairs reporting, essayist films, films of persuasion, and those which strictly document science experiments or phenomena.

Any such distinction can, however, only be one of degree and is based on many variables. Prost, for example, acknowledges that films are not

inherently in any one camp and that the difference is one of purpose "rather than a dichotomy of mutually exclusive types" (2003, p. 287). Lajoux argues that different types of film including ethnographic film, documentary, advertising and newsreel can all be data depending on the research aims (2003, p. 167) and that "creative" films with ethnographic themes can also have a research purpose (2003, p. 172). In attempting to "grasp the multiformity" of ethnographic film, Pauwels draws a distinction between films of mimesis and those of "scientifically motivated expression" conceding however that "this crude dichotomy…only reflects part of the existing diversity" (2004, p. 43).

My use of the term "creative practice research" is not, therefore, to set up dichotomies, but rather points to my quest to produce a documentary film that not only contributes to knowledge of the subject matter (children's play cultures), but also provides, through filmic methods, a different way of interpreting, knowing and understanding: seeing and hearing from different angles; tracing new parallels and drawing out new connections. Adopting a creative practice methodology also acknowledges an experimental stance towards practice and this fits the conceptual framework of my project, as my research practice is construed as an intervention and experimentation in the representation of children's play in documentary, questioning more conventional approaches. In this context, I define as creative, practice which takes as its mission the exploration of new territory - revisioning the familiar, devising novel ways of practicing or innovative techniques (though these need not be big, nor iconoclastic).

A useful metaphor for creative practice research, used by Haseman (2006) in his elaboration of "performative research" is J. L. Austin's concept of the "performative" sentence where, in the appropriate circumstances, "to utter the sentence is not to *describe* my doing…or to state that I am doing it: it is to do it" (1962, p. 6 author's emphasis). In other words: "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action" (ibid).[2] Thus, for my conception of creative practice research, the performative utterance (creative practice) is

an inherent component of the act (research), rather than an addendum to it as, for example, an illustration appearing as part of the exegesis.

In this project, the concept of research by documentary film practice was intrinsic to the research rationale and question, as well as to the aims of the AHRC-funded large project of which it was a part. I am therefore sympathetic to Haseman's argument that the outputs and knowledge claims of practice research presentations can and should be placed at the heart of the research and not be merely instrumental asides to the dissertation (2006). Haseman also argues that such research should eschew "trying to translate the findings and understandings of practice into the numbers (quantitative) and words (qualitative) preferred by traditional research paradigms" (2006, p. 101). I agree that if what is meant is merely *transferring* findings from a creative practice mode into a different mode (say from film to a dissertation), such a move would generally be unsatisfactory and would fail to effectively capture the experiential, sensory and other nuances and understandings arising from the film itself. For this reason, I am also sympathetic to Haseman's insistence that practice researchers be allowed to express their findings solely through their practice, in cases where that is appropriate.

However, whilst I am not defending a traditional hierarchy of research methodologies or the academic convention that insists on the supremacy of the written text, I nonetheless personally find value in writing - not as a means to *transfer* my practice into text, but as a way in which to further explore, analyse and discuss issues, concepts and theories that arise *as a result of* my own and other practice. This form of meta exploration, articulation and argumentation is I believe, better achieved in written text - due to the possibilities or affordances of writing that are not superior to the image, but can be used to differently address the research. Moreover, in a research setting, an accompanying text can serve to contextualise the film practice (which may not be evident from the work itself) and, at a practical level, provide explanatory production and other information that again may not feature in the artefact, as to do so would detract from or interfere with the work as it is intended to be presented and viewed. It is important to

emphasize that I am not calling for all practice to be accompanied by written text. However I also believe that research which includes both a practice and written element is not less creative because of it. The two elements of my research are conceived as two independent outputs. In other words, they can be understood as "cousins": related but different elements, that each expand the horizon of the other, similar to Elkins' idea of mutualism where "the idea is to have the image work with or against the text, but not simply *for* the text" (2013, p. 30 author's emphasis).

The term *creative practice research* also points to the choices, selections and subjectivities that are inherent in most documentary films, especially once the recorded material has been shaped by means of an editing process. Arguably, the same could be said for ethnographic writing – and has been, most notably by Clifford and Marcus (1986) – contesting the idea of the "scientifically objective" ethnographer and their transparent apprehending of other cultures. The transparency of the documentary camera and filmmaker have likewise been challenged – for example, by Winston (2008), and due to the insights of Kuhn (1963) and Foucault (1972), it is also now commonly accepted that all research (whether practice-based or not) takes place within particular contexts which themselves are constituted by paradigms and discourses.

The Role of the Film

A crucial aim of the two-year AHRC-funded *Playground Games* project, of which my film was a constituent element, was to investigate and record the play cultures of the primary school playground at a time of heightened apprehension that traditional play was losing out to videogames and the internet, resulting in sedentary, anxious and anti-social children (Buckingham, 2000). Responding to the debates about a "disappearing" or "toxic" childhood attributed to screen-based entertainment (Palmer, 2006; Postman, 1994), a further aim was to enquire about the relationship between traditional childhood games and media-based games (Burn & Richards, 2014).

These aims dovetailed with another important project objective: to update the work of Iona and Peter Opie, independent researchers who recorded and documented "the people in the playground" and "the lore and language of schoolchildren" across England over a period of nearly four decades. Between 1969 and 1983, Iona Opie made 137 audio recordings as part of her research for *The Singing Game* (Opie & Opie, 1985), containing 85 hours of games, songs, rhymes and accompanying explanations, mostly collected from unnamed children. These lively recordings, now held by the British Library[3] were made by Iona Opie, using a portable tape recorder on open reel or cassette tapes, as background research and not intended for public distribution. Given the fast-moving chatter of the playground, audio recordings were more convenient than taking written notes in situ – and easier than audio-visual recording which, at the time, was expensive, bulky, technically demanding and intrusive.

It is clear from listening to these recordings that there is a wealth of related additional information embedded in the audio – which though perhaps not intentionally collected, may nonetheless be of great interest to researchers from a variety of disciplines. This includes material such as accent, intonation, vocabulary and speaker gender (Jopson et al., 2014). However, in contemplating the ways in which to update this work thirty to forty years later, it seemed archaic and counterproductive to stay with audio-only recordings rather than audio-visual – especially given that the latter technology was also far easier to use than previously. In addition, audio-visual recording was more suited to documenting the expressivity and ephemerality of children's play as it could record the embodied actions, gestures and gazes – not just the verbal and aural expressions of play. It also allowed us to document the play spaces and situate children's activities within these environments in order to understand the relationship between the two. The transcript included with this exegesis (see Appendix 14) amply demonstrates the wealth of multimodal interaction facilitated by audio-visual recording.

Visual Methods: Photography and Film in the Human Sciences

While it is sometimes forgotten, visual methods were highly developed in the natural and human sciences before the arrival of photography. Sera-Shriar (2014) describes how 19th century observational practices predated ethnographic fieldwork and derived from sophisticated pre-existing techniques in natural history, anatomy and physiology. Early anthropologists and explorers, many trained in the natural sciences, borrowed the observational and representational practices of this earlier "visual epistemology" (Bleichmar, 2012, p. 8) and set about describing the world visually. MacDougall explains that 19th century ethnographic and exploration literature is "filled with line drawings of implements, body decorations, costumes, jewellery and architectural details" (1997, p. 281).

Discussing the 19th century production of scientific atlases, Daston and Galiston describe the shift of scientific image making from a 17th and 18th century idealisation of the typus as "truer to nature – and therefore more real – than any actual specimen" (2007, p. 60) to a "mechanical objectivity", responding to fears by scientists that in matters of scientific enquiry, the illustrator was prone to idealise and regularise observations.[4] Scientists saw in photography the ability to produce images "untouched by human-hands" and which favoured "the possibility of minimizing intervention, in hopes of achieving an image untainted by subjectivity" (Daston & Galison, 2007, p. 43).

Thus, the alignment of photographic images with the production of scientific knowledge was made early on. In 1839, Daguerre's photographic process (the *daguerreotype*) was introduced to the members of the French *Académie des Sciences* by scientist and politician, François Arago, who appealed to the government to purchase Daguerre's patent, likening photography to other observational instruments critical to modern science, such as the thermometer and the microscope (Winston, 2008, p. 135). The argument succeeded and Daguerre's patent was purchased and made public. By 1875, the camera had been comprehensively accepted as a legitimate scientific tool (Rothermel, 1993, p. 140).

Photography appeared at the same time as institutions and practices claiming the name of ethnology and anthropology and according to Pinney (2011) was quickly espoused.[5] Chaplin (1994) connects the beginnings of social science in the U.S. with the photographs of Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine and discusses how early volumes of the *American Journal of Sociology* (1896-1916) featured thirty one articles that used photographs as illustrations or evidence and "pressed for 'social amelioration', since photographs 'force a confrontation with reality'" (1994, p. 198 citing Stasz 1979 p.134).

Photography in early British anthropology served different purposes with early proponents seeing themselves as working within the traditions of the biological sciences, "applying rigorous method to their data and analysis" with "classification as the primary aim for ordering and thus understanding" within an evolutionist model of analysis (Edwards, 1998, p. 25). Photographs from the far-flung corners of empire, obtained from a wide variety of sources such as missionaries, colonial administrators, travellers and dealers, stood in for "being in the field" and circulated through a network of meetings and learned societies. However, concerns about quality and reliability led to attempts to direct collecting practices and systematize data (Sera-Shriar, 2015).

Photography's evidentiary potential was put to use in discerning and classifying racial and criminal types and Edwards argues that the convergence of eugenics, photography and notions of scientific reference led to a discourse in which photographic portraits represented "types" rather than individuals "making the abstract visible and tangible" (1998, p. 28). However, by the last decades of the 19th century, some voices in anthropology were calling for a change. For example, Everard im Thurn argued against anthropometric anthropology, emphasising a cultural relativist approach which attempts to understand and convey the reality of the subject, even though his own images did not always comply (1893). Other voices advocated for a continuation and improvement of the status quo. For example, M.V. Portman maintained that properly taken photographs with added written explanations provided satisfactory answers to the questions in

Notes and Queries on Anthropology (the British anthropological field research guide of the period).[6]

Anthropologists were early adopters of film technology and in 1898, just three years after the Lumière Brothers' initial public screening, the first filming by anthropologists in the field took place on the Torres Strait expedition led by Alfred Court Haddon – who later also encouraged filming on the 1901 Walter Baldwin Spencer expedition to central Australia.[7] The Torres Strait expedition also made extensive use of photography, returning with around 500 photographs as well as voice recordings on wax cylinders. Edwards describes the expedition as marking "the beginning of anthropologically informed field photography" in what one could describe as a "proto-modern sense" (Edwards, 1998, p. 41) given its emphasis on the everyday, ritual and material culture and a more unmediated and contextual style of photographic representation (although physical "types" continued to be recorded). A similar example is Franz Boas' work with the *kwagulth* (previously referred to as Kwakiutl)[8] in 1894 and his deployment of the professional photographer, O. C. Hastings.[9]

Early enthusiasm for the photographic image was based on the belief that the camera as "apparatus" would produce objective, scientific, visual documentation – fitting in with the dominant ethos of anthropology at this time "with its emphasis on data-gathering, salvage ethnography and scientific procedure" (Henley, 2000, p. 208). This was followed, in the late 19th century, by a turn towards representation in film and photography that was more naturalistic, unmediated and contextualised.

At the same time, paradigm shifts began to appear in anthropology and despite Haddon's insistence that the Kinematograph was "an indispensable piece of anthropological apparatus" (Dunlop, 1979, p. 11 citing Haddon 1900), the interest in film and photography started to wane. Edwards suggests that a combination of factors including the shift in focus from visible appearances to (non-visible) social structures and beliefs resulted in photography being perceived as part of the "old anthropology" (1998, p. 43). She also mentions the passing of both the comparative method and, citing

Malinowski (1935, p. 460), the scientifically sterile "fetishistic reverence for an object of material culture", for which photography had been significant. Other reasons put forward include the development in anthropology away from a concern with visual detail, material culture and their preservation towards "more holistic descriptions of cultures" (MacDougall, 1997, p. 290).

These factors, together with a crisis of confidence in photography as unmediated truth, resulted in visual methods no longer being central to anthropological investigation and theorisation, but seen instead as mere illustration, documentation or a private form of note-taking in the field. Any hint of authorship was thought to compromise the archival value of recorded material and ethnographic films (as authored texts constructed from footage) were marginalised within the discipline, despite vast numbers of films with "some degree of ethnographicness" being produced in the period prior to WW2 (Henley, 2020, p. 29).

Elsewhere there were exceptions. Filming and photographing extensively during their fieldwork in Bali and New Guinea from the 1930s onwards, Mead and Bateson's work was the most prominent, producing seven edited films and two photographic ethnographies (from around 25,000 still photographs and 22,600 feet of 16mm footage). Jacknis (1988) claims that these were perhaps the first cultural representations to use images, coupled with texts, as the primary vehicles for making ethnographic arguments and analyses. MacDougall, however, points to a difference in position between Mead and Bateson, with Bateson having wanted "to conduct the enquiry by means of filming, but Mead had wanted to film first and analyse later" (1997, p. 79 citing Mead and Bateson 1977). Nonetheless, and contrary to their stated position at the time and which remained Mead's position throughout, Henley identifies Mead and Bateson's film *Trance and Dance in Bali* (1952) as being "a clear departure" from the use of the camera "merely as a recording instrument" (2020, p. 72).

Areas of tension remain regarding the value of visual approaches in research and scholarship. However, there has also been a growing acceptance that some aspects of knowledge and understanding are only accessible by non-

verbal and non-textual means. Although the camera is rightly no longer prized as an instrument of objectivity, it nonetheless has an important role to play in contributing knowledge particularly of the non-verbal, the affective, the experiential, and the sensory. That visual methods in social, media and cultural research have moved on since the above debates is evidenced by the literature. See, for example, Crawford and Turton (1992), Banks and Morphy (1997), Banks (2001), van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001), Harper (2002), Burn and Parker (2003b), Pink (2007), Rose (2014), Jewitt (2014), and Bezemer (2017). The use of video in contemporary research with children has also become more commonplace. See for example, Sparrman (2005), Flewitt (2006), Aarsand & Forsberg (2010), Potter (2010), Pahl and Pool (2011), Lomax (2012), Cowan (2014), and Yamada-Rice (2017). There has also been a growing recognition in the research context that audio-visual recording provides, in addition to the verbal, a broad range of significant multimodal data such as gesture, facial expression, body postures and movement as well as other contextual information such as spatial and environmental data (see, for example, the analysis and discussion in Chapter Four and the associated transcript in Appendix 14).

With regard to my doctoral research, however, it is useful to expand on the distinction between raw footage and my finished film, particularly as this raw footage was also produced by researchers in the other ethnographic strand of the project (and by some of the children, as participant researchers, using "point and shoot" Flip Ultra cameras).[10]

Ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall, explains the difference between ethnographic films and ethnographic footage:

> Films are structured works made for presentation to an
> audience. They make manifest within themselves the
> analysis that justifies such a presentation. Films are
> analogous in this sense to an anthropologist's public
> writings or to any other creative or scholarly productions.
> Footage, on the other hand, is the raw material that comes
> out of a camera, and no such expectations attach to it. It

can perhaps best be compared to an anthropologist's field notes and may be used for a variety of purposes, including the making of films. (1978, p. 406)

Thus, the unedited video clips made by the ethnographic researchers and children in the two schools can be considered ethnographic *footage,* used in unedited form for research purposes, comparable to the audio recordings made by Iona Opie as research material for *The Singing Game* (Opie & Opie, 1985). Similarly, the "raw" (record) footage that I filmed can also serve as ethnographic data - though doing that alone would not address my research question to provide the analysis, within the film itself, that MacDougall refers to above.

Also, although it may have been possible to address my research question solely through a theoretical written exposition, this would nonetheless have been an unsatisfactory approach given my research aims, identified above and in the introduction, of making a practice-based intervention into documentary film – investigating, through film discourse, representations of children's play and ways of giving greater prominence, in documentary film, to children's ideas, views and expressions of their play culture. For these reasons, a film was required as the medium *for* this exploration, rather than simply using the footage as the subject *of* exploration (i.e., as data). As a result, it is useful to see the filmmaking process as a methodology (particularly within an ethnographic context), rather than treating the film solely as the output of research. As MacDougall explains in this conversation:

> [T]he filmmaker's "discoveries" become the fabric of the finished work, whereas a writer creates a new fabric built upon notes and the experiences of fieldwork. There is the film editing, to be sure, but the shots used in the film must always be those produced in the field at the moment of direct contact with the events. These cannot be "rewritten." There is therefore a constant sense of creation in

filmmaking, of being on the edge, of making fateful
decisions. (Barbash & Taylor, 1996, p. 381)

Banks also makes the point that while fieldnotes can be rewritten or even faked, "the things seen by the celluloid and heard by the magnetic tape can, for the most part, only be presented as they are or were (however fragmentarily)" (1990, p. 17). Although referring to earlier (pre-digital) filmmaking technologies, these comments are still relevant to my project as my film is edited solely from "raw" footage as it was shot. Other than standard edits and one or two fades/dissolves (used only to avoid a jump cut), it has not subsequently been re-touched or otherwise manipulated. I discuss the shooting and editing processes in more detail in Chapter Four.

In addition to being an intervention in documentary practice and providing embodied and interactional ethnographic information about children's play, the film also has a role as a critical method (Callahan, 2015) that creatively highlights the "more than representational" (Lorimer, 2005) knowledge, afforded by documentary filmmaking. The term "more than representational" (also known as "non-representational") points to affective, experiential and sensory modes of apprehending and knowing. An increasing acknowledgement, from the late 1980s onwards, of the relevance of the senses in research and representation became known as a "sensorial turn" and was taken up, under different names, by scholars across a number of disciplines including the arts, anthropology, medical practice, sociology, design and architecture to name a few (Pink, 2009).

Following Thrift (2007), "non-representational theory" (to give it its original title) emerged in cultural geography as a critique of the intense focus on structural and post-structural systems of meaning and representation that had dominated the discipline in previous decades. This theory has since been taken up by scholars in a wide variety of other disciplines. Despite its somewhat awkward title, non-representational theory does not *per se* reject visuality, or deny the significance of the visual in the performance and reception of the many activities, interactions and practices that make up daily life – or in their documentation or artistic expression. Nor does it reject the

role of visual representation in the formation of social, cultural and political dispositions and attitudes. It does, however, question the absolute primacy of the sign, making a case for the importance of also attending to affective, experiential and sensory modes of meaning (which may resist, transgress or otherwise interfere with logic and reason).

While not denying the importance of the "more than representational", I would also nonetheless suggest that creative practitioners such as filmmakers, musicians, artists, and writers, have always attended to the affective reaches of their work (as an intrinsic part of it), but in the main have done so in the form of *tacit* knowledge, acquired through apprenticeship and practice of the medium, rather than by explicit teaching or learning – and that this aspect of their practice has remained un-theorised or under-theorised. I would also add that in shooting my film, where I worked on my own amongst the roiling roustabout activity of the playgrounds, I relied significantly on tacit, intuitive, empathetic and sensory awareness to observe and to film. I suspect that the same also happens in other examples of fieldwork, even though it may rarely be mentioned.

Burn (2014) informs us how film operates as a multimodal medium, through an orchestrated layering and shaping of different modes of signification (visual, gestural, spoken, musical etc.). However, as non-representational theory reminds us, film is not solely a "text" to be read by the disembodied Cartesian mind, it is also an "emotion machine" (Tan, 1996) – one that connects our affective embodied selves with the events on screen, through our empathetic channels. Empathy works in us by mirroring what we expect the on-screen subject is feeling. In other words, we feel what we interpret the other is feeling: their sorrow or joy. Thompson explains that empathy is not only a matter of feeling, but also a way of knowing ourselves, our world and our fellow creatures:

> [T]he intersubjective openness of consciousness and empathy are the preconditions for our experience of inhabiting a common intersubjective, spatial world. (2001, p. 19).

We can thus start to understand how the affective dimensions of film can provide amplified, additional or alternative knowing, through non symbolic conduits, working together with the domain of signs. Marks makes the point that it is the difference and interaction between these domains in film, that allows us to discover different ways of knowing.

> [T]he point is…to maintain a robust flow between
> sensuous closeness and symbolic distance, which we may
> also, following Peirce, call Firstness and Thirdness (2002,
> p. xiii).

In an earlier publication, Marks explains her notion of haptic visuality which she contrasts with optical vision - and describes it as a type of synaesthesia in which filmic viewing is experienced as touching: "I have been brushing the (image of the) fabric with the skin of my eyes, rather than looking at it" (2000, p. 127). In this encounter with film, sensory experience overtakes meaning, articulating affect and the unsayable. In his amusing paper from an international relations perspective, Callahan makes the case that whereas his documentary film, *Toilet Adventures* (2014), provides numerous facts, it is the affective recounting of two interviewees' experiences (complete with embarrassed laughter and cringing facial expressions) and the fast cutting juxtapositions between them that "carry much of the burden of the analyses" precluding the need for the film to make "meta-statements" that "efface affect in favour of explanation and interpretation" (2015, pp. 907-908). Non-representational aspects of my film are discussed in Chapter Four.

The Role of the Exegesis

A further aim of my research, in addition to those related to my practice, was to contribute knowledge to the academy through contextualising and theorising my film intervention and selected other documentary films on children's play, by means of a written exegesis that articulates my discussion and findings using analytical, comparative, interpretivist and reflexive methods. This dual (practice/exegesis) methodological approach to the study and representation of children's play is a good fit with my research topic, my

professional media and academic experience, and with the *Playground Games* project as a whole (given that the latter, as part of the Beyond Text programme, aimed to "break down traditional boundaries between practice-led or practice-based research and other forms of investigation" (*AHRC Beyond Text Research Programme Specification*, p. 2), in addition to emphasising non-textual communication as the subject of investigation.

Criticality is a crucial instrument of my doctoral discussion and a further function of the dissertation is to provide the basis for this through a review of previous practice, which is only possible through the conventional mode of written argument and critique. This is also the most appropriate format for evaluating my film: by subjecting it to the more conventional processes of moving image analysis, and comparison with other moving image texts. Thus, the written component of my doctoral submission explicates and substantiates the research purpose of my film, discussing the film's particular practice-based affordances for addressing the research question and its theorisation as contribution to the documentary genre. It also includes critical discussion of relevant literature and theory. In doing so it identifies that drawn upon to validate my research and findings. It also identifies, by means of visual and textual analysis of a selection of documentary films as well as extracts from my film, key cultural issues and rhetorics relating to the documentary representation of children's play, exploring how they are addressed in my and other documentary films of children's play to reveal "the space in which discursive events are deployed" and "to describe the interplay of relations within it and outside it." (Foucault, 1972, p. 29).

The dual practice/exegesis format of my submission also constitutes a "multimodal" approach to knowledge production - one in which there is an inter-complementarity between the experiential, sensory and affective information of moving pictures, and the more analytical and argument-based contribution of the exegesis with each able to inform the other. However, while complementary, each element in this dual format also requires different forms of apprehending. Reading words comprises a different cognitive process to viewing images, as does the resulting understanding. The film is

not an illustration of the written text and the written text is not an explication of the film, nor are the same things expressed in these two forms. Different cognitive domains are activated by film and written texts – for example, whereas both writing and film can be descriptive, watching a film sequence of an event is cognitively similar to experiencing the lived event (Grodal, 2006, pp. 3-4), whereas reading requires the skill of decoding symbols and layout, and the conceptual or ideational processing of words into meaning. Film and written texts also offer different domains of knowledge - writing is good at providing structural, theoretical and hermeneutic knowledge, whereas film excels at providing affective, performative, kinetic, proxemic, spatial and gestural knowledge, not to mention the additional knowledge provided by synchronised audio. Read as two parts of a whole, my film and this exegesis aim to mutually enhance the understanding that each element brings to the subject – even though both can nonetheless also "stand alone" as separate contributions to knowledge. Dowmunt makes a similar point when he states that "both text and film together are part of the overall 'theoretical enquiry'" (2009, p. 13) and cites filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-Ha:

> I theorise *with* my films, not *about* them. The relationship between the verbal, the musical and the visual, just like the relationship between theory and practice, is not one of illustration, description or explication. It can be one of inquiry, displacement and expansive enrichment (in Pearce & McLaughlin, 2008, p. 107 author's emphasis).

I first became familiar with the combination of theory and practice during my undergraduate degree in Film and Photographic Arts at PCL.[11] Victor Burgin (one of my tutors at PCL) describes how he and his colleagues designed the course around the question "What does a student need to know to establish the basis of a literate and informed practice in film and photography?" (2006). Through this, they devised a practice-theory model, which later became the template for other UK media degrees. This model is also elaborated in Burgin's suggestion of a practice-emphasis research degree, in which the output would be two components: a long, written essay and a substantial body of practice (ibid).

Within the context of doctoral research in the creative arts (incorporating fields such as film and television, design, museology, creative writing, theatre arts, journalism and fine art), Milech and Schilo (2004) discuss three models for a combined practice/exegesis research thesis – commentary, context and question – arguing that the "question model" is the one best suited as each component is conceptualised as an independent answer to the same research question and does so "through the 'language' of a particular discourse" (2004, p. 6). This last proposition is somewhat ambiguously worded – though I take it to mean, in terms of my research, that the respective particularities of writing and film - each with their own possibilities and affordances, rules and conventions - enable different communicative modes and therefore result in different forms of knowledge such as, for example, "knowledge as meaning" and "knowledge as being" (MacDougall, 2005, pp. 5-6). Milech and Schilo's "question model" is also useful in accentuating the autonomy of each component whilst maintaining that both form part of a whole in addressing the research question. The "question model" is unifying in that it rejects the usual divides between practice and written articulation or exposition, whilst retaining their individual communicative and ideational affordances similar to the related but distinct "cousins" referred to earlier, with each amplifying the understanding of the other. The model is also helpful in that it emphasises, including at the theoretical level, a respect for "the authority, autonomy, languages and conventions of the disciplines that produce creative works and production pieces" and asks that "such works be 'read' (by examiners) on those terms, and not as something which needs an explanatory gloss" (2004, pp. 6-7).

Using Milech and Schilo's model, I describe my research as question-based because my research addresses a question that emerged out of a preliminary investigation into documentary films about children's play. It is also practice-based because documentary film practice and its outcomes lie at the heart of the research problem and question - and are addressed through a methodology that places film practice in a prominent position, side-by-side with the written exegesis (with both these forms representing different ways of knowing and understanding).

Ethics

While an ethical approach is essential for all research projects, this needs particular attention when conducting research with children, and especially with younger age-groups, given their relative immaturity and inexperience.

The AHRC *Playground Games* project was multi-institutional, with each investigation led by a Co-Investigator based in one of the participating Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). At the time, I held an academic post at the University of East London and my practice research was therefore submitted to and approved by the members of the Research Ethics Committee in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of East London (see Appendices).

As part of the AHRC *Playground Games* project, my research was conducted using the *BERA Guidelines for Ethical Research* (2004). These guidelines provide principles for ethical conduct in research and are designed to protect participants and researchers. Any research must of course also comply with legal requirements in relation to working with children. All researchers on the wider project had obtained the relevant clearance at the time for working with children (CRB).

As the BERA guidelines state, an ethic of respect towards anyone involved, directly or indirectly in the research undertaken is the basis for ethical conduct and implies a set of responsibilities on the part of researchers. BERA also requires researchers to comply with Articles 3 and 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

I discuss below how these requirements and responsibilities were addressed in relation to my study,

Voluntary and Informed Consent Including the Right to Withdraw

Article 3 of UNCRC requires that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration. As Alderson

suggests, "[c]onsent is the central act in ethics" and valid consent is properly informed, specific, and freely given (2020, pp. 129-130). I discuss below the process in seeking informed consent for my study.

As my study was conducted as part of the *Playground Games* project, consent was sought in conjunction with the other projects and research teams. Given the complexity and scale of the Playground Games project (comprising a large ethnographic study, three practice-based investigations, and over 500 potential children participants), it was important, from an ethical standpoint, not to overwhelm or confuse participating children and their parents/carers with numerous separate information documents and requests for consent.

The project team as a whole therefore worked together to agree on a single set of information leaflets and consent documents for each school, that addressed all the project strands of the *Playground Games* project. In addition, it was agreed to provide parents/carers, participants and staff in each school, with a single point of contact in the Playground Games research team who would be able to answer queries about the project (if necessary, seeking information from individual project leads).

Children, parents/carers and school staff also each received an appropriate information leaflet and consent form. A traditional view has been that younger children in particular lack sufficient competence to give their consent. However this appears to be contradicted by Stanley et al. (1995, p. 400) who suggest that the competence of elementary school children is generally underestimated.

The two schools requested different consent requirements resulting in an opt-in process for the school in Sheffield and an opt-out process for the school in London, and slightly different forms. In addition to the information leaflets, parents/carers were also invited to specially arranged sessions in each school in advance of the project start so that they could meet the researchers, find out more about the project, and have any questions answered.

Nonetheless, consent is not just a one-off exercise and following Flewitt's notion of "provisional consent" (2005), I ensured, through discussion and negotiation, that consent was sought as an ongoing process throughout my study. Seeking ongoing consent extended from initial contact, throughout the film production and post-production periods. Screenings for all children, staff and parents/carers for both schools were arranged after the film was completed. This allowed school staff, children and their parents/carers to evaluate the film as a whole and, in the case of school staff and children, their on-screen appearances, and ask for them to be removed if they required. They did not need to explain or justify their reasons to request removal. Nonetheless, no objections were received from school staff, the children or from parents/carers.

Article 12 of the UNCRC gives children the right to have their views heard and taken seriously. The implication for the project is that all children have a right to participate in the research project and have their views heard. This information was communicated in the information leaflets and in discussions with children in the school.

The filming and editing process was also explained to children, clarifying that while I hoped to record as many children as I could, it was possible that not everyone would be included in the final version of the film.

Privacy and Anonymity

Confidentiality and the anonymising of personally identifiable data are considered the norm when conducting research. While consideration was given to using visual anonymising methods such as blurring, I took the view that while such a solution may be meaningful in situations where children were divulging sensitive information, it would be counterproductive in relation to the research question and in terms of the visual information about children's play that filming provided. Another important consideration, which relates to Article 12 of UNCRC, is that by having the right to participate and providing their (ongoing) consent, it followed that children would also have the right to be properly recorded and presented in the film, rather than

appearing as an anonymised blur. The information leaflets and consent forms informed participants and parents/carers that filming for a documentary would be taking place (with the possibility of public screenings and broadcasts) and that children were able to withdraw consent at any time. The option to withdraw consent was also communicated in ongoing discussions with children, as part of the ongoing provision seeking of consent.

Data Protection

The recordings made on digital video tapes, were safely stored under lock and key during filming and post-production and I was the only person who had access to the recorded film material.

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[1] See also, for example, the broad definition of research in the REF 2021 submission guidance (Appendix C, items nos. 1 and 2) available from: https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1092/ref-2019_01-guidance-on-submissions.pdf (accessed 10-07-2023).

