

THE SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER IN A
KINDERGARTEN-FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

By

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For Merle, my mother

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THE SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER IN A KINDERGARTEN-
FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM

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This dissertation is a report of a qualitative analysis of the sociology of gender in a combination kindergarten-first grade classroom which was part of a laboratory school affiliated with a large university. The goals of this study were to describe what gender meant to the children who were observed as they lived their everyday lives within this particular social setting and to describe how they used gender meanings to construct an intersubjectively meaningful social world. Essentially, the purpose was to describe the social reality of gender as the children subjectively apprehended it and objectively constructed it in day-to-day activity.

Participant observation and open-ended interviewing were the methods used to collect material for analysis. The material was gathered over a period of ten months from September 1974 to June 1975. Over 600 hours were used for observation. The situation in

the classroom was such that the 30 children were relatively free from external constraints from adults and were consequently free to pursue their own projects and construct their own social system without immediate or pervasive adult intervention. Most of the observations, then, were of children in interaction with other children unmediated by direct adult influence.

In order to adequately represent the subjective experience of the children a conscientious effort was made to bring as few preconceptions about the nature of the phenomenon of gender as possible to the research setting, and analytical and phenomenological categories were not used or constructed prior to the period of observation. During the period of analysis and writing some concepts from phenomenological sociology as developed by Alfred Schutz became useful for understanding the meaning of the material collected and for organizing it for presentation.

✓ Schutz's theory of typification was especially useful.

• Schutz's assumption is that knowledge of the social world is knowledge of its typicality and that language provides a unique vehicle for persons to order their social experience, both as they apprehend the meaning of events and act in the life-world. The study was organized by reference to some of the essential typifications about gender that were shared by all the children of a gender in the class. For girls, the essential meaning of being a girl revolved around meanings having to do with personal relatedness and intimacy with other people. Boys' typifications about boys revolved around issues of power and competence in the world.

Girls' and boys' typifications about the other gender were discussed, especially in relation to their ideas about their own gender.

Children's subjective meanings and objective social relations were described. This study described some of the individually held variations of meanings about gender, how children's shared knowledge about gender was reflected in their everyday activity, patterns of association, and status considerations, and how the social relations which emerged were then apprehended by the ✓ children as a validation of their essential typifications. The study showed that the children concretely reproduced the essential forms of their typification about what same gender adults were like, including the social distribution of knowledge and place by gender. A central focus of the study was a description of how gender and gender meanings were related to the social distribution of power by gender within this social setting.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

General Objectives of the Dissertation

This dissertation is a report of a study in the sociology of gender among kindergarten and first-grade children in a school setting. The main goal of the study was to describe how the children socially constructed gender by describing what they knew about what it meant to be a girl or a boy, some of the ways that externalized their knowledge in day-to-day activity, and how the social relations and products they created and maintained through their activity in turn influenced their ideas about gender.

The Social Setting and the Participants

The social context of the study was a combination kindergarten-first grade self-contained classroom which was part of a laboratory school of a large southern university. There were 15 girls and 15 boys in the class. The social composition of the parental group was a socioeconomic and racial mix but with a pronounced middle-class, academic-professional majority. The children were taught by a mature white female teacher who was occasionally assisted in a minor capacity by other adults. In addition, the children attended special area classes and were instructed by other teachers. School personnel with whom the students were in daily contact had no systematic or conscious program to modify the children's ideas

about gender. The students were allowed a great deal of unstructured time and had the freedom of movement to follow many of their own impulses and to develop their own social reality without immediate adult supervision.

The Methodology and Collection of Material

The material analyzed for this study was collected through participant observation and open-ended interviews with each child. The material was gathered over a period of ten months from September 1974 to June 1975. The general purposes of this study were known by the teacher but not by the students.

Definitions of Terms

In this study gender refers to the psychological, cultural, and social aspects of femaleness and maleness. Sex refers to those aspects of femaleness and maleness that are typically designated as biological. Gender identity refers to the sense that an individual has that she/he is of a gender and includes a self-typification about such an identity. Gender role refers to the expectations one has for the self and others which are gender based or the result of being said to be one gender and not the other. The components of gender role are typified both in terms of types of performances and types of actors and may include interests, activities, association, sexual behavior, attitudes, skills, dress, and expressive modes.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section has several interrelated goals. Some of the most relevant research on the content of young children's ideas about gender will be reviewed. There will be a limited consideration of research on the school's role in sustaining, creating, or changing children's ideas about gender. Finally, three studies which are methodologically and substantively most similar to the present study will be reviewed and discussed in order to illustrate how this study is different from previous research on children and gender within schools.

Sociologists and anthropologists, stimulated by the women's liberation movement, have recently produced an important body of theory and empirical research on gender and social organization.¹ However, this research has focused upon how adults, rather than children, organize gender and how institutional structures organize men and women rather than boys and girls. Children are taken into account in studies of childrearing practices, and the relationship of such practices to the reproduction of economic, political, and social structures; but they are rarely studied as world-builders in their own right, as persons who share knowledge about the social world and knowingly act to create social reality.

Most research on gender that focuses on very young children's perceptions of social reality has been by developmental

psychologists rather than by sociologists and anthropologists. There are three main psychological theories of gender identity and role development: psychoanalytic theory, social learning theory, and cognitive developmental theory.² Of the three, the cognitive developmentalists, like the present author, emphasize the *ideas* that children have about gender and the *active* role children take in creating their reality within a gender-based context. In addition, the cognitive developmentalists often prefer open-ended interviewing and a nonquantitative approach to more quantitative, forced-choice methodology. Open-ended interviewing was one method used to collect data in the present study.

Of the cognitive developmental psychologists, Lawrence Kohlberg (1966) has provided the most comprehensive picture of children's ideas about gender, through his own research and through his interpretation of other studies which used more quantitative methods. Consequently, the first part of this review will rely heavily upon Kohlberg. It will not include, however, his complex theoretical formulations. For this the reader is referred directly to Kohlberg.

An assumption of most empirically based research about children and gender is that children are either male or female and, above a certain age, know that they are. Though some children as young as eighteen months can correctly identify their gender, by the age of three, three-quarters of children can correctly label themselves as boys or girls (Kohlberg, 1966; Money & Ehrhardt, 1972; Thompson, 1975). According to Kohlberg, many children of

three do not know much of what it means to be a person of a gender. Their gender label is understood to have the same status as their names. Most persons of three do not know that everyone is a gendered person, that gender is dichotomous, that one's gender does not change, or that gender is essentially assigned because of one's genitals (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Kohlberg, 1966). According to phenomenologically based social scientists, children of three do not know what Harold Garfinkel has identified as the essential adult "rules" for socially constructing gender (Kessler & McKenna, 1978).

Because very young children are ignorant of the adult assumptions about the nature of gender, children have what are considered strange ideas about gender. For example, a three-year old might know that if a man changes from pants to a dress he changes from being a man to being a woman. A three-year old does not know the rule that genitals, not dress, are the essential signs for attributing gender to another or to herself/himself. Similarly, because young children do not know that one's gender stays the same throughout life, a child of three, or even four or older, may know that one's sister may be a daddy when she grows up. Very young children are unaware that women were once girls and men were once boys or that men or women are like they, the children, are. Children know that other children are the same, or different, gender as they are before they know that adults of the same gender are like they are (Kohlberg, 1966).

The empirical research by Kohlberg and others showing that three-year olds apparently do not know the essential rules of gender construction necessary to stabilize their gender identities seems to be in conflict with the clinical experience and observations of John Money and his associates (Money & Ehrhardt, 1972; Money, Hampson, & Hampson, 1955). Money clinically studied children who, for a variety of reasons, had developed gender identities counter to the gender others attributed to them, had ambiguous or poorly developed gender identities, or had been assigned at birth, intentionally or mistakenly, a gender that was counter to some aspects of their biological statuses as males or females. Money found that, with proper environmental, surgical, and hormonal support at puberty, children below the age of 18 months, and as late as three years, could successfully become either girls or boys and grow up to be men or women regardless of their biological status. It was the assignment of gender and commitment to it that was essential for a child to develop the desired identity and role behaviors necessary to socially construct herself/himself as a girl or a boy. However, after the age of three, according to Money, it is typically easier and better for the child's psychological and social well-being to allow a child who has an incorrect or socially ambiguous identity to retain the identity she/he knows herself/himself to be instead of trying to change the child's sense of herself/himself as a girl or a boy to fit the child's biological makeup. Money found that after three, changing a child's body was easier than changing her/his mind.