[2] Some examples of the "performative" used by Austin are: "I do" in a marriage ceremony (though an acknowledged error, the example holds); "I give and bequeath" in a will and "I bet" in a wager (1962, p. 5)

[3] See The Opie Archive (*The Opie Archive*, n.d.) and The Opie Collection of Children's Games and Songs (*The Opie Collection of Children's Games and Songs*, n.d.)

[4] See for example the description of Arthur Worthington's attempts to record splashes of liquid in his attempt to understand fluid flow, in Dalston and Galison (2007, pp. 11-16)

[5] For example, daguerrotypes by Thiesson, of a Botocudo man and woman (a paleoamerican people from south eastern Brazil), were displayed to the French Academy of Sciences in 1844 by anatomist Etienne Serres – who in the same year published short observations on the usefulness of photography in studying races, and in 1852 published further observations on anthropological photography. Among the earliest photographs in British Collections are a pair of photographs of skulls dated 1854 and captioned '*Gallerie d'Anthropologie du Museum*' [sic] - found in an album compiled by J. Barnard Davis (medical doctor, collector and craniologist). See (Pinney, 2011, p. 18)

[6] For a history of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, see Urry (1972)

[7] See Henley (2013) for a detailed discussion of the filming by Haddon and Baldwin Spencer

[8] Kwakiutl is an anglicisation of *kwagulth*, the name of the group Boas primarily studied. Kwakwaka'wakw is a more comprehensive name, adopted since the 1980s and applicable to all the local groups speaking the Kwak'wala language. See note 58 on p.76 in (Henley, 2020, p. 76)

[9] For an extensive account, see Jacknis (1984)

[10] The children's recordings are included in the British Library Collection: *Children's Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age*

[11] The Polytechnic of Central London (formerly the Regent Street Polytechnic) – now the University of Westminster.

Chapter 3: Children's Play in Documentary and Ethnographic Film

This chapter begins with an examination and discussion of key themes and perspectives informing my research. Following this, I survey a selection of ethnographic and documentary films featuring children's play. I conclude by comparing and drawing out commonalities and differences in the film treatment and representational discourses of children's play as presented in these films.

Representational Rhetorics of the Child

Images of children were not new to the 19th century. However, the advances of that period in mechanical reproduction (print-making, photography, and then moving pictures) fuelled an explosion in the use and popularity of child images that continues today. The Victorian captivation with the child was sparked by a variety of factors including English Romanticism, as exemplified by Wordsworth's view of childhood and his writing on nature and the child (Ward, 1986), as well as an explosion in research about the physiological and cognitive development in humans which resulted in a fresh conceptualisation of "childhood" and "the child". The fixing of the category of childhood was further reinforced by the introduction of mass schooling and by the clearer picture of child development created by the advancing "practices of child psychology, developmental linguistics and anthropometry" (Steedman 1995 p. 7).

Importantly, the second half of the 19th century also saw a large increase in the brand-focused advertising of consumer goods, driven by the development of lithography and colour printing which created a valuable association between image and product (Church, 2000). Children in sentimental poses frequently featured in these branding and advertising

images. A notable example is John Everett Millais' painting, *Bubbles* (1886), used to advertise Pears Soap. However, one of the most well-known and popular images of the period was of a child crying – an interesting image as it combines the scientific and the sentimental. The picture, later known as *Ginx's Baby* (1872), was commissioned by Charles Darwin from Oscar Rejlander for his research on human expression (Darwin, 1872). The image sold over 60,000 prints and a quarter of a million *cartes-de-visite* (Prodger, 1999). Technical problems meant that Rejlander's photograph lacked contrast and was too small for publication, so he simply traced over an enlargement of it – meaning that the published image was not actually a photograph. Nonetheless, Lebeau argues that this image is highly significant as an example of the "Victorian interest in, and commodification of, the image of the child" (2008, p. 10) and that it was a driver of the subsequent interest that cinema had in children.

Children and play featured in film from its inception. For example, many of the Lumière brothers' *actualités* featured children. They were filmed playing in the sea: *Baignade en mer* (1895), having a pillow fight: *Bataille d'oreillers no.2* (1897), playing "teatime": *Le gouter des bébés* (1897) or being fed: *Le repas de bébé* (1895). Holland describes the 19th century popularity of child images and the "cult of childhood" (2004, pp. 8-9), and Lebeau argues that cinema of the 1890s and early 1900s "*moved in on* the child" (2008, p. 7) and that this came in the midst of the (already-existing) "Victorian compulsion to represent the child" (2008, p. 8). Drawing on already-existing cultural tropes and discourses of the Victorian period, early cinema and the "child pictures" initiated the trajectory and discourses of the child in both fiction and non-fiction film, as well as a set of visual positions for the child as cinematic subject. Moreover, despite the apparent indexicality to "real life", the medium of film does not just *show* – its persuasiveness and popularity also helps to *shape* perception of the recorded subjects, configuring the field of vision and the representation of childhood and the child.

The Victorian compulsion to represent the child has hardly abated. Holland argues that childhood "lends itself to spectacular presentation" and children

"hold a special place in the imagery of our times" (1992, p. 8) and contemporary representations of children continue to be widespread. James et al. describe the long-standing but persistent models of childhood that have become, over time, discourses of conventional wisdom enveloping the child and "informing everyday understandings of childhood" (1998, pp. 3-21) including in visual media and other representations, as can be seen in the tropes of the innocent or evil child discussed in Chapter One.

Nonetheless, although there are calls for children's voices to be heard more widely, we have seen that children have very little say in how they are represented, particularly in mainstream media, even though they have clearly demonstrated having coherent opinions (Messenger Davies & Mosdell, 2001)

Childhood Culture and Rhetorics of Play

Although subject to some historical and cultural differences, there is general agreement that all children play and it is seen as one of the defining characteristics of childhood – something that all children have in common and which differentiates their world from that of the adult (Bergen & Fromberg, 2015; Kehily & Swann, 2003). In contesting traditional theories and concepts of childhood and the child, influential scholars working within the framework of the new sociology of childhood have questioned the previous epistemological status of children's lore and culture as a distinctive collection of traditional cultural practices, passed on, swapped and practiced exclusively among children and set apart from the "adult world". For example, James et al. problematize the idea of children's play and lore as childhood culture, proceeding to test a series of arguments against this notion in order to discern its validity (1998, pp. 81-100). In the series of statements concluding different stages of their assessment they nonetheless acknowledge the existence of children's culture as a context in which children's social relations are enacted (and can be described). They go on to agree that childhood culture is also a temporal site of cultural production,

transmission and reproduction, characterised by fluidity and movement (as opposed to preserving ossified cultural forms), taking place within a generational peer group culture, in particular spatial locations away from adults (such as playgrounds, bedrooms or the street). Thus, critiqued and discussed through the perspective of the new sociology of childhood, children's culture has nonetheless been found to constitute distinct practices of cultural production and reproduction for and by children. These conclusions align with what I found filming *IMG* and can also be seen, differently represented, in the films surveyed below.

Play scholar Sutton-Smith lists seven rhetorics of play[1] noting that while they are presented as "implicit narratives" and therefore seen as "naturally occurring", they are instead discourses of persuasion about play and imbued with ideological values (1997). In doing this, Sutton-Smith also alludes to the wider rhetorics applied to childhood (1997, p. 14), similar to those discussed in James et al. (1998) and James and Prout (2015b), thus demonstrating how a discussion of play also reveals wider (adult) discourses about childhood and children: for example, how the rhetoric of play as progress appears to serve adult needs more than those of children (1997, p. 42). The concept of children as "adults-in-waiting" favours a developmental approach to play which Sutton-Smith calls the "progress rhetoric" (1997, p. 9). Lester and Russell (2008, p. 9) regard the developmental model as the dominant paradigm, indicating that it "has come to be seen as a self-evident truth" whilst warning of the lack of empirical evidence for this assumption. Other perspectives on childhood recalling the 18th century Romantic views of Rousseau and Wordsworth emphasise the relationship between childhood play, freedom and the outdoor environment, seeing this as the most conducive to children's health and well-being – see, for example, Frost and Sutterby (2017) or Moore (1997).

Documentary and Ethnographic Differences?

There are many views on what exactly constitutes a documentary film. Corner, for instance, defines it as:

> [T]he loose and often highly contested label given, internationally, to certain kinds of film and television (and sometimes radio programmes) which reflect and report on "the real" through the use of the recorded images and sounds of actuality. (1996 p.2)

But while most would agree (to some degree) with this definition, the form that this takes, the methods used, the level of verisimilitude, and even the definition of "the real" (as it relates to the work) are all open for debate. Nicholls acknowledges this difficulty in his chapter discussing the domain of documentary, saying that:

> Documentary as a concept or practice occupies no fixed territory. It mobilizes no finite inventory of techniques, addresses no set number of issues, and adopts no completely known taxonomy of forms, styles or modes.(1991, p. 12)

He goes on to say that "[a]t one level we might say documentary is what those who regard themselves as documentarists produce" (1991, p. 13). This circular definition arises because there is nothing about the materiality of a documentary film that inherently (in and of itself) defines the documentary film and all of the techniques used in a documentary film can be applied equally well in a fiction film. A film such as Peter Watkins's *The War Game* (1965) or *Punishment Park* (1971) may look, sound and act like a documentary, but be completely fictionalised. Conversely, a TV mini-series like Errol Morris's *Wormwood* (2017) may use extensive reconstructions and the narrative techniques of a fiction film but still, undeniably, be a documentary. Numerous other examples blur and stretch these boundaries in different ways.

Early cinema did not make a rigid distinction between fiction and non-fiction film and from 1895 to the 1920s, film programmes would include an eclectic mix of *actualité* (often local scenes or travelogues) and staged re-enactments of newspaper cartoons, such as the famous Lumière brothers' film *L'arroseur arosé* (1895). In other words, it mixed embryonic documentaries and embryonic narrative films with little distinction made between the two. The histories of documentary film and ethnographic film also overlap. One of the earliest long-form documentary films, *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty,1922), is also often described as an early ethnographic film. Although perhaps not ethnography in the strictest sense – as Flaherty was neither an academic, nor trained in ethnography, he nonetheless lived with the Inuit participants for sixteen months while making the film as a "participant observer" and it remains one of the few moving picture records of Inuit culture of the time. *Nanook* features dramatized scenes but as Henley (2020) reminds us, the meaning of the term "documentary" is not fixed or stable, and has changed substantially changed since the 1920s when it was not considered unusual to fictionalise documentary content. In alluding to the mutability of documentary's definition, Henley could also be describing ethnographic film. Documentary and ethnographic film continue to share similarities – for instance, in their mode of figuration (observational, participatory, reflexive) and in the choice and treatment of subject matter. For example, Kim Longinotto is known as an observational documentary filmmaker but covers subjects that could equally be considered ethnographic such as divorce in Iran (*Divorce Iranian Style*, 1998), female genital mutilation in Kenya (*The Day I Will Never Forget*, 2002), and women who live as men in Japan (*Shinjuku Boys*, 1995). There is therefore little consensus on what makes an ethnographic film or differentiates it from a documentary film (Friedman, 2020), though this position is critiqued by Ruby (1975).

Using Weitz's (1956) characterisation of art as an "open" concept, Plantinga (1997) argues that traditional definitions of the documentary are bound to fail as it too is an "open concept" and while its members may share "family resemblances", these aren't strong enough (particularly for works at the periphery, so to speak) to differentiate it from other categories, even ones

such as fiction film. Instead, he suggests using "stances" (1997, p. 17), drawing upon Wolterstorff's concept of "world projection" (1980) – that is to say, a projection of the world depicted in the representation. In this scheme, both the documentary and ethnographic film would typically take an assertive stance as their projected worlds are asserted as occurring in the world as portrayed. This contrasts with the fictive stance generally taken by a fiction film, which does not assert or maintain that the projected world is a true one, but simply invites the viewer to consider the projected state of affairs.

While strong similarities may exist between fiction and non-fiction films, they do not share what I would describe as their "ethical orientation". By this I mean that underlying the concept of both documentary and ethnographic film is their commitment to a form of honesty that what is shown is not made up or imaginary, even though it may be presented in a dramatized or staged manner.

Plantinga makes a similar point describing what he calls "asserted veridical representation" (1997, p. xiii), that is to say that when asserted or indexed as documentary or ethnographic, these films maintain a contract with the audience that what they are looking at are reliable guides to the pro-filmic scene, to what is being asserted as having taken place. However, in his discussion, Plantinga says that "[t]he filmmaker implicitly asserts veridical or truthful representation" (1997, p. xiv) whereas I would argue that a notion of *honesty* is more useful in this context as it precludes the controversial questions of where truth lies or to whom it belongs. I would also argue that the concept of honesty allows a wider palette of cinematic representation to be used – as the filmmaker can assert the authenticity of the representation (honesty) without having to maintain a strict indexicality between image and the pro-filmic (truthfulness).

I would also argue that this commitment to honest representation does not apply to fictional genres such as television drama, fiction film (including the Peter Watkins films mentioned above) or sub-genres such as historical fiction, even if based on lived events, as these representations only need stay true to their own imagined world. I also suggest that the idea of honesty

is what makes documentary and ethnographic film meaningful forms of filmmaking, as without it, these genres would fail to have an identity separate from fictional works. Of course, notwithstanding the above commitment (and perhaps because of it), documentary films have a great capacity to mislead and deceive, especially in their rhetorical or persuasive function (Plantinga, 1997), but this would in any case, be an ironic or (if duplicitous in intent) perverse use of the form. I would nonetheless argue that, in order to remain meaningful, documentary and ethnographic films need to maintain and uphold the commitment to honesty, even where lived events have been dramatized or where filmmakers deliberately render difficult the perception of the dividing line between truth and non-truth, for example as a means of demonstrating to viewers, how obfuscation is enacted by state agents and others – see, for example, Kahana (2021) on the films of Errol Morris. Moreover, the notion of and commitment to representational honesty allows for the possibilities of genuinely mistaken assertions (and their correction), while excluding any acceptance of misleading in bad faith.

Although, as we have seen, there may be nothing in terms of material and style that conclusively defines a documentary or ethnographic film, there is, according to Nichols, an "institutional formation" (1991, p. 14). Drawing on Lyotard's (1984) notion of institutional constraints and parameters (which encourages and privileges the institutional discourse and prevents discursive possibilities outside its bounds), Nichols argues that documentary filmmaking operates as a community of practice which "share[s] a common, self-chosen mandate to represent the historical world, rather than imaginary ones" (1991, p. 14). The discourses of this community, though not rigid and open to challenge, nonetheless separate what "can be said" from what "cannot be said" within documentary practice generally (and its subgenres).

Ethnographic film could likewise be said to operate as a community of practice – one that has been trained in anthropological methods and concerned with the subject matter of that discipline. However, as Pink (2007) states, the practice of visual ethnography (including ethnographic film) has escaped the original institutional boundary and is now widely used in other

disciplines. Therefore, in view of the blurred demarcation between documentary and ethnographic film and instead of maintaining exclusionary boundaries, adopting a stance of *honest representation* as discussed above, would in any case, seem a more useful approach, and where necessary, would nonetheless retain institutional relevance.

With the above debates in mind, the remainder of this chapter will examine a selection of films featuring children's play. As I discussed in my introduction, relatively few available documentary or ethnographic films take children's play as their sole or primary topic, However, even though the field was somewhat limited, I nonetheless feel that I was able to gather together an interesting and varied selection of films. The films are culturally and ethnically diverse, featuring play in the Global North and Global South, and cover an extended time period from 1957 (*One Potato, Two Potato*) to 2014 (*Let's Get the Rhythm*).

This analysis will explore the extent to which the films acknowledge and engage (whether consciously or not) with the discourses about childhood identified in Chapter One – and the way in which this is expressed through film language and other means. My intention here is not to provide an exhaustive survey. Instead, I have concentrated on the films which provide the most interesting insights in terms of my discussion, or in comparison with *IMG*.

Corner (1996) identifies the documentary genre as having three evidential and one associative mode for the use of the image and two evidential and one expositional mode for sound. He divides the evidential image mode into reactive (fly on the wall, limited scopic mobility) and proactive observationalism (observational with increased scopic mobility), with the third evidential mode being illustrative (the image is subordinate to verbal discourse). The fourth mode is associative (the images are engaged in producing an exposition or evaluation). The evidential sound modes are described as overheard exchange, testimony and expositional. This classification scheme provides an interesting framework, which my analysis will draw upon, together with Nichols' documentary modes: poetic,

expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative, and interactive (Nichols, 2017, p. 156).

While I am mindful that neither set of modes should be seen as a historical progression to a more "truthful" documentary form or linked with particular countries or periods, I nonetheless divide the films into groups to provide an additional structure to my analysis. The first contains two American films (*Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* and *Let's Get the Rhythm*); the second contains two British films (*One Potato, Two Potato* and *Dusty Bluebells*); and the third covers a selection of ethnographic films. My grouping should, however, be seen as "cutting across" modes, rather than seeking to impose any additional significance upon them (for instance, to relate them to specific locations, periods, or types of film). My brief analysis of the films in the final group should likewise not be taken as a comment on their quality or significance – it is simply due to the constraints of space.

Two American Films

Pizza Pizza Daddy-O (Lomax 1967)

Pizza Pizza Daddy-O was filmed in 1967 and was directed by the folklorist, Bess Lomax. It features a series of clapping games and songs performed by young black girls. At a surface level, there are similarities between *IMG* and *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*. For instance, both adopt a "chrono-logic" (Winston, 2008, pp. 113-123) and start similarly with black titles (with sound overlapping) and a slow fade in to show what appears to be the start of a play break (as both films open with a shot of children moving into an empty frame). In *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, most of the children rush to the climbing frames, running from one to another. At 1:08, a couple of children start playing a clapping game in the centre of the playground. More children join them and the clapping game shifts organically to form a ring. The image is frozen while there is a voice over, and when it returns, all twelve children are playing together in this central area.

The opening voiceover in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* says that "the following film was made on a Los Angeles playground early in 1968". However, we are not watching a normal playtime but, as the "Study Guide for Film *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*" (Lomax Hawes, 2003) informs us, one which has been set up mid-morning specifically for filming a specially selected group of fourth grade girls (9-10 years old). The voiceover here is not inaccurate, just economical with the truth – though Lomax is open about the conditions of filming in her Study Guide.

The film adopts a direct cinema shooting style using two 16mm cameras and recording the sound on an overhead boom microphone. Although two cameras are sometimes used to film two different events occurring in parallel, this is not what happened here – the children were grouped together in one big game and rendered this unnecessary. As a result, the two cameras were instead used to record the same action from two different angles with different framing – an equally valid use which allows the two shots to be intercut without jarring, using what is known as "continuity editing".

The positioning of the second camera is also significant. It could have been used handheld, at ground level, like the first camera (as the arrival of lightweight cameras that could film sync sound meant that this had, at the time, become a common approach in documentary film and news reporting). Instead, it is placed high up (possibly on a climbing frame) and looking down on the playground. Although this high angle wide shot allows us to see all of the children (and the entire clapping game), it also has other effects on the viewer – for instance, this type of high-angle shot is often used in narrative films to make a character seem vulnerable and these meanings naturally carry across to documentary film. Another effect of this angle is to distance the viewer: we are no longer "in" the playground with the children, we are "outside" looking "at" them. While used sparingly in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, it therefore also contributes to a more conventionally scientific feel in the film and this distancing effect is increased by the use of an off-screen narrator.

Through its voiceover and framing, *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* can be seen to be operating within a mixture of proactive observationalist (Corner) and expository (Nichols) modes. The film benefits from having sync sound to record the games and songs – yet in spite of this, the children are not given the opportunity to speak about their games, even though the technology was available and this omission therefore thus reinforces a dominant discourse in which children's voices are muted and ignored, even though the stated focus of the film is children's play culture.

In Sherman (2015), Lomax is quoted as saying:

> When I put on *Pizza*, what everybody said to me at that
> point was, "Why didn't you let the children talk about it
> themselves?" Well, (a) these are totally nonverbal children
> – most children are pretty nonverbal anyway…In the
> second place, no one would have understood them
> (p. 213).

These claims by Lomax are questionable, given the eloquence with which the children in *Let's Get the Rhythm* and *IMG* (to name but a few) talk about their play. As the film documents the girls' singing (and, to a lesser extent, the conversations between them), it is clearly inaccurate to describe them as nonverbal.

Some commentators also noted that the voice over in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* seemed unfitting. Bill Ferris, for instance, says "I'm strongly opposed to any narration which is not the voice of the people that you are working with…[W]hen that narrative voice of the scholar comes in you really resent his presence" (Sherman, 2015, p. 214). It is also noticeable, when viewed from a modern perspective, that while the narration talks about the games as being part of young Afro-American female culture, it is spoken by a white male. The commentary was controversial at the time, though it appears, however, to have been a deliberate and subversive step on Beth Lomax's part, perhaps drawing on the conventions (or clichés) of the Griersonian documentary and its imitators. She states:

> White audiences looked at [*Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*] and
> said to themselves "Aren't they cute and haven't they got
> rhythm?" And I began to feel that the film was going to do
> tremendous amounts of social harm, and I wrote an
> overblown beginning and hired a gentleman [Donald
> Freed, novelist and playwright], who happened to be, by
> the way, on the advisory committee of the [Black]
> Panthers, to narrate it in as "up-town, high-toney" a voice
> as he could, to in effect say, "This is an educational film. It
> is important. This is a dignified upper-class cultural
> presentation because we think it is important. We think
> you should look at it." The interesting thing is that it's had
> that effect and it worked exactly the way. I intended it to.
> (cited in Sherman, 2015, p. 213).

In any case, the fact that Lomax felt the need to use a white male narrator in order to have the content properly recognised in a research context, seems a clear indication of the triviality barrier at work in relation to filming children's play.

The use of a single boom mic (which Lomax says in the Study Guide was pointed out to the children beforehand) causes the games to be focused on one area of the playground – the centre – and perhaps also affects how they are played. This highlights the way in which a filmmaker can, through their actions, subtly structure the play which occurs. But conversely, it also shows the complexity of the relationship between the filmmaker and filmed – and how the subjects of a documentary can be aware of these structures and willingly collaborate within them.

One particular sentence stands out in the Study Guide essay which says that the children "referred to the entire session as 'the taping'". The word "taping" seems unusual in the circumstances because the documentary was shot on celluloid film, so this is not a phrase that the children would have picked up from the filmmakers - nor would they have used it at home as videotape was too expensive for domestic use at that time. They would, however, have

been familiar with this term from its use on television – as it was common for sitcoms, game shows and certain other programmes to be taped in front of a live studio audience (and for this to be announced at the start or end of the programme).

The comment about taping implies that the children were not entirely naïve about the shooting process, particularly as Lomax did a rehearsal shoot (without film in the cameras) to get the children used to being filmed. When the children place themselves under the boom microphone with what she describes in the Study Guide as "almost professional aplomb" (Lomax Hawes, 2003) it is because they have at least a passing familiarity with the process – possibly from the rehearsals, but conceivably also from having seen a boom microphone drop into shot in a live television show or be visible when switching from one camera angle to another. This is an example, perhaps, of how children's understanding of given situations (and their actions within these) are often underestimated.

Let's Get the Rhythm (Chagall 2014)

Let's Get the Rhythm: The Life and Times of Miss Mary Mack provides an interesting contrast with the more classically ethnographic *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, even though *Let's Get the Rhythm* uses footage from the earlier film and includes Bess Lomax Hawes (formerly Bess Lomax) as an interviewee.

Rather than concentrating on a single group of players in a single location as in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, *Let's Get the Rhythm* presents a historically and geographically diverse survey of clapping games. As well as containing excerpts from films such as *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, *Let's Get the Rhythm* also uses archive footage and images to present a narrative arguing that clapping games date at least from ancient Egypt and that they are played globally. A visual connection is also made between similar games played in parts of Africa and those found in the US. The young participants in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* were not interviewed, thus maintaining a hierarchy of academic over popular knowledge and adults over children, whereas in *Let's Get the*

Rhythm there are a number of interviews with children, a few of which feature prominently and others contributing sentences here and there. However, the interviews and comments of the young participants are interspersed with adult interviews ranging from older generations such as mothers, aunts and grandmothers to male and female academics and experts. While acknowledging the interesting contributions, a hierarchy is nonetheless established here too, with adult interviews fulfilling the "serious" role of academic, expert or elder opinion while children discuss "lighter" matters. To some extent, this mirrors the use of the commentary in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, though the effect here in *Let's Get the Rhythm* is softer and appears more inclusive. No doubt unintentionally, this hierarchical organisation of the material nonetheless implicitly enacts and reinforces the received view that children lack the competence to explicate their own play culture. To redress this long-standing imbalance, it may have been better to give children more interview "screen-time" than the adults or to conduct the interviews with children and adults separately.

As with all documentaries, *Let's Get the Rhythm* is shaped by its shooting schedule, budget and conditions, which in turn are reflected in its use of film language. Theorists often treat the "language" of a film as similar to the act of writing, even though the logistics of filmmaking make it very different. Making a documentary is an interactive process that is responsive to the subject matter and participants, and has technical, practical, financial and logistical constraints. Hence, the format of a documentary is often not preordained or inevitable and may only find its final shape in the editing. Even though the filmmaker will (to some degree) decide in advance what type of documentary they would like to make (for instance, its subject, approach, style and structure and length) and organise the logistics of the shoot around this (selecting participants, deciding on locations and filming equipment etc), once the filming starts, they nonetheless face a series of critical creative decisions about what to film and how to shoot it, knowing that once a moment is gone, it is lost forever. Some decisions – both before and during shooting – may be forced on them by practical constraints (limited access to locations or people) or technical issues (the number of cameras or camera

operators available or the practicalities of recording sound). However, the filmmaker has to live with the consequences of these decisions during the shoot and the editing.

Pizza Pizza Daddy-O was shot in a single location over a single continuous period, simulating a play break. This simulated "break" was in fact a specially arranged period in which the girls were taken out of class for filming. Making documentaries "in the field" generally means that filming takes place within the possibilities and constraints afforded by the location and the nature of the events being filmed, in addition to the participants. Budget is also a consideration, especially with independent or grant-funded productions. These possibilities and constraints in turn influence the shooting technique (for example, the availability and use of two cameras) and this in turn can influence the style of editing (which in the case of *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* includes using a continuity of action). Other decisions also follow from these choices and contribute to the end result. For instance, the use (and positioning) of the boom microphone is dependent on the position of the camera and the chosen lens. In the case of *Let's Get the Rhythm*, there was an extended shooting period (from 2007 to 2014) in which play was filmed with a wide range of participants and interviewees, in several locations. The filming was also supplemented by the video material that Chagall had already been collecting since 2002 (2017). The material is not edited chronologically, but instead makes thematic connections (for example, linking found and new footage of the same game or a new interview with old footage). Establishing connections visually is one of the advantages of using visual methods in research, as I discuss in Chapter Four.

It is also noticeable in the *Let's Get the Rhythm* that there is a progression in the camera angle used in the footage. For example, as noted above, the earliest material is taken from *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* and uses the previously discussed distant, elevated, camera angle and microphone mounted on a boom. Later black and white "found" footage, which appears to be recorded on videotape, adopts a lower camera angle which I will refer to as an "adult's eye view" (Figure 2). This trend towards a lower camera angle continues in

the footage shot more recently. Here the camera adopts a "child's eye view" which is adjusted depending on the age/height of the subjects (Figure 3). It is difficult to tell whether this progression was a conscious decision on the part of the filmmaker(s). Nonetheless, the progression is there and the effect on the viewer is the same, whether conscious or not.

Figure 2: "Adult's eye view" (from *Let's Get the Rhythm*)

Figure 3: "Child's eye view" (from *Let's Get the Rhythm*)

In Figure 2 above, we see the sound recordist holding the small omnidirectional microphone towards the children to avoid picking up other ambient sound. This type of microphone plugs straight into the video recorder – far easier than the older system for sound recording used in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* which relied on a separate reel-to-reel tape recorder synchronised with the film camera.

The *Let's Get the Rhythm* documentary interviews adults (both academic and non-academic) and children. However, there again appears to be a subtle hierarchy in how the interviews are filmed. For instance, a clip-on microphone is used when interviewing the academics, but not the other adults or the children. Likewise, the children are only rarely filmed seated, whereas the academics are almost always filmed this way.

Also, the quantity of material in *Let's Get the Rhythm* (archival footage, new footage, interviews, graphics) presents its own challenges. While *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* presented its games in their entirety, *Let's Get the Rhythm* adopts a faster pace of editing – both within the games and in the documentary as a whole. It tries to fit in a lot of games and a lot of ideas and this occasionally

works against the material. Figure 3, for instance, comes from the "numbers game" sequence. This only lasts 30 seconds but features an interview with the children about the game and shots of them playing, voiceover from the narrator, an interview with an adult speaking about the game, and a graphic showing the pattern of the clapping – and most of these edits are "L" or "J" cuts where the sound from one shot either overlaps the following ("L") or preceding one ("J"). However, in doing this, the viewer doesn't get a sustained view of the game where they can appreciate the complexity for themselves – in a sense, the documentary seems to assume that the viewer is as familiar with this particular game as the filmmaker. While praising the film's pace and engagement, one review comments that "[the] number of speculative points in the film appear and disappear with a frustrating evanescence" – though it goes on to say that "[s]uch unexplored, underexplored, or problematic presentations read much more like opportunities for future scholars, however, than any sort of failure on Chagall's part" (Hutcheson, 2017, p. 104).

Two British Films

One Potato, Two Potato (Daiken 1957)

One Potato, Two Potato was made in 1957 and supported by the BFI Experimental Film Fund. Filming took place over a twelve-month period. Although not part of the Free Cinema movement, *One Potato, Two Potato* is highly influenced by it – and by filming children's games, it appears to be following the Free Cinema Manifesto which recognises "the importance of people and the significance of the everyday" (MacKenzie, 2014, p. 149).

One Potato, Two Potato adopts a more poetic mode than the previous two films discussed above, also perhaps influenced by its Free Cinema predecessors whose manifesto states "The image speaks. Sound amplifies and comments" (ibid).. In keeping with Nichols's poetic mode, the film does

not use a spoken commentary as was the convention at that time when sync sound was only feasible in the studio.

One Potato, Two Potato was made just before developments in film technology (such as the Nagra III NP and Neopilot system) made sync sound recording equipment more portable and easier to use on location, eventually paving the way for the observational documentary style of direct cinema and cinéma vérité (which overtook, but did not eliminate, other forms). The lack of sync sound in *One Potato, Two Potato* meant that on-camera interviews were impossible but the film nonetheless uses non-synchronised sound (added during the editing process) to good effect – at times, creating an impressionistic montage of play in which the relationship between the image and the sound is somewhat fluid and experimental, thus overcoming through playing with form, the constraints imposed by a lack of synchronised sound. For instance, there is a sequence where a girl is playing a ball game with the rhyme "plainsie, clapsie, round the world and backsie". The first time the girl does the rhyme, the actions more or less match the words, but as she repeats them, we see that sound and image become more and more out of sync. The soundtrack for *One Potato, Two Potato* is unusual among the selected documentaries in that it includes specially composed music (by musician and broadcaster Ann Driver MBE) in addition to the sounds of the games – adding to the poetic and artistic feel of the documentary, in spite of its bomb-damaged urban setting.

The opening of *One Potato, Two Potato* is unlike those of the other discussed here. The opening credits are handwritten in chalk on the panels of a railway bridge. It then cuts to a close up of a girl's hand tracing a line in chalk as she walks along – a dynamic shot, full of movement. The music starts and after a few brief establishing shots, there is an opening montage of games (leapfrog, handstands, see-saws, swings, etc.) which continue this dynamic feeling. Particularly noteworthy here is a shot where the camera swoops left and right following a girl on a swing. Even when it is filming hopscotch, the film adopts a rapid pace. Instead of showing the whole game

in wide shot, the filmmakers focus in close up on the feet of the player and panning left and right as they hop rapidly across the court.

Although the pace slows down slightly after this opening section, the intention is obvious: this is a film that wants to capture the sensory dimension of play, its *feeling* and exhilaration, rather than the details of the games. In this, it differs from the two previous films mentioned in this chapter which tend toward the expository. For example, even though *Let's Get the Rhythm* had a fast pace of editing and ideas, it still tends to give the viewer time to follow the games (notwithstanding the comments above about the "numbers game" sequence).

Like *IMG* and *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, *One Potato, Two Potato* uses a "chrono-logic" (as described in Chapter One) as its overarching narrative structure, but while *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* and *IMG* use the idea of a school break period to provide an overarching coherence to the action, *One Potato, Two Potato* uses the passage of the seasons to provide a subtle structure to the film. For example, it starts with a girl saying that the rain has ended, perhaps suggesting April showers, then progresses to maypole dances, conker fights in the autumn, bonfire night, and so on. Varying games according to the seasons was previously a common practice among children, but one that has declined in more recent times.

The lyrical representation shows children as distant and exotic elements in the bomb-scarred landscape and in the poetic portrayal of their games and songs seems nostalgic, made more for adults than for children - depicting the adult theme of looking back at a distant childhood, rather than an up-to-date, child-centred representation of children's play culture.

Dusty Bluebells (Hammond 1971)

Dusty Bluebells was made by BBC Northern Ireland in 1971. It was filmed in Belfast during the period of sectarian violence known as "The Troubles", and makes this clear right from its opening shots: a zoom into St. Peter's Cathedral and a tracking shot taken from a car past graffiti that says "Join

I.R.A." and "Join Fianna". British soldiers and military equipment are also shown as occasional cutaways throughout the film.

These visuals are contrasted throughout with a narration and visual style which, as with the previous film, are quite lyrical. As such, *Dusty Bluebells* also adopts a form that is deliberately poetic. The camerawork is interesting and varied (as one would expect from a professional film crew, supported by the resources of the BBC). For instance, at 18:06, there is an extreme long shot looking down at a playground from a far greater height than in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* – and this cuts straight to a big close up taken from ground level (Figure 4). However, at times the camera angles appear unmotivated (except as a purely sensory exercise) which, as with *One Potato, Two Potato*, brings to mind the current interest in sensory ethnography and in film as "more than representational" – see, for example, Marks (2000). For instance, at 8:28, two boys are filmed from below playing a clapping game and later on, at 9:24, the film uses a first-person view as if the boy was playing the clapping game with the camera person or the viewer. At 6:20, a circle of children is shot from the inside the circle looking out – and at 6:38, from the same position looking up.

Figure 4: Abrupt change of framing in *Dusty Bluebells*

Pizza Pizza Daddy-O, *One Potato, Two Potato* and *Dusty Bluebells* each, in their own way, have a strong sense of location (*Let's Get the Rhythm*, on the other hand, loses some of its geographical specificity by focusing more on the universality of clapping games). In *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, the play takes

place in a single playground, giving a strong sense of this location, but little of the city beyond. In *One Potato, Two Potato*, there is a wider range of locations and in some cases, these bomb-damaged buildings and areas of waste ground form an important background for the games (for instance, in the *King of the Castle* and *Good Ship Alley-Alley-O* sequences) indicating that children are resilient and that play can take place anywhere – even in less-than-ideal environments. In *Dusty Bluebells*, the influence of the city on the children's games and play is less direct but is made to feel equally pervasive through the way in which the immediate location (local streets, buildings and shops) and wider city (including the cathedral, factories and British Army presence) are foregrounded in the film. For instance, at 15:44, there is a lengthy sequence during which a children's song is played over shots taken from inside a textile factory.

Whereas sync sound was not achievable in the case of *One Potato, Two Potato*, the situation is different with *Dusty Bluebells*. Here there has been a deliberate decision to forego the sync location sound and the option of hearing the children speak for themselves in favour of the lyricism of children's voices in song. Also, although the film uses synchronous sound and has several sequences where children are shown singing directly to the camera, there are none where the children are speaking to the camera or being interviewed.

While the two British films differ in terms of their soundtracks, they are nonetheless similar in other ways. For example, both films focus on a poetic lyricism in the visual representation of children's games featuring songs throughout. In *Dusty Bluebells*, these are songs that accompany the games, while in *One Potato, Two Potato*, we hear a mixture of rhymes, singing games and instrumental folk tunes, sometimes in arrangements that evoke sounds of childhood like the music box. They are also similar in not featuring any spoken comments, expressions or opinions by the children. As mentioned, *One Potato, Two Potato* did not have the option of sync sound, but children's views and comments could nonetheless have been recorded "wild" and then laid over the images in the editing process, as was done with

the rhymes, songs and music. *Dusty Bluebells* uses sync sound when filming children playing singing games, but as with *One Potato, Two Potato*, we don't hear children expressing their own views and comments. These two films, made almost fifteen years apart, adopt similar representational rhetorics emphasizing lyricism and a nostalgic poetic depiction. As with *One Potato, Two Potato, Dusty Bluebells* also seems to be responding to adult wistfulness and longing for an idealised childhood in the midst of a troubled city, rather than a focus on actual children – as evidenced by a lack of children's direct speech.

The omission of children's direct expression in these two films echo the same omission in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*. In essence, in these three films (*Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, *One Potato, Two Potato* and *Dusty Bluebells*), adults have decided to "mute" children speaking, something that seems like a contradiction when coming from films that appear to be championing children's culture in all its variety. In the case of *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*, we have an explanation of sorts provided by Bess Lomax in the study guide, even if it seems unsatisfactory (see above), but not for *One Potato, Two Potato* and *Dusty Bluebells*.

Whatever the reasons are, by muting children's speech and expression and only featuring traditional songs sung in angelic voices, these films embody the "walled garden" view of childhood and favour a romanticised and sentimentalised archetypal child over the real child.

Other Representations

As indicated in Chapter One, children were a "muted" group in mainstream anthropology until the latter part of the 20th century. They were not studied for their own cultural production and reproduction, being mainly seen from a developmental perspective or as the products of particular attitudes towards child rearing or forms of social organisation – as, for example, in the work of Margaret Mead (1942).

In other words, ethnographic focus was predominantly on adult (mostly male) concerns and society, with children figuring as resulting examples of adult social organisation, attitudes and beliefs, rather than as social actors in their own right. Where children were considered, they were mainly theorised as "adults in waiting". As a result, children's play was seen as imitating or rehearsing adult activities and rituals as a form of "training", rather than as cultural production and reproduction that could include humorous and transgressive commentary on adult society. This perspective, together with the outlook on children's play that otherwise sees it as "trivial", obscures the view of children as culturally creative social actors and commentators - thus potentially preventing us from seeing what lies right under our noses, in plain sight.

Nonetheless, the view of children as "adults in waiting" and play mainly as a developmental activity was not restricted to anthropology. The "development" perspective of childhood was, after all, the dominant paradigm of Western study of childhood until challenged by more recent theories which became known as the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 2015a).

Children's Magical Death (Asch and Chagnon 1974)

The short anthropological film *Children's Magical Death* was released in 1974 and is in many ways a companion piece to *Magical Death* (1973), produced by the same team in the preceding year. Both films document the shamanistic religious rituals of the Yanomamö tribe of Venezuela, which involve taking a hallucinogenic snuff.

But while the earlier film focused on the adult rituals, this one records a group of young children imitating them. Instead of hallucinogenic plants, the children inhale ash and then pretend to be intoxicated – and in a short final sequence, the boys pretend to be possessed by the Hekura spirits until it degenerates into light-hearted play fighting.

In any case, it is worth keeping an open mind on whether the boys are "twitching" or "winking" to recall Geertz's account (1973, pp. 6-7). This is because the problem could be one of perspective. For example, if the

anthropologist or fieldworker takes a developmental view of childhood that sees children only as "adults in waiting", and disregards children's own interpretive and creative activity (perhaps due to the triviality barrier), they are likely to miss alternative interpretations that don't align with these biases, particularly if the play or comment is transgressive and/or ironic.

Also, it may be that, children are fully aware that childhood offers a period when they can be transgressive and tease or mock their elders without incurring sanctions *because* their play is not taken seriously. Thus, children may take advantage of this negative bias, based on their "not yet adult" status, to have fun and obfuscate their teasing and mocking intentions toward their more powerful elders – allowing these to think they are learning by imitating their "betters", when they are in fact interpreting, commenting and re-creating. The situation of course changes when children cross over into adulthood. At this point they become able to fully participate in the rituals, but will also be expected to take them seriously.

The film is observational (Sandall, 1972; Young, 1995), following the action and shot with a single camera equipped with a zoom lens which allows dynamic reframing "in-camera". In compliance with tenets of observational film, the filmmakers are neither seen nor heard, though their presence is nonetheless emphasised by the boys "breaking the fourth wall" - pointing at the camera and teasing the operator. The only sound is that recorded at the time and there are no voice overs, on-screen commentary or music. On-screen subtitles in English translate the dialogue. A caption is shown at the beginning of the film, which presents a brief introductory explanation. This says "Children begin learning adult roles early in Yanomamö culture", pointing to a viewpoint of children as "adults in waiting" and the rhetoric of play as progress discussed earlier. However, from viewing the film, it seems that the imitation by the boys themselves may have another more subversive purpose. In other words, it may be that the children aren't merely imitating and are instead commenting on, or even mocking, the participants in the rituals (and perhaps also the filmmakers).

The boys seem very conscious of the camera and they seem to "play to the gallery". At 3:37, a seated boy points and says "that cameraman looks horny", suggesting that the children are in a mischievous and bawdy mood. At 4:03, a boy turns to look at the camera as if to make sure it is recording, before turning back to his friends - then at 5:02 says "we're running low on 'drugs' – take some more, Dodowa!". At 6:10, one boy says "let's be Hekura spirits now and eat souls!". At 6:28, they playfully "attack" a couple of boys (with gentle mock blows) until the "attack" disintegrates of its own accord.

Although it is difficult to be absolutely sure without more information, it would nonetheless seem, from the comments by the boys and their laughing glances at the camera operator, that they are having fun at his expense, while also having fun pretending to snort the "drugs" and enact the exciting parts of the ritual. The ending where the enactment collapses into group playfighting seems to clearly indicate "play" rather than the "training" implied by the caption at the beginning of the film.

Vermont Kids (Marshall 1975)

While it does not feature structured games, *Vermont Kids*, made in 1975, uses an interesting mixture of observational and participatory film methods to document children's play. The film contains four self-contained segments, each covering a different activity – building a treehouse, playing with mud and water – and a different group of (younger) children making toy aeroplanes.

The film not only documents the activities, but also the interactions between the participants and with their surroundings. It is directed and filmed by John Marshall using the "long-take" ethnographic approach more commonly seen in his anthropological films about indigenous cultures (for instance, the 1972 film *Children Throw Toy Assegais,* using footage shot in 1958). In doing so, *Vermont Kids* successfully conveys the idea that ethnographic observation can (and probably should) also be focused on practices and interactions of the "home" culture as much as on the "other".

Although he clearly has a rapport with the participants and obtained their trust, Marshall adopts only a moderate level of participation in his role as a participant observer. This level of participation/interaction varies between segments – it is highest in the third segment (where two young boys are building planes out of clothes pegs) but in most, it is restricted to an occasional brief question or comment.

Unlike *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* which adopts the chrono-logic of a play break, or *Dusty Bluebells* which orients the viewer in the city before settling on the play in a single street, each segment in *Vermont Kids* drops the viewer straight into the action without any orientation. The "Treehouse" segment, for example, starts in a disorienting close up (Figure 5) and maintains this for an extended period – indicating perhaps that these films would be viewed in an educational context, say as illustrations for a lecture, rather than as a stand-alone artefact. Nonetheless, the opening sequence forces the viewer to concentrate and work out what is happening (without a commentary to guide them). Mermin argues that this work on the part of the viewer can create a sense of complicity (1997, p. 43). It is important to stress, however, that this camera angle isn't deliberately artistic or obscure – it arises naturally from the shooting conditions (the limited space and the filmmaker's proximity to their subjects).

Figure 5: Opening shot of "Treehouse" segment of *Vermont Kids*

The filmmaker (Marshall) was, with de Brigard, the originator of the concept of (long take) 'sequence filming' in ethnographic research:

> A sequence may be thought of as a verifiable record of a
> small event. Sequence filming replaces the ordinary
> process of shooting and editing a thematic film…with the
> attempt to report the events themselves in as much detail
> and for as long as possible… The result is a sequence
> notable for the lack of conceptual and contextual
> framework which other forms of film attempt to supply
> (Marshall & de Brigard, 1995, pp. 133-134).

This method of recording was privileged among some anthropologists who argued that it allowed the socio-cultural scientist to apprehend the action over time unhindered by any reduction or manipulation in the form of edits –

see, for example, Asch and Asch (2003). I would not disagree with the potential usefulness, for anthropologists, of the "long take" as a means of observing the development of events and social interaction over time.[2] However, I take issue with the idea that such a shooting style provides a more "objective" or "scientific" visual account given the inherent (and unavoidable) subjective choices in filmmaking, irrespective of the length of the take – for example, the choice of camera angle and framing.

According to Nichols (2017), an observational mode privileges "life as it is lived" (p. 133) spontaneously and without cinematic adornment such as commentary and supplementary music or sound effects. The filmmaker observes and is led by the action, filming the observed who go about their lives. What is not shown is not added. In its stringent form, which discouraged interviews or any other interaction with the observed, the observational mode was questioned as being voyeuristic and adopting a "peep hole" approach to the lives of others (Sherman, 2015). This critique becomes especially acute when filming vulnerable subjects, even if they have agreed to be filmed, raising issues of privacy and ongoing informed consent – concerns that Marshall would have been well aware of, having been the cinematographer on Frederick Wiseman's controversial film *Titicut Follies* (1967), set in a mental institution for the criminally insane.

Vermont Kids uses a "long take" shooting style and is filmed with a handheld camera rather than from a fixed point on a tripod. By shooting handheld, Marshall adopts a very mobile point of view. The combination of handheld camera mobility and the use of the zoom lens allows him to reframe the shot within the take (bringing the action closer or distancing it, where appropriate) and means he can effectively edit "in camera" without discontinuing the action of the situation or its sound (I discuss my use of this style of camerawork in Chapter Four). In the second sequence titled "In the Dirt" (14:15), where a large group of children build mud dams on a dirt slope above a car park, the camerawork ranges from very wide shots, taking in the many interactions and the entire geography of the scene, to close shots that emphasise the sensory aspects of playing with mud and water. The range of

framing from wide to close also positions the viewer differently – with the very wide shot providing a metaphorical and actual distancing from the action - akin to viewing ants in a formicarium - and the closer shots furnishing a more intimate apprehending of the action and the participants.

The wide "formicarium" shot echoes the very high angle shot in *Dusty Bluebells* and both show children in their respective game formations. As mentioned above, both of these shots put the children at a distance from the viewer, indicating that the children's world is not accessible to the adult, that it is a world apart. However, the use of this shot in *Dusty Bluebells* seems to underline the nostalgic view of childhood as it shows children participating in a timeless "folk" dance tradition whereas the equivalent shot in *Vermont Kids* is undeniably up to date, showing active agentic children engaged in a common endeavour, making and modifying their surroundings. As with *Dusty Bluebells*, these children are also in their own world, but one that is engaged not nostalgic. One disadvantage of the long take is that it makes it difficult to for example, feature or survey a series of different events or conduct visual comparisons of these - for example, different methods of performing an action such as a counting out rhyme (as shown in *IMG* from 7:53 to 9:22). Also, most films subtly compress "real time" through the editing process and audiences are therefore generally familiar with "film-time" going at a quicker pace than the equivalent observation in "real-time". Indeed, I would argue that audiences tend to *expect* films to have a certain minimum pace (which has become faster over time). Thus, another disadvantage of the generally slow (real-time) development of action in a long take is that it can be difficult for a non-specialist audience to watch, as the lack of pacier action can feel laborious and lead to the viewer becoming bored and restless. Nonetheless, an advantage of using long takes is that it provides the viewer with the opportunity of observing and understanding the featured social interaction over time, without discontinuity. This has observational benefits in a research context, but can also hold the interest of the lay-person, assuming they have the patience or retained interest to persevere with the slower pace of this type of cinematography.

By showing children building and making things over a substantial period of time, without adult assistance, and through the use of dialogue between filmmaker and participants showing children as articulate and competent, *Vermont Kids* projects a discourse of children as adventurous, creative, collaborative and mostly (though not entirely) harmonious.

Woodbine Place (McEvoy 1987)

This film features the interactions and games of a mixed age group of younger children during the summer school holidays in Gateshead, North East England. The film takes place in the close where the children all live.

As with *Dusty Bluebells*, the first shot situates the action and the film starts with a wide, high-angle, establishing shot of the location. The film adopts a mainly observational mode but also includes interviews with some of the participants. The filmmakers are not seen or heard in the observational sequences and only heard off-camera in the interview sections when asking questions of the participants.

The observational sections focus on children's relations with each other during their play activity in the close. These sequences are long enough for the viewer to achieve an understanding of the featured situation, without the need for commentary or voice over explanation. Another benefit is that the viewer gets to study children's interactions during an event that takes place over time.

The filmed observations mainly focus on aspects of the day-to-day peer relationships and conflicts between the young child participants, rather than on games and play as such. However, the interactions between the group of children take place during summertime outdoor play activities in the street (Woodbine Place) that forms the main location of the film and thus their play features extensively. Rather than playground games, the activity includes pretend play between two young girl participants, boys building pretend garages for toy cars, adventure play on bikes and in the surrounding shrubbery or playfighting in the communal gardens. In this type of play, interaction takes place in the context of fluid alliances and conflicts within the

group. At different times children are friends or not friends, excluded or included. Through its pace and editing structure, the film succeeds in demonstrating the mercurial and rapidly shifting set of interactions among children who at times seem to inflict emotional hurt on one another but who also seem quick to repair and forgive these ruptures.

The filmed interviews appear constructed as a form of reflection on the preceding filmed observations. The interviews also focus on the interactional aspect of the participant's activities, with the filmmaker gently questioning the interviewee. The children's replies thus provide the some of the participant children's perspective on the events that are seen in the observational sequences.

In terms of framing, the film adopts a "child's eye" view. In other words, the camera is kept low down most of the time, a technique I also adopted in IMG. Lowering the camera to be at the children's height means that they fill the frame as adults do when they are filmed. This framing accords the child the equivalent visual emphasis on screen, to that of adults.

The filming and sound recording of *Woodbine Place* is made easier by the extensive use of portable remote microphones. The children carry the battery pack and transmitter on a belt in a pouch normally hidden behind their back (this is visible in Figure 6). They do not seem bothered by the pack, though it must have taken some time to get used to it. This approach to recording sound allows the filmmakers a great deal of flexibility. Once miked up, the children could wander around freely and the filmmakers could film them from a distance using a telephoto lens, but still get a clear, distinct, sound recording from the closely-placed microphone.

In spite of their size and weight, the radio microphones were successful in capturing the conversation and interaction of young pre-school children, a group that is even less represented in their own words, than those of primary school age. In some ways, this technique is closer to television programmes such as *Secret Life of 4, 5 and 6 Year Olds* (2015-2019) than those used in the previous documentaries that I have discussed here.

Figure 6: Child with belt for remote microphone (from *Woodbine Place*)

The participatory aspects are well-handled, however, the independence of the film's observational position is (arguably) undermined by the parent/child relationship between filmmaker and subjects, especially as this relationship is not clarified within the film. The viewer therefore does not know (until the end credits) that the children are related to the filmmaker. The retrospective realisation of the relationship then calls into question the assertive stance referred to by Plantinga and the concept of honesty in documentary, both discussed earlier in this chapter – not because I question that the events did not take place, but because an important relationship between filmmaker and participant was obscured from the viewer (unless they happened to notice the similarity of family names in the end credits). Such a disclosure may have been made in teaching notes or other written material. However, it would have been far clearer if this information had been provided in the opening titles.

This relationship also raises concerns about the degree of independent informed consent obtained for the shooting – as the people who were seeking the consent (as filmmakers) were, in many cases, also the ones granting the consent (as parents). The issue of independent informed consent on behalf of minors is something that filmmakers and researchers

are much more sensitive to now, particularly in the wake of still photographers such as Sally Mann and Irina Ionesco. However, this film was a professional production, made for broadcast on Channel 4, so would have had rigorous processes to ensure the proper clearances and consents had been obtained.

Woodbine Place is interesting as it is one of the few documentaries in this sample to include interviews with children in which they are questioned about their play and friendships, though the children interviewed are quite young (pre-school age). The children appear relaxed about being filmed and familiar with the process. In a self-reflexive touch, the filmmakers include the following exchange over the end credits (51:18):

> Child A: Brian's taking the [picture].[3]
>
> Child B: It not, its filming work. It's just filming work.
>
> Child A: What?
>
> Child B: Can you see that red wire over there?
>
> Child A: Mmm.
>
> Child B: Shall I tell you why that red wire is there?
>
> Child A: Yes.
>
> Child B: Well, because Brian and Wendy's doing the filming, aren't they?
>
> Child A: Today they are.

Despite the issue discussed above of not disclosing their relationship with the participants, the filmmakers of *Woodbine Place* have nonetheless succeeded in demonstrating, through sensitive observational filming, the careful way in which children conduct their social relationships, solve conflict, forgive transgression and deal with other difficult issues in their social world. In these respects, they also demonstrate what we can learn from paying more attention to children's methods and interactions.

Barbara and Her Friends in Candombleland (Opipari and Timbert 1997)

I mentioned in Chapter One that the dominant depictions of childhood seem to have left little room for the representation of children as capable and creative social actors in their own cultural worlds. Using sync sound and an observational approach, *Barbara and Her Friends in Candombleland* shows, however, the benefits of adopting a different perspective with children speaking directly about the motivations behind their play. The film explores Candomblé, interviewing both the young initiates in this religion and their similarly aged peers who imitate its rituals, dances, and possession. This dual exploration allows the film to treat the actual and imitation Candomblé with equal importance and in doing so, comments insightfully on the wider society – revealing the children's motivations behind this imitation, rather than treating this type of play as an unproblematic childhood diversion.

While play is inevitably shaped by the society around it and the resources to hand, it is not just a rehearsal for adulthood and there will always be play activities which adopt different forms – even if these are limited in scope. As I point out in my introduction, many ethnographic films concentrate on the structures and rituals of adult society and see children merely as "adults in waiting" (see also the discussion of *Children's Magical Death* in this chapter). This perspective leads to a focus on play which echoes, imitates or rehearses the adult rituals and ignores play which is less obviously structured or functional. They may also fail to see when the imitation has other significance – for example, when it is ironic or parodic as discussed above (in relation to *Children's Magical Death*).

Over the course of the documentary, the interviews in *Barbara and Her Friends in Candombleland* gradually reveal the hidden motivations behind the play – showing the increased opportunities and status of the children who are initiated in the Candomblé versus those who are only imitating the rituals. From this, it becomes more apparent that the imitative possession (as presented in the documentary) is being performed by those who have limited life opportunities (the school drop-out Meiraeane) or who are excluded from

the higher levels of the religion (Denise, who has been told that she can only be a Ekedi[4]).

These insights would not be possible if the filmmakers had just focused on the actual religion and treated the imitation play as a secondary activity or a novelty. Moreover, the sensitive engagement by the filmmaker, with what children have to say about their play activity and religious practice has also underlined the value and importance of listening to what children have to say.

From the Ikpeng Children to the World (Txicão et al. 2001)

The relationship between the filmmaker and their subjects is inevitably a complex one – and not merely restricted to the performative mode of documentary. Power relations can come into play, although these may not be invariably favourable to the filmmaker (for instance, if the other parties choose to be uncooperative). This relationship may have transactional elements and negotiation on both sides, even within the observational documentary or the ethnographic film. Sometimes the negotiation may be financial (paying for access or compensating for time) but often, it is around intangible elements: privacy vs access; the novelty or increased status of being filmed; and so on. As a result, the subjects may be economical with what they choose to reveal (and when) or have fun at the filmmaker's expense.

These transactional undercurrents are clearly visible in the indigenously made *From the Ikpeng Children to the World*. The sync sound documentary is, on one level, a video letter (responding to one sent from a village in Cuba) and at the end of *From the Ikpeng Children to the World*, the main participants ask for others to respond and show them their homes, food, etc. Playful and mischievous elements are also visible in the film – but this is not to say that these interactions are without value. For instance, there is a scene in which two boys describe their much younger sister as "a white man's toy" (meaning a doll) before showing where the batteries go on her back (Figure 7). This brief interaction is, at one level, just the children having

fun with the filmmaker (and through them, with the viewer) – but also speaks volumes about their relationship with modern technology and culture (both knowing and ironic) and the status of young children.

Figure 7: Doll sequence in *From the Ikpeng Children to the World*

The film also reveals a different childhood, one where the difference between play and work (in the sense of helping with communal tasks) is less distinct than in the Global North, and where a traditional lifestyle blends with modern technologies. The Ikpeng children are shown as knowledgeable about the natural environment of the lake and surrounding forest, as well as having advanced skills in various tasks. The film portrays a gender-based division of labour, with girls attending to husbandry and agriculture, and boys involved in fishing and making arrows. However, some aspects of their childhood are recognizably the same as children elsewhere – toilet humour, giggles, racing into the water to swim, bow and arrow competitions (boys) and playing imaginary games with the younger children (girls) with both genders demonstrating their know-how. In one sequence the two boy protagonists set about carving wood and palm stems to make toy aeroplanes, recalling the much younger children in *Vermont Kids*, engrossed in the same activity. After running round the village clearing with their planes, the film continues the display of modernity and cuts to the boys showing us the village "bush doctor" plane that takes villagers to the city when they need medical care. The film then cuts to an interior and the boys set about showing their knowledge of the radio that the village uses to make contact with other

locations. Demonstrating their navigation of modernity and custom, we are then shown the school classroom, followed by a sequence where girls and boys are being adorned in preparation for a traditional ceremony.

Conclusion

The preceding survey of films featuring children's play shows the variety between them in terms of their film discourse. While all of these films represent children, they do so in different ways – and in this section, I will do a brief comparative analysis to highlight some of these salient features.

The ethnographic filmmaker John Marshall worked on *Children's Magical Death* and directed *Vermont Kids*, taking the same techniques and applying them closer to home to explore children's psychological development through play and their understanding of their surroundings (*Vermont Kids*, n.d.). While *Children's Magical Death* implicitly adopted a utilitarian "play as progress" viewpoint showing children imitating adults to prepare them for those roles, *Vermont Kids* appears, in its focus on the interaction between the participants, to see psychological development as more important. This distinction in emphasis itself raises questions about the potential unconscious biases of filmmakers, concealed in the different representations of children's play in the global North and the global South.

Vermont Kids and *Children's Magical Death* adopt the approaches of traditional ethnographic filmmaking, particularly the unedited shot. In contrast, *Let's Get the Rhythm*, *Woodbine Place*, *Barbara and Her Friends in Candombleland*, and *From the Ikpeng Children to the World* can be seen as aligned with more recent approaches (notwithstanding the fact the some of these films do not identify as ethnographic films) – with *From the Ikpeng Children to the World* also being an example of indigenous filmmaking (one is hesitant to call it participant filmmaking as the filmmaker, while being part of the community, doesn't appear on screen or include their interaction with the participants in the final documentary).

Pizza Pizza Daddy-O can also be seen to be adopting a similar scientific tone to *Children's Magical Death*, but utilising a different shooting style/film

language, particularly through its use of the high, wide, distant camera angle (looking "down" and "at" the children) and its voice over. This contrasts with *Vermont Kids* which adopts the ground-level viewpoint of a participant observer.

Vermont Kids, *Woodbine Place, Children's Magical Death* and to an extent *From the Ikpeng Children*, provide intimate views of childhoods and of the interactions between children whereas others, such as *One Potato, Two Potato* and *Dusty Bluebells* focus purely on the games as patterns and poetry. The lyricism of *One Potato, Two Potato* is enhanced by its specially composed soundtrack and the songs in *Dusty Bluebells* serves a similar purpose as they are staged as a performance to the camera, rather than being an accompaniment to a game. *Dusty Bluebells* has a poetic voice-over narration which likewise contributes to its lyricism, whereas *One Potato, Two Potato* focuses more on a form of "visual poetry" as the Free Cinema movement discouraged narration.

The visual style of *One Potato, Two Potato* and *Dusty Bluebells* is distinct from both traditional and contemporary ethnographic approaches. In a sense, it is the Free Cinema style of the late 50s and early 60s which had, by the 70s, become sufficiently mainstream for the BBC to use it (albeit just for certain types of documentary film). It is also possible that the poetic tone of *Dusty Bluebells* (and lack of interviews) was a way to sidestep the issue of The Troubles.

Both *Children's Magical Death* and *IMG* feature children imitating adults. This is in contrast with *Barbara and Her Friends in Candombleland* which features children imitating children, an act which is tied up with issues of status and opportunities as discussed earlier. In the two schools filmed for *IMG*, the main targets for this imitative play were "mummies and daddies" and "animals" and the next chapter analyses an extended scene in which these are discussed. However, it is useful to note here that the "mummies and daddies" games included ones with no fathers (reflecting both real-life circumstances and the non-availability of willing boys to take part) and overlapped with the "animal" play. One game (described at 25:39 as "a bit

like mummies and daddies") featured "two owners are looking after the fox…'cos they find the fox lonely and his mum left it…abandoned it". These examples from *IMG* shows the extent to which imitative play can feature adaptation and transformation, rather than being a pure and faithful replication and these points should also be considered (in addition to mischief and parody) when viewing the imitation in *Children's Magical Death* and potentially taking it at face value. It also shows the benefits of asking the children about the motivations and meanings in their play as is the case in *Barbara and Her Friends in Candombleland* (discussed earlier).

One can also draw a contrast between *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* and *Let's Get the Rhythm*. Both have an interest in documenting clapping games and their participants, but differ in their approaches – the former looking at one location in detail to understand the specific local instances of these games in full and the latter at a wider range of locations to understand similarities and variety. This is reflected in their differing visual styles.

The wide shot has affordances that make it useful in providing a comprehensive view of group games – for example, one can show the number of players, how they are arranged (both among themselves and in relation to the environment around them), and how they move during the course of the game. In some ways, it is a more "scientific" viewpoint, particularly when also combined with a high viewpoint which may well explain its use in *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O,* given Lomax's comments (discussed above) explaining the use of the "expert male" commentary and language in the film. However, we also see this shot in *One Potato, Two Potato* and *Dusty Bluebells*, perhaps because these two films seem to be interested in the aesthetics and visual patterns of play, rather than the interests and motivations of the children who are playing. The visual distancing in these two films also accords with a traditional "walled garden" view of children's play and childhood.