Money identified three as the "critical age" to reassign gender and said that after three the child was resistant and confused and the process of reassignment is extremely problematical. Kohlberg (1966) and Kessler and McKenna (1978) contend, however, that children of three may not even know their gender labels and are very likely not to know that one's gender does not change throughout life, the rule of invariance, as well as other rules for socially constructing a gender identity. The apparent disagreement has not been resolved. It may be that after a certain period of time it is the significant adults in a child's life who cannot sustain the reassignment. Kessler and McKenna have suggested that very young children may have some, as yet, unknown way of perceiving differences and similarities between persons like and unlike themselves without recourse to notions of gender or cognition and labeling. Some of the transsexuals whom they interviewed reported that their attempts to "pass" as their newly assigned gender are often unsuccessful with very young children while successful with older children and adults. Kessler and McKenna suggest that research into this area, and other issues about gender differences, have been hindered by the taken-for-granted, common sense assumptions that scientists use to investigate gender.

By the age of five, most individuals have learned to correctly attribute a gender to themselves and others (Kohlberg, 1966). The cues they use to attribute gender reveal something of what they know about gender, though not what their knowledge signifies to them at a meaningful level. Using forced-choice

questionnaires researchers have found that most children know that males and females have different hair lengths and wear different types of clothing and they use these cues to attribute gender. Furthermore, these cues have priority for children over cues that are more meaningful to most adults. In one study (Thompson & Bentler, 1971), children of four, five, and six who were asked to determine the gender of plastic dolls when the dolls had the hair length of one gender and the genitals of the other, had little trouble labeling the gender of the dolls even when they were in conflict. Most children know that women have longer hair than men and most based their choice on hair length regardless of the genitals. An earlier study (Katcher, 1955) also demonstrated, by forced-choice methods, the priority for children of hair length and clothing over genitals to determine gender. In that study, only 51% of five-year olds could correctly identify gender by genitals. Among the six-year olds, 71% correctly attributed gender to the pictures with genitals. The study indicates that as children age they learn that genitals, like hair length and dress, are generalizable by gender. At that age, biological penises and vaginas have ceased to be only concrete objects and have assumed the status of cultural objects with social meanings having to do with gender.

Kessler and McKenna (1978) have argued from a phenomenologically based perspective that attributing gender to oneself and others is primary to the social construction of the reality of gender. They write that once a gender attribution has been made in

course of a particular concrete interaction it is no longer necessary for a person to continue to portray a gender for the other person. The attributor does the rest for her/him. They write:

As a consequence of holding the natural attitude, the attributor filters *all* of the actor's behaviors through the gender attribution that was made, and the actor's behaviors are made sense of within that context. (p. 160)

Once a gender attribution is made, the dichotomization process is set into motion. The cues involved in the schema which led to the attribution are seen as connected with a myriad of other cues which are consequently also attributed to the person. (p. 161)

Once the rules for socially constructing gender have been learned by children they tend to construct dimorphism where there was continuity (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). Between the ages of five and seven, almost all children have learned the adult rules for constructing and attributing gender. At this age, most children know that persons are either male or female; that everyone is of a gender; that one grows up to be the same gender; and that adults were the same gender when they were children (Kohlberg, 1966).

Research indicates that children have developmentally changing ways of viewing and interpreting perceived differences between males and females. Using open-ended interviewing from a cognitive developmental perspective, Ullian (1976) found that

. . . with increasing age, there are shifts in the kinds of interpretations the individual gives to biological and social differences between males and females. It is the nature of these interpretations, rather than of the biological and social differences *per se*, which shed light on the psychological aspects of masculinity and femininity. (p. 25)

According to Ullian, children of six view differences between males and females as based on size, strength, length of hair, and voice characteristics and other external physical characteristics. At this age a child knows that roles and labor are socially distributed by gender but knows these differences are derived from the external physical differences. At eight years children begin to sense that gender exists somewhat independently of external characteristics and relate, in some aspects, to role training. Consequently, the social distribution of roles, labor, and attitudes does not seem as compelling and inevitable as at six. Ullian found that children often have become more aware of persons' future roles within the social system. Children know that roles in the economic and social sphere are distributed by gender and they automatically, she says, begin to distribute the required characteristics to members of each gender to enable them to fulfill their role obligations. In contrast to the tolerance of the eight-year old, children of ten are quite rigid about conforming to social expectations. Though the way children view and interpret biological and social factors changes with age, the dichotomized dimensions of power, competence, nurturance, and activity remain stable throughout the developmental period to adulthood and are distributed differentially by gender.

According to Kohlberg (1966), by about the age of five, six, or seven, almost all children have learned that they are like same gender adults. He contends that because children value things like themselves, and because they strive for cognitive consistency

and moral and social conformity, they consciously choose behaviors associated with the idealized adult gender type. They want to be like same gender adults.

Researchers have found that at the age of four and five children have some shared typified images of what men and women are like. Using forced-choice questionnaires, Kagan and Lemkin (1960) found that when asked direct and indirect questions about who was "stronger,"³ more punitive, the "boss," "smarter," and of whom the children were more afraid, a significant majority of children of both genders answered the father rather than the mother. The questions about strength, smartness, and being the boss brought especially high agreement among the boys that it was the father. When asked which parent was more generous and "nicer," children of both genders answered the mother, though agreement was not clearly so high as upon fathers being stronger, smarter, and the boss. Kagan and Lemkin found that almost all of the children wanted to grow up "to be" and "to be like" the parent of her/his own gender. Emmerich, Goldman and Shore (1971), using similar methodology, found similar results. Hartley (1959) and Kohlberg (1966), using open-ended interviews, found that children had similar ideas about girls and boys as Kagan and Lemkin (1960) and Emmerich et al. (1971) found that they had about adults.

Kindergarten and elementary school teachers have been criticized for having and using stereotypical knowledge of boys/men and girls/women. In several studies (Feshbach, 1969; Levitin & Chananie, 1972; Loo & Wenar, 1971), teachers were asked to

describe or rate what their preschool and primary school students were like along several dimensions. The teachers tended to rate boys as more active, aggressive, and extroverted than girls. According to the researchers, the teachers' ratings and descriptions conflicted with systematic observation measurements which found no gender differences in children's aggression or level of activity. Their findings, however, are different from those reported in other studies which found boys to be more physically aggressive (Knudson, 1973; Spiro, 1958). A systematic observation study of several cultures found that in each, boys were more likely to act aggressively; girls were found to be more sociable in all but one culture studied (Whiting, 1963).

Research based on social learning theory (Serbin, O'Leary, Kent & Tonick, 1973) found that teachers reinforced, through positive or negative attention, aggressive behavior by boys but not dependent behavior. For girls, teachers reinforced dependent behavior but not aggression. The study did not report teachers' perceptions of their behavior.

In every known society, primary responsibility for children and essential social location, domestic or public, are distributed or assigned by gender in an interrelated manner. Women are home because they take care of children, men are not because they do not. Some anthropologists and sociologists suggest that this asymmetrical distribution of labor and place accounts for women's powerlessness in relation to men (Chodorow, 1978; Rosaldo, 1974; Strathern, 1976). Polatnick (1973) contends that power is the

reason for the division. She argues that, for a number of reasons, being at home with children reduces women's power relative to men's, and that men don't rear children because of the reduced power connected to childrearing, rather than because of a "natural" and inevitable biological relationship between women and children.

Kohlberg (1966) has found that children of five and six, and even younger, articulate these universal divisions of labor, place, and power when asked open-ended questions. They know that women are home with children and that men are outside, beyond the home. Using a combination of interviewing and forced-choice questionnaires, researchers found similar images of men and women among five- and eight-year old girls and boys (Hartley, 1959, 1960; Hartley & Klein, 1959; Schlossberg & Goodman, 1972).

According to Mead (1935), the prestige values of every known society are always attached to the activities of men and the way men are thought to be. Women are always accorded an inferior value. She found this to be the case despite the variability in masculine and feminine patterns from culture to culture. Open-ended questioning of American children has revealed that some children as young as four are aware of the differential prestige attached to being a woman or a man (Kohlberg, 1966). Kohlberg suggests that children's perception of superior male prestige stems from young children's attraction to adults who are perceived as competent, in control of resources, and powerful. Children's perception of men/fathers as more powerful and more instrumentally competent has been found by

researchers using forced-choice methodology (Kagan & Lemkin, 1960) and open-ended interviewing (Ullian, 1976).

As previously noted, both Kohlberg (1966) and Ullian (1976) found that children know that masculine power is primarily derived from men's larger size and strength. Kohlberg suggests that children perceive this size difference directly, not, for instance, because it is taught to them directly by others. Both Kohlberg and Ullian found that children believed that size and strength mediated other more social factors, such as occupation which children also knew gave men power.