Barbara and Her Friends in Candombleland and *From the Ikpeng Children to the World* show that a playful childhood can mean something quite different. In *From the Ikpeng Children*, play is close in form to adult activities, but it

comes to the fore in *Barbara and Her Friends* – where both the initiates and the imitators have, in different ways, pressures and maturity beyond their years when compared to Western children. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that regardless of the motivation behind it, the children in *Barbara and Her Friends* still seem to regard their play as a pleasurable and sociable activity – and care should be taken to not unthinkingly repeat the problem and victim tropes discussed in Chapter One.

The film which relates most closely to my stated research question is *Let's Get the Rhythm*. *Let's Get the Rhythm* was made with different aims than *IMG*, being more interested in the variety and diffusion of clapping games, but the two films nonetheless share many similarities – both in the approaches to the filming process and in the style/content of the finished film. For instance, both films are interested in hearing the children speak about their games and treat them as the experts on this domain (notwithstanding the use in *Let's Get the Rhythm* of additional academic and expert voices). Similarly, both films adopt the position of a participant observer and use the "child's eye view" shot angle which they document in moderately long (but not completely unedited shots) and intercut with related material (often grouped by topic). These approaches to the organisation and structure of the film are explored in more detail in the next chapter.

In the above survey we have seen that not all documentary films that show children's play are actually about children themselves or their play culture. For example, *One Potato, Two Potato* and *Dusty Bluebells*, while providing interesting records of children's games at historical moments and locations, do not appear focused on the children themselves or their cultural production. The complete lack of comment, explanation or description by children in both films seems to underline this apparent lack of engagement with the children themselves, while their play culture is aestheticized and hence distanced from the lives of the players. This approach contrasts strongly with the work of Iona Opie who, at the same time as these films were made – and in the same country - was making detailed tape recordings

of children's cultural production – thus demonstrating exactly what these films chose to exclude.

In comparing the films, it is notable how much more lively and engaged children appear when speaking directly. Therefore, it would appear from this survey that one answer to my research question would be to actively seek the views of children as engaged participants, speaking as and for themselves, rather than speaking over them, muting their voices, or speaking on their behalf.

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[1] These are: Play as progress (development through play); Play as fate (gambling/games of chance); Play as power (sports/contests); Play as identity (traditions, festivals and rituals); Play as imaginary (involving creative improvisation); Play as individual pleasure (for relaxation or escape); Play as frivolous (idle or foolish activity). The first is the dominant perspective on children's play in modern society.

[2] On film, the single shot was limited to the 10-minute duration of a 16mm film magazine. On video, this can now be much longer and is only constrained by the length of the tape and capacity of the batteries.

[3] The young child actually says "Brian's taking the pizza", but it is clear that Child B in this exchange knows what they mean.

[4] A secondary role within the religion, who assist those who go into a trance. For her, this role may be particularly painful as an oracle initially said she could be possessed, then reversed this decision.

Chapter 4: Making and Analysing *ipidipidation my generation!*

My research question asked how might children's play be represented in documentary film to give greater prominence to children's views and expression about their play culture. This chapter addresses that question by discussing the production of my film and the concepts and theories that informed its making – both as an intervention into documentary film practice and as an experimentation in the representation of children's play.

In the first part of the chapter and taking the position of filmmaker, I discuss the production processes and the various considerations in making the film, both as a public presentation and as a research film. In the second part, I discuss and analyse a short section of the documentary using a multimodality framework (Burn, 2014; Burn & Parker, 2003a), identifying how meaning is produced through film practice and analysing the embodied multimodal meaning made by participants. A multimodal transcript of the sequence is also provided showing a detailed breakdown of the action of the participants and the filming components (see Appendix 14).

The idea for my film as an experimentation and intervention, came about as a result of my prior research on documentary films about children's play and the often-used representational tropes of children in documentary and non-fiction films outlined in Chapter One, both in terms of the cinematic elements (film language) and how they encoded discourses about children, their play and its position in the wider social world. As experimentation and intervention, my practice and the resulting film therefore implicitly question the ways in which children are mostly represented in documentary film as well as seeking to positively reposition the cinematic treatment of children and their play cultures in that genre. Foucault calls for the tranquil acceptance of pre-existing forms of continuity (discourses) to be disturbed and for it to be demonstrated that these continuities do not "come about of themselves but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinized" (1972, p.

25). My film therefore could be considered as being inspired by a Foucauldian spirit of intervention – one that disturbs and queries the assumptions, discourses and practices that have routinely structured documentary film representations of children and their play.

Aim for the Film

My aim in making the film was therefore to try to alter documentary film's normative relationship with children by filming them in a way that positioned them implicitly, within the fabric of the film, as competent social actors and as the experts on play – while at the same time honouring the experimental and imaginative attributes of children's play culture and its presentational and performative qualities, which can be energetic, enthusiastic and humorous, as well as transgressive and resistant. Through this strategy, I hoped to increase the understanding and appreciation of what Geertz calls the "webs of significance" (1973, p. 5) woven by children in their play, providing an alternative to the more characteristic documentary representations of children discussed previously, as well as lessening the "trivialisation" of children's cultural worlds. I therefore strove in *IMG* to develop a film "language" that demonstrated the competence and agency of primary school-age children in their own cultural world as well as the complexity and variety of their play activities through, for example, foregrounding the participants and making cinematic provision for the direct expression of what they had to say.

Participatory Methods

As explained in the introduction, my documentary film was made as part of the wider AHRC *Beyond Text* project: *Children's Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age.* The aims of the project were to investigate children's playground games and songs and their relationship with popular media. They also included updating the work of Iona and Peter Opie on children's play cultures and challenging the commonly held view, that

children were abandoning playground games in favour of screen-based entertainment.

To achieve the aims of the wider project and attend to the dynamic yet often ephemeral multiplicities of the playground, a variety of approaches and methods were adopted, ranging from more conventional written ethnographies and cultural analysis (Jopson et al., 2014; Willett et al., 2013), to practice research in computer design and implementation (Mitchell, 2014; Mitchell & Clarke, 2013) and creative practice research as in the case of *IMG*. Curating the British Library *Playtimes* website was another aspect of the project (Potter, 2014). The research was conducted over two years in two primary schools (one in inner London, the other in the suburbs of Sheffield).

Drawing on the new sociology of childhood, the project as a whole was child-centred and participatory methods were used across the different elements of the wider project. Children were seen as active participants and invited to contribute to research in each component (if they wished to), as co-researchers alongside the project researchers. Children from both schools were therefore actively involved in all components of the wider project, though it is worth mentioning that this involvement did not extend to research design, but rather to the collection and production of data, ideas generation, subject expertise and in advisory and evaluative capacities.

For example, children participated in collecting data for the ethnographic study through interviews with researchers and with each other and by making short video clips of their play and games (with easy-to-use Flip cameras). Children from both schools also participated in workshops to determine the classification of games for the British Library website of the project, as well as contributing content such as drawings and photographs.

For the *Game Catcher* computer game project, which I led, children were invited to make suggestions for the development of the computer game, game design and user-experience. They participated in beta and user-testing sessions held in both schools, assessing the application and suggesting amendments and improvements in relation to its use and playability. They

also contributed suggestions on which games to add to the *Game Catcher* repertoire, in group interviews, in notes and through making drawings in workshop sessions. Contributions from the children were important to the success of the design and implementation, as they provided suggestions and feedback grounded in *their* particular viewpoint, experience, physical materiality and ability.

As I discussed previously, an important aim of the film component, with its emphasis on children's play culture, was to focus on children as the experts of play culture, visually and metaphorically framing their actions and views as salient and displacing the more traditional documentary or ethnographic film approach of using children's activities as illustration of adult 'expert' commentary or explication (see for example the discussion on films in Chapter Three).

During filming children contributed their 'insider' knowledge of play cultures and their lived experience of play. They consented to being filmed at play, participated in filmed conversations and interviews, demonstrated and discussed their games and skills and described their imaginative and social play. In this respect, the filmmaking process could be considered as an extended encounter between an engaged 'novice' (the filmmaker) and a series of experts on play culture - rather than a conventional encounter between an adult academic researcher and research subjects , with the resulting film considered a "collage of our shared activity" (Pahl & Pool, 2011, p. 18).

Although I would ask questions during filming, my approach was to remain "open" to how children chose to respond and the direction in which they chose to take the exchange, to not turn away questions or requests for information and to respond without judgement, respecting children's right to enquire about matters concerning them.

I also explained the working of the camera and microphone and invited children to look through the viewfinder, so as to enhance understanding of the filming process and how a scene might look when being recorded. It is

however worth mentioning that video recording was not unfamiliar to most children, as devices such as phones, tablets, camcorders were relatively common objects within their home environments. It is also worth mentioning that children were relaxed and even eager to participate in being filmed (something also remarked on by other researchers on the project), reflecting perhaps the performative nature of much contemporary family entertainment, such as talent, dance and reality TV shows, karaoke machines and the easy availability of performance recording, display and dissemination.

Filmmaking with and about children

In addition to focusing on children as the experts of play culture, a further aim of my film within the wider *Playground Games* project, was to update the work of the Opies audio-visually, contributing data on contemporary children's playground cultures as it presented in the two schools we studied.

I have remarked above that in my preliminary research prior to making the documentary I was struck by what documentary representations of children's play appeared to say about children and childhood, and how this was communicated in the film itself. I was also struck by two lacunae: firstly, how few documentary films looked at children's play as an important cultural practice in its own right (in contrast to the more common instrumental view of play as developmental or as a means for, or evidence of, socialisation), and secondly how few documentary films focused exclusively on children and included children's own views and expression, presented directly on screen, in their own voices.

These considerations and lacunae drew me to devise my aims for my film to demonstrate, both to a lay audience and to scholars, the breadth and depth of children's expertise and knowledge of their play cultures - and the competent articulacy of children discussing and explaining their play. Such a demonstration would, through an intervention in the genre, also address the documentary forms of representing children on screen, as well as dominant content and discourses about children in documentary. The above considerations also led me to formulate my research question - asking how

might representation in documentary film give greater prominence to children's ideas, views and expression – and to consider filmic methods for answering it.

I was nonetheless aware of the possible option of facilitating children to make the film (or a series of shorter films) themselves, for example along the lines of the Navajo filmmaking workshops (Worth & Adair, 1972) which aimed to enable outsiders to see the world through the eyes of indigenous people.

A later similar project had been conducted with children in 2011 to 2016 by ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall and described in a chapter titled *How Children See* (2022). The chapter discusses a selection of films made by children aged ten to thirteen, from a variety of backgrounds in India, following a series of six to twelve-week workshops which they attended to learn the basics of camerawork. Taking the position that children see society from a unique viewpoint, granting them a distinctive perspective and understanding which adults do not possess but can learn from, MacDougall's aim was to gain knowledge about how children perceived and interpreted their surroundings and what these perceptions could teach the project researchers about contemporary Indian society. The chapter describes how children were selected for the workshops, noting that on the first occasion, when MacDougall asked anyone interested to register their name, he found all fifty-one children eager to participate. He therefore had to interview them all and make a selection. The criteria for selection appeared to boil down to the author's personal choice of candidates, though he acknowledges the subjectivity of the process. I can imagine the disappointment of those children who were not selected, though this difficult aspect is not touched on in the chapter. Another aspect that was not addressed was the editing process. It would have been interesting to know how this key aspect of filmmaking was addressed in the workshops and by the children. Acknowledging that the variation in geographical location and background of the child participants precluded any general conclusions about how the children saw their society, MacDougall nonetheless makes a number of interesting observations, one being that younger children aged 10-11 years

made films that delved more deeply into their subject than older children. Another of his main observations was that the children were not derivative in their filming style, but were constantly surprising him with their inventiveness: "In a sense they seemed to be reinventing filmmaking as they went along" (p. 184) – though this inventiveness is not likely to come as a surprise to scholars and researchers working in the field of children's play.

More recently and in a play research context, Potter and Cowan describe their project investigating the playground as "meaning-makerspace" and children's play practices as multimodal meaning-making (2020, p. 14). The project adopts a multi-faceted visual methodology that includes 7 to 11 year-old children co-researchers recording video of their play spaces and play activities, in addition to drawing, map-making and conducting interviews. Using a variety of devices, children produced video recordings of their playground, interviews with other children and, with the aid of wearable cameras (using chest harnesses), provided rich insight into, for example, the complexities of playground football. These included instances of previously unnoticed creative performativity and mimetic reinvention of game elements such as the recently instituted football ritual of calling for the VAR (Video Assistant Refereeing). The authors comment on the way children incorporated the research project into their play so that "the project itself became part of the playful meaning-making space of the playground" (p. 6). This produced a rich dataset encompassing many forms of play, which in turn revealed significant findings demonstrating the complexities of children's play-spaces, encompassing artefacts, devices, virtual, global and school playgrounds and imaginary places, to name a few.

The research described above illustrates some of the exciting possibilities afforded by enabling children's media production and co-research opportunities. As demonstrated by these projects, there is much to learn from the unique perspectives and insights provided by children and it goes without saying that, should the occasion arise, I would very much welcome involvement in such opportunities. Nonetheless, the practice I write about here had a different set of objectives. In particular, the aims of my research,

including that of an intervention into the genre, meant that my film was in dialogue with the formal properties and history of documentary and ethnographic film. Engagement with these elements meant that in this aspect my film was an adult production, speaking to and challenging those adult discourses about children and their play, identified by Buckingham (2000) and which I referred to in Chapter One, while also standing alongside children in their pursuit to be heard.

Audience

I discuss my practice below, but it is important to first mention the viewer or audience. The audience is as important a consideration in documentary filmmaking as elsewhere - as they shape the presentation of the material – for example, whether to align with audience expectations or surprise them and how to do this, while nonetheless retaining audience engagement. The shaping of a documentary is also affected by how much prior knowledge the audience is likely to have of the subject matter. Bruzzi (2013) discusses documentary filmmaking as performance, an action that is meaningless without an audience.

Making my film, I was conscious there were two overlapping but non-hierarchical intended audiences. Firstly, as a research film about children's play, the audience is composed of scholars in the fields of child studies, play and ethnography, as well as teachers and other professionals in the field of childhood and play. However, as an experimentation in documentary film representation of children's play, its audience naturally includes those mentioned above (and may also include scholars in film, culture and media studies and other filmmakers) – but importantly, also includes children and the (adult) general public.

In that it has two aims, my film looks in two directions: a "research" direction, with its associated demands to address the research problem and question, and a "film" direction. Whilst academic and professional audiences may accept *longeurs* in a research film that provides rewards elsewhere – say, in terms of new information or demonstrations of practice – this is not normally

the case with the general public who demand - in exchange for their attention - if not entertainment, then at least the right not to be bored. When making *IMG*, I was naturally acutely aware that children in particular, have a low boredom threshold and that I therefore needed to make an engaging film.

Tool of Enquiry

In my introduction, I described my film as a tool of enquiry and in this section, I explain this further. As described elsewhere, the methodological aims of my film were two-fold. My first aim was to produce an intervention into the representation of children's play to investigate practices that might give greater prominence to children's views and expression. The results of this enquiry as experimentation are implicit in the submitted film and I discuss throughout this chapter the different aspects of filmmaking to address my research question. My second aim was to use film recordings as a method for gathering ethnographic data on children's play as well as structuring it into an ethnographic film, viewable by scholars, children and the general public.

As tool of enquiry, the contribution is therefore two-fold: ethnographic "footage" of approximately 40 hours of unedited video recordings of children's play in two playgrounds over two years and the edited version of this footage, submitted here as a 40-minute film. Debates on what constitutes ethnographic film have been well rehearsed without reaching a consensus and ethnographic interest has become the working criteria for defining whether a video or film is ethnographic (Pink, 2007). The ethnographic interest of my film is to be found in the content itself but also in the analysis which is implicit in the structuring of the content into a film artefact. I discuss the structure in more detail below, but one way of considering how one might evaluate the ethnographic value of the film is to consider whether it would be a useful resource for teaching about children's play culture - for example, to trainee school teachers; students in

anthropology and child-related disciplines (child studies; education; sociology; psychology etc).

Ethnographic Film and/or Documentary Film?

My film was produced as a methodological tool in ethnography as well as a film artefact for public presentation. This statement can be reframed by saying that the work aims to be an ethnographic and a documentary film, so can it be both? In Chapter Two, I discussed the lack of consensus defining both documentary and ethnographic film and asked whether these two genres could in fact be differentiated from each other. I also outlined the historical and figurative overlap between the two modes. From the literature (discussed in Chapter Two), it would appear that attempting to isolate and "territorialize" film genres by their cinematic stylisation or by other forms of generic apportioning is bound to fail as there are no fixed common criteria to define the boundaries of a genre – which, instead, are mutable forms that change shape as they come into contact with new possibilities or constraints. Nonetheless, as discussed, documentary and ethnographic film are not strangers, as they share a number of criteria in relation to representational and figurative practice, such as the use of observational, participatory and reflexive modes. This leads me to consider, following Plantinga, that "documentary" and "ethnographic" are both "open concepts" (1997, p. 15), and as such they are both unable to quarantine themselves from concerns common to both. This assessment brings me to conclude that my film, being concerned with cultural practices and made in a research context using ethnographic and observational approaches, can be considered as either an ethnographic or documentary film (or both) and that the decision to affix one or other label is dependent on contextual matters external to the "raw material", the constructed artefact or cinematic mode.

I also therefore do not consider there to be any tension between my film as a public presentational artefact and as a methodological tool in ethnography. On the contrary, this combination of roles was "designed into" my

methodology based on my experience and the knowledge that it was a feasible objective given my twin aims of intervention and experimentation and I outline below the contributions made by my practice.

Documentary Film Representation and Truth Claims

> The study or representation of another culture is no more a mere "description" of the subject matter than a painting "describes" the thing it depicts. In both cases there is a symbolization, one that is connected with the anthropologist's or artist's intention to represent the subject in the first place (Wagner, 1981, p. 18).

> Like every great word, "representation/s" is a stew. A scrambled menu, it serves up several meanings at once. For a representation can be an image visual, verbal, or aural…. A representation can also be a narrative, a sequence of images and ideas…. Or, a representation can be the product of ideology, that vast scheme for showing forth the world and justifying its dealings (Stimpson, 1988).

The above quotations give some idea of the complex subject of representation. In the first, Wagner highlights the subjective and interpretive nature of all representation and in his book went even further, describing ethnographic representation as the "invention of culture" (Wagner, 1981, p. 17). In the second, Stimpson points to the multifarious modes of representation and the values and ideologies with which they may be imbued. Also in my view, documentary film and the issues of representation are intrinsically linked because documentary purports to represent lived reality and embodied presences, rather than imagined ones.

Making any film is a constant process of selection, both in the shooting and editing process, and this requires the problematic action of subjective choice. As a result, documentary film cannot represent reality unproblematically. In

this sense, documentary film is interpretative and subjective, even whilst retaining an "indexical bind" to the recorded phenomena (Nichols, 1991, p. 149). The indexical link provides a sense, for the audience, of "being there" (in the same space as the filmmaker and social actors) and that is one draw of documentary. It also provides for the assumption that documentary has some "truth value" in the sense that it allows the viewer privileged insight into depicted events (Hall, 1997, p. 85) and that the images and sound shown "have their origins in the historical world" (Nichols, 1991, p. 25). In other words, there is an expectation for documentaries that the events would have taken place anyway and any staged action would be clearly indicated (Chapman, 2009, p. 145).

Clearly then there are tensions for the documentary filmmaker between the inevitable subjectivity of the filmmaking process and the expectations for the result to have "truth value". I would suggest that this tension is unsolvable as truthfulness is a moral attribute that is difficult to evaluate (hence the use in law of the adversarial system) and untruthfulness difficult to prove unless extremely obvious. The insolvability of this tension does not however mean that it can be ignored and instead the responsibility of documentary filmmakers to act ethically is increased. Thus, as I argued in Chapter Two, because of its relationship with lived experience, documentary film requires that an ethical position of honesty is maintained towards the subject matter (honest representation) and towards the participants and the audience (not to deliberately mislead or deceive). In practice, this orientation entails that the filmmaker does their best to honestly represent the subject of their production, while at the same time not constraining creative means for doing so. My reference in the paragraph above to the interpretive aspect of documentary was not to demean the genre, but rather to identify that space in which honest representation takes place and which in my research film is a space of experimentation and intervention, one that also makes a contribution to the ethnographic knowledge of children's play.

In considering what might have been conflicting interests (between experimentation and ethnographic record), I was influenced by the work of

Iona and Peter Opie. As discussed earlier, Iona Opie in particular made many sound recordings of ad hoc playground interviews with children describing and explaining to her their play cultures and their games, rhymes and slang. These recordings are lively and fresh representations of children's lore which reveal the language and articulation of children's performances and accounts of their play culture, unmediated by adult interpretation. As a result, they provide us with a rich historical, folkloric and ethnographic resource and a valuable insight into a world and culture that has been frequently overlooked. The Opie tapes indicated that children wished to communicate their knowledge and were indeed worth listening to.

I learned from, and was motivated by, Iona Opie's expertise in adopting relaxed methods of interaction with participants and informal interviewing techniques. The tapes give the impression of children at ease, collaborating with her in the transmission of their knowledge about their cultural worlds. These considerations inspired my overall approach and I attempted to meet the aims outlined in my methodology in the "expressive, engaging way" mentioned by Nichols (2017, pp. 104-105), reflecting the creative basis of my practice.

Film Voice

To partly realise this aim, I adopted in my film the use of what film theorist Plantinga refers to as "the open voice" (1997, p. 115) with the intention of avoiding the "closed" authoritative or didactic discourse found in more conventional or formally structured documentaries (which frequently use a presenter or voice-over narration to impart an interpretation and thereby guide the viewer). In doing so, I hoped to make available to the viewer a more plastic approach to the content and form of the text – in other words, adopting an approach of showing rather than telling – which is after all, what film is good at. Using an open voice and building a narrative without the use of explanatory commentary requires a careful use of cinematic methods to structure an account that both informs and retains the interest of the viewer,

especially as in this configuration they are required to do more work making connections and constructing understanding from the flow of shots and sequences. However, as mentioned previously, this process can also create a sense of complicity in the viewer (Mermin, 1997, p. 43).

The Setting

Filming in the field took place between 2009 and 2011 in two English primary schools: one in central (inner) London and the other in a suburb of the Sheffield metropolitan area (South Yorkshire, north-central England, approximately 160 miles northwest of London).

English state-funded primary schools are generally for children aged four years to eleven years, though the four- to five-year-old intake are classified as being in "reception" class (a less formal learning environment). Attendance at reception is not compulsory in England but it is encouraged as a good way to introduce children to school life. Primary school proper begins at age five (year one) and progresses to age eleven (year six) after which time children move into secondary education (from year seven).

As discussed in Chapter One, the focus of my practice research were children aged five years to eleven years old as it this age range which coincides with when children are most active at play activities. My research and filming therefore did not include children in reception classes.

The London School

The London school had approximately 226 pupils and is relatively typical of central London local authority-funded community schools with a high-degree of ethnic diversity and a wide range of economic diversity. Central London contains, in close proximity, a range of expensive properties and local authority public housing. Nearly 31% of children were eligible for free school meals (a low-income indicator) and approximately 50% of children did not have English as a first language (measured at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2018/19). The school is housed in a three-story Victorian school building which has undergone modernisation. It is located in a traffic-intense, high-

density part of central-north London. The school has two main play areas: (a) a rooftop which houses a small football pitch and a separate covered section, and (b) a ground-level space that extends to three sides of the school building. One side of the ground level space is situated along a very busy main road, making it noisy despite being surrounded by high brick walls. A large part of this area is situated under hefty Victorian brick arches and was mainly but not exclusively a play space for younger children. Both play areas, given the building and location, are compact (though at the time of filming, the school had just installed an additional play space on land adjacent to the school which significantly enlarged the ground-level play area). This new space included a small sunken nature garden and landscaped rubber mounds simulating hills and green space (green matting) and the Fleet River, the hidden London river that runs deep beneath the school (blue matting). On certain days, including when there was inclement weather, children were allowed to gather in the library and some classrooms where they played board or trading card games and enjoyed other non-boisterous activities such as watching videos, reading or drawing.

The Sheffield School

The Sheffield school had approximately 476 pupils and is located on a large housing estate comprised of pre-and-post-war semi-detached houses with gardens, on the northern outskirts of Sheffield, mostly surrounded by green belt land. The school population here differs from that of the London school in being relatively homogenous. For example, in 2018/19, 0% of children were recorded not having English as a first language (measured at the end of Key Stage 2). However, in terms of economic indicators, it is not too dissimilar with 24.6% of pupils in the Sheffield school being eligible for free school meals. The two-story school buildings, dating from the mid-20th century, are spread-out and spacious, especially compared to the cramped accommodation of the London school. The playground is extensive, comprising a large tarmacked area in front of the main entrance to the school building. This area housed a football and basketball pitch, bordered at the front by a (fenced off) road and on one side by a large green field (also part of the school grounds) that extended for approximately 50 metres to the side

boundary and 100 metres towards the rear boundary of the school. Unlike the London school, the play spaces were all on the one level and connected together so children had a substantially large area over which to play. The only restricted area was the play space at the very back of the school building which was reserved for younger children and included a medium sized grass area of about 25 metres square, bordered at the boundary fence by trees. The grass area of this space was landscaped to slope down to a small tarmacked play area. This part of the school grounds also housed an outdoor classroom. Being extensive, the Sheffield school grounds had a greater variety of spaces where children could gather or play. For example, in addition to the tarmacked and green spaces, there was also an area with play furniture and swings, a sunken seating area and a brightly painted covered space.

As with the London school, children were allowed to gather in the library and classrooms during inclement weather and their activities here were similar to those of the London school. However, the Sheffield school also had a large assembly room/gymnasium where on occasion the girls played football (the football pitch in the playground being mainly – but not exclusively – a boys only zone).

Production

To achieve maximum access, freedom of movement and the widest range of shooting opportunities, I constituted a single-person film crew: camera operator as well as sound recordist. I also edited the film and mixed the soundtrack, relying on my professional experience in all these areas.

Camera, Sound and Editing Equipment

The technology used for filming was relatively straightforward. *IMG* was filmed on 1080HD high-definition digital tapes, using a professional digital video camera. Sound was recorded synchronously with the image and although the camera had a built-in microphone, better quality sound could be obtained from using a separate directional microphone mounted on top of the

camera and protected with a "dead cat" wind muff (a source of great curiosity to the younger children who frequently asked me what the furry object was, while stroking it).

Each day after filming, recorded material was transferred in high resolution to separate hard drives for editing and storage. Although the transfer to hard drives was time consuming, it meant that all the recorded material on the digital tapes was backed up to an additional platform for safety. This back-up copy was kept intact as a duplicate of the digital tapes and a further copy of the material was made for editing purposes. The material was edited using Final Cut digital editing software.

My Approach to Filming

Before filming began, I drew up a set of procedures to follow in the field, with the aim of ensuring the best experience for the participants, foregrounding their experience and welcoming their views and self-expression. Subsequently, I was pleased to discover that a similar list for filming children had been drafted by McCrum and Hughes (1998) to advise television reporters, as this confirmed my methods.

My list could be seen by some as analogous with the observational "rules" of direct cinema (Banks, 1992, p. 123). However, I would argue that although there are some similarities in procedures and in, for instance, the "open voice" form of documentary (see above), my method differs. This is because although it aims to give prominence to children's views and expression and to "reset" the representation of children's play, my approach does not profess to provide the objective or "transparent" view of the participants claimed by adherents of direct cinema's initial period as described by Winston (2008, pp. 161-165).

My list addressed how I would best approach both the act of filming and the child participants in particular as follows:

<u>The General Approach to Filming</u>

a) The filmmaking approach is one of "semi-participant observation" (Swain, 2006), though the interaction is generally limited to asking questions and fielding interruptions.

b) The filmmaker's "listening position" towards participants is open, enquiring, and non-judgemental – listening to what they have to say, remaining alert to interaction.

c) Interviews are likewise to be conducted without an agenda, allowing time for participants to answer and raise their own topics.

d) The filmmaker is neither foregrounded, nor hidden. They "blend in" where possible (so as to maintain focus on the social actors), but not so much as to hide the fact that they are filming.

e) Children's games and play are "found objects" of children's culture. As such, the filmmaker records the events of the playground, but as far as possible, does not influence or affect these. Therefore, no rehearsals are conducted. Play is not "set up", or reconstructed (for example, where a shooting opportunity is missed, or to make continuity editing easier). Events are best filmed as and when they occur, thus keeping the contextual environment of the action intact.

<u>The Approach to Participants</u>

f) Following the new sociology of childhood, participants are considered and treated as social actors (James & Prout, 2015a, p. 12), competent social beings (p. 20), and experts in their (play) culture.

g) Participants (who wish to), speak for themselves, directly to camera where possible. No third-party narrator or commentary is to be added, other than subtitles for purposes of clarity or translation.

h) Where possible, participants are filmed at their own height, preferably so that they fill the frame. Where possible, children are not to be filmed as "small" or "looked down on" as this affects how they are perceived.

i) Participants are filmed as they appear. There is no attempt to idealise the images (e.g. through "artful" framing, lighting or props).

j) Where possible, participants are invited to "look through the lens" prior to or during filming, so that they can see for themselves and comment on how shots are framed. (This was mainly possible when filming semi-structured interviews, but of course less possible when filming "hand-held" in the hustle and bustle of the playground. Nonetheless, the aim here was to include participants in decisions in respect of their representation, for example, how they are framed.)

Regarding item (d) on "blending in", it was impossible for me to disappear completely (as one of the few adults in the playground and the only one with a large video camera). However, I adopted strategies to avoid being seen as a teacher or teaching assistant. I didn't have to "act like a child" to blend into the playground – just not be one of the school authority figures. For example, I refrained from speaking to teachers, teaching assistants or other adults in the playground, and only communicated with children. Where possible I stayed low, at a similar height to children and adopted a discreet presence so that I would not be a focus of attention. I was always on my own in the playground, sometimes seated in a corner, other times standing to one side. In this respect, I adopted Swain's "least-teacher" position (2006). In addition, it may be that my visibility as filmmaker clarified my position in the playground as far as the children were concerned and therefore allowed me to have a more liminal status than the authority figures. This was useful as I wanted to speak to them on their own terms about their play. These strategies seemed to be successful as the children were unfazed by my filming (ignoring me when they had more interesting things going on) and I had no problems getting to interview children or filming their playground activities. My overall approach to filming was observational, though I did not adhere to the strict tenets described in his article by Young (1995), as I adopted a more fluid approach to filming and I also incorporated semi-structured and informal ad hoc interviews. In line with classical observational methods, I did however include, amongst more structured sequences, some long continuous takes that allowed the viewer to "experience the event" (Young, 1995, p. 104) and make their own analysis (I discuss the filming and editing processes in separate sections below). Also aligning with the

observational approach, I used only sync sound recorded at the time of filming.

Filming

I conducted three main strands of filming:

a) Observational recording of play activities using an ethnographic approach – mainly in the playgrounds with a small amount of indoor play activities. (Figure 8)

b) Informal ad hoc interviews with children during their playtime. (Figure 9)

c) Semi-structured group interviews. (Figure 10)

Figure 8: Example of observational recording (from *IMG*)

Figure 9: Example of informal ad hoc interview (from *IMG*)

Figure 10: Example of semi-structured group interview (from *IMG*)

Observational recording

I adopted a grounded approach to filming led by events and activity emerging from the field. As MacDougall states: "I felt that the filming should be an inquiry leading to a structure, not a structure demonstrating the ideas I had started with" (2005, p. 121). This approach is similar to the observational mode (Nichols, 1991, pp. 38-44).