Schools have been accused of sustaining and even encouraging children's knowledge about gender differences in instrumental competence, social prestige and power, nurturance behavior, and roles and occupations. Some critics contend that teachers behave differently with boys and girls, depending upon typified knowledge of what children are like rather than perceiving the child as a unique individual. There is a body of research that supports the contention that teachers' interaction with boys and girls is different. For instance, one systematic observation study (Serbin et al., 1973; Serbin & O'Leary, 1976) reported that teachers spent more time teaching boys than girls, especially when teaching instrumental type skills. After explaining a procedure requiring motor and instrumental competence, for instance, using a stapler to attach paper handles on a basket, teachers tended to patiently assist boys *as the boys completed the task themselves*. With girls, teachers were more likely to complete the task *for them* rather than teach

them how to do the task themselves. One problem with assessing the meaning of such research is that one does not know, but can only guess, about the interaction between students and teachers. One cannot know, for instance, whether children behaved differently toward the teacher and thus elicited such behavior. Or what meaning the help from the teacher had for the girls, boys, and teachers.

Another gender-related aspect of what Henry (1966) called the "hidden curriculum" of schooling is the content of children's literature and textbooks. Analysis of textbooks and literature by a number of researchers (Feminists on Children's Media, 1971; Key, 1971; O'Donnell, 1973; Women on Words and Images, 1974) has revealed that they support the images of men and boys, women and girls, which characterize children's knowledge about gender differences in power, occupation, role, nurturance, competence, activity level, and sphere of operation. In addition, male characters were found to outnumber female characters about three to one or more. Some educators defend this unequal distribution of characters with the explanation that boys won't read books about girls and girls will read books about boys. Consequently, if children's books aren't about boys, boys will be penalized in the development of their reading skills. Feminist critics respond that boys won't read books about girls because girls are portrayed in such an uninteresting manner (Women on Words and Images, 1974). In addition, feminists charge that the portrayals and the ratio of male to female characters may teach girls that they are less

interesting and important persons than boys, whatever the explicit intentions of publishers and educators in using such materials.

Schools have also been charged with perpetuating the idea that power in public roles is a prerogative of men through the "hidden curriculum" of the hierarchical relations of authority in elementary schools. Examination of the issue by Johnson (1971) showed that most school administrators are men though 80% of elementary school teachers are women and that the percentage of female elementary principals has progressively declined from 55% in 1928 to 20% in 1973. According to feminists, this hierarchical relationship teaches and reinforces the knowledge that power and men are associated in public roles and that women, including their women teachers, are supposed to be less powerful and less of an authority than men.

Despite differences in prestige attached to men and women, girls, as well as boys, of all ages between three and 14 seem to prefer persons of their own gender when asked about preferences directly or through the use of projective questions. Children of four and five were shown sets of pictures, each with a girl and a boy, and were asked whom of each pair they would choose as a friend. In general, children preferred same gender friends. Children observed in schools also played more with same gender persons (Belotti, 1976; Cadmus, 1974; Knudson, 1973). Other researchers (Hartley et al., 1962) asked children eight to 11 years old whether they would rather have a boy or a girl baby when they grew up and had children. To determine how children

viewed adult preferences between boys and girls the children were also asked about a fantasized couple who wanted to adopt a child. Those children who expressed a preference between a boy or a girl baby preferred a baby of their own gender. Children also thought that women would prefer girls and men would prefer boys. In this study no questions were asked about the reasons for preferences.

Smith (1939) presented children ages eight to 14 with a list of 33 traits which had been designated by experienced teachers as desirable or undesirable. Children were asked to indicate whether a trait was more like a girl or a boy. Children of all ages assigned more positive traits to their gender than to the other, and in general saw their gender more positively. However, with increasing age, boys expressed a progressively lower relative opinion of girls; girls, by contrast, increasingly expressed a higher opinion of boys relative to themselves. By the age of 14 girls thought almost as well of boys as they did of girls.

Quantitative type research on college age men and women found that persons of that age of both genders tend to construe and construct reality using the assumption that what is linked to men is better (McKee & Sherriffs, 1957). Goldberg (1968) gave college women sets of booklets with the same six articles in six professional fields including some traditionally associated with women, some with men, and some with neither gender. In some booklets an article would have the name of a female author, in another booklet the same article would carry the name of a man. The college women were asked to evaluate the articles on several

criteria. The results showed that when articles had the names of men they fared significantly better than when the same article was presumed to be authored by women. College women perceived men as being more competent even in areas which were traditionally viewed as being a woman's sphere.

Findings from forced-choice research by Brown (1957) show that the decrease in girls' relative preference for femininity begins at age five. Kohlberg (1966) notes that this decline corresponds with an age-developmental perception of superior male prestige, power and competence.

What gender means to children is revealed by their behavior as well as by what they say. However, most of the research about children's behavior has not been considered within an intentional context and the question of how children themselves articulate the meaning of their behavior has not been a specific concern of most research. Instead, patterns of behavior are identified through observation and are counted, by agreement within a science, as instances of some type of behavior. Alternatively, observers enter the field with observational instruments listing concrete behaviors which, again by agreement within a science, are said to represent instances of certain types of behavior. When the particular behaviors are observed they are counted and quantified. The research goals are to measure frequencies of behavior, not to describe the meaning children give to their own behavior. There may be some speculation on the part of the researcher, however, on subjective meaning.

A study by Knudson (1973), a primatologist,⁴ illustrates the latter methodology and will be described here to show how the present study, by contrast, will focus on the meaning of the behavior to the actor rather than on behavior per se. Knudson's study, "Sex Differences in Dominance Behavior of Young Human Primates," was concerned with counting the frequencies of certain behaviors among nursery school children which she believed had to do with dominance and submission. The results of the observations were statistically analyzed in relation to a number of other variables such as size, age, and presence of siblings in the classroom. Knudson found that boys were, on the average, more physically aggressive and that girls were more verbally aggressive than boys. She reported that boys, unlike girls, had a relatively well defined hierarchy of dominance, and were generally more dominant than girls. Knudson's findings were consistent with other studies that showed that though there were average differences in aggressive behavior of the genders, no behavior was entirely exclusive to one gender. Her data also showed that intergender variation of dominant and submissive behavior was more significant than intragender variation. Several conclusions may be drawn from considering these data, but it cannot be known what the behaviors meant to the children because their subjective meanings were not reported.

The extent to which Knudson was unconcerned with the participants' own meanings was illustrated by an account she gave of one subject, a girl who was counted for several days as a boy. Unlike other girls, she regularly played with boys outside and

exhibited what Knudson called "rough and tumble" play. Knudson did not say how the girl or the other children interpreted the girls' behavior. Did they count her as a girl or a boy or was gender even relevant to them? How did she perceive herself? Was she potentially a transsexual or did she give meaning to her behavior within the experience of a girl's identity? More generally, what did the children in the classes observed make of the different patterns of behavior of girls and boys? Did girls and boys interpret the meaning the same or differently? Were there no shared gender meanings but only individually determined meanings?

As a primatologist, Knudson approached human behavior with the same methodology and in the same terms as nonhuman primate behavior. This meant, among other things, considering behavior independently of meanings constituted in language. The intention of the present study is not to question the legitimacy or value of systematic observation methodology, or Knudson's findings, but to illustrate that a methodology which can result in a child's being counted for several days as a member of the wrong gender is not adequate to understanding a child's subjective meaning within an objective context.⁴

There is current research on gender and children within school settings that has used participant observation methodology, or a similar approach, to collect material for analysis. However, these studies have had different theoretical orientations and purposes than this study. Three recent studies using similar

field methods to study gender will be discussed at this point to illustrate how the central concerns of those studies are different from present concerns.

A fundamental difference is that all three studies have employed the conceptual framework of socialization. The primary emphasis in socialization research is upon environmental factors which act upon a child and to which she or he reacts. Much of the quantitative based research previously discussed has also used the socialization approach to ask questions about children. The active role of the child in structuring reality is theoretically assumed by some researchers but in practice is typically neglected or viewed as a secondary goal.⁵ The primary question in most socialization based research is how do social agents--schools, the media, parents, and other institutions--induct children into gender roles and what are the processes of transmission? The question is a good one but not a useful one for answering how children construct their own social reality.

Pivnick (1974) used the socialization framework and participant observation field methods to study gender and children in a first-grade classroom in a somewhat traditional school setting. Pivnick wanted to determine what teacher behaviors, institutional structures, and school materials supported or challenged what she had previously identified as the conventional "sex-role expectations" (or gender role) for adults in adult society. She reported that there were a few, relatively minor ways that teachers differentially responded to girls and boys which reflected teacher gender

role expectations, but there were no systematic attempts to teach gender roles directly. Teaching gender roles through school materials was, however, a different matter. Like previous researchers who had investigated children's media, Pivnick found that characters were extremely gender typed and that boy characters were by far the most notable and commanding. Pivnick noted that there were no attempts on the part of teachers to present alternative nontraditional views of the genders.