Interviews

The purpose – and effect – of my approach – in which the conventions of adult interviewing were applied to the children (there are no adult interviewees) – was to raise the profile and standing, in the eyes of the viewer, of what the children were saying. In effect, by presenting them (audio-visually) as experts, the participants are accepted as experts (to some extent this is the power of the on-screen presence). I felt that it was particularly important to interview children in *IMG* not merely observe them – and to include these voices in the final film. This approach places the children as active participants in the documentary, rather than just as passive subjects, and acknowledges their status as experts on their own play. As Bess Lomax points out, when interviewed in *Let's Get the Rhythm:* "there is an enormous strain, a kind of a rush of communication along generational lines between adult to adult and child to child and those don't often, sometimes don't cross" (her hand movements while saying this emphasise that the lines of communication take place in parallel and are separate). The way that children talk about their games as insiders is different to the way that adults talk about them – even if these adults come from the same community and played the same games when they were younger – and speaking to children can provide insights which would not be available through other means (for instance, about the inspiration or motivation behind their play).

I also felt strongly that the final documentary should maintain the position of foregrounding children as experts on their own play – and not undermine it by including additional interviews with adults or adding narration. It is also important to realise, however, that adding a voiceover or additional

interviews is an active, conscious decision on the part of the filmmaker – and that documentaries that do this are therefore going out of their way and doing extra work to undermine or erase the child's voice. In the final film, my own voice can be heard (off-screen) asking occasional questions (where it was impossible or disruptive to edit them out), but apart from this, the only voices in *IMG* are those of the children.

Complying with the outlined ethos, both ad hoc and semi-structured interviews were each filmed as one long take.

Semi-structured Group Interviews

Semi-structured group interviews were used because noise levels and distractions often made it difficult to record in-depth ad hoc interviews with groups while in the busy playground. These interviews, held outside of children's play when it was quieter, also allowed me to explore areas such as pretend play in more detail. I conducted the interviews in a quiet teaching room – or outdoors, when the occasion arose. Conscious of my position in the power relations between an adult filmmaker/researcher and child participants, I felt that conducting interviews in group settings would help, to some degree, in addressing this imbalance. I considered that children would have more confidence and hence feel relaxed when participating in an interview together with their peers. Children were nominated by their teachers to take part in the semi-structured interviews (as they were taken out of class to participate). However, the interviews were free ranging, so that the children would to a large extent, be directing the exchange. They also sometimes gave spontaneous demonstrations of their games which were also filmed.

The girls from Sheffield in the group interview seemed somewhat regretful that the boys rarely wanted to play families with them, though were also matter-of-fact about it. Their comments about the boys "playing dogs" provided an interesting parallel with the boys from the London school also talking about this subject. Another intriguing aspect of the interview is the subtle embodied interaction among the girls as the interview was taking place, in addition to the speech turn-taking.

These were conducted in the playground as and when the opportunity arose. As with the semi-structured format, interviewing children in groups allowed them to feel more comfortable as they were among friends and peers and outnumbered the filmmaker, redressing (to some extent), the power imbalance that exists in these situations.[1] Children did not feel "put on the spot", as other members of the group could interject. The atmosphere was conversational, and they would remind each other of songs or games, correct or challenge each other's recollections, and introduce new stories or topics. They would also team up to demonstrate clapping games, etc. Of course, group interviews may increase the degree of performative behaviour by interviewees (both towards the filmmaker and each other), but I did not view this as problematic (particularly in a film about play cultures).

Reflexivity

For Denzin and Lincoln, reflexivity is "the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher…a conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and respondent" (2018, p. 143).

In my study, being reflexive meant remaining aware of participants and others in my surroundings, while also staying attentive to how I impacted on those around me, in effect adopting a reflexive stance. Reflexivity in my filmmaking was three-fold: the reflexivity of the researcher in the field; the reflexivity of the filmmaker during filming and the reflexivity of the editing process.

My voice can be heard in the film, engaging with the participants and asking them questions. This reflexive inclusion signposts the filmmaker as well as the filmmaking process and reveals it as a process of enquiry, rather than a conclusive statement, as well as removing any notions of the recording as unmediated observation. Also, in addition to signalling the participatory interaction between filmmaker and participants, it is an indication that the recording is constituted by both the filmmaker and the social actors. As with

other aspects of ethnographic practice (written or visual), there are different views on what level and form of reflexivity is appropriate.

Reflection

Making my film had a number of similarities to ethnographic research, and although I classify my film as documentary, it can also be seen as an ethnographic film (Banks, 1992).

Filming was in a number of respects, similar to empirical field research using ethnographic methods, in that observations and interviews took place in the field over a long period. Additional similarities included ethical considerations, an awareness of power relations between filmmaker and participants, the need to build a rapport with participants and others such as teachers, and for the researcher/filmmaker to be reflexive in their approach.

As a film presentation of ethnographic material, there is a requirement to satisfy the academic demands of ethnographic data, though these need not be the same as those for written ethnographies. For example, MacDougall suggests that visual media facilitates the construction of knowledge not by "description" (to borrow Bertrand Russell's term) but by a form of "acquaintance" (2005, p. 220). He also suggests, that visual media employ principles of "implication, visual resonance, identification and shifting perspective" that involve the viewer in "heuristic processes and meaning-creation quite different from verbal statement, linkage, theory-formation and speculation" (ibid).

The acknowledgement of these different yet complementary modes of knowledge presentation recalls Milech and Schilo's practice/exegesis model discussed in Chapter Two. As MacDougall indicates, each medium has its own specificities. The mimetic and indexical capabilities and affordances of sync-sound film recording, enable the viewer to for example, see the action (and hear the sound) of playground games and their spatial distribution, conveying a sense to the viewer of "being there" and of witnessing play events. It allows an audience to view the embodied movement of the players, their gestures, speech and songs, and their interaction with each other.

Post-production

Documentary Editing

As a time-based medium, where sequences of succeeding images need to make visual sense, editing is not just a process of selection and reduction - it is also important in structuring the audio-visual material into a coherent and meaningful text.

Editing in observational documentary and ethnographic film is generally less prescriptive as the filmmaker is attendant on the action of the participants, not on a pre-determined script. Whereas a classical Hollywood style film will have been worked out in terms of shots and structure prior to filming, in an observational documentary the camera operator will be working in an improvisatory mode while filming the lived action, and it is in the edit where the film is given a structure. The role of editing is even more heightened where there is no pre-arranged shooting script and material is recorded in situ in an evolving situation (as with *IMG*).

As is the case with most documentaries, many more hours of film are recorded than are used in the final version of the film, also known as the final cut. Edited into a 40-minute film from approximately 40 hours of material, IMG had a ratio[2] of 60:1 which is not unusual for a documentary film shot on digital tape or SD cards.

The theoretical and analytical approach of multimodality (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress, 2010; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001), further developed in relation to film (Burn, 2014), explains the "orchestration" of the filming and editing modes, how each of these processes contribute to the construction of meaning. Both filming and editing – and their orchestration – will differ, depending on the genre and other characteristics of, or intentions for a given film.

Structuring IMG: Categories and Clusters – Thematic Organisation

As with a written article, the structure of a documentary film is important for coherence and comprehension. A documentary subject will have been researched beforehand, and based on this research, the filmmaker will have an idea of the subject matter they wish to record and how this should be treated on film. Depending on the subject matter and the circumstances of production, the structure can be decided beforehand and filmed more or less to a predetermined list of required shots or, as with *IMG*, the filming can follow the action without a detailed idea of what is to be filmed - in which case most of the structure and coherence of the final film is put together afterwards, in the editing process.

As a research film, I was concerned to find ways in which I could organise the recorded data and incorporate analyses, whilst at the same time fulfilling the requirements of a coherent and compelling film (in much the same way that an ethnographer writing up notes is concerned to provide a thick yet engaging and comprehensible description). Structuring the film content into *clusters* of categorical content presented opportunities for analytical comparisons, allowing findings emerging from the recordings to be figured in the film itself, without any requirement for external explanation, for example in the form of a commentary. Unlike say, a static diagram, film is a time-based medium and once a shot or sequence has played and a completely different one appears (as is commonly the case), it is can be difficult to recall the disappeared shot accurately (one shot/sequence cognitively replacing the other) and thus it is more difficult for the viewer to retain the connections between sequences that flowed past some time beforehand. Therefore, connections between filmed material positioned close together and grouped as thematic clusters, provide (by means of cinematic language) access to resulting useful insights that may otherwise have been overlooked.

For instance, in the example of the transcribed extract (see Appendix 14), the organisational structure showed that "dog games" were common to both schools and only played by boys. It also emerged that games of families

included non-human families (for example, dogs), or a mixture of humans and non-humans.

As a non-narrative documentary, *IMG* could be structured using the categorical form (Bordwell & Thompson, 1986) with children's play as the overall organisational category. In editing the recorded material into sequences and then into subsets or what I have called *clusters*, I have extended Bordwell and Thompson's typology and put it to use as an editing principle. This method of structuring material has proved useful in furnishing complementary information to that presented in the images or on the soundtrack. For example, in the film extract provided, I grouped relevant sequences into a cluster of pretend games about *families.* This form of organisation highlights the variety, similarities and differences between the different games of families, and arranges, into a coherent film text, research recordings driven by grounded enquiry, where the recordings themselves are not pre-scripted or pre-determined.

The clustering scheme is also useful in grouping film material that otherwise may not be connected by any spatio-temporal, narrative or other logic - and may prove particularly useful in research contexts, as described above. Shots are used individually or are edited together to make up a sequence. Sequences are then grouped together as a meaningful cluster, based on a categorical similarity.

Also, within the overall unit of a film there may be a number of clusters (each containing one or more sequences, which are in turn made up of one or more shots). For example, the segment of *IMG* presented here is a cluster of sequences on the subject of "pretend games". I call this type of cluster *thematic*[3]. Other thematic clusters in the 40-minute film include: clapping games; TV inspired "performance play"; and the "Bloody Mary" ghost myth. Clustering is also useful in slicing through playground life across two locations as in *IMG*, revealing similarities or differences and making the connections salient.

Clustering therefore helps to identify and theorise the variances and commonalities within a theme. The thematic variety provided in this clustering scheme also has an additional aesthetic benefit, mirroring the variety and pace of the playground. Outside the examples I provide here, one could however, also see other uses for clustering in films – in making connections and links between what might otherwise be considered unrelated material. However, clustering would not generally be used as an organising principle in narrative film (fiction or non-fiction) - as the narrative structure/development itself would normally provide the logic driving the organisation of filmed material into scenes and sequences.

While categorical clustering provides an internal coherence, the film nonetheless also requires an overarching structure of coherence to indicate to the audience that they are viewing a textual unit, and not just a succession or collection of similar but unrelated sequences.

Metaphors are useful in framing and organising documentary sequences as a textual unit. Winston describes the use of a temporal organising principle (such as "a day in the life") as "chrono-logic". He argues that in some cases the use of "chrono-logic" is a means of narrativizing material (2008, p. 113), though in the case of *IMG* I would argue that it is more a means of signposting, bracketing the film as a whole (using the unifying device of a playground break) so as to situate the content and orient the viewer. This is done using cinematic conventions that denote the beginning of a film. In *IMG*, the film starts with a fade-in from black as two girls enter an empty playground (whilst the sound also fades in). The last few shots of the film likewise show the end of the break, denoting closure.

Film Analysis – A Multimodality Framework

In the above sections of this chapter, I discussed the ways in which I sought to develop approaches to the filming and organisation of material, so as to address the research question and intervene in the practice of documentary film representations of children's play culture.

In this section, I conduct an analysis of a segment of my film *IMG* including examples of the three strands of filming described above (Figures 8-10).

The segment for analysis was chosen as it provides an example of play action (the "dogs" game) that, following Nichols' typology, is observational in that the camera observes from afar, and participatory as I also engage with the participants and ask them about the game. The segment also includes examples of ad hoc and semi-structured interviews. In the interest of anonymity all names of participants have been changed in the exegesis.

My analysis was made as a proof of concept and an exercise in "close viewing" to determine whether, in relation to the ethnographic value of the material, information acquired from it augmented that learned solely by standard viewing.

Transcript for Ethographic Value

An accompanying multimodal transcript (see Appendix 14) provides a detailed breakdown of the action of the participants and the filming components in the three-minute film extract. There are numerous different ways of producing transcripts (Bezemer & Mavers, 2011; Cowan, 2018), though the one presented here is different to the examples in these publications.

Though transcribing moving images can be time-consuming (depending on how much detail is transcribed), I found that more information did indeed emerge as a result of the process. For example, the process of making the transcript showed that the slight laugh by Dahi (in the "Dogs" sequence) is a reaction to the off-screen "you die" uttered by a boy during the "scary maze" discussion, a connection I had not previously made, but which became clear on close viewing. Making the transcript also made me more aware of the more subtle gestures and facial expressions made by participants, such as Ann touching her hands together, as well as the elusive interaction based on gaze, between the four girls in the semi-structured interview. I used video editing software to view the film as this allowed me to scroll through the

sound and images at frame-resolution. Normal viewing software generally does not permit such detailed scrutiny.

Length prevents me from discussing my findings from the transcript in more detail, but this experience shows that the act of transcribing can be a valuable tool for scrutinising on-screen content in detail and it authenticates the ethnographic value of the filmed material. The processes of transcription, as a different mode of apprehending "makes strange" the film, and it seems to be this "making strange" that provides additional previously overlooked information.

The eight sequences in the indicative example presented here feature children's pretend play on the topic of "families". It is interesting to note that the "families" are not always human – they can also be animal families. For example, though the four boys in the second sequence are playing at being dogs, they are a "family" of three dogs and an "owner". Likewise, with the game of "foxes", Jenny describes how the two owners look after the fox (abandoned by its mum), and protect it from "the hunter". In each case, the play activities (e.g. feeding, caring) are similar to those when playing "families". This data shows that families and animals play a significant role in the imaginary play of children from both schools, across ages and genders. The transcription identifies the subtle nuances in play and peer interaction that may otherwise go unnoticed.

The final sequence with the group of five girls is a single long take, without intermediate edits, recorded with the camera on a tripod. However, although it provides rich ethnographic information of the discussion and the interpersonal interaction taking place, it would be naïve to think that it was unstructured. All film texts are structured, even if they comprise long, unedited takes. The shot is, for example, incorporated into the cluster of "pretend games" and into the film as a whole. Furthermore, the viewer has no knowledge of how much of the "raw footage" is included in the sequence (which may be a longer shot than what is shown), as they are not privy to that information. Other interviews contain more edits, such as the one with Jenny about the "fox game". In this case the "raw footage" was also filmed as

a single long take – adhering to my filming procedure of not repeating shots – but here the filming was hand-held and more "mobile" than that of the group of five girls, shot using a tripod. A camera on a tripod is "fixed" and can only pan, tilt and zoom, albeit smoothly – whereas hand-held camerawork provides the ability to radically change the camera angle and viewpoint within the shot, as well as panning, tilting and zooming. Use of a handheld camera generally provides more options for varieties of shot and framing within one shot or take.

Different shot sizes and angles provides options for making "smoother" cuts in the raw material. Smooth, seamless edits provide an appearance of continuous and uninterrupted movement of the argument or "flow" of the film-text. However, they are not always desirable in a research context because they can obscure a change of shot. This is one argument against the use of edits in ethnographic film (they can "lull" the viewer into thinking they are watching an uncut or nearly uncut sequence). Another argument is that they represent the introduction of fiction techniques into research or non-fiction material and a "capitulation to fiction" (Young, 1995, p. 110) – although for some filmmakers, all film is fiction and "there is no such thing as documentary", as Trinh T. Minh-ha famously said (Hohenberger, 2007, p. 107).

In relation to edits, I would however argue that an appropriate use of smooth edits can be justified for ethnographic or documentary material within a film-text (which is in any case "a construct") – on the basis that it assists in retaining the flow and overall progression of the film along with the interest and engagement of the audience – subject to not excluding information of relevance, or information that would otherwise radically change the perception of the sequence or film as a whole. For example, the edits in the "fox game" were made solely to remove hesitations from Jenny's account (the foregrounding of her account being of prime importance) – so as to make it more comprehensible to the audience, whilst still retaining the other multimodal meaning-making information in Jenny's utterances, such as the choice of vocabulary, intonation and sentence structure. These edits did not

abridge or materially change the content or emphasis in her speech. Also, the original "raw" footage has been preserved intact, so researchers will have access to this data in due course, if required.

In terms of an ethnographic approach, removing hesitations in speech is a matter of judgement in relation to the research aims, to be considered within the overall cinematic and research "design" of the film. In the case of *IMG*, the ethnographic significance is with the children playing and discussing their play culture and games – rather than, for example, with recording the speech patterns of participants – so in this case removing hesitations between sentences does not materially affect the data. Audio-visual film representation is a multimodal social semiotic practice on two levels, form and content. In other words, how Jenny is filmed (what camera angle, for how long etc) and what she is filmed doing or saying are both meaningful in terms of her portrayal and that of the wider groups (girl, child) that she belongs to. For example, even within a long unedited take, each change of the camera position - for example, moving round the subject with a hand-held camera - changes the angle of view, and therefore changes what is being included and excluded from the frame. Another form of framing, a zoom-in, brings the subject closer to the viewer but progressively excludes peripheral and potentially contextual information, and a zoom-out takes them further away, while including more peripheral information. A zoom-in, by making an item progressively larger within the frame, also has the effect of signalling that the item brought closer to the viewer is the focus of that moment in the film – an example of what in multimodality is termed "salience" (Kress, 2010, p. 131). The most salient item in the frame is the most important and is where the viewer's attention is directed. The progressive forward movement of the zoom-in also motions "pay attention" to what is coming towards you.

The multimodality concept of a frame (distinct from the purely cinematic one) is also "essential to meaning-making in all modes" (Kress, 2010, p. 149) and therefore essential to practices of representation. The playground, like the classroom, is a delimited space, framed by (mutable) discourses and power

relations. This opens up a social-semiotic approach to analysing the actions within them (Hodge & Kress, 1988). However, looking specifically at the film mode (and focusing on this area for the purpose of this discussion), we can also, following on from Burn (2014), develop this concept further in terms of documentary practice - to consider the filming and camerawork of *IMG* to be spatial *framing* – concerned with the spatial distributions and arrangement of subjects within frames and shots *and* the movement of the camera as it changes the spatial arrangements in the frame – and to consider the editing to be temporal *framing* – concerned with organising shots into sequences *and* the (temporal) duration of individual shots and sequences as well as the unfolding rhythm and pace of the film over time. Spatial and temporal framing play an important part in cinematic representation as well as in the creation of cinematic affect and are therefore essential elements of filmmaking as creative practice.

Fiction filmmaking typically has great control over spatial framing – e.g. though camera placement, location and set design (shots can also be retaken to control performance). But in documentary, many of these "resources" are "ready-made" and – through documentary convention or self-imposed restriction should not be manipulated by the filmmaker (see my list of "procedures") thus de-emphasising certain aspects of the contributory modes. The documentary filmmaker also does not control the embodied modes – see diagram in Burn (2014, p. 378) – only how these are presented through orchestrating modes. We should not, however, ignore the embodied modes in analysing a documentary. In this genre, the shot is more a selection than a construction, and looking at the embodied modes helps us to unpick the filmmaker's rationale for making this selection in both shooting and editing. Looking at these embodied modes is also essential in allowing us to identify the full ethnographic value and richness or "thickness" (Geertz, 1973, p. 7) of the material.

For example, the first part of the "dog game" sequence consists of two shots from a long hand-held take (consisting of numerous camera angles as both camera and subjects move around). The material selected for the film are the

parts of the longer shots that most clearly communicate the game: the "dogs" being "fed" and being "walked". The ad hoc interview that follows is from a different shot. In the first shot, the boys acting as dogs are spinning their "webs of significance" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) - gesturing, with their mouths, their hands and also pleading "I am hungry!". This confirms that in play, travesty and mimicry (Caillois, 2001, p. 21) are indeed complementary acts when required – as the mouth gesture alone is not sufficient to communicate the role of "ravenous dog". The boys sit in a semi-circle – as the "dogs"- gazing fixedly at the "owner" who is feeding them. Undeterred by the other activity going on around them in the playground, their gaze and actions indicate that they are immersed in the game. The "owner" turns to his side and gestures that he is picking up food, then puts his hand up to the mouths of two boys, leaving out the third. This omission is intriguing as it seems to be part of the game – could it be a "punishment" by the "owner"? In the second shot, we see three boys crawling on all fours along the green (foam covered) section of the playground, while the "owner" (a smaller boy than the others) walks upright, his hand on the shoulder of one of them. All keep close together, immersed in their game. It is interesting to note that, as the playground is quite small, the boys would have been aware of my filming close-by, but are not deterred from their play, or embarrassed by being filmed. In the third shot, Adil explains their game and who they are – gesturing as he does so, while looking directly at the camera. Two have "come out" of their immersive "magic circle" – that "temporary world within an ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart" (Huizinga, 1955, p. 10). Basim is initially out of shot, but then, apparently still "in game", is seen crawling from left to right behind the other two (Adil and Mahi) and towards Mark (the "owner"). Mark does not answer my question to him, but Adil and Mahi interject to answer on his behalf. Are they being protective of him? This and the discussion of the "scary maze game" suggest the complex interpersonal dynamics within this group relating to power and transgression. They seem aware that the killing in the "scary maze game" is transgressive, and (possibly for this reason) seem "torn" between concealing and explaining. For instance, Mark shrugs when asked about "scary maze" – but when he whispers to Adil does he tell him what to say, or give him

permission to explain? I mentioned earlier, that in terms of my research, film is both a method and a tool of enquiry – and we can see this in the above account and in what follows. To summarise, even this short segment of *IMG* provides rich ethnographic insights in a number of different areas, (in terms of both audio and visual information), for example:

- Similarities of pretend play topics across two schools (dogs, families)
- Transmission of games
- Pretend play (specifically families)
- Gender differences and commonalities
- Interpersonal relations

Although concepts such as the "magic circle" are established in the study of pretend play, film can also highlight precisely when and how players step out of the game (even if only momentarily). In addition, the film was able, though close viewing and multimodal transcription, to reveal:

- Speech: Who speaks most/least. The significance of speech. Non-speech ("playing dumb" and prompting each other), for instance in the "dog game" sequence.
- Body language and gaze: Towards each other. Towards the filmmaker.
- Facial expression: When engaged. When off guard.
- Gestures: Accompanying their own speech or others. In isolation.

The openness of the interviews also provided additional insights into the games. From the five girls, we heard how the games had adapted – with boy/girl "families" evolving into all-girl "families without dads" and all-boy "dogs". The boys also contributed to this – and the "scary maze" provided insight into how they handle secret (transgressive) games.

[1] Group interviews may not suit all scenarios (e.g. where privacy is required). However, it was gratifying to have my filming ethos in relation to interviews confirmed when I read, sometime after filming, the Save The Children guide to interviewing children. (McCrum & Hughes, 1998)

[2] The ratio of the "raw" footage shot to that in the edited film.

[3] Not to be confused with thematic clustering in data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5: Concluding Remarks and Reflection

> Documentary filmmakers must care about children and be
> willing to take the time to observe them closely and gain
> their trust. This means not dictating to them as an adult or
> directing them but allowing them to be expressive in their
> own ways. (MacDougall, 2005, p. 72)

My study was conducted using a practice/exegesis model consisting of a 40-minute documentary film and accompanying exegesis, which includes this chapter.

My research question asked how might children's play be represented in documentary film so as to give greater prominence to children's expression and views. The question was prompted by the discovery on the one hand, of the near absence of documentary films about young children's play culture and on the other, the frequent use and persistent repetition of documentary, non-fiction television and press media tropes presenting children as problems.

Play and lore is a central activity and area of expertise for children of primary school age and it was the focus of the ethnographic study for the AHRC *Children's Playground Games and Songs* project of which my research film was a component.

Having identified the problem described above (see Chapter One), addressing the research rationale and the documentary representation of children through the perspective of their play was an effective way to focus on children as experts in the knowledge transmission of play culture, from (expert) child to (novice) adult. It also enabled a less unequal encounter between (adult) filmmaker and participants.

Once the topic for my research was determined (as described above), I critically examined the existing discourses about childhood. In parallel with this, I explored (at a high level) how these discourses have both been represented in, and shaped by, contemporary film and television. Doing this allowed me to posit some initial hypotheses to explain these phenomena (for instance, that the triviality barrier limited the research into children's play and influenced the portrayal of children in documentary film as problems or victims).

This aspect of the investigation also confirmed that exploring the research question by looking specifically at documentary film portrayals of children's play was a promising approach to take. I also conducted a comparative survey using a selection of films identified in this research – narrowing down the scope of my analysis and looking solely at films featuring children's play. This served two purposes. The first is that it confirmed many of the concerns identified in Chapter One. The second is that my detailed analysis of the other films identified specific issues in the representation of children in documentary film – and hinted at potential solutions. It was evident, for example, that many films about children mute the voices of children and that this issue is exacerbated by the use of voiceover as in, for example, *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O* and that although the lack of voice can be addressed by interviewing children, this solution can also be undercut by presenting interviews with children as subsidiary to those with academics and/or other adults as, for example in *Let's Get the Rhythm*. My survey and analysis was therefore successful in that it both confirmed my initial hypotheses and identified specific examples for testing in and through my film.

In analysing my own film, I narrowed the focus of my research further – looking first at my film as a whole (and the process of making it), then in much more detail at a typical sequence from it.

The film was successful on the basis of the criteria that I set out for myself (see Chapter Four). I illustrated that was possible to produce a film which would foreground the knowledge, expression and views of the child participants, and audio-visually present the participants as experts.

I nonetheless had two additional criteria that I wished to satisfy. The first was that the film worked, on its own terms – in other words, that it was interesting and enjoyable to a lay audience (including children and staff from the two schools involved in the shooting). At the end of the *Playground Games* research project, I had two well-received screenings of the film, confirming this point.

The second criteria was that the film should also be informative to a specialist academic audience – for instance, researchers in the field of child and play studies. The film was screened to an audience of scholars, academics, authors and experts on play, folklore and child studies at the final conference for the *Playground Games* project, held at the British Library. The response to the film was very positive, as told to me by members of the audience. The film has also been positively received by play scholars and educators, for example at the International Play Association Conference, as well as by the general public, at screenings held at the V&A Children's Museum.

The film identified specific approaches that can be taken to improve the representation of children's play in documentary film. Although my film (and this thesis as a whole) concentrated on children's play, it is likely that these findings can also form at least a starting point for rethinking and re-setting the portrayal of children in documentary film more generally. For instance, I devised a set of practical approaches to shooting my film (see Chapter 4) which could be of use to professional filmmakers and to researchers working in visual methods. The list of approaches is straightforward, but acts as an important reminder for avoiding the unconscious biases that can permeate the adult's everyday view of children.

One interesting finding when one looks back on the survey is that there are isolated examples of good practice – for instance, the child interviews in *Let's Get the Rhythm*, the trusted participant observer stance of *Vermont Kids*, and so on. However, these are not conscious interventions in the way that *IMG* was – these films were produced with different aims and criteria in mind (for example, the observational mode used by John Marshall in *Vermont*

Kids) and it is possible that where they adopt similar techniques, it is not as conscious a step as in *IMG*). It is also notable that documentary films demonstrating these good practices in filming children are limited in quantity and in scope (as are films about children's play more generally) – the dominant discourse(s) still tend to present negative images and silence children.

This raises interesting questions and although some of these were mentioned in the early chapters of this thesis, they still remain (at least partly) unanswered and thus present opportunities for further avenues of research. For instance, if the UNCRC empowers the voices of children, why are these voices so rarely heard in documentary film and news reporting – particularly as interviewees on issues directly affecting children? Likewise, why has the new sociology of childhood had comparatively little effect in changing the representation of children in documentary film? Is this because its focus has been predominantly in the area of research and policy, rather than in the visual media, or have attempts to improve this area been met with resistance? These questions are outside the focus of this study, but they point the way to potential future research.

In conclusion, I feel that the methods identified in this thesis and demonstrated in my film indicate solutions which could be disseminated to - and used by - visual researchers and the community of documentary and ethnographic film practice within the academy and beyond.

Representing, interviewing and listening to children respectfully is not a difficult proposition, it just needs adults to become aware of their assumptions, attitudes and biases in relation to the expression and representation of children, and where necessary, to recalibrate these. The dominant discourses and rhetorics affecting children, discussed in this study, currently remain embedded, yet with awareness they could be easily addressed. When that happens adults and children will both benefit.

Filmography

Films

Agüero, I. (Director). (1988). *Cien niños esperando un tren*

Asch, T. and Chagnon, N. (Directors). (1974). *Children's Magical Death*

Asch, T. and Chagnon, N. (Directors). (1973). *Magical Death*

Asch, T. and Marshall, J. (Directors). (1972). *Children Throw Toy Assegais*

Callahan, B. (Director). (2014). *Toilet Adventures*

Chagall, I. (Director). (2014). *Let's Get the Rhythm: The Life and Times of Miss Mary Mack*

Daiken, L. (Director). (1957). *One Potato, Two Potato*

Flaherty, R. (Director). (1922). *Nanook of the North*

Goldschmeid, E. (Director). (1954). *Lasciatemi almeno giocare*

Hammond, D. (Director). (1971). *Dusty Bluebells*

King, A. (Director). (1967). *Warrendale*

Lomax, B. (Director). (1967). *Pizza Pizza Daddy-O*

Longinotto, K. (Director). (1995). *Shinjuku Boys*

Longinotto, K. (Director). (1998). *Divorce Iranian Style*

Longinotto, K. (Director). (2002). *The Day I Will Never Forget*

Longinotto, K. (Director). (2007). *Hold Me Tight, Let Me Go*

Lumière, L. and Lumière, A. (Directors). (1894). *Les jeux d'enfants dans la rue*

Lumière, L. and Lumière, A. (Directors). (1895). *L'arroseur arosé*

Lumière, L. and Lumière, A. (Directors). (1895). *Baignade en mer*

Lumière, L. and Lumière, A. (Directors). (1895). *Le repas de bébé*

Lumière, L. and Lumière, A. (Directors). (1897). *Bataille d'oreillers no.2*

Lumière, L. and Lumière, A. (Directors). (1897). *Le gouter des bébés*

Marshall, J. (Director). (1975). *Vermont Kids*

McEvoy, W. (Director). (1987). *Woodbine Place*

Mead M. and Bateson G. (Directors). (1952) *Trance and Dance in Bali*

Mitchell, G. (Director). (2011). *ipidipidation my generation!*

Morris, E. (Director). (2017). *Wormwood*

Opipari, C. and Timbert, S. (Directors). (1997). *Barbara and Her Friends in Candombleland*

Philibert, N. (Director). (2002). *Etre et avoir*

Txicão, K. et al. (Directors). (2001). *From the Ikpeng Children to the World*

Watkins, P. (Director). (1965). *The War Game*

Watkins, P. (Director). (1971). *Punishment Park* (1971)

Wiseman, F. (Director). (1967). *Titicut Follies*

Television

Blind Date (ITV 1985-2003)

Born Naughty (C4 2015)

Boys and Girls Alone (C4 2009)

Boys Alone (C4 2002)

House of Tiny Tearaways (C4 2005)

Kids Behind Bars (C4, 2005)

Kids Behind Bars (BBC 2011)

Mad for It (ITV 1999-2000)

My Violent Child (Channel 5 2014)

Secret Life of 4, 5 and 6 Year Olds (2015-2019)

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Appendix 1: Beyond Text Case for Support

Figure 11: Beyond Text Case for Support (eight pages)

- how oral transmission interacts with children's media cultures. Clapping games such as *I Went to a Chinese Restaurant* are well-known for their references to popular culture (Elvis Presley); more recent songs refer to soap operas, Teletubbies, and Barbie. These contemporary references co-exist with songs displaying more folkloric themes, such as *Under the Bramble Bushes*.
- the multimodal nature of these oral texts – the embodied, ludic, linguistic, poetic and musical aspects of songs and games.
- social cohesion and exclusion, the social agency of children, and the place of carnivalesque, transgressive modes of play in their lives. We will explore how the making and unmaking of games relates to the making and unmaking of identity and the fluid social fabric of childhood.

Technology, Innovation and Tradition

We will investigate relationships between playground cultures and technology, and the impact of new media on oral tradition, developing:

- a digital archive and website at the British Library, combining its Opie collection with collections in Sheffield and Leeds. The website will enable visitors to explore the archives, and enjoy interactive game versions of traditional playground culture. It will feature an innovative multimodal design exploiting the affordances of Web 2.0, an element of interactive gameplay, and the pioneering use of child curators.
- an analysis of the relationship between new entertainment media and oral folk cultures. A migration of games and songs into new media can be seen, for example, on YouTube, or in Wii games which use skipping.
- a selection of playground games as a 'proof of concept' prototype for the Nintendo Wii. This innovation, provisionally entitled the 'Game-Catcher', and supported by Nintendo UK, will adapt the Wii to reproduce the movements of clapping and skipping as games for children to play. This will allow a selection of the games collected in the project to be playable on the Wii, further adapted for the British Library website. It will also offer a new data capture technology for researchers in this field.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims – to:
- research, archive and intervene in the dynamic transformation of a living oral tradition in the context of new gaming cultures and technologies
- examine the relationship between traditional playground games and children's media cultures
- develop interdisciplinary methodologies, combining approaches from literary, media and game studies, ethnography and computer science within a common social semiotic framework
- conduct effective knowledge transfer into the games industry and the education and cultural policy sectors
- involve children as participant researchers, curators, and game designers

Objectives – to:
- develop a digital archive and interactive website of playground games, songs and rhymes at the British Library

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- conduct a multimodal textual analysis of the relation between folkloric and media cultures
- conduct ethnographic studies of playground culture in two primary schools (London and Sheffield)
- develop and theorise a 'proof of concept' prototype for a computer game adaptation of selected playground games
- involve children's panels in exhibition and curatorship, ethnographic study, and games design
- disseminate outputs in high-profile events in London and Sheffield

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main question:
What is the relation between children's playground culture and their media culture?

Sub-questions:
1. How are games and songs made and unmade in the process of oral transmission, and how do these transformations incorporate the cultural resources of popular media?

2. How do such transformations represent particular social motivations and cultural affiliations, especially in relation to contemporary media?

3. How can traditional playground games be mediated and preserved through new media technologies for interactive online exhibition and for kinaesthetic gameplay?

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Children's folklore has been an object of study for over 150 years, with researchers recognising playground games and clapping and skipping songs as important cultural texts. Collections enact a desire to preserve and protect traditional rhymes and games (Halliwell 1842/9; Gomme 1894/8) and emphasise the inventiveness and richness of an oral tradition sustained by children alone (Opie and Opie, 1959, 1969, 1985).

A notable theme of this research is what the Opies call the 'wear and repair during transmission' (1959). Studies note the interplay between historical continuities and the continual change through which playground lore responds to contemporary cultural preoccupations. Playground lore reflects 'continuity and change, stability and variation, dynamism and conservatism' (Bishop and Curtis, 2001: 10). We will explore these paradoxes of oral culture, setting them against analogous forms of preservation and rapid change in the new media of the digital age.

Children's playground games have been investigated from various other perspectives: as forms of identity and socialisation (Allison, 1993); as linguistic patterns (Crystal, 1998); as informal literacies (Grugeon, 1988); as musical and compositional practice (Glover, 2001); as forms of creative learning (Bishop and Curtis, 2001), and, of course, as play (Sutton-Smith, 1995). Our research will study in particular how different semiotic modes are creatively combined: how music, ritualised symbolic movement, and linguistic patterning function for cultural purposes, both inherited and reinvented.

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Whilst many studies value children's linguistic cultures, they often gloss over their aggressive, scatological, obscene and anti-authoritarian nature (Bauman, 1978). However, these elements are crucial in the 'making and unmaking' of playground lore, enacting the power relations of children's practices (Grugeon, 2001). We will explore transgressive, phantasmagorical play in children's creative and imaginative practices.

Importantly for our research, although many collections record the integration of popular cultural references (Elvis, Madonna, advertising jingles and soap operas) into games and songs, the evolving relation of playground lore to the media cultures of contemporary childhood has been largely neglected. Instead, there has been a long-standing critique of the infiltration of popular and commercial culture in children's play (Elkind, 2006; Postman, 1983). We will take as our initial hypothesis the opposite idea: that productive connections exist between the lore of the playground and the practices of children's media culture.

Finally, collections of children's lore have not usually been intended for children themselves. Even ethnographic studies are subject to 'adultocentrism' (Bauman, 1978). Our project will enlist the active help of children's panels, and seek their advice in research, design, and dissemination; and, importantly, their involvement in the crating of the BL website.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research activities will fall into **three** distinct, closely-related, parallel sections:

1. The BL online resource (research sub-question 3): A digital archive and website incorporating *The Opie Collection of Children's Games and Songs* (an analogue audio archive at the British Library); and selected audio recordings and photographs at partner institutions, the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT) at the University of Sheffield and the Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture (LAVC) (see letters of support). The project's programme of digitisation, catalogue enhancement, resource discovery and interpretation will improve access to these collections. The design of the website (incorporating new material from the ethnographic study) will contribute to innovation in library exhibition through interactive components drawing on games research, the design of adaptive and adaptable search facilities for different audiences, and the use of child curators from the children's panels in our partner schools.

2. Textual and ethnographic study (sub-questions 1 and 2): A **multimodal analysis** of selections from these archives and data from the ethnographic studies will be undertaken to determine the relationship between children's media culture and playground lore, its development over time, and its local variation. The analysis will feed into the ethnographic studies, allowing historical comparisons between archive material and data collected in the field. The **ethnographic studies** will collect observational, visual, audio and interview data in two primary schools (Sheffield and London). The Sheffield school is located in a large public housing estate serving a primarily white, working class community. The London school will be in the King's Cross area, close to the British Library, serving a multiethnic community. The children will be active participants, collecting data in their social ecologies of play. This approach recognizes that they are social actors who can play an active role in projects relating to their cultural worlds (e.g. James and Prout, 1990). These studies will contribute to the BL website and the Wii prototype suite of games.

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3. Wii prototype development (sub-question 3): this prototype, the 'Game-Catcher', will adapt the hardware and software of the Nintendo Wii to 'record' the physical movements of clapping and skipping games, and then integrate them with music and words. Captured games will then be playable by other children. The design process will draw on computer science, games design, and multimodal design theory. Children's panels from our partner schools will contribute to the design, as will our partner Nintendo UK (see letter of support). The technical output will feed into the ethnographic study (as a new way to capture games in the field); and into the BL website, as a model for game-based interaction. It will also be demonstrated to Nintendo and to interested independent developers in the project's knowledge transfer phase.

Interpretative methodology

The central interpretative methodology is multimodal analysis, building on our recent analyses of signifying practices in children's culture, such as their engagement with Harry Potter across book, game and film (Burn, 2004). Multimodal analysis derived from social semiotics (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001) analyses different modes of signification within general principles of communication, representation and social practice. We will draw on previous multimodal approaches to expressive action, drama, music (van Leeuwen, 1999), website design (Lemke, 2002) and computer games (Burn, 2006).

Multimodal analysis is appropriate also for the ethnographic study. Rather than privileging observational or photographic data, it allows an integrated analysis of movement, song, language, gesture, and ludic structure. It also allows analyses of patterns of change, innovation and cultural reference across time and across gender, age, ethnicity, lifestyle choice, social class and cultural interest.

It is less-well equipped, however, to account for situated, embodied, subjective cultural experience. It will, therefore, be combined with approaches more attentive to physical performance, context and culture: drama and performance theory, and Cultural Studies approaches to popular media culture.

Finally, multimodality theory is a theory of design. It will inform the development of aspects of the BL website, the Wii Game-Catcher, and the design contributions made by our children's panels to these technological innovations.

The research team

The team possesses extensive experience of this range of research approaches. The Centre for the Study of Childhood and Youth in Sheffield, the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media and the Centre for Multimodal Research at the Institute of Education, and the London Knowledge Lab all provide expertise on which the project can draw. UEL provides a context of media practice and relations with media industries.

Dr Burn (LKL) will co-ordinate the project. His expertise is in the multimodal analysis of children's media texts and discourses, and computer games. He will be involved at some level in each of the three sections of the project, and will contribute specifically to the textual and ethnographic study and the games development.

Professor Marsh (UOS) is experienced in the study of children's literacies and media cultures, and will oversee the ethnographic studies, in close collaboration with Dr Willett (LKL), whose experience is in ethnographic studies of children's media cultures and play.

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Dr Willett, an experienced field researcher, will be mentored by Professor Marsh in this first experience as a Co-Investigator. Two research officers experienced in ethnographic fieldwork will be appointed, one in London, one in Sheffield.

Mr Robinson (BL) has experience of working with audio archives and developed the content for the BL's *Sounds Familiar* website. He will co-ordinate the digitisation programme and development of the online resource in consultation with BL colleagues in the Sound Archive and Learning. The researcher appointed will be experienced in website design for museums, libraries and galleries.

Ms Mitchell (UEL) is experienced in the study of computer games as art, and in media and multi-media production. She will direct the development of the Wii prototype, and produce, direct and edit the 30 minute documentary. The research officer appointed will be a programmer with experience in games design and development. Ms Mitchell is a senior academic and experienced games researcher; in this first experience as Co-Investigator, she will be mentored by Dr Burn. Nintendo UK will provide a free developer's kit, and advice on Knowledge Transfer. The London Knowledge Lab is the convenor of the London Games Research Group, which can also offer support and dissemination.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The project will run three meeting schedules (see Gantt chart for details):
- Core group (whole team): once a term
- Three research teams: RT 1 (BL website); RT 2 (textual/ethnographic study); RT3: Wii prototype development): twice a term
- Advisory Group: twice yearly

Dr Burn will **co-ordinate**, and attend all meetings. He has experience of funded research incorporating complex partnerships similar to those proposed here: working with major cultural institutions, with children as participant designers in a software development project, and with industry.

The **Research teams** have liaison responsibilities: the collections feed into the ethnographic study and Wii development; data and analyses from the ethnographic study feed into the BL website and the Wii prototype; the Wii design will be trialled for ethnographic data capture and adapted for the BL website.

RT1:
Jonathan Robinson (BL: team leader)
Joan Beal (NATCECT)
Clive Upton (LAVC)
Research officer 1

RT2:
Professor Marsh (UOS: team leader; Co-I)
Research Officer 2
Dr Willett (IOE; Co-I)
Research Officer 3

RT3:
Grethe Mitchell (UEL: team leader; Co-I)

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Research Officer 4
Game-Catcher advisory group (see Technical Appendix)

The Advisory group will meet twice a year, advising on research, dissemination and knowledge transfer, with the following members:

- Michael Rosen, the Children's Laureate
- Darren Gorton, Nintendo UK
- Professor Lucy Green, popular music specialist, IoE
- Liz Grugeon, specialist consultant in children's playground games
- Professor Mark Levene, computer scientist, Birkbeck
- Professor Rose Luckin, LKL, learner-centred design specialist
- Mike Rawlinson, MD of Entertainment Leisure Software Publishers Association
- Dan Jones, independent playground games researcher
- Malcolm Taylor, Head Librarian, English Folk Dance and Song Society
- Professor Peter Blatchford, IoE, children's playground culture specialist
- Roger Walshe, Head of BL Learning

OUTPUTS AND DISSEMINATION

- Interim conference (March 2010) at the Institute of Education to build networks of researchers in children's playground culture
- BL digital archive
- BL website aimed primarily at schools, the general public, but also academic researchers
- Co-authored book: *Children's Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age*
- 3 refereed articles (target journals: *Convergence; Game Studies; Folklore; Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth;*)
- Proof of concept prototype for the Nintendo Wii: demonstration to educators at the BETT show Feb 2011
- 30 minute documentary of the ethnographic project
- Final conference at the British Library for educators, archivists, researchers and policy-makers (DCMS and DCSF).
- Final conference for children at the University of Sheffield, co-hosted by the Centre for the Study of Childhood and Youth. The Children's Commissioner for England will be invited.
- Training at the BL in the digitisation of open reel and audio cassette recordings to be disseminated to other institutions
- Promotional campaign by the British Library Press Office to specialist press, the media and the general public.

TIMETABLE

The timetable will follow the pattern of each research team:

- RT1: review and digitise collections, develop archive and website
- RT2: conduct ethnographic study in term-times; interpret data between phases
- RT3: iterative development of prototype Wii Game-Catcher.

The overall coordination of the project follows the meetings schedule outlined in the project management section.

For details, please see Gantt chart in Technical Appendices, specifying project meeting schedules, timelines, milestones and deliverables.

Word count: 3,000

Appendix 2: UEL Ethics Form

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF A RESEARCH PROGRAMME INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

<u>Please read the Notes for Guidance before completing this form.</u> If necessary, please continue your answers on a separate sheet of paper: indicate clearly which question the continuation sheet relates to and ensure that it is securely fastened to the report form.

1.   Title of the programme:

AHRC Beyond Text Programme - Large Grant Award

      Title of research project (if different from above):
Children's Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age

2.   Name of person responsible for the programme (Principal Investigator):

Principal Investigator (PI):
Professor Andrew Burn - Associate Director of the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media (CSCYM), The Institute of Education (IOE), University of London

UEL Applicant & Co-Investigator:
Ms. Grethe Mitchell
Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

The project is a collaboration between UEL, The Institute of Education (London), Sheffield University and The British Library.

  Name of supervisor (if different from above):   N/A

Status: N/A

3.   School: Humanities & Social Sciences   **Department/Unit:** N/A

4.   Level of the programme (delete as Appropriate):

    (a)~~undergraduate basic~~
    (b)~~undergraduate project~~
    (c)~~Postgraduate (taught)~~
    (d)~~Postgraduate (research or Professional Doctorate)~~
    (e)   post-doctoral or staff

5.   Number of:

    (a) researchers (approximately):
1 x Principal Investigator, 4 x Co-Investigators and 4 x recruited Research Officers.

    (b) participants (approximately):
All consenting children in the two schools whose parents also provide consent, will be involved in the project - estimated at 400 - 500 pupils (both schools).

Page 1 of 10

Figure 12: UEL Ethics Form (ten pages)

6. Name of researcher (s) (including title):
Applicant:
Ms. Grethe Mitchell - UEL ; Co-Investigator - UEL STAFF

Nature of researcher (delete as appropriate):

(a) staff   (b) ~~students~~   (c) others

If "others" please give full details:

- **Principal-Investigator:** Professor Andrew Burn - Associate Director of the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media (CSCYM) The Institute of Education (IOE), University of London
- **Co-Investigator:** Professor Jackie Marsh - School of Education, University of Sheffield
- **Co-Investigator:** Ms. Grethe Mitchell - Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities and Social Sciences University of East London (UEL)
- **Co-Investigator:** Mr. Jonathan Robinson - Lead Content Specialist, Sociolinguistics and Education, British Library
- **Co-Investigator:** Dr. Rebekah Willett - Lecturer, Faculty of Culture and Pedagogy, the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London.
- **Four recruited Research Officers:**
  - Dr. Julia Bishop based at the University of Sheffield
  - Ms Laura Jopson based at the British Library
  - Dr. Christopher Richards at the London Knowledge Lab, Institute of Education.
  - Dr. Jennifer Sheridan based at the London Knowledge Lab, Institute of Education.

7. Nature of participants (general characteristics, e.g University students, primary school children, etc):

Primary school children Y1 to Y6 (age 5 to 11)

8. Probable duration of the research: The research project overall is for 24 months (including preparation and write up periods) - however individual elements of the project have different start times.

from (starting date): April 2009   **to (finishing date):** March 2011

9. Aims of the research including any hypothesis to be tested:

The project will produce a digital archive and interactive website of games and songs at the British Library; an extensive analysis of playground lore and its relation to children's media cultures; and a prototype playground games suite adapted for Nintendo *Wii*-type technology. A documentary film will also be produced as one of the outputs of the research.

The project has the following aims and objectives:

Aims – to:
- research, archive and intervene in the dynamic transformation of a living oral tradition in the context of new gaming cultures and technologies
- examine the relationship between traditional playground games and children's media cultures
- develop interdisciplinary methodologies, combining approaches from literary, media and game studies, ethnography and computer science within a common social semiotic framework
- conduct effective knowledge transfer into the games industry and the education and cultural policy sectors
- involve children as participant researchers, curators, and game designers

Objectives – to:
- develop a digital archive and interactive website of playground games, songs and rhymes at the British Library
- conduct a multimodal textual analysis of the relation between folkloric and media cultures
- conduct ethnographic studies of playground culture in two primary schools (London and Sheffield)
- develop and theorise a 'proof of concept' prototype for a computer game adaptation of selected playground games
- involve children's panels in exhibition and curatorship, ethnographic study, and games design
- disseminate outputs in high-profile events in London and Sheffield

The project will consist of:

1. An ethnographic study of playground culture in playgrounds in two primary schools: one in Sheffield and one in London.
   As part of the project, children's playground play will be observed using written notes, video and audio recording. Children will be involved in the collection of data in that they will record playground games and rhymes using digital camcorders and voice recorders. Children will take part in individual and group interviews about their play. The data collection will involve naturalistic observations of play (in which games and rhymes will be embedded) and staged performances of games and rhymes when necessary.
   ** **Please note (a):** Ethical approval for the ethnographic study in Sheffield and London has been sought separately by Dr. Rebekah Willett at IOE.

2. The development of a digital archive and interactive website of playground games, songs and rhymes at the British Library with the curatorial involvement of children's panels from the project.
   ** **Please note (b):** Ethical approval for the digital archive and interactive website has been sought separately by Mr. Jonathan Robinson (British Library).

3. The development and theorisation of a 'proof of concept' prototype for a computer game adaptation of selected playground games with the involvement of children's panels in the selection and design of the prototype games. (Ethical approval sought from UEL).
   ** **Please note (c):** Ethical approval for the focus group interviews regarding the proof of concept prototype for the Nintendo Wii game (taking in the same schools as the ethnographic studies) has been sought via the IOE Ethics review process, by Dr. Rebekah Willet at IOE. (See IOE ethics form attached).

4. The production of a documentary film about the project - using filmed material and events, staged performances of games and rhymes where necessary, and material collected/recorded by children and researchers during the course of the project. (Ethical approval sought from UEL).

   ** **Please note (d):** This ethical review form relates only to the development and theorisation of a 'proof of concept' prototype for a computer game adaptation of selected playground games and to the production of a documentary film about the project (items 3 and 4).

   ** **Please find attached** the Research Ethics Application Form from the IOE in respect of the Ethnographic Study in Sheffield and London and the focus group interviews regarding the proof of concept prototype for the Nintendo Wii game.
   ** **Please also find attached** the consent forms relating to video and audio recordings. The development, distribution, collection and administration of the consent forms produced for children, parents/guardians and for school staff, was led by the investigators conducting the ethnographic study, with the collaboration of the schools involved in the research. (please see attached documents). Advice and input on the content of the consent forms was also gained from Dr Richard Zheng (UEL Director of Intellectual Property Development) via email and face to face discussion with the PI (Prof. Andrew Burn) and the applicant (Ms Grethe Mitchell).

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main question:
What is the relation between children's playground culture and their media culture?

Sub-questions:
1. How are games and songs made and unmade in the process of oral transmission, and how do these transformations incorporate the cultural resources of popular media?

2. How do such transformations represent particular social motivations and cultural affiliations, especially in relation to contemporary media?

3. How can the traditional playground games be mediated through new media technologies for the purposes of interactive online exhibition and for kinaesthetic gameplay?

RESEARCH METHODS

The research activities will fall into **three** distinct, closely-related, parallel sections,:

1. The British Library online resource (research sub-question 3): A digital archive and website incorporating *The Opie Collection of Children's Games and Songs* (an analogue audio archive at the British Library); and selected audio recordings and photographs at partner institutions, the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT) at the University of Sheffield and the Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture (LAVC). The project's programme of digitisation, catalogue enhancement, resource discovery and interpretation will improve access to these collections. The design of the website (incorporating new material from the ethnographic study) will contribute to innovation in library exhibition through interactive components drawing on games research, the design of adaptive and adaptable search facilities for different audiences, and the use of child curators from the children's panels in our partner schools. Ethical approval for the digital archive and interactive website at the British Library has been sought separately by Mr. Jonathan Robinson (British Library).

2. Textual and ethnographic study (sub-questions 1 and 2): A multimodal analysis of selections from these archives and data from the ethnographic studies will be undertaken to determine the relationship between children's media culture and playground lore, its development over time, and its local variation. The analysis will feed into the ethnographic studies, allowing historical comparisons between archive material and data collected in the field. The ethnographic studies will collect observational, visual, audio and interview data in two primary schools (Sheffield and London). The Sheffield school is located in a large public housing estate serving a primarily white, working class community. The London school is in the King's Cross area, close to the British Library, serving a multiethnic community. The children will be active participants, collecting data in their social ecologies of play. This approach recognizes that they are social actors who can play an active role in projects relating to their cultural worlds (eg James and Prout, 1990). These studies will contribute to the British Library website and the Wii-type prototype suite of games. Ethical approval for the ethnographic study in Sheffield and London and for the focus group interviews regarding the proof of concept prototype for the Nintendo Wii game (taking in the same schools as the ethnographic studies) has been sought separately by Dr. Rebekah Willet at IOE.

3. Wii-type prototype development (sub-question 3): this prototype, the "Game-Catcher", will adapt the hardware and software interface of Nintendo Wii-type technology to 'record' the physical movements of clapping and skipping games, and then integrate them with music and words. It is anticipated that captured games will then be playable by other children. The design process will draw on computer science, games and interactive design, and multimodal design theory. Children's panels from our partner schools will contribute to the design, and we have the support of Nintendo UK. The technical output will feed into the ethnographic study (as a new way to capture games in the field); and into the BL website, as a model for game-based interaction. It will also be demonstrated to Nintendo and to interested independent developers in the project's knowledge transfer phase.

10. **Description of the procedures to be used (give sufficient detail for the Committee to be clear about what is involved in the research).** Please append to the application form copies of any instructional leaflets, letters, questionnaires, forms or other documents which will be issued to the participants: *See appended documents (12 no.)*

For the ethnographic study, children's playground play will be observed using written notes, video and audio recording. Children will be involved in the collection of data in that they will record playground games and rhymes using digital camcorders and voice recorders. Children will take part in individual and group interviews about their play. The data collection will involve naturalistic observations of play (in which games and rhymes will be embedded) and staged performances of games and rhymes when necessary. Ethical approval for the ethnographic study in Sheffield and London has been sought separately by Dr. Rebekah Willett at IOE.

For the documentary, children in the two schools will be recorded over a period of time, on video and audio. Some of the filming will be specially staged (e.g. staged performances of games and songs) and some of the filming will be observational. Filmed interviews may also be conducted. Some of the material recorded by the ethnographic researchers and by the children themselves, and some of the recorded interviews by the ethnographic researchers, may be used in the documentary.

For the proof of concept for the Nintendo Wii game, focus group interviews will be conducted over the course of the project. This will involve testing new software and giving feedback to the researchers. Data collection will involve written notes, video and audio recording. Some of these recordings may be included in the documentary film. Ethical approval for the focus group interviews regarding the proof of concept prototype for the Nintendo Wii game (taking in the same schools as the ethnographic studies), along with the ethnographic study, has been sought separately by Dr. Rebekah Willet at IOE.

A Children's Panel will be involved in managing children's involvement in the project. It is intended that the constitution of the panel will have two members from each class Y1 – Y5, one boy and one girl from each class. The panel will talk with relevant members of the research team about how children can be involved in recording play in the playground. The panel will also give advice about how children can be involved in other parts of the project, such as helping with the project website, curating elements of the British Library website and acting in an advisory role on the development of the proof of concept for the Nintendo Wii-type games.

The process for identifying members of the panel will be decided by class teachers, in discussion with relevant members of the research team (i.e. the ethnographic researchers). The research team will support children in their work on the panel – and will explain the process to children, manage the administration of the panel and provide regular reports on the Panel's work for the Headteacher and School staff.

The research project will be conducted according to the BERA (British Educational Research Association) code of ethics for educational research.

Informed consent for the research will be obtained from parents/guardians and from the children themselves. Participants (children and their parents/guardians, and teaching/support staff) will be provided with information about the project in the form of leaflets and in face-to-face meetings/discussions with researchers. (See informed consent process below).

INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS
The consent process has been led by the investigators at IOE and Sheffield, in consultation with the two schools and with the other project investigators. The two schools have different requirements and this has resulted in an opt-in process for the school in Sheffield and an opt-out process for the school in London, and hence slightly varied consent forms. Parents/ guardians have been sent a leaflet outlining the project and asked for written consent or to advise the school of any objection to the research and other activities of the project. They have also been invited to a parents' evening/meeting, where the project was discussed. Children have also been given information about the project and asked for their consent. (See attached parent/children/staff information leaflets and parent/children/adult consent documents). Please note that due to the different requirements at the Sheffield and London schools there are two sets of documents. Each document is prefixed with either SHEF - for the Sheffield school, or IOE - for the London school). Researchers and co-Investigators will visit each classroom to

explain the project and answer questions. It is made clear to children and parents that they can withdraw from any of the research activities at any time prior to completion of the project. Parents/guardians and children will also be invited to attend a screening of the documentary prior to its final edit and parents will be able to request withdrawal of recorded material of their child at this stage if they wish. It is also made clear to children and parents that they can withdraw at any stage of the process should they wish to do so.

Consent takes place in a number of stages:
   a) At the initial stage, all parents/carers are asked to give consent for data on playground play to be collected, recorded, analysed and used in publications by the research team, or to make known their objection to this. Parents have a choice of opting into/out of, the research component and/or the documentary component.
   b) Once parents/carers have given consent, consent from children are sought. They are given information leaflets in class and supported in the completion of the forms where appropriate. If parents give consent but children do not, data from the children is not collected.
   c) If the team wish to use any visual data on the project website or the British Library website, further written consent will be sought from children and parents/carers.

*Please note that all the consent forms are prepared, administered and collected by the researchers doing the ethnographic study (Professor Marsh, Dr. Bishop, Dr Willett and Mr Richards), in consultation with the two schools.
*Please see attached: information leaflets and consent forms and the Ethics Approval form for IOE.

11.	Are there potential hazards to the participant(s) in these procedures?	YES/~~NO~~

   If yes: (a) what is the nature of the hazard(s)?

1. Because some data is visual, complete anonymity is not possible.
2. We are aware that playground games are sometimes private and powerful spaces for children, and we are concerned about disrupting these spaces.
3. Children may become tired/distressed in the collection and recording of playground data; in the recording of material for the documentary film; in the process of the development of the proof of concept computer game.

   (b) what precautions will be taken?
1. We will not have names of the children on the websites or in the research outputs, and an informed consent process has been developed in collaboration with the two schools. This will assure us that parents and children have given informed consent for audio and video recording (as well as the other aspects of the project).
2. To address this, researchers work with the Children's Panel, who will mediate our access to these spaces (see description of Children's Panel in item 10 of this form.)
3. If children become tired/distressed in the collection of playground data, development of the prototype Wii-type game or the work with the British Library, they can immediately withdraw and any related data will be destroyed. The information leaflets make it clear that children can withdraw at any time. If a child withdraws participation from the documentary, their consent and that of their parent/guardian to retain/use previously filmed or recorded material will be sought separately.

12.	Is medical care or after care necessary?	~~YES~~/NO

   If yes, what provision has been made for this?   N/A

13.	May these procedures cause discomfort or distress?	~~YES~~/NO

See item 3 in section 11.

   If yes, give details including likely duration: N/A

14.	(a)	Will there be administration of drugs (including alcohol)?	~~YES~~/NO

   If yes, give details: N/A

(b)   Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress, please state what previous experience you have had in conducting this type of research: N/A

15.   (a)   How will the participants' consent be obtained?

Consent is sought both from the parents/guardians and from the children (in a simply worded 'form of words'). Consent is also sought from participating adults e.g. school staff.
** Please see "Informed Consent Process" in Section 10 of this application for details of the process. Also please see attached information and consent notices.

(b)   What will the participants be told as to the nature of the research?

All prospective participants (children, parents/guardians and school staff) will be fully informed as to the nature of the research and provided with information leaflets (see section 10 and attached documents for details). Children receive an age-appropriate information leaflet and are informed about the project by relevant members of the research team and by the school staff supporting the project. Members of the research team are available to discuss details of the project with parents/guardians, children and teaching/support staff. Parents are also invited to meet the researchers at parents evenings/coffee mornings.

16.   (a)   Will the participants be paid?   ~~YES~~/NO

Individuals will not be paid, however the project will cover expenses e.g. travel/subsistence etc. (where relevant). The participating schools will receive a goodwill payment of £500 each for their involvement in each year of the project.

(b)   If yes, please give the amount: Goodwill payment of nominal sum of £500 to each school in each # year of the project.

(c)   If yes, please give full details of the reason for the payment and how the amount given in 16 (b) above has been calculated (i.e. what expenses and time lost is it intended to cover):
This is a goodwill payment of a nominal sum.

17.   Are the services of the University Health Service likely to be required during or after the research?   ~~YES~~/NO

If yes, give details: N/A

18.   (a)   Where will the research take place?

The ethnographic studies, and most of the documentary filming will take place in the two schools (Sheffield and London). Filming in some other locations related to the project may also take place (e.g. British Library, London Knowledge Lab, IOE, Sheffield University, UEL). Editing of the documentary will mainly take place at UEL (e.g. MPC and/or MERL). The prototype game development will take place mainly at the London Knowledge Lab (IOE) and UEL with other activities taking place in the two schools (e.g. user testing, focus group discussions etc). The website development will take place mainly in London at The British Library, with some discussion possibly taking place in the two schools. None of the research sites involve particular hazards and permanent help-points, sources of relief or advice are on site or close-by to the locations.

(b)   What equipment (if any) will be used?