Pivnick did not explicate children's conceptions of gender, nor were their ideas very often portrayed indirectly through description of behavior. Children's talk and behavior were usually discussed only when they were part of a teacher-child interaction presented to illustrate the teacher's gender role expectations and what she was doing to socialize children into conventional roles.

Belotti (1976) used field observation methodology, as well as material collected from observing and participating as a member of Italian society, to answer the question posed as the title of her book, What Are Little Girls Made of?⁶ Part of her discussion concerned children's participation in games and rituals, children's literature and toys, and the role of the school in socializing girls and boys into their respective gender roles. She found that most Italian nursery school teachers knowingly and unknowingly inducted children into conventional gender roles. Some of her findings are particularly interesting because they demonstrate differences and similarities between American and

Italian culture in the gender area. Though not setting out to study children's knowledge about gender, in the process of describing how parents, teachers, book publishers, and the mass media socialized children, she paints a rich picture of girls and boys. One senses something of how they gave meaning to and constructed their world. On the other hand, she never explicitly states what they know in their own terms. The reader is left to ponder whether her imaginings about children's experience reflect their actual interpretation of their experience. In general, the focus of the study was on how adults organized children's reality rather than upon how children organized their own reality within a gender-based context.

Another briefer study which utilized the methodology of participant observation in a natural setting and the conceptual framework of socialization was Joffe's (1971) research in a self-consciously progressive nursery school in California. Her stated purposes were to determine the school's role in the transmission of gender role expectations and to determine how the children themselves conceived of their gender role obligations. She found that though the school was theoretically and politically committed to minimizing gender-typed socialization, some adults, especially helping parents, inadvertently transmitted cues about what was appropriate, expected behavior for the genders. Since the school was dependent upon outside sources for children's media, the media were found to lag far behind the school's progressive posture about gender roles.

Joffe implicitly retained the perspective of socialization when she attempted to examine how children perceived gender roles. Instead of referring children's talk and behavior to their own conceptions of gender, Joffe referred what they said and did to what she knew about the meaning of adult gender roles and behavior. To illustrate, Joffe described several events where one child rejected another's use of toys or objects by reference to gender. "Girls only!" a girl yelled to a boy who wanted to join her on a large structure in the playground. The boy countered, "No! Boys only!" Joffe suggested that because the behavior of exclusion was reciprocal it was, in her words, "meaningless." She continued, saying, ". . . one can reasonably conclude that to neither of the contestants is there any serious belief in an essential 'male' or 'female' aspect of the structure under dispute" (p. 472). She designated this gender-based exclusion as part of an "ideology of control" but again related it to the experience of adults rather than to the experiences and meanings of the children. Joffe wrote

In sum, we might look at the use of sex as an ideology of control in childhood as a revealing caricature of the adult world and its usage of sex categories. Like these children, adults also invoke sex as a means of behavior control; the crucial differences are that among adults, the two categories are utilized in a patterned way (some would call it male supremacy) and both male and female adults--unlike these children--actually behave in accordance with this ideology.
(p. 472)

From Joffe's treatment of this event we know two things. First, what the children did and said, and second, what Joffe herself knew about adult gender patterns of behavior and adult meanings. What

we do not know, and cannot know from her presentation and analysis, is what the children knew about gender and what meaning the event had for them. In the present study, such an event or pattern of events was further analyzed to assess how it expressed children's knowledge about gender, and constructed the concrete reality of gender as children articulated meaning in their own terms. To declare that such behavior is meaningless because it does not conform to prior knowledge about adults' meanings is a way of not taking children seriously as social constructors of reality. It would be analogous, I think, to characterizing a third world people's attempts to modernize along the Western industrial model, within their own concrete cultures and societies, as a caricature and meaningless because they had not yet become Westernized and modernized. To observe third world persons on television with grass skirts, outhouses, and McDonald hamburgers does provide a mirror of sorts for Americans. But what do these things mean to them? Certainly they do not experience themselves as caricatures.

McKay (1974) has suggested that children are in possession of their own culture or succession of cultures and are competent interpreters of their social world just as adults are competent interpreters of their world. He has criticized researchers for studying children using the notion of socialization. He contends that it is an expression of the sociologist's common-sense and taken-for-granted position in the world of everyday as an adult. As such, socialization analyses essentially mirror the adult

sociologist's view that children are incomplete human beings for not having yet been socialized and that adults, by contrast, are complete. McKay complains that socialization research is "forward looking" in the sense that the child is not considered on her/his own terms but as someone in the process of becoming something else, that is, an adult, a complete human being. Children should be approached by sociologists just as anthropologists approach members of other cultures: on their own terms. The next section of the dissertation will propose a framework for studying children and gender on the children's own terms.

Summary

A review was made of some of the most relevant empirically based research on gender and young children to describe what researchers have found that children, especially of the ages four through seven, know about gender. The review of the research using methodology other than participant observation indicated that children typify and construct gender along several dimensions. First, by the age of seven most children know that there are two and only two genders, that they are different from one another, that everyone is of a gender, and that gender is invariant. Second, children know that power, types of competencies, social location, social function, attitudes, physical traits, and expressive style are distributed by gender.

Some of the research on the school's role in differentiating and typing by gender was briefly reviewed. In general, it seemed

schools and teachers tended to support children's notions about gender, as delineated by the research on children's ideas, rather than to change or modify them.

Three gender studies which used participant observation type methodology were reviewed and contrasted to the present study. It was found that these studies, representative of the genre, used the framework of socialization to examine children and gender within school settings. The studies tended to ignore or gloss children's own conceptions of gender and did not seriously consider how children constructed gender in day-to-day activity. In conclusion, it seemed that no current research had the goals of the present research: to explicate children's ideas about gender and to demonstrate and describe how they used those ideas to construct reality in day-to-day activity in interaction with other children within the social setting of the school over time.

Notes

1. See especially Chodorow (1978), Rosaldo and Lamphere, eds. (1974), Reiter, ed. (1975), and Rubin (1975) for some good examples of the development of feminist theory and empirically based research.
2. For a contemporary formulation of psychoanalytic theory and gender development see Stoller (1968, 1975); for the classic statement see Freud (1925). For a complete statement of social learning theory and gender development see Mischel (1966, 1970). See Kohlberg (1966) for a cognitive-developmental analysis of the development of gender. For a phenomenologically based critical analysis of these positions see Kessler and McKenna (1978). Kessler and McKenna (1978) have made an important contribution to gender research and feminist theory with their recently published work, Gender: An ethnomethodological approach, and have provided the foundation for a phenomenological theory of gender development. Unfortunately, this work was not available at the time the present

study was formulated or for the bulk of the analysis and writing. It is recommended to anyone interested in gender research, whatever their theoretical orientation. Their complex analysis cannot be adequately considered within the review of the literature for this study.

3. The quotation marks signify the exact phrases or terms used by the researchers in their questionnaires rather than phrases or terms introduced by children.
4. For a feminist reinterpretation of primate studies see Leibowitz (1975).
5. Some of the research of Hartley (1959) is a notable example of a balanced approach where the views of the children are taken into account. See especially Hartley (1959).
6. Belotti's (1976) book is especially notable for its implicit male bias and value system for assessing the meaning of little girls' behavior. If the girls are typical girls she expresses contempt for them. Belotti also expresses class-based contempt for women Italian nursery school teachers who, according to her, are usually from the lower classes.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

Introduction

The goals of this study were to describe what gender meant to the subjects of the study as they lived their everyday lives within this particular social setting and to describe how they used gender meanings to construct an intersubjectively meaningful social world. Essentially, the purpose was to describe the social reality of gender as the children subjectively apprehended it and objectively constructed it in day-to-day activity. The method of inquiry best suited to realize these phenomenological goals was the method called participant observation. This section will discuss participant observation methodology and the criteria for the validity of the study. It will then discuss the actual collection of material for the study.

Participant Observation Methodology

As used for this research, participant observation¹ is a term that refers to the "circumstances of being in or around an ongoing social setting for the purpose of making a qualitative analysis of that setting" (Lofland, 1971, p. 93). It is an attempt to be close to and study the people who live in that setting in order to understand their meanings and lived experience by observing them over time and recording their activities and utterances as they naturally go about their everyday lives.

A central requirement for understanding the subjective meanings of the subjects of a study is that the participant observer enter the natural setting with as few preconceptions about the nature of the phenomena to be observed and described as possible. Zaner (1973) writes

To seek to understand the social world *as it is for those whose social world it is* is possible only if one practices the systematic art of listening to them in their own terms and attends to the "social world" they construct for themselves. "Listening" as I intend it here, is no mere fetish, but requires the careful construction of devices--models and ideal types, analysis of common vernaculars, study of the multiple forms of expression . . .--by which an attuneful and appreciative "seeing" of social worlds can alone occur, one which is adequate and faithful to the "things themselves" in their own proper settings. (pp. 41-42)

The construction of analytical and phenomenological categories must emerge during the observation and analysis, and not prior to it, to adequately represent the subjective experience of those studied. Lofland (1971) describes the commitment of one doing phenomenological inquiry as a commitment to "represent the participants *in their own terms*" and, therefore, it is necessarily a process of discovery, a process of learning what is happening while one is engaged in the world of the subjects. He writes that "one must find out about those terms rather than impose upon them a preconceived or outsider's scheme of what they are about" (p. 41). The participant observer must approach phenomenon in a manner which allows it to appear to her/him as it is in itself prior to any theoretical interpretation of it.

Lofland (1971) characterizes the role of the participant observer as that of a reporter who has "taken the role of the other" and who, by the depiction and presentation of what life is like for her/his subjects, allows the readers to at least partially project themselves into the point of view of those who have been depicted. He writes

. . . the reporter should have himself been close to the people he reports on. By the term "close" I refer to four types of proximity. (1) He should have been close in the physical sense of conducting his own life in face-to-face proximity to the persons he tells about. (2) This physical proximity should have extended over some significant period of *time* and variety of circumstances. (3) The reporter should have developed closeness in the social sense of intimacy and confidentiality. . . . (4) He should have conducted his recording activities in such a way that his reportage can give close and searching attention to minute matters. He should have paid attention to the minutiae of daily life.

Lofland lists several requirements for the report itself.

The report should be truthful. It should describe what the reporter in good faith believes actually went on; it should be factual.

The report should contain a significant amount of pure description of action, people, activities, and the like.

Fully to capture the reality of a place, the report should contain direct quotations from the participants as they speak and/or from whatever they write down. (pp. 3-4)

The primary goal of the participant observer is a description of the characteristics of a phenomenon rather than an analysis of causes or consequences. Berger and Luckmann (1967) make this clear when they write

The phenomenological analysis of everyday life, or rather of the subjective experience of everyday life, refrains from any causal or generic hypotheses, as well as from assertions about the ontological status of the phenomena analyzed. It is important to remember this. Common sense contains innumerable pre- and quasi-scientific interpretations about everyday reality, which it takes for granted. If we are to describe the reality of common sense we must refer to these interpretations, just as we must take account of its taken-for-granted character--but we must do so within phenomenological brackets. (p. 20)

"Bracketing" refers to the technique of suspending the belief in the constancy and independent existences of phenomena by treating our own taken-for-granted assumptions *as beliefs* rather than as immutable reality. By bracketing questions and assumptions about the origin and ontological status of phenomena, an observer may better explicate how the subjects themselves ongoingly construct and, perhaps, articulate notions of causality. In this study, unless the antecedents of some aspect of the phenomena of gender were present and apprehended by the observer, the cause of the aspect was not considered or, if considered, will be clearly identified as conjecture.

Analysis primarily takes the form of an ordering of the subject's categories for understanding and constructing the social world. The task of the observer, then, is to engage herself/himself in the world of the subjects while at the same time maintaining the stance of a disinterested observer who, being disinterested, can render an explicit objective account² of the manner in which the subjects themselves structure, order, and account for their experience, regardless of the ultimate validity or invalidity of the

knowledge upon which such ordering is based (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The point in the present study was to tell how it was for the subjects. What did the subjects know and what did they do, considered from the perspective of gender?

A participant observer basically has three sources of material available to develop this description of the subjects' world. First, the researcher has face-to-face access to the conversations and acts of the subjects as they live in their natural attitude of everyday reality, an attitude which the observer seeks to leave undisturbed by her/his presence. By observing the subjects over an extended period of time the researcher may determine the typical individual and shared meanings subjects use to define, interpret, and apprehend the people, objects, and events within their concrete social setting. By carefully examining the material collected, the researcher should be able to describe the explicit and implicit motivational and explanatory schemes that recur over time and that seem to be essential and central to the subjects' production of their meaningful social order as they daily construct it.

The researcher also has access to the objects which the subjects produce in the form of written documents, arts and crafts, tools, toys, and so on. The participant researcher should become aware of subjects' shared meanings expressed within and by the use of such objects.

Finally, the participant observer must also utilize her/his own experience as a person who lives in the world as well as

studies the world. Part of the task of the observer is to critically reflect upon the nature of the observed phenomena as it appears in her/his own consciousness.³ The observer must *explicitly* recognize that she/he perceives the social world in terms of humanly constructed meaningful patterns and not as meaningless sense perceptions. This recognition must occur not simply to guard against bias and projection but must occur as a recognition of what actually occurs during sociological work. The sociologist as observer inevitably employs her/his own meanings as a resource shared with participants in order to make sense of their acts and conversations. Turner (1974) makes this point when he writes that ". . . the task of the sociologist in analysing naturally occurring scenes is not to deny his competence in making sense of activity but to *explicate* it" (p. 214). The ultimate goal of the observer is to describe the life-world of the subjects and not to render an account of her/his own experience. In practice, the analysis and description depend upon reflection on the content and assumptions which structure one's own consciousness of the phenomena. The rendering of the other's world depends upon self-understanding on one's own life-worldly experience.

Participant observation methodology has been used extensively by sociologists for qualitative analysis of natural settings,⁴ but the methodology has not been used extensively for studying the setting of the school. In those school-based studies that have employed the methodology of participant observation the goals and theoretical assumptions of the research have been different from the

present goals and assumptions.⁵ In general, such research has intended less phenomenological goals. Three studies that used participant observation methodology to study aspects of gender within a school setting were previously discussed in Chapter II.

Validity of the Study

Phenomenologically based studies using the methodology of participant observation have clearly different goals from studies which employ quantitative methods of analysis. Quantitative studies seek to provide reliable generalizations about and systematic empirical measures of the frequencies of events. They seek to provide evidence of the causes and consequences of social phenomena. By contrast, qualitative studies seek to be descriptive rather than explanatory. The goals are to describe human social experience in its own, perhaps situationally unique, humanly derived terms and not translate experience into quantitative terms.

If the criterion for the validity of qualitative studies of everyday life is not verifiability with other research, as it is for quantitative studies, what are the criteria for determining validity? Psathas (1973) identifies the "key issue" for studies of everyday life as "whether the results of an inquiry fit, make sense, and are true to the understanding of ordinary actors in the everyday world" (p. 12). He proposes three "tests" to determine the validity of such studies.

One test of the validity of investigations lies in the extent to which the findings are faithful to and consistent with the experience of those who live in that

world. Are the findings faithful representations, descriptions, accounts, or interpretations of what those who ordinarily live those activities would themselves recognize to be true? If second order constructs were translated back into the first order constructs to which they refer, would the observer's report be recognized as a valid and faithful account of "what the activity is really like"?

A second test is whether the descriptions and accounts of the activity would allow others--not directly knowledgeable as to their occurrence but sharing the same cultural stock of knowledge--to recognize the activities if confronted with them in the life-world *after* having only read or seen the account presented by the social scientist analyst. (p. 12)

The third test suggested by Psathas is one which he describes as more difficult and not relevant to all studies. Basically, can the "reader" of a social scientist's report become a "player" in the everyday world of those who ordinarily participate in that world merely as a result of having read the report?

Lofland (1971) had a similar assessment as Psathas about the key issue for questions of validity of studies of the everyday world of subjects. He wrote

. . . the best and most stringent test of observer constructions is their recognizability to the participants themselves. When participants themselves say "Yes, that is there, I had simply never noticed it before," the observer can be reasonably confident that he has tapped into extant patterns of participation. (p. 34)

Time Span of the Observations

To increase the depth and scope of my understanding of how children understood gender and reconstructed a sense of gender in their everyday lives, it seemed necessary that I be present for a considerable period of time. Consequently, I observed in the

setting for over 600 hours, over a period of ten months, from the first day of school in September until the last day of school in June. For the first three weeks of the school year I was present at all times while the children were at school so that I could become aware of the attitudes and behaviors characteristic of the students prior to their entry into this situation as well as to observe the development of social relations from their beginning. From the fourth week of school until school recessed for the holidays in December, I was present except for three afternoons a week. On those days, I left the school one and one-half hours before the children left for the day. When school resumed in January, I observed continuously for another week. After that week I observed at irregular intervals to monitor new developments. During the last five weeks of school I was present almost continuously, either observing or interviewing.