Children collecting data will at times use simple video "camcorders" such as 'Flip' video cameras. (Children will receive training and support in the use of the cameras and the techniques of recording video). Children testing and advising on the prototype game development are likely to be using Wii-type control devices or similar, or adaptations thereof in supervised situations. Children will receive instruction and training on any equipment prior to use. The applicant (Grethe Mitchell), researchers, investigators and teaching/support staff will at times be using a Laptop computer, Sony VX2000 or similar video camera with on-board microphone, tripod, directional microphone with wind shield and boom pole. Other possible equipment includes lightweight domestic-type video cameras, portable lights for video recording, wireless and other microphones, audio recording devices and still cameras.

(c)   If equipment is being used is there any risk of accident or injury?   YES/NO

There is no particular risk of accident or injury. The video/audio and computer equipment used is designed to be portable and light weight. Precautions will be taken to minimize the risk of accident or injury in line with the guidance/procedures provided by the schools, institutions and relevant staff. The research locations are in urban areas and therefore within relatively easy reach of external medical assistance if necessary. The school and institutions involved also have internal first aid procedures in place.

If yes, what precautions are being taken to ensure that should any untoward event happen adequate aid can be given: N/A

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19.   Are personal data to be obtained from any of the participants?   YES/NO

If yes, (a)   give details: Please see item 10 for details of the data collection.

This ethical review form relates to the development and theorisation of a 'proof of concept' prototype for a Wii-type computer game adaptation of selected playground games and to the production of a documentary film about the project. The provisions of the Data Protection Act will be complied with.

Separate ethics approval procedures have been undertaken at IOE for the ethnographic studies and the focus group interviews regarding the proof of concept prototype for the Nintendo Wii game; and at the British Library for the development of a digital archive. The ethical review processes for these components are being managed by the Institute of Education (for the ethnographic studies and focus group interviews - see attached documents), and the British Library for the archive and website.

For the proof of concept for the Wii-type game, focus group interviews will be conducted several times over the course of the project. This will involve testing new software and giving feedback to the researchers. Data collection will involve written notes, video and audio recording. The prototype game itself will not contain personal data.

Consent for the inclusion of video and sound recordings in the documentary is sought from children and their parents/guardians (see item 10), as well as from school staff. Consent is sought in collaboration with the schools involved. In addition a screening will be arranged for the participating parents and children at a final draft stage, to allow parents/guardians and/or children to withdraw from the documentary at this stage if they wish, prior to final completion of the documentary.

(b)   state what steps will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the data?

All ethnographic data will be anonymised where possible i.e. children will be given pseudonyms.
Video and sound recordings used in the documentary production will not be entirely anonymous and informed consent for this is sought (see item 10 for a description of the research and informed consent process).

During production of the Wii-type prototype game and the documentary film, recorded material will be stored securely (e.g. equipment and hard drives will be securely stored when not in use, laptop computers will be password protected and securely stored when not in use). Electronic data will also be password protected and/or encrypted for

additional security where applicable.

Any other personal data gathered for the project (e.g. notes etc.) will be stored securely in locked cabinets.

      (c)   **state what will happen to the data once the research has been completed and the results written-up. If the data is to be destroyed how will this be done? How will you ensure that the data will be disposed of in such a way that there is no risk of its confidentiality being compromised?**

Where consent has been obtained, ethnographic data, video and sound recordings will be archived with the British Library and/or the National Film Archive (British Film Institute). Where consent has not been obtained, data will be destroyed. Computer data will be destroyed using an application such as Eraser - see http://www.heidi.ie/node/6 (or similar) for Microsoft operating systems, the built in 'Secure Empty Trash' facility for Macintosh or a Macintosh application such as Edenwatch Permanent Eraser - see http://www.edenwaith.com/products/permanent%20eraser/ to prevent material being retrieved.

20.	Will any part of the research take place in premises outside the University?	YES/~~NO~~
	Will any members of the research team be external to the University?	YES/~~NO~~

If yes, to either of the questions above please give full details of the extent to which the participating institution will indemnify the researchers against the consequences of any untoward event:

This ethical review form relates to the development and theorisation of a 'proof of concept' prototype for a computer game adaptation of selected playground games and to the production of a documentary film about the project. (Separate ethics approval processes have been undertaken for the ethnographic studies, the focus group interviews regarding the proof of concept prototype for the Nintendo Wii game and for the development of a digital archive and website at the British Library. The ethical review approval for these components are managed by the Institute of Education (for the ethnographic studies and focus group interviews), and the British Library (for the archive and website.)

Research will take place at various locations outside UEL, such as the Institute of Education (IOE), the London Knowledge Lab (LKL), Sheffield University, the British Library, ▮▮▮▮▮ Primary School (Sheffield); ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Primary School (London).

21.   **Are there any other matters or details which you consider relevant to the consideration of this proposal? If so, please elaborate below:**

If researchers observe anti-social behaviour such as bullying, racist or discriminatory behaviour taking place during the observation of play, they will follow school procedures for dealing with this.

22.   **If your programme involves contact with children or vulnerable adults, either direct or indirect (including observational), please confirm that you have the relevant clearance from the Criminal Records Bureau prior to the commencement of the study.**

    YES/~~NO~~ CRB clearance has already been obtained for the applicant (Grethe Mitchell). All members of the research team will have CRB clearance.

23. DECLARATION

I undertake to abide by accepted ethical principles and appropriate code(s) of practice in carrying out this programme.

Personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and not passed on to others without the written consent of the subject.

The nature of the investigation and any possible risks will be fully explained to intending participants, and they will be informed that:

    (a)   they are in no way obliged to volunteer if there is any personal reason (which they are under no obligation to divulge) why they should not participate in the programme; and

    (b)   they may withdraw from the programme at any time, without disadvantage to themselves and without being obliged to give any reason.

NAME OF APPLICANT: **Signed:** Grethe Mitchell (via email)
(Person responsible)

Grethe Mitchell (applicant).
_____   **Date:**

NAME OF DEAN OF SCHOOL: Signed: _____

_____   Date: _____

ethics.app
[September 2008]

12 Attached Documents:
1. Case for Support [BT-PlaygroundGames-CaseForSupport-Final.pdf]
2. IOE, University of London - Form for Ethics Approval for a Research Project: Funded Research [PlaygroundIOEEthicsForm.pdf]
3. IOE Children Information Leaflet [IOE-ChildrenInfo.doc]
4. IOE Parent Information Leaflet [IOE-ParentsInfo.doc]
5. IOE Teacher/Adult Information Leaflet [IOE-TeacherInfo.doc]
6. IOE - letter to school staff [IOE-letter to CH staff.doc]
7. Sheffield - Children Consent Form [SHEFF-CHILDREN consent Final.doc]
8. Sheffield - Children Information Leaflet [SHEFF-Info for children Final.doc]
9. Sheffield - Parent Information Leaflet [SHEFF-Info for parents Final.doc]
10. Sheffield - Parent Consent Form (for children) [SHEFF-Info for parents Final.doc]
11. Sheffield - Staff Information Leaflet [SHEFF-Info for Staff Final.doc]
12. Sheffield - Adult Consent Form [SHEFF-Staff Consent Final.doc]

Appendix 3: UEL Ethics Approval

UEL
University of
East London

Grethe Mitchell
Humanities and Social Sciences School, Docklands

11 December 2009
ETH/11/94

Dear Grethe,

Application to the Research Ethics Committee: Children's Playground games and songs in the New Media Age. (G Mitchell).

I advise that Members of the Research Ethics Committee have now approved the above application on the terms previously advised to you. The Research Ethics Committee should be informed of any significant changes that take place after approval has been given. Examples of such changes include any change to the scope, methodology or composition of investigative team. These examples are not exclusive and the person responsible for the programme must exercise proper judgement in determining what should be brought to the attention of the Committee.

In accepting the terms previously advised to you I would be grateful if you could return the declaration form below, duly signed and dated, confirming that you will inform the committee of any changes to your approved programme.

Yours sincerely

Simiso Jubane
Admission and Ethics Officer

Research Ethics Committee: ETH/11/94

I hereby agree to inform the Research Ethics Committee of any changes to be made to the above approved programme and any adverse incidents that arise during the conduct of the programme.

Signed:..Date: ....

Please Print Name:

Figure 13: UEL Ethics Approval (one page)

Appendix 4: IOE Ethics Form

Institute of Education, University of London
Ethics Approval for a Research Project: Funded Research

Basic Information table:

Project title	CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND GAMES AND SONGS IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE			
Director	Andrew Burn (PI), Rebekah Willett (co-I)			
School/Unit	FCP, LKL		Faculty	FCP
Start date	1 April 2009	End date	31 March 2011	
Expedited review requested	Reason for expedited review:			
No				
Funder	AHRC		Funding confirmed?	yes
All research projects at the Institute of Education are required to specify a professional code of ethics according to which the research will be conducted. Which organisation's research code will be used?				BERA

1. Has this project been considered by another (external) Research Ethics Committee? If so, please insert the name of the committee, the date on which the project was considered, and send the approval letter to Sean Jennings (researchethics@ioe.ac.uk) in either hard or electronic format.

A separate ethics review process is being undertaken for the production of a documentary film and is being managed by the University of East London.

2. Summary of planned research (please indicate the purpose of the research, aims and main research questions, and research design, *min.* 150 words)

The project will produce a digital archive and interactive website of games and songs at the British Library; an extensive analysis of playground lore and its relation to children's media cultures; and a prototype playground games suite for the Nintendo *Wii*.

Aims – to:
- research, archive and intervene in the dynamic transformation of a living oral tradition in the context of new gaming cultures and technologies
- examine the relationship between traditional playground games and children's media cultures
- develop interdisciplinary methodologies, combining approaches from literary, media and game studies, ethnography and computer science within a common social semiotic framework
- conduct effective knowledge transfer into the games industry and the education and cultural policy sectors
- involve children as participant researchers, curators, and game designers

Objectives – to:
- develop a digital archive and interactive website of playground games, songs and rhymes at the British Library

Ethics form version 2.0 October 2008   1

Figure 14: IOE Ethics Form (four pages)

rhymes at the British Library
- conduct a multimodal textual analysis of the relation between folkloric and media cultures
- conduct ethnographic studies of playground culture in two primary schools (London and Sheffield)
- develop and theorise a 'proof of concept' prototype for a computer game adaptation of selected playground games
- involve children's panels in exhibition and curatorship, ethnographic study, and games design
- disseminate outputs in high-profile events in London and Sheffield

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Main question:
What is the relation between children's playground culture and their media culture?

Sub-questions:
1. How are games and songs made and unmade in the process of oral transmission, and how do these transformations incorporate the cultural resources of popular media?

2. How do such transformations represent particular social motivations and cultural affiliations, especially in relation to contemporary media?

3. How can the traditional playground games be mediated through new media technologies for the purposes of interactive online exhibition and for kinaesthetic gameplay?

RESEARCH METHODS

The research activities will fall into **three** distinct, closely-related, parallel sections,:

1. The BL online resource (research sub-question 3): A digital archive and website incorporating *The Opie Collection of Children's Games and Songs* (an analogue audio archive at the British Library); and selected audio recordings and photographs at partner institutions, the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition (NATCECT) at the University of Sheffield and the Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture (LAVC) (see letters of support). The project's programme of digitisation, catalogue enhancement, resource discovery and interpretation will improve access to these collections. The design of the website (incorporating new material from the ethnographic study) will contribute to innovation in library exhibition through interactive components drawing on games research, the design of adaptive and adaptable search facilities for different audiences, and the use of child curators from the children's panels in our partner schools.

2. Textual and ethnographic study (sub-questions 1 and 2): A **multimodal analysis** of selections from these archives and data from the ethnographic studies will be undertaken to determine the relationship between children's media culture and playground lore, its development over time, and its local variation. The analysis will feed into the ethnographic studies, allowing historical comparisons between archive material and data collected in the field. The **ethnographic studies** will collect observational, visual, audio and interview data in two primary schools (Sheffield and London). The Sheffield school is located in a large public housing estate serving a primarily white, working class community. The London

school will be in the King's Cross area, close to the British Library, serving a multiethnic community. The children will be active participants, collecting data in their social ecologies of play. This approach recognizes that they are social actors who can play an active role in projects relating to their cultural worlds (eg James and Prout, 1990). These studies will contribute to the BL website and the Wii prototype suite of games.

3. Wii prototype development (sub-question 3): this prototype, the 'Game-Catcher', will adapt the hardware and software interface of the Nintendo Wii to 'record' the physical movements of clapping and skipping games, and then integrate them with music and words. Captured games will then be playable by other children. The design process will draw on computer science, games design, and multimodal design theory. Children's panels from our partner schools will contribute to the design, as will our partner Nintendo UK (see letter of support). The technical output will feed into the ethnographic study (as a new way to capture games in the field); and into the BL website, as a model for game-based interaction. It will also be demonstrated to Nintendo and to interested independent developers in the project's knowledge transfer phase.

3. Research methods to be used (tick all that apply – this information will be recorded on a database of the types of work being presented to Ethics Committees)

☒ Interviews	☐ Systematic review
☒ Focus groups	☐ Randomised controlled trial
☐ Questionnaire	☒ Literature review
☐ Action research	☐ Use of personal records
☒ Observation	☐ Secondary data analysis
☐ Other	

4. Research participants

Does the research involve human participants?
☒ Yes, as a primary source of data *(e.g. through interviews)*
☐ Yes, as a secondary source of data
☐ No *Please explain____*   _____

If the research involves human participants, who are they? (tick all that apply)
☐ Early years/pre-school   ☐ Adults *please specify below*
☒ Primary School age 5-11
☐ Secondary School age 12-16
☐ Young people aged 17-18
☐ Unknown

5. Specific ethical issues

What are the ethical issues which may arise in the course of this research, and how will they be addressed? (min. 150 words) You will find information in the notes about answering this question.

This ethical review form relates to the ethnographic study of playground culture in playgrounds in two schools (London and Sheffield) and the focus group interviews regarding the proof of concept prototype for the Nintendo Wii game (taking in the same schools).

For the ethnographic study, over a two-year period, children's playground play will be observed using written notes, video and audio recording. Children will be involved in the collection of data in that they will record playground games and rhymes using digital camcorders and voice recorders. Children will take part in individual and group interviews about their play. The data collection will involve naturalistic observations of play (in which games and rhymes will be embedded) and staged performances of games and rhymes when necessary.

For the proof of concept prototype Nintendo Wii game, focus group interviews will be conducted several times over the course of two years. This will involve testing new software and giving feedback to the researchers. Data collection will involve written notes, video and audio recording.

We have two main ethical concerns. 1) Because some of the data is visual, complete anonymity is not possible. We will not have names of the children on the websites or in the research outputs, and we are having parents and children OPT-IN to the project. This will assure us that parents and children have given informed consent for the videoing (as well as the other aspects of the project). 2) We are aware that playground games are sometimes private and powerful spaces for children, and we are concerned about disrupting these spaces. To address this, we will establish a Children's Panel who will mediate our access to these spaces.

The Children's Panel will be involved in managing children's involvement in the project. The panel will have two members from each class Y1 – Y5, one boy and one girl from each class. The panel will talk with the research team about how children can be involved in recording play in the playground. The panel will also give advice about how children can be involved in other parts of the project, such as helping with the project website, curating elements of the British Library website and in advisory capacities in relation to the proof of concept prototype for the Nintendo Wii game.

The process for identifying members of the panel will be decided by class teachers, in discussion with the research team. The research team will support children in their work on the panel –we will explain the process to children, manage the administration of the panel and provide regular reports on the Panel's work for the Headteacher and School staff.

If children become distressed in the collection of playground data, the development of the Nintendo software or the work with the British Library, they can immediately withdraw and any related data will be destroyed.

INFORMED CONSENT PROCESS
Parents/ carers will be sent a leaflet outlining the project and will be asked for written consent (see attached 'parent info' document and separate 'parents consent' document). They will also be invited to a parents' evening, when the project will be discussed. Children will also be given information about the project and asked for their consent (see attached 'children's info' document which also contains the consent form). Researchers

Appendix 5: Letter to Children (London)

If you have any questions about the project, please ask your teacher to let us know, and when we are next in school we will answer your questions.

Chris Richards   and   Rebekah Willett
(the researchers)

May 2009

Children's Playground Rhymes and Games in a New Media Age

Over the next two years ███████████ Primary School will be involved in an exciting project about playground rhymes and games.

What is the project about?
We would like to collect examples of the games and rhymes that children use in the playground. We want to see if these are different to rhymes and games that have been played in the past. We also want to find out if the games and rhymes include characters and tunes from television or music.

To find out these things, we will record children playing in the playground, writing notes when we

watch you and using camcorders and recorders that tape voices. We will study the games and rhymes we collect and write about them. We will put information about some of the games and rhymes on a project website.

Later in the project, we will use some of the games to help to develop an idea for a new Nintendo Wii game. We will also make a film about playground rhymes and games. Your school is one of two schools in England chosen to take part in this project.

What will happen to the recordings of my play?
When we write about your games and play, we will give you a different name, so that no one will know it is you. We will use some of the recordings and notes when we write and talk about the project, in the film we make and in the idea we develop for the new Nintendo Wii game.

We have sent home a letter about the project, and the adult who looks after you may tell us if they do not want you to take part in the project. You do not have to take part in the recording of playground

games and rhymes, just let us know. You can also change your mind at any time.

What if I don't want to share some of the games and rhymes I know?
If you agree to take part in the project, and then see someone with a recorder near you when you are playing and you do not want to be recorded, just tell him or her. If something gets recorded and then you decide you don't want us to hear or see it, tell us or tell a member of the School Council.

What is the Children's Panel?
The School Council will be our Children's Panel. The panel will talk with the research team about how children can be involved in recording play in the playground. The panel will also give advice about how children can be involved in other parts of the project, such as helping with the project website.

Can I be one of the children who records play?
We hope that lots of children will have a chance to record play in the playground. Each class will have a turn at using Flip camcorders to record playground games.

Figure 15: Letter to Children – London (four pages, shown two up)

Appendix 6: Letter to Parents and Carers (London)

19 May 2009

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to you in order to introduce ourselves and let you know about an exciting research project that ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ Primary School will be involved in over the next two years (2009-2011). We are researchers at the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth at Media (see reverse for our contact details). The project is called 'Children's Playground Rhymes and Games in a New Media Age'.

What is the project is about?
The project is funded by the government through the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It is a partnership between the Universities of London, Sheffield and East London and the British Library. We would like to collect examples of the games and rhymes that children use in playgrounds today. We want to see how current games and rhymes link to children's use of media, such as television or music. We want to see if these are different to rhymes and games that have been played in the past. Collections of playground rhymes and games from past generations will be placed on the British Library website for teachers, children and parents and carers to access. This is an important national project that has a distinguished advisory panel which includes the Children's Laureate, Michael Rosen. ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ is one of two schools in England chosen to take part in this project; the other school is ▇▇▇▇ Primary School in Sheffield.

To find out about current games and rhymes, we will talk to children about their play and record them in the playground during playtime using video camcorders and recorders that tape voices. We will train children on how to use camcorders, and they will do some of the recording. The games and rhymes we collect will then be looked at by researchers who will write about them. We will put information about some of the games and rhymes on a project website. We will also use some of the games to develop an idea for an adaptation of the Nintendo Wii. We will also make a documentary film about playground rhymes and games.

What will happen to the recordings of my children's play?
The school would like its involvement in the project to be public knowledge, as it is proud to be taking part in such an important national project. However, none of the recordings will carry the names of the children. The recordings and other data will be studied by researchers interested in children's play. We will use some of the recordings when we write and talk about the project, in the film we make and in the development of an adaptation of the Nintendo Wii.

Your child's name will not appear in any of these. Apart from the documentary film material, all video collected will be used for research purposes and will not be available to the general public. If we wish to use an image of your child on the British Library website we will ask you for permission. In addition, we will invite you and your child to a showing of the documentary film at a draft stage. Your child can withdraw at any time. Please contact us or send a brief note to the deputy ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ if you do not wish your child to take part or if your child does not want to participate.

Figure 16: Letter to Parents and Carers – London (two pages)

Can my child be more actively involved in the project?

The School Council will act as our Children's Panel. The panel will talk with the research team about how children can be involved in recording play in the playground. The panel will also give advice about how children can be involved in other parts of the project, such as helping with the project website, participating in the documentary and in the design of the Nintendo Wii adaptation. We hope that lots of children will participate in all aspects of our project and have a chance to record play in the playground.

What are the benefits of the project for my child?

Your child will be associated with the wider investigation and may be involved in recording play and thus will learn valuable technological skills. The school will be given a sum of £500 for each year of the two-year project and this will be spent on equipment that will benefit your child, such as playground equipment or ICT software. The project will also generate material that will be of great interest to other schools and children, and your child will learn about playground games and rhymes.

Are there any disadvantages for my child?

The only disadvantage we think might occur is if your child plays games and rhymes that he/she does not want to share with the team. We can reassure you that we will not use any data children do not wish to share. The project will take place at playtimes, therefore your child will not miss any lessons by being involved in the project.

Thank you very much for reading about the project. If you have any further questions, please contact us at any time.

Rebekah Willett and Chris Richards
Institute of Education, University of London
23-29 Emerald Street, London WC1N 3QS

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Appendix 7: Letter to Staff (London)

19 May 2009

Dear ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ staff,

We'd like to introduce ourselves and the research project that will include your school. We are both based at the London Knowledge Lab, just a few minutes walk away near Lambs Conduit Street. Rebekah taught in primary schools for many years. She researches children's media cultures. Chris taught English and Media Studies in various London secondary schools and colleges. His first job was as a supplementary teacher in a primary school in Leyton.

The project, Children's Playground Games in the New Media Age, runs for two years (until April 2011) and, in part, aims to take further the work of Peter and Iona Opie. The Opies documented children's play through several decades from the 1950s. We'll make some of their books available to you, so you can see some of what they collected. The emphasis of our work is on the way that children draw on popular media in their play, though we'll be looking at all aspects of their activities during playtimes.

We have prepared separate information sheets for you, for the parents and for the children. **The parents and children can opt out of the project at any time by contacting** ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ **or us, but it is important that all parents receive the information.** The information for the children can be posted on the class notice-board. We are arranging for translations of these documents (into Bengali). We'll need to include the information for parents in the welcome packs given to families of children starting at the school. We will be in school for assembly on Tuesday 19 May and for the coffee morning on Friday 5 June.

Thank you very much for distributing the information to parents. We are really looking forward to meeting you and the children. We will be available to answer any questions you may have both on those dates and on other occasions over the next few weeks.

Rebekah Willett and Chris Richards

Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media
London Knowledge Lab
23-29 Emerald Street, London WC1N 3QS
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

http://www.lonklab.ac.uk
http://www.ioe.ac.uk

Figure 17: Letter to Staff – London (four pages)

Children's Playground Rhymes and Games in a New Media Age

Information for School Staff

What is the project is about?

This is a two-year project that is funded by the government through the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It is a partnership between the Universities of London, Sheffield and East London and the British Library. It is part of the AHRC's 'Beyond Text' Programme.

The project has the following aims and objectives:

Aims – to:
- research, archive and intervene in the dynamic transformation of a living oral tradition in the context of new gaming cultures and technologies
- examine the relationship between traditional playground games and children's media cultures
- develop interdisciplinary methodologies, combining approaches from literary, media and game studies, ethnography and computer science within a common social semiotic framework
- conduct effective knowledge transfer into the games industry and the education and cultural policy sectors
- involve children as participant researchers, curators, and game designers

Objectives – to:
- develop a digital archive and interactive website of playground games, songs and rhymes at the British Library
- conduct a multimodal textual analysis of the relation between folkloric and media cultures
- conduct ethnographic studies of playground culture in two primary schools (London and Sheffield)
- develop and theorise a computer game adaptation of selected playground games
- involve children's panels in exhibition and curatorship, ethnographic study, and games design
- disseminate outputs in high-profile events in London and Sheffield

The project will be supported by an expert advisory panel of academics, game industry representatives and specialists in children's oral culture, including the Children's Laureate, Michael Rosen.

What is the school's involvement?

Your school is one of the two schools in England chosen to take part in this project. The Headteacher and Deputy Head have agreed that the school can be involved.

The research team will collect data on playground games and rhymes through the following methods:

- Observations of children's play at playtimes, dinner time and in teacher-led activities
- Image and sound recordings of children's play in the playground
- Interviews with children about playground games and rhymes

Children will be involved in collecting data through video and audio recordings of play in the playground.

Some of the data collected will be naturalistic, i.e. children's playground games and rhymes will be embedded in their ongoing playground activities. However, we anticipate that some of the data collected will be staged in that children will perform specific games and rhymes when invited to do so or when they wish to do so. The context of all data collected will be recorded.

A documentary film about playground games and rhymes is one of the outputs of the research project - so by pre-arrangement with the school, we will be videotaping and recording children's play at playtimes, as well as videotaping interviews with children and filming staged games and songs. The documentary film may also use material recorded by children and by the on-site researchers.

The project has an Ethical Code of Practice. We will inform parents and carers about children's involvement in the project, including the documentary film, and parents will have the option of not having their children involved. We will also inform children about the project at an assembly. We will invite parents, children and staff to a showing of the documentary film when it is near completion. The parents and children will have the option of withdrawing from the project at any time.

The researcher appointed to work in the school is Chris Richards. He will be working with another researcher, Rebekah Willett. Chris will arrange regular visits to the school over its two-year period. The timing of the visits will be in agreement with ███████████

Near the end of the project (March 2011), the school will be involved in a conference in Sheffield at which the outcomes of the project will be disseminated to teachers, parents and carers and children.

Will children be actively involved in the project?

The School Council will act as our Children's Panel. The panel will talk with the research team about the games and rhymes we collect; they will assist the British Library in archiving the games and designing the website; and they will help with the development of the Wii adaptation. The panel will also give advice about how children can be involved in other parts of the project, such as helping with the project website.

The research team will support children in their work on the panel – they will explain the process to children, manage the administration of the panel and provide regular reports on the Panel's work for the Headteacher and School staff.

We aim to involve as many children as possible in the collection of the playground data. They will have opportunities to use digital camcorders and voice recorders to do this. They will be trained in the use of the equipment by the research team. We will lend the school 2 camcorders, and we will propose that each class will have the camcorders for 2 weeks during playtimes.

The procedures for the involvement of children will be decided upon by the research team after consultation with class teachers and the Children's Panel.

What are the benefits of the project for the school?
The school will be given a sum of £500 for each year of the two-year project.

The project will provide an opportunity for children to learn more about playground rhymes and games, both their past history and current practice. The school will be contributing to an important project that has national, and international, significance.

Are there any disadvantages for the school?
The research team will attempt to minimise any disruption to the school's working life. We will be respectful at all times of the school's priorities and will respond to any requests regarding the nature of the data collection and recording processes. If you are on the playground when we are collecting data and prefer not to take part in the project, please do not hesitate to inform Chris or Rebekah.

Can I become directly involved in the project?
The project team welcome any offers of involvement from school staff. Our partner school in Sheffield is very keen to develop links with ████████████████ In particular, the ICT teacher in Sheffield would like to establish a joint blog or other form of communication between children. You may also wish to undertake work in classrooms on playground games and rhymes or help with the documentary film production. We are happy to advise on any of this work. At any point during the project, please raise any issues/ concerns with ██████ ████████ and/ or Chris or Rebekah.

If you have any further questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact:

Dr Rebekah Willett Rebekah Willett or Dr Chris Richards, London Knowledge Lab, 23-29 Emerald Street, London WC1N 3QS, ████████████████

Appendix 8: Letter to Children (Sheffield)

CHILDREN'S CONSENT FORM   (7 MAY 2009)

NAME.."

CLASS..

Please circle 'yes' OR 'no' for the two questions below.

RESEARCH - I agree that researchers and other children can record my play and ask questions about games and rhymes. I understand that
- my voice might be recorded and my games might be videoed.
- recordings will be used to write about playgrounds, and my voice might be on the project website.
- the researchers will ask **further** permission to use any images of me for the project website.
- all videotape and sound material will be given to the British Library to keep permanently for use in research, publications, education, lectures and broadcasting.
- I can change my mind at any time.

1. Do you agree to take part in the research? YES NO

DOCUMENTARY - I agree that sound and images of me can be included in a documentary film about playground games. I understand that I can change my mind at any time.

2. Do you agree to take part in the documentary? YES NO

Signature.................................... Date.............................

Children's Playground Rhymes and Games in a New Media Age

What is the project is about?

We would like to collect examples of the games and rhymes that children use in the playground. We want to see if these are different to rhymes and games that have been played in the past. We also want to see how the games and rhymes link to your use of media, such as television or music.

To find out these things, we will record children playing in the playground, using our written notes when we watch you and using digital camcorders and recorders that tape voices. The games and rhymes we collect will then be looked at by researchers and we will write about them. We will put information about some of the games and rhymes on a project website.

Later in the project, we will use some of the games to help to develop an idea for a new Nintendo Wii game. We will also make a film about playground rhymes and games.

Your school is one of the 2 schools in England chosen to take part in this project.

You may have some questions about the project. We try to answer some of these on the next pages.

What do I have to do?
You do not have to do anything different from what you normally do in school. We want to record playground games and rhymes when you are playing at playtimes and dinner times in the playground or maybe in activities led by your teacher. Sometimes this will mean that adults or other pupils will watch and record your play using written notes, a digital camcorder or digital voice recorder. We might also ask to talk to you about play.

Do I have to do this?
No. If you do not want to take part in the recording of playground games and rhymes, just let us know. You can also change your mind at any time. If you agree to take part in the project, but then see someone with a recorder near you when you are playing and you do not want to be recorded, just tell him/ her.

What will happen to the recordings of my play?
When we write about your games and play, we give you a different name, so that no one will know it is you.

The recordings and notes will be looked at by researchers to find out about children's play. We will use some of the recordings and notes when we write and talk about the project, in the film we make and in the idea we develop for the newWii game. Your name will not appear in any of these. If you appear in the film we will ask the adults who look after you at home if they agree.

What if I don't want to share some of the games and rhymes I know?
If there are any games and rhymes that you do not want to share

with the researchers, just tell us and we will delete the recording, or tell a member of the Children's Panel who will then tell us.

What is the Children's Panel?
We will set up a Children's Panel in the school. The panel will have a boy and a girl from each year group Y1 – Y5, one from each class. The panel will talk with the research team about how children can be involved in recording play in the playground. The panel will also give advice about how children can be involved in other parts of the project, such as helping with the project website, participating in the film and in the design of the Wii game

Can I be a member of the Children's Panel?
This will not be decided by the research team. Your teacher will tell you how the child from your class who will be on the Panel will be chosen.

Can I be one of the children who records the play?
We hope that lots of children will have a chance to record play in the playground. Who will do this will be decided by the researchers after discussion with teachers and the Children's Panel.

Thank you very much for reading about the project. If you are happy to take part, please fill in the form on the back of this leaflet.

If you have any questions about the project, please ask your teacher to let us know and when we are next in school we will answer your questions.

Julia Bishop and Jackie Marsh (the researchers)

Figure 18: Letter to Children – Sheffield (four pages, shown two up)

Appendix 9: Children's Consent Form (Sheffield)

CHILDREN'S CONSENT FORM   7 MAY 2009

YOUR FULL NAME..

CLASS..

Please circle 'yes' OR 'no' for the two questions below.