During the period of observation, I accompanied the children as a single group, in small groups, or individually everywhere they went during the school day. We went to the school cafeteria, music class, physical education, the library, the school nurse, all over the playground, and on short field trips. In addition, I attended events which took place at times other than regular school hours. For instance, I attended the elementary school Open House just prior to the holiday recess. I also attended after school conferences that the teacher had with the practicum students from the University.

Collection of Material

There were three concrete methods used to collect material for analysis. By far the most important method was to observe the children, teachers, and other actors while keeping a running account of what was occurring in the form of written field notes. The second most important method for collecting material was to interview the teacher and each of the children individually, using a format of open-ended questions. A third, quite minor method was to have each child participate in a picture-selection task. Because of the way each of these specific techniques was utilized, each must be considered part of the general methodology of participant observation rather than as separate methods. This section will concern itself with the actual collection of the material in order to provide an account of the research process, the usefulness of the methodology within school settings, and an account of the general nature of the particular setting.

Observation

Depending upon the social context and the necessities of the research goals, the method called participant observation may refer to a number of different behaviors, research postures, and levels of engagement on the part of the researcher. There is, however, an attitude which is necessary in order to use the method properly, an attitude of nonjudgemental perception and a mental posture of disengaged reflection. This attitude and research posture reflect the primary assumption of qualitative research

that it is possible for the researcher to transcend her/his common sense taken-for-granted notion of the world in order to reflect upon and describe the social reality of others, while being a person who lives both with and within that social reality. This process is described in the literature in a number of ways. One is supposed to "empty" oneself of presuppositions, to be "open" to the phenomena, and to let the situation reveal itself in consciousness by "seeing" instead of "thinking." By assuming this attitude, one is able to apprehend experience at different and deeper levels of meaning.

The successful acquisition of this attitude is typically influenced by at least two factors. It is influenced by the emotional and cognitive style familiar and habitual to the researcher in her/his natural attitude, and by the demands for engagement made upon the observer by other people within the research setting.

In this research, the greater problem was modifying my habitual cognitive process. The first and most essential lesson I had to learn as an observer was to monitor my normative judging process and my tendency to abstract phenomena prematurely. Both tendencies had to become conscious so that I could "see" without knowing what I was going to see in advance, to see what was there instead of merely seeing a reflection of my preconceptions or abstractions. From observing I understood at a more profound level what don Juan meant when he cautioned Carlos Castaneda (1971) to stop his "internal dialogue" and rely on his senses. My strong tendency to abstract phenomena before "seeing" what

actually composed the phenomena constituted a serious liability for understanding the nature of others' subjective experience and describing it. It necessitated a constant process of "taking apart" my abstractions so that I might understand events better. The process of recording events concretely and behavioristically while in the field, rather than interpretatively, was a useful method for monitoring this tendency.

A device developed for the practical purposes of observation helped me to learn how to stop the judging and premature abstracting process. I had been aware from the beginning of the observations that subtle and not so subtle body cues revealed to the subjects any judgements I was making about their behavior. It was immediately apparent that the children looked at my face, especially, when they were doing something that they thought an adult might object to. In consequence, I learned to be aware of my face and body and the messages that I was giving to the children. A tightened jaw, slightly raised eyebrows, raised chin, tension in the shoulders, all provided messages to the children of disapproval. Similarly, smiles provided encouragement. Obviously, if I would encounter the children as they would act with one another beyond the presence of significant adults, these behaviors had to be changed. When I maintained an almost totally impassive, relaxed facial expression and loose posture, my external appearance immediately seemed to convince the children that I was not making either positive or negative judgements about their behavior. However, this discipline of outward appearance became

more than a facade because it seemed that by acting neutral I became neutral. My mental processes became congruent with my body. I would become conscious of being better able to observe all manner of behavior without constructing normative judgements about it or constructing elaborate fantasies about its meaning. And when I did make such judgements and construct such fantasies, I became aware of it by using my body as a monitor of changed feeling. My "open" body facilitated an open, receptive awareness.

The implicit and explicit demands of others for the researcher observer to become actively engaged, to be a full participant, were far less of a problem in this social context than they might have been in another. Most importantly, I learned that young children can be observed without one's active participation far more easily than most adults. This will be discussed later. In addition, the attitude of the adults who worked at the school was characterized by openness and genuine respect for the value of research. Mrs. Cowan, the teacher whose class I observed, was particularly supportive of my role as a researcher.

However, the fact remained that when I entered the classroom my role and situation were somewhat ambiguous and the level at which I would be actively engaged as a participant or disengaged as an observer was somewhat problematic. For my part, I wanted to observe and to take written field notes while observing. I intended to initially limit my participation to a minimum, and only for the research purpose of acquiring more information or clarifying something that puzzled me. However, the participants, adults

and children alike, had other projects than research they were pursuing, and oftentimes in the early period of the observations they would seek to engage me in one way or another.

Mrs. Cowan was gracious and generous in her acceptance of my presence. Her immediate goals, however, were not primarily those of facilitating research; she had to organize 30 children, of two general developmental levels, and 30 individual levels, into a coherent social group so that learning and social development might take place consistent with her assessment of individual needs. This involved her being actively and continuously engaged with 30 children who were four, five, and six years old. Though she had the assistance of a teacher aide for two hours in the morning until December, and the occasional assistance of parents, for practical purposes she was alone. Neither the aide nor the parents initiated activity on their own, but waited for specific directives from the teacher.

During the large part of the day when neither aide nor parents were available to assist in the ubiquitous details of classroom life, the teacher wanted and needed some help and quite naturally saw me as being a potential source of assistance. There I was: an adult female, constantly present, apparently doing nothing but watching and writing on a note pad, and all the while about me children were requesting paper, crayons, pencils, help, and attention. During the early part of the year the teacher would ask me, at what I usually experienced as inopportune times, to provide assistance of a mundane nature, e.g., to "cut the art paper for the

children and pass it out" or for assistance which implied that I accept responsibility for intervening among the children, e.g., "taking the children to music."

The need to "get along" with the teacher, and the wish to help when possible, made such requests problematic. Because of the extremely fluid nature of classroom life, I felt it was imperative to continuously observe and take notes about the developing social situation during the early phase of social organization. In addition, it seemed to me that were I not there some type of interactive response would naturally develop, and my being there was incidental to the natural setting. And, though I did not mind assisting at times, I did not want to accept the role of teacher aide, for once accepted, the role would be hard to shed. Consequently, I resisted the more neutral, mundane requests passively. For instance, by doing the task when specifically requested, but never volunteering, and ending the engagement as soon as the specific concrete request was fulfilled. Not an insensitive person, Mrs. Cowan soon understood that I conceived the needs of my research to take precedence over her needs for my assistance. Consequently, she began to modify her requests so that she asked for assistance far less often, waiting for times that she perceived me to be receptive.

The matter of my participating in classroom life as an adult who was responsible for children and who would actively intervene and modify their behavior was more serious an issue, and on that score I was quite firm and forthright from the beginning. I explained to the teacher why I did not want to assume any role which

implicitly demanded that I be responsive to the children. I wanted the children to know that they could do "anything" in my presence, and that no judgement or consequence would result from my witnessing their behavior. Therefore, with the understanding of Mrs. Cowan, I did not perform such tasks as "leading children to the gym for physical education," or "watching them after lunch," until well into the observation period, after I had been typified by the children as a harmless, and possibly socially incompetent, adult.

Having established an observational baseline of sorts after several weeks of observation, Mrs. Cowan and I developed an implicit understanding about the role I would take as a participant, and to what extent I would assume responsibility in the classroom. My sense of the agreement was that I would intervene only in the event of an emergency, that is, when there was a real and imminent danger for the physical safety of a child. The exact lines of responsibility were never drawn nor was the question ever discussed explicitly, but a satisfactory arrangement evolved in the context of the ongoing interaction. She observed me, and, I imagined, concluded that, "Yes, she won't let a child who is in the shallow creek drown. . . . But will she stop a child from enter-ing the creek in the first place?" The situation was ambiguous. I was passive and impassive, and observed to be so in a variety of situations in which adults would normally intervene. I stood by and observed and took notes while children fought with one another, even when one was clearly being hurt by a larger child; I observed

the children tearing through the halls and yelling on the way to lunch, and continued taking notes all the while; I observed them as they disobeyed the explicit rule of the teacher not to go down by the creek without an adult, without taking any action other than to follow them after a few moments to observe them and take notes. It was the incident of the creek, I believed, that helped Mrs. Cowan understand the sense that I had of what was her responsibility as the teacher, and what was my responsibility as a researcher observer. Because I had always felt my presence to be incidental to classroom life, and because I had never explicitly or implicitly agreed to any other definition of the situation, I felt relatively comfortable in assuming that role.

During the later part of the observation period, when Mrs. Cowan needed to leave the classroom and I was the only adult present, it was enough for her to be satisfied that I agreed to remain until she had returned. Mrs. Cowan would ask, for instance, "Barbara, are you going to be outside after lunch?" I would answer that I was, and she would reply, "Good. I need to go to the restroom."

Agreeing that I was going to be outside observing after lunch was not the same thing, I felt, as agreeing that I was responsible for the children other than the way any adult would be considered to be responsible for children in her presence. Fortunately, a situation never developed which constituted an emergency. I did intervene for reasons of safety twice, though the situations had not yet fully developed into imminent danger when I acted.⁶

Importantly, Mrs. Cowan had a reliable sense of the limitations and restrictions that children placed upon themselves in terms of safety and hurting others. Apparently she had developed it from years of teaching. She seemed to have the ability to determine whether there were children in a group who would cross the boundary from hurting others to doing serious damage to others or themselves. In this group there were no children who did not have a good deal of self-control about safety.

The ethical question of my being an adult who did not act but only observed children was more problematic in relation to the children. As I have said, my research needs as I saw them at the beginning of the observations were to establish myself as a person whose presence did not essentially concern the participants. In relation to the children, the task was a relatively easy one. I quickly learned that one may ignore the requests and questions of children, requests which are ubiquitous and unceasing within such a context if one acknowledges them; I would simply look at them impassively as though I did not comprehend the meaning of their behavior nor understand the normative values which usually attach to such behavior. This was relatively easy *as I had never engaged them, even in mundane ways*. In this context, the children did not get angry when I did not respond to their requests or questions, even by acknowledging them. They did not try to hide their behavior from me.⁷ After the first day or so, they were apparently not self-conscious about my presence and were willing to do all types of things in my presence, from lying to other

adults and beating up other children, to expressing joy and affection to one another.

Initially, I was surprised to the point of being thrilled that I could be in the presence of other humans in face-to-face interaction without having any responsibility to act or be socially competent in more than a rudimentary way. After a time, the situation became more ethically problematic for me. I began to feel a sense of complicity in the ubiquitous acts of violence, as though my presence as an adult who did not act in the face of such violence served to affirm its legitimacy, or served to increase the feelings of helplessness of a child who was being hurt. During the earliest period of the observations, a child who was being attacked would appeal to me and the aggressor would hesitate to continue the attack. After a short period of time, however, it became common for an aggressor to tell another that it was useless to appeal to me. As Wanda put it when she was hitting a smaller child, who unsuccessfully sought my help, "Don't do no good to tell her you stupid black ass. She ain't gonna do nothin' to help you." Comments of that sort were somewhat unsettling. Even as I continued my observation and note taking, I began to speculate on what manner of statement my passive presence made to the children. I never satisfactorily answered that question for myself, but continued observing and taking notes without intervening.

I came to be known by the children, who did not usually remember my name, as "the girl who writes all the time." Unlike the teacher, the children were never told what I was doing in the

classroom and some occasionally asked me what my purpose was. Unlike the first-grade children Cadmus (1974) observed in a more structured, teacher-directed setting, many of the children I observed were never satisfied with my answers to their questions about what I was doing in the classroom and why I wrote all the time. Using Cadmus' suggestions, I initially answered, "Writing down a few ideas." Such an answer was often followed by another question such as, "What ideas?" Shelley, the most persistent questioner, tried to get me to give a phenomenological report of what I was doing and what my intentions were. After several attempts at penetrating my obscure answers the following interaction occurred:

Shelley: "What are you doing?"

Observer: "Writing down some ideas."

Shelley: (Exasperated) "Ideas about what?"

Observer: "The phenomenological reality of gender."

Shelley shakes her head, thinks a moment, and then, pointing to the handwriting on the page says, "What do these *ideas* say? Read the *words* to me." (Emphasis hers.)

Observer: "Excuse me now."

Shelley: "Are you writing about us?"

Observer: "I write about everything I see."

If I had it to do again, I would, at the beginning of the observations, tell the entire group in simple, understandable terms, what I was doing in the classroom. A truthful, forthright answer would not have changed their behavior in any significant way. The

crucial point in observing was that I did not judge them or intervene.

The children's typification of me as a person who did not "do anything" was obviously useful for observing. I was able to take notes and watch them without having any significant impact on the life-world, and without having to constantly monitor the impact of my own participation and involvement. In combination with the relatively unstructured and unrestricted nature of the classroom, I was able to observe 30 children beyond the presence of significant adults, and, thus, to observe a child directed and constructed meaningful social world as it was being constructed and maintained.

Observing the various adults was more problematic.⁸ Unlike the children, none of the adults thought that I was unaware of the meaning of their behavior. With adults, a different stance had to be taken, one which was generally friendly if somewhat formal.

Initially, the teacher was somewhat apprehensive about my presence in the classroom, especially as she felt a bit anxious, "rusty" was her word, about her teaching this year. I could easily observe the teacher without influencing her behavior when I observed her indirectly, from a distance, or while she was in a formally structured situation, as when she was working with the entire group. Over the long run, her public utterances and behavior were largely spontaneous and uninfluenced by my presence.

However, it was difficult to observe her closely when she was interacting with a single child during individualized instruction. In order to hear her soft voice I had to sit right next to her and

the child, especially as there was always a good deal of sound from the rest of the class. Many people tend to feel uncomfortable when one observes them and despite the fact that Mrs. Cowan was accustomed to being observed as a laboratory school teacher she felt uncomfortable. Almost invariably she would stiffen a bit, and then deal with her uneasiness by trying to incorporate me into the role of assistant teacher thereby reducing the threatening aspects of my role as observer and researcher. She would try to get me to become a full participant in one way or another, usually by requesting that I take over the job she was doing. For instance, if a child was reading to her she would ask, "Would you read to Barbara?" I would then end up listening to a child while she left to teach another.

Because the results of such observations were generally unsatisfactory, and accessible only by indirect means, I did not observe such intimate, one-to-one encounters very often. In essence, Mrs. Cowan had effectively modified an aspect of my behavior which had made her more uncomfortable than she wanted to be. However, I did observe the teacher's public behavior toward children so I was able to see what other participants saw, and to assess the meaning which they attached to her statements and behavior.

Questioning and Interviewing

The research posture I assumed during the first period of observation was not entirely passive and unresponsive to the subjects. During this first three months, my research-as-zombie

period, I would occasionally ask a child about the meaning of an event. The questions were generally asked in simple informational terms such as, "When you said _____ to that boy, what did you mean?" Or, "Why do you think that _____ started crying when _____ said that?", and so on. The purpose of asking questions was to clarify some matter usually having to do with motivation. Asking questions often provided immediate clarity but there were pitfalls involved. By asking questions I once or twice ended an event before it had had a chance to fully develop. More importantly, by asking questions, I sometimes tended to abort my own reflective process. Instead of reflecting upon my own puzzlement or confusion and trying to determine what assumptions or categories I was using to understand meaning, and thereby possibly reveal categories that the others were also using, I sought immediate clarity. The most important of these times was when I could not determine a child's gender. On the other hand, there were times questions should have been asked when they were not, and opportunities for clarity were lost. From experience I learned that essential themes were recurring and if I observed carefully, the significant aspects of the situation would be revealed. This was a highly individual matter, however, and another researcher might benefit from more, rather than less, questioning.

Systematic and structured ways of questioning were not used until well into the observations in late December when the first picture selection task was given. There were several reasons for the late date of structured questioning. First, I had found that my questioning tended to make *some* children shy of acting around me

immediately afterwards, and caused others to orient themselves to me. I found the role of nonparticipant observer to be useful and enjoyable and I did not want to change this role relationship with the children. Second, I wanted the questions developed for the interviews to have emerged during the process of observing rather than from any prior categories and conceptualizations. Third, I wanted to consider the responses and answers within the context of what I had learned from observing over an extended period of time. I wanted to know what the children did and said with each other before I considered what they said to an adult.

At the end of the year each child was asked these predetermined, open-ended questions during a long and short interview session:

Long Interview Questions

1. What is your mother's occupation or job?
2. What is your father's occupation or job?
3. What do you want to do or be when you grow up?
4. Do you like school? What activities do you like the best? The least?
5. When you play, what do you like to play the most? The least?
6. Whom do you like to play with the most? Why? The least? Why?
7. Some people are boys and some people are girls. How are boys and girls the same?
8. How are boys and girls different from one another?
9. What can girls do?
10. What can boys do?
11. What can men do?
12. What can women do?
13. Do girls have fun? Do boys have fun? Who has more fun? Why?
14. If you were grown up and were going to have a baby, would you want a girl baby or a boy baby? Why?
15. Who do you think should be the boss or make most of the decisions in your family? Why?