RESEARCH - I agree that researchers and other children can record my play and ask questions about games and rhymes. I understand that
- my voice might be recorded and my games might be videoed.
- recordings will be used to write about playgrounds, and my voice might be on the project website.
- the researchers will ask **further** permission to use any images of me for the project website.
- all videotape and sound material will be given to the British Library to keep permanently for use in research, publications, education, lectures and broadcasting.
- I can change my mind at any time.

1. Do you agree to take part in the research? YES   NO

DOCUMENTARY – I agree that sound and images of me can be included in a documentary film about playground games. I understand that I can change my mind at any time.

2. Do you agree to take part in the documentary? YES   NO

Signature... Date.................................

Figure 19: Children's Consent Form – Sheffield (one page, shown two up)

Appendix 10: Letter to Parents/Carers (Sheffield)

What are the benefits of the project for my child?

Your child may not directly benefit, although if he/ she is involved in recording play, he/ she will learn valuable technological skills. However, the school will be given a sum of £500 for each year of the project and this will be spent on equipment that will benefit your child, such as ICT software. The project will also generate material that will be of great interest to other schools and children and your child will learn about playground games and rhymes.

Are there any disadvantages for my child?

The only disadvantage we think might occur is if your child plays games and rhymes that he/ she does not want to share with the team. We can reassure you that we will not use any data children do not wish to share. The project will take place at playtimes, dinner time and in teacher-led classroom activities, therefore your child will not miss any lessons by being involved in the project.

Thank you very much for reading about the project. If you have any further questions, please contact us at any time. Once you have read through this leaflet, please complete and sign the attached Consent Form.

Contact:

Jackie Marsh and Julia Bishop
School of Education, The University of Sheffield
88 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2JA

Children's Playground Rhymes and Games in a New Media Age

What is the project is about?

This is a two-year project funded by the government through the Arts and Humanities Research Council. It is a partnership between the Universities of London, Sheffield and East London and the British Library.

We would like to collect examples of the games and rhymes that children use in playgrounds today. We want to see how current games and rhymes link to children's use of media, such as television or music. We want to see if these are different to rhymes and games that have been played in the past. Collections of playground rhymes and games from past generations will be placed on the British Library website for teachers, children and parents and carers to access.

This is an important national project that has a distinguished advisory panel which includes the Children's Laureate, Michael Rosen. Your child's school is one of the two schools in England chosen to take part in this project. The Headteacher fully supports the project.

To find out about current games and rhymes, we will record children playing in the playground, using video camcorders and voice recorders. The games and rhymes we collect will then be looked at by researchers and we will write

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about them. We might put information about some of the games and rhymes on a project website.

We will also use some of the games to help to develop an idea for a set of Wii-type games.. We will also make a documentary film about playground rhymes and games. The documentary is one of the research outputs, along with book chapters and journal articles. We may want to use video recordings of your child for public display, such as at conferences, in the documentary film or on the Playground Games section of the British Library website. (Please see attached consent form.)
You may have some questions about the project. We try to answer some of these below. If you have further questions then please contact us (our contact details are on the back of this leaflet).

What does my child have to do?
Your child does not have to do anything different from what he or she normally does in school. We want to record play when your child is playing at playtimes and dinner times in the playground, or in teacher-led classroom activities. Sometimes this will mean that adults or other pupils will record your child's play using a video camera, digital recorder or sound recorder. We may also make notes of observations and talk to children about their play in informal interviews.

Does my child have to do this?
No. Your child does not have to take part in the recording of play. You can also change your mind at any time. If you agree now that your child can take part in the project, but then change your mind later on, just let us know.

What will happen to the recordings of my children's play?
The School would like its involvement in the project to be public knowledge, as it is proud to be taking part in such an important national project. However, any data collected in the school will be anonymised so that your child cannot be identified by name.

The recordings and other data, such as interview responses and written observations, will be looked at by researchers to find out about children's

play. We will use some of the recordings when we write and talk about the project, in the film we make and in the development Wii game.

Your child's name will not appear in any of these and your child's face will only appear in the documentary film and in other material if you agree to this. We can reassure you that we will **NOT** use any visual or other data in dissemination of the project without your permission. (Please see the consent form.)

Can my child be more actively involved in the project?
We will set up a Children's Panel in the school. The panel will have two members from each year group Y1 – Y5, one boy and one girl from each year. The panel will talk with the research team about how children can be involved in recording play in the playground. The panel will also give advice about how children can be involved in other parts of the project, such as helping with the project website, participating in the documentary and in the design of the Wii game. The process for identifying members of the panel will be decided by the class teachers.

We hope that lots of children will participate in all aspects of our project and have a chance to record play in the playground. Who will do this will be decided by the researchers after discussion with teachers and the Children's Panel. If your child is involved in recording play, we will ensure he/ she knows how to use the equipment.

Figure 20: Letter to Parents/Carers – Sheffield (four pages, shown two up)

Appendix 11: Parent/Carer's Consent Form (Sheffield)

CONSENT FORM   **DATE: 7 MAY 2009**

Children's Playground Rhymes and Games in a New Media Age

We are very grateful for your understanding and support of the research project on playground games (details of which are attached). Please fill in and return this form by 1 June 2009 to confirm your willingness for your child to take part.

Andrew Burn, Chris Richards and Rebekah Willett, Institute of Education, University of London
Grethe Mitchell, University of East London
Jackie Marsh and Julia Bishop, University of Sheffield

For questions about the project or about this form please contact Jackie Marsh, School of Education, The University of Sheffield, 88 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2JA ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
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CHILD'S NAME.. CLASS..

Please circle 'yes' OR 'no' to the two questions below.

1. RESEARCH - I agree that researchers and other children can record my child's play and ask questions about games and rhymes. I understand that
   - Recordings will consist of notes as well as some short audio and video recordings of the children performing games and rhymes.
   - Notes and audio recordings will be used for analysis, the project website and academic publications beyond the life of the project.
   - The researchers will ask **further** permission to use any video images for the project website.
   - All videotape and sound material will be deposited at the British Library and preserved as a permanent reference resource for use in research, publications, education, lectures and broadcasting.

Do you give consent for your child to take part in the Research? YES   NO

2. DOCUMENTARY – I agree that video and sound material of my child's contribution can appear in the documentary film about the project. I understand that while there is no guarantee that all of the materials collected will be fully used, our intention is to use as much as possible and the editorial decision is final. I understand that the material collected may appear on DVD, in print and/or other suitable forms and in markets beyond the project. I understand that at a screening of the documentary prior to completion, participating children and their parents/guardians will have the opportunity to withdraw from the documentary if they wish.

Do you give consent for your child to take part in the Documentary? YES   NO

Parent/Guardian name: ....

Signature: ....Date: ....

Home Address: ....

....Telephone: ....

Figure 21: Parent/Carer's Consent Form – Sheffield (one page)

Appendix 12: Information for Staff (Sheffield)

involve a day-visit to the British Library in London. The Children's Panel will also consider how playground data might inform the development of the Wii-type game.

What are the benefits of the project for the school?
The school will be given a sum of £500 for each year of the two-year project.

The project will provide an opportunity for children to learn more about playground rhymes and games, both their past history and current practice. The school will be contributing to an important project that has national, and international, significance.

Are there any disadvantages for the school?
The research team will attempt to minimise any disruption to the School's working life. We will be respectful at all times of the school's priorities and will respond to any requests regarding the nature of the data collection and recording processes.

Can I become directly involved in the project?
The project team welcome any offers of involvement from school staff. For example, you may wish to undertake work in classrooms on playground games and rhymes, communicate with our partner school or help with the documentary film production. We are happy to advise on any of this work. At any point during the project, please raise any issues/ concerns with Peter Winter and/ or the project team. We would also request that you complete and sign the attached documentary consent form so that you may contribute to the documentary.

If you have any further questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact:

Professor Jackie Marsh
School of Education, The University of Sheffield, 86 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2JA

Children's Playground Rhymes and Games in a New Media Age

Information for School Staff

What is the project is about?

This is a two-year project that is funded by the government through the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). It is a partnership between the Universities of London, Sheffield and East London and the British Library. It is part of the AHRC's 'Beyond Text' Programme.

The project has the following aims and objectives:

Aims – to:
* research, archive and intervene in the dynamic transformation of a living oral tradition in the context of new gaming cultures and technologies
* examine the relationship between traditional playground games and children's media cultures
* develop interdisciplinary methodologies, combining approaches from literary, media and game studies, ethnography and computer science within a common social semiotic framework
* conduct effective knowledge transfer into the games industry and the education and cultural policy sectors
* involve children as participant researchers, curators, and game designers.

Objectives – to:
* develop a digital archive and interactive website of playground games, songs and rhymes at the British Library
* conduct a multimodal textual analysis of the relation between folkloric and media cultures
* conduct ethnographic studies of playground culture in two primary schools (London and Sheffield)

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* develop and theorise a 'proof of concept' prototype for a computer game adaptation of selected playground games
* involve children's panels in exhibition and curatorship, ethnographic study, and games design
* disseminate outputs in high-profile events in London and Sheffield.

The project will be supported by an expert advisory panel of academics, game industry representatives and specialists in children's oral culture, including the Children's Laureate, Michael Rosen.

What is the school's involvement?
Your school is one of the two schools in England chosen to take part in this project.
The Headteacher has agreed that the school can be involved and would like the school's involvement to be publicly recognised.

The research team will collect data on playground games and rhymes through the following methods:
* Observations of children's play at playtimes, dinner time and in teacher-led activities
* Image and sound recordings of children's play in the playground
* Interviews with children about playground games and rhymes.

Children will be involved in collecting data through video and audio recordings of play in the playground.

Some of the data collected will be naturalistic, i.e. children's playground games and rhymes will be embedded in their ongoing playground activities. However, we anticipate that some of the data collected will be staged in that children will perform specific games and rhymes when invited to do so or when they wish to do so. The context of all data collected will be recorded.

A documentary film about playground games and rhymes is one of the outputs of the research project - so, by pre-arrangement with the school, we will be videotaping and recording children's play at playtimes, dinner time and in teacher-led classroom activities, as well as videotaping interviews with children

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and filming staged games and songs. The documentary film may also use material recorded by children and by the on-site researchers.

We will seek permission from parents and carers for children's involvement in the project, including the documentary film. We will also seek children's consent. The project has an Ethical Code of Practice, a copy of which is attached.

The researchers working in your school are Julia Bishop and Jackie Marsh. They will arrange regular visits to the school over its two-year period. The timing of the visit will be in agreement with the link teacher for the project,

Towards the end of the project, the school will be involved in a conference in Sheffield at which the outcomes of the project will be disseminated to children, teachers, parents and carers.

Will children be actively involved in the project?
We will set up a Children's Panel in the school. The panel will have two members from each year group Y1 – Y5, one boy and one girl from each year. The panel will talk with the research team about how children can be involved in recording play in the playground and the games and rhymes collected.

The process for identifying members of the panel will be decided by class teachers, in discussion with the research team.

The research team will support children in their work on the panel – they will explain the process to children, manage the administration of the panel and provide regular reports on the Panel's work for the Headteacher and School staff.

We aim to involve as many children as possible in the collection of the playground data. They will have opportunities to use digital camcorders and voice recorders to do this. They will be trained in the use of the equipment by

The procedures for the involvement of children will be decided upon by the research team after consultation with class teachers and the Children's Panel.

The Children's Panel will also be involved in curating elements of the British Library collection of playground rhymes on an interactive website. This will

Figure 22: Information for Staff - Sheffield (four pages, shown two up)

Appendix 13: Staff Consent Form (Sheffield)

DOCUMENTARY CONSENT FORM (Adults)   DATE: 7 MAY 2009
Children's Playground Rhymes and Games in a New Media Age

We are very grateful for your understanding and support of the research project on
playground games (details of which are attached). Please fill in and return this form to
confirm your willingness to take part in the documentary about the project.

Andrew Burn, Chris Richards and Rebekah Willett, Institute of Education, University
of London
Grethe Mitchell, University of East London
Jackie Marsh and Julia Bishop, University of Sheffield

For questions about the project or about this form please contact Jackie Marsh,
School of Education, The University of Sheffield, 88 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2JA

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DOCUMENTARY – I agree that sound and images of my contribution can appear in the
documentary film about the project. I understand that while there is no guarantee
that all of the materials collected will be fully used, our intention is to use as much as
possible and our editorial decision is final. I understand that the material collected
may appear on DVD, in print and/or other suitable forms and in markets beyond the
project.

I hereby agree that I have consented to contribute to the documentary of the project.

Name: ....

Signature: ....

Date: ....

Home Address: ....

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Telephone: ....

Figure 23: Staff Consent Form – Sheffield (one page)

Appendix 14: Multimodal Transcript

Shot	Start/End (mm:ss)	Int/Ext	School	Location	Shot type	Shot angle	Strand	Handheld	Static	Framing	Participants (see notes)	Action	Speaker	Speech	Gaze	Gesture	Facial expression
1	25:04 - 25:11	Ext	CH	Playground Garden	CU	EYE	AHI	Y	Y	CU Sally FG with 2 girls in BG and 2 girls R (joined by 3rd girl)	Sally	Sally in FG L. 2 young girls in BG, one passes behind Sally; 2 other girls playing to R (biting/kissing?). A 3rd girl joins in with the latter 2 holding the arms of 2nd girl who is moving side to side (pretend animals?).	Sally	We play the tiger game and (.) mm (....) 'nd we pretend to be animals.	Sally to FM, then to cam, then to FM		Neutral
2	25:11 - 25:16	Ext	CH	Playground - foam slope between upper and lower playgrounds	WS	HI	OBS		Y	WS group	[L2R] Adil, Basim, Dahi, Mark	4 boys in rough circle, on foam floor of playground. Adil [L] is on all fours. Basim [C] is seated with his back to cam facing Adil and Dahi. Dahi [R] is seated, facing towards cam. Mark [XR] has back to cam' is also seated facing Dahi and Adil. Dahi is opening and closing his mouth. Adil is on all fours, leaning forward with mouth open. Mark turns to R to 'pick up food' then turns back to Dahi and Adil and 'feeds' first Dahi, then Adil.	Basim	I'm hungry! (off screen)	Adil & Dahi gaze fixed on Mark as he 'feeds' the 2 boys. As he is being 'chewing'(and after Adil has been 'fed') Dahi looks towards Basim (who has his back to cam). Mark gaze on Adil as 'feeds' him, then turns head to R as he 'gets more food' turns back to L and looks at Dahi as he 'feeds' him then at Adil as he 'feeds' him - then gaze on Dahi again.	Adil and Dahi open and close mouths in 'eating' or 'hungry' gesture. Mark turns to R and extends arms to pick up 'food'. Mark turns back with both arms extended and fists closed as if holding something. Mark R hand to Dahi's mouth and brings his hand towards Dahi in 'feeding' gesture. Dahi opens mouth wider to receive and when 'fed' makes 'chewing' gesture with mouth. Adil	
3	25:16 - 25:22	Ext	CH	Playground - foam slope between upper and lower playgrounds	MS to WS then pan R	LO	OBS		N	MS group, zoom out to WS and pan to R following boys	[L2R] Adil, Basim, Dahi, Mark	Adil [XL] on all fours; Dahi [L] crouched then drops to all fours at top of slope; Mark [R] upright with left hand holding Dahi by the neck of his top; Basim [XR] on all fours. The boys make their way up the slope.	Basim (OS), Adil (OS), FM (non-diegetic)	25:18 Basim: (off screen): It's about dogs... [Adil (off screen): (He's) a baby] 25 :20 FM About dogs? [25:21 Basim (?) (indistict):1m hungry! Please!] Basim (off screen): Yeah 00:25:21 Adil (off screen): He's a puppy	Adil: head down, gaze at floor then face obscured at 25:17 Dahi: head cown, gaze at floor Mark: head downwards Basim: head down 25:18 Basim head looks at cam, turns back looks forward, neutral.	25:19 Mark raises R arm to mouth then sweeps R arm back, forward and out to R Speech: (?)	Adil: smiling - then face obscured at 25:17 Dahi: neutral head down Mark: mouth obscured) neutral, head downwards Basim: neutral, head down, 25:18 Basim turns head looks at cam, 25:19 Basim turns back, moves away from Mark and looks forward, eyes to floor, neutral.

Shot	Image	Start/End (mm:ss)	Int/Ext	School	Location	Shot type	Shot angle	Strand	Handheld	Static	Framing	Participants (see notes)	Action	Speaker	Speech	Gaze	Gesture	Facial expression
4		25:22 - 25:32	Ext	CH	Playground - foam section in front of garden area	CU	EYE	AHI	Y	N	25:22 Static CU Adil with Basim [XL] and Dahi [XR] with Mark in BG behind Dahi	[L2R] Adil, Basim, Dahi, Mark; Boy in BG (striped top), FM				25:22 Adil to cam		Adil: Amused Basim: smiling
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs										behind Dahi		Mark and another boy in conversation in BG (not heard)	Adil	25:22 He's the biggest	Adil turns to look at Dahi on R, then back to cam. Dahi turn head to L and looks ahead into distance	Adil points to Dahi on R	Dahi: half smiling (unsure?)
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs										25:23 Cam pans R							
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs												Basim crawls into shot from L	Adil	25:24 I'm the mediumest	Adil: Gaze to FM/cam then turns head to L at end Dahi: turns gaze from direction of Adil towards FM/cam	25:24 Adil: Points hand/finger to self	Adil: staight expression Dahi: slight smile [as if checking modality is accepted?]
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs										25:25 Cam pans L			Adil		Adil: Turns head to L towards Basim and turns back to face cam		
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs																	
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs										Cam pans to follow Basim who is crawling L to R. In BG another boy is discussing with Mark.		Mark and other boy talking in BG (not heard). Dahi seems to be listening to them whilst his body faces the camera.	FM	25:27 [to Mark] And, and who's (.) and who are you?			
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs													Boy in BG (striped top)	25:28 (?)	25:29 Dahi turns head to R in response to boy in BG		
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs													Bassim	25:30 (pointing to Mark): Mad	Basim: at cam Mark: looking over glasses at cam	25:30 Basim R hand points to Mark	Basim: Smiling Mark: neutral
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs													Dahi	25:30 He's our owner!	Dahi head to R face away from cam to start, then turns to cam		Dahi: emphatic Bassim in BG: smiling
4 (cont)	Talk about dogs													Dahi	25:31 He's our owner! (repeated) Adil (off screen): ...our owner	Dahi: To FM Mark: in BG at cam		Dahi: emphatic (wanting to convince?) Basim:

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Shot	Image	Start/End (mm:ss)	Int/Ext	School	Location	Shot type	Shot angle	Strand	Handheld	Static	Framing	Participants (see notes)	Action	Speaker	Speech	Gaze	Gesture	Facial expression
5	(black)	25:32 - 25:36	Int	MP	Main reception	CU	EYE	AHI	Y	N	CU Jenny to R looking down. Pan down and onto table with drawing	Jenny		Jenny	25:32 It's like (.) what we always play, the foxes	Jenny: looking down	Jenny moves L hand onto drawing	
6	(black)	25:36 - 25:51	Int	MP	Main reception	CU	EYE	AHI	Y	Y	CU Jenny with girl in BG on L	Jenny, FM		FM	25:36 Is foxes like mummies and daddies?	Jenny: looking (up) at FM		Listening
6 (cont)	Foxes													Jenny	25:39 .hhh (....) it's a bit like mummies and daddies	Jenny: looks to distance on L (thinking?) - then looks down to L - then turns gaze to far L (distracted by something?)	Jenny moves back in her seat	
6 (cont)	Foxes													Jenny	25:42 .hhh (..)	Jenny looking L turns head to look to R		
6 (cont)	Foxes					CU	EYE			N	CU Jenny then start pan down then cut			Jenny	25:43 but (.) err (.) the thing (.) the thing is we've got like .hhh (.) two owners and then one	Jenny drops head and gaze, looks down		
7	(black)	25:51 - 25:56	Int	MP	Main reception	CU	HI	AHI	Y	Y	CU drawing	Jenny		Jenny	one person that's like (.) the hunter	OS	Jenny moves left hand to and fro across foxes drawing (horizontally)	
8	(black)	25:56 - 26:03	Int	MP	Main reception	CU	EYE	AHI	Y	N	CU Jenny	Jenny		Jenny	25:56 and the hunter is trying to kill the fox	Jenny looking down then looks up to FM face	Jenny L hand to FM face	
8 (cont)	Foxes										CU Jenny			Jenny	25:58 'cos he doesn't like foxes (.) .hhh	Jenny looking up then looks down (to drawing OS)	Jenny raises L hand and makes pointing gesture at drawing [drawing OS]	
8 (cont)	Foxes										CU Jenny then pan down to drawing			Jenny	26:01 [swallow] (....) now	Jenny: looking down pan off her		
9	(black)	26:03 - 26:12	Int	MP	Main reception	CU	EYE	AHI	Y	Y	CU Jenny	Jenny		Jenny	26:03 the two owners are looking after the fox	Jenny: looking down		
9 (cont)	Foxes													Jenny	26:06 'cos they find the fox lonely and his mum left it (.) it abandoned it	Jenny turns and looks up to cam then looks away (lonely) then looks back at cam (mum left it) looks down again (abandoned it)		

Shot	Image	Start/End (mm:ss)	Int/Ext	School	Location	Shot type	Shot angle	Strand	Handheld	Static	Framing	Participants (see notes)	Action	Speaker	Speech	Gaze	Gesture	Facial expression
10	(image)	26:12 - 26:20	Ext	CH	Playground garden area	CU	EYE	AHI	Y	Y		Sam (girl enters and leaves frame)	01:01:19 Girl into shot on L and turns to look into cam over Sam's L shoulder, then goes to BG turns and looks to cam from distance to end of shot (Sam in FG)	Sam	26:12 umm I play families with Claire (...) and (....) sometimes I play littlelest pet shop with Rosie and Daisy and some others	Sam looks down to R, turns head and looks across to L, turns head to R, turns head to L, looks down, then looks up to cam		
11	(image)	26:20 - 26:42	Ext	CH	Playground - foam section in front of garden area	MCU	EYE	AHI	Y	Y		Adil, Mark, Dahi	Mark is between Adil [L] and Dahi [R]. His right arm is around Adil's neck and is whispering into Adil's ear (indistinct). All are seated. Mark pulls away and sits back on his haunches, looking at cam.	Dahi	26:20 We have	Adil is looking down; Dahi is looking to cam then to FM		
11 (cont)	Scary maze												Mark, looking at cam, leans forward and grabs Adil's jacket pulling him closer.	Dahi	26:21 brothers and sisters			
11 (cont)	Scary maze												01:29:08 Mark holding onto Adil, bends forward and whispers in his ear again					
11 (cont)	Scary maze												01:30:08 Adil leans to cam (talking over Dahi) and says: And! Mark sits back on haunches with a big grin looking at cam and lifts his shoulders (thrilled), his finger in his mouth.	Dahi	26:24 and then we go around to different places and countries			
11 (cont)	Scary maze													Adil	26:27 And scary maze game, that's what he said	Mark looking to cam (finger in mouth); Adil leaning towards and looking at cam; Dahi looking at cam.	Adil gestures to Mark (that's what he said)	Mark: mischevious Adil: amused and unsure Dahi: amused
11 (cont)	Scary maze													FM	26:30 What's 'Scary Maze'?			
11 (cont)	Scary maze													FM	26:31 How do you play 'Scary Maze'?	Adil turns head towards Mark; Mark looks down to floor; Dahi looks at cam (amused).		Adil, Mark, Dahi looking to cam, amused, expectant?
11 (cont)	Scary maze													Adil	26:33 Adil (to Mark): How do you play 'Scary Maze'? Unknown (OS) (quiet, laughing): you die	Adil turns to Mark; Dahi half turns head towards Mark. Mark shrugs his shoulders in response to Adil.		

Shot	Image	Start/End (mm:ss)	Int/Ext	School	Location	Shot type	Shot angle	Strand	Handheld	Static	Framing	Participants (see notes)	Action	Speaker	Speech	Gaze	Gesture	Facial expression
11 (cont)	Scary maze													Adil, Unknown (OS)	26:34 Adil says something to Mark (indistinct) / Unknown (OS): die! You die!	Dahi looks to L [source of OS voice?] half smile, lets out a little laugh on "you die!" and looks around to R	26:34 Adil gestures to Mark to whisper the answer to him, then leans towards Mark.	
11 (cont)	Scary maze													Adil	26:39 Adil: leans forward to cam: yeah...in the maze you have to eat someone!			
12		26:42 - 27:13	Ext	MP	Back Playground	MCU	EYE	AHI	Y	Y		Linda, Ann, FM		Ann	26:42 Ann - walks towards cam: And they're like for the truth, for the heart for the love.	Linda looking to R; Ann looking at cam, looks away then looks back and at FM		Linda smiling. Ann smiling.
12 (cont)	Truth for the heart													FM	26:46 Which one?			
12 (cont)	Truth for the heart													Ann	26:47 The truth for the heart for the love		Touching hands (hidden inside sleeves) together	
12 (cont)	Truth for the heart													FM	Can you explain how you play that?	Ann glances briefly down and left. Linda looks at FM.		
12 (cont)	Truth for the heart													Ann	26:52 Ann: .hhh erm we find a hole and we (.) need to find some sticks (.) hm and then (.) erm you just dig it a little bit and then you put grass in .hhh erm you have to put your family in and then .hhh you pick your family out and you say (sweet?) things to 'em			
13		27:13 - 27:41	Ext	MP	Back Playground	MCU	EYE	AHI	Y	Y		Joyce, Tina, FM		Joyce	27:13 er, we were playing (.) we were playing picking daisies and making daisy chains and now we're playing 'babies'	Joyce to cam; Tina looking down and into distance		
13 (cont)	Babies													FM	27:21 And who's the baby?			
13 (cont)	Babies													Tina	Little murmur/cry			
13 (cont)	Babies													Joyce			27:22 Strokes Tina's head looking to cam	

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Shot	Image	Start/End (mm:ss)	Int/Ext	School	Location	Shot type	Shot angle	Strand	Handheld	Static	Framing	Participants (see notes)	Action	Speaker	Speech	Gaze	Gesture	Facial expression
13 (cont)	Babies													FM	Awmm			
13 (cont)	Babies													FM	27:27 And what ..and, and, (.) Are you the mama/			
13 (cont)	Babies													Joyce	27:30 Yeah, yes		Joyce nods head	
13 (cont)	Babies													FM	Hmmm			
13 (cont)	Babies													Joyce	27:32 Because I am older than her			
13 (cont)	Babies													FM	27:34 Oh-kay			
13 (cont)	Babies													Tina	27:36 Waaah!		27:36 Runs off to R	
13 (cont)	Babies															27:37 Turns to look at Tina		
13 (cont)	Babies													Joyce	27:39 What's she doing now?	Looking towards where Tina ran off		
13 (cont)	Babies													Joyce	27:40 She's running away from me	Joyce turns to cam		
14		27:41 - 28:08	Ext	MP	Front Playground	WS	HI?	SSI	N	Y	WS group (27:43 camera zooms out slightly)	[L2R] Jackie, Susan, Trisha, Dana, Jo	The group of 5 girls sit on chairs in semi-circle.	Jackie	27:41 Like we always used to have two babies	Jackie looks down then looks towards group. (Susan and Trisha are looking down, Susan is fiddling with the string of her top; Trisha is fiddling with something on her top; with something on her fingers.) (Dana is leant forward in her chair, looking down) (Jo is off/screen)	Jackie gestures with pointing R hand as she speaks..(emphasising her speech)	
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Jackie	and a mum and a dad.	27:43 Susan turns head and looks up at Jackie (who is looking at the group)	Jackie gestures with pointing R hand as she speaks..(emphasising her speech)	
14 (cont)	Families no dads											27:46 pan slightly to R (to include Jo)			Jackie, Jo	27:45 This time we have a mum and a dad, an older sister and a baby.. 27:48 Jo: finishing yawn, leans forward, says something (?)]	27:45 Susan nods head, looking at Jackie, then looks back down. Dana head and gaze are towards Jackie 27:48 Dana gaze towards Jo who is yawning - then she looks back down to floor	Jackie turns head from group to look L and down, points with finger (to emphasise speech) 27:47 Trisha looking down, bites her nail and looks up	

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Shot	Image	Start/End (mm:ss)	Int/Ext	School	Location	Shot type	Shot angle	Strand	Handheld	Static	Framing	Participants (see notes)	Action	Speaker	Speech	Gaze	Gesture	Facial expression
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Jackie	Jackie: ..because all we got (.)	Dana turns head back to centre and looks down at ground	27:49 Susan lifts both arms to head then leans forward holding head in hand, leaning on her knee.	
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Jackie, Trisha	27:51 Jackie: we Hhhh [Trisha (looking to camera) : We used to have more sisters] .. We used to have a dad (.) now we don't have a dad..now we just have a mum and um..	27:51 Dana lifts and shakes head/hair and looks to cam then to [L] at Trisha (as she speaks) 27:51 Susan lifts head from hands and looks at Jackie then looks back down 27:55 Susan, Dana and Jo all looking at Jackie who is looking down. Trisha is looking down at her finger	27:52 Trisha: takes (L hand) finger away and gestures with (L) hand as she speaks 27:52 Jo leans forwad and looks up to cam from floor, says something looking at Jackie and then at camera (indistinct not as loud as Jackie and Trisha)	
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Susan	27:56 Susan; Because all (?) boys don't wanna play wi'us	27:57 Jackie turns head from L and looks down in front of her; Susan looks slightly to [L - FM?] as she speaks; Dana (smiling) looks at Susan; Jo looks at Susan.	27:56 Susan lifts both hands and gestures dismissively point at herself	
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Jackie	27:59 Jackie: no..		Jackie waves R hand (dismissively)	
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Susan	27:59 [Susan: they don't want t'play mothers and babies ..]	Dana (smiling) leans forward looking at Susan; Jo is looking across at Jackie and Susan; Trisha is looking down.	Susan gestures with L hand (explanatory gesture?)	
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Dana	28:00 [Dana (smiling): Yeah we used to play nBlake used to be dad all the time] [Susan (nodding looking at Dana):	28:00 Dana looks to L (FM) cam as she speaks 28:01 Susan turns to Dana and nods at what she says. Trisha glances at Dana then looks away to L (finger in mouth)		

Shot	Image	Start/End (mm:ss)	Int/Ext	School	Location	Shot type	Shot angle	Strand	Handheld	Static	Framing	Participants (see notes)	Action	Speaker	Speech	Gaze	Gesture	Facial expression
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Dana	28:02 Dana: I mean (.) sometimes Lyndon or Miles comes but not normally..	Jackie is looking away (half turned away from group); Trisha looks towards Susan then glances down at her hands.		
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Jo, Dana	28:05 [Jo: But they're dogs] Dana: Lyndon...	Jo: gaze towards Susan/Jackie then sits back in chair and looks to FM OS L and speaks. Jackie is still turned away, looking down finger in mouth. Susan: looking at Jo (who has interrupted Susan); Trisha is looking down at her finger. Dana: Looking at FM OS L.		
14 (cont)	Families no dads													Susan, Dana	28:07 [Susan: But they're dogs yeah! (laughs)] Dana (smiling): Lyndon...		Susan nods head and gestures (agreement) to Jo (who is smiling) Jackie: takes finger out of mouth and turns back to front, looking down. Trisha is looking down. Dana sits back smiling as she speaks.	