16. Do you know what power is? What is it?
17. Who has power in the class?
18. Who has power in your family?
19. How does a person get power?
20. If you could have a man teacher or a woman teacher next year which would you choose? Why?

Short Interview Questions

1. Which boy in the class is most like a boy? Why?
2. Which boy in the class is most like a girl? Why?
3. Which girl in the class is most like a girl? Why?
4. Which girl in the class is most like a boy? Why?

The general purpose of the interviews was to understand how the children, when asked directly, would articulate the categories which they used to understand, interpret, and construct the world in terms of gender. Also sought was knowledge about relationships and patterns of activity which might have to do with gender, such as friendship or status. Both the content of their typifications and their typifying process were of interest. Another purpose was to consider their meanings within the context of what had been observed over several months. Though some questions, such as the obligatory "What are you going to do or be when you grow up?" carried the stamp of habitualized adult-child interaction (some children sighed when I asked this question) most of the questions were developed from research concerns and puzzlements which emerged during observation.

Because of unforeseen circumstances and demands upon the time of the children, much less time was used for the interviews than had been planned. This was especially the case for the shorter interview which was carried out almost on a hit-and-run basis right in the middle of hectic classroom activity. The long

interview was conducted over a period of several days during the next to last week of school. The short interview took place during the last two days of school. Unfortunately, lack of time did not allow every child to participate in the short interview. Because of the qualitative nature of the research process, and the fact that the interviews were fundamentally supplemental, this lack of completion did not substantially detract from the value of the material gathered.

The procedure used for the interviews was simple. For the long interview each child was asked to come into the small room adjoining the classroom and asked if she or he was willing to answer a few questions. For most of the students the interviews were conducted individually and outside the presence of other students. I wanted the ideas of each child uninfluenced by others in an immediate sense, and I wanted the less active, less articulate children to have a chance to give voice to their view of the world. There were some exceptions to the rule of individual interviews. Anne, Karen, and Victoria wanted to be interviewed together and I agreed. Each of the three was asked each of the questions in turn, but they were allowed to interact with one another during the procedure. Because of special circumstances, Michael had to be questioned within the classroom proper while others were about. He was interviewed while Shawn, who had already been questioned, was present. Shawn was encouraged not to dominate but was allowed to comment. In both of these atypical cases it was decided that the interaction during the questioning was as instructive and as

important for analysis as the solitude of other interview situations. In fact, some especially valuable material was gathered during these two interviews.

The shorter interviews were all conducted with other children around, though each child was questioned individually. During the short interviews other children would sometimes listen to the answers being given, would inadvertently provide a stimulus to the child being questioned which influenced her/his answer, or would even coach the interviewee as to what answers to give. Though this was not ideal, nor what had been planned, the answers of the interviewee, as well as the comments and responses of other children, were quite useful for understanding what gender meant to them.

A relatively noninterventionist posture was taken by the observer for the interviews. Several guidelines were fairly rigorously observed. First, the same nonjudgemental attitude used for the observations was achieved during the interviews. The child was asked a question and the response was accepted and written down, verbatim when possible, or in its essence.⁹ Answers which consisted of shrugs and terse statements, such as "I don't know," were accepted, though the question was repeated to give the child another chance for comprehending a meaning. However, no additional explanations of a meaning were provided, either in the form of suggesting examples or by explicating a concept by using different categories to explain meaning. Either a child understood and constructed a meaning or she/he did not. The reason for this rigid approach had to do with the purpose of the interviews. The purpose

was to have the child provide the explanatory concepts and categories and to articulate the elements of a concept rather than to have the child respond to observer constructed typifications other than those structured by the questions themselves.

Had the interviews been the primary source of material this approach would not have been acceptable, and it would have been necessary to follow through more thoroughly. But because the interviews were fundamentally supplemental to the observations the responses were acceptable without further elaboration.

There are no problems with the validity of the content of the questions, their structure, the order they were asked, the answers, or the particularities of the interview situation, given the conceptual framework of the study and the reflective tools of analysis. In essence, the answers to the questions, within the context of the interview situation, have essentially the same status for purposes of analysis as the material gathered through observation. In fact, the interview should be considered as face-to-face interaction and a subject of analysis *as* interaction, though it intimately involved the researcher. This approach was consistent with the methodological framework of the study.

The interview material was considered in terms of the motivation and meaning the interview *in its totality* had for the child, including at times the fact that another child was coaching from the sidelines. All of the answers and responses have the same status and validity, though some answers were more useful and provided more insight than others. When a child gave an answer which

seemingly parroted an adult axiom, but acted in a contradictory fashion during the face-to-face of everyday, the answer was as useful as when a child gave what appeared to be a completely spontaneous answer. When a child gave an answer which was clearly related to a stimulus in the immediate environment, including the gender of the observer, the response was useful in terms of understanding the process of typification and of social maintenance of social knowledge. For instance, when a boy made a negative remark about girls during an interview and suddenly realized that the observer was a girl his response at that point was material for analysis. The research question was, What did the answer mean within the social context?, rather than in terms of a more isolated and abstract conception of knowledge. Subjective meaning is social meaning and social events, whatever their nature, were material for analysis. Given the assumptions of the process of analysis and the criteria for validity there are few relevant questions about the validity of any material. This is not the same thing, of course, as questions about the validity of the results of the analysis.

Picture Selection Task

A minor source of material used for the study was the responses given by children during a picture selection task. The purpose of the task was to get material on friendship selection, status, and perception of teacher preference among students. It was given twice, once just before the holiday recess in

December and once again in March. The procedure used was to invite one child into the small room where snapshots of every individual member of the class were randomly arranged on a table. The child was given a few moments to look at the pictures and then was asked to perform one of two tasks, and then the remaining task. After the first task was completed the pictures were shuffled and randomly arranged on the table for the next task. The instructions for the tasks were:

1. Choose the picture of the person whom you'd like to be your best friend, the person that you like the most.
2. Pretend you are the teacher, Mrs. Cowan. Select the child that you think is the best student in the class, the one you think that Mrs. Cowan likes the best.

After choosing a picture the child was asked to choose another, "Of the ones that are left, choose . . .," until all of the pictures had been chosen. When a child did not want to finish the tasks, for whatever reasons, I insisted that she/he finish. I recorded her/his objections to finishing, recorded any remarks made at the time, and noted where she/he wanted to stop. All of the choices and their order were recorded as well as other significant remarks and behaviors. It was clear that no child had difficulty understanding what was being asked of her/him. All the children were initially eager to do the tasks though some did not want to continue to make selections for various reasons. No child asked why the task was being given. Only one child, during the second task, showed any concern about the answers given by another child.¹⁰ At no time did any child show concern that other children

would learn of the answers she/he gave. I do not know whether the children talked about their answers among themselves. I never observed any to mention the tasks to others.

There was a difference in the attitude of most children toward the teacher-task and the child-task, a difference that persisted regardless of the order in which the tasks were given. The children were generally uninterested in pretending to be the teacher. The lack of interest in the teacher preference task was not surprising as it had become apparent during the observations that the teacher did not generally show a significant preference for individual children, and had, for a variety of reasons, assumed a role that resulted in children not having much tension about her opinions. Consequently, the teacher-task was given only during the first session.

Occasionally, after a child had finished making her/his selections I made an observation about the choices which had been made and recorded any responses the child gave to my observation. Where my comments were the stimulus for a child's remark, as opposed to when comments were spontaneously offered by a child, it is noted in the analysis. Most often, primarily because of a lack of time or perceived interest on the part of the child, I did not comment on the choices after they were made, but simply dismissed the child and thanked her/him for performing the task.

No quantitative analysis was performed on the material collected and none would have been useful to the purpose of this study. Such an analysis would have been a different type of study than the

one made. I did use some simple arithmetic to consider some of the picture-selection task material, e.g., ten girls selected a certain boy in their top ten selections, but all such counting was considered in the context of the observations and was used to illustrate a point made through the observations rather than to make a point in itself. In fact, given the casual nature of the procedure, the loose structure of the questions, and the complex nature of the phenomena, a quantitative analysis would have been either meaningless or false in its meaning. Like the interview questions, the task selection must be considered as "soft" data, as conversation, in fact, and should not be thought of as representing any more objective type of material. It might even be argued that the most meaningful and useful part of the material was the spontaneous comments and body behavior of the children as they did the task.

The Concept of Typifications

During the period of analysis and writing some concepts from phenomenological sociology as primarily developed by Alfred Schutz (1970; Schutz & Luckmann, 1973) ^{became} ~~because~~ useful for understanding the meaning of the material collected and for organizing it for presentation. The most important of these concepts was that of typifications or typicality constructs. Schutz's concept of typification is a complex one and only a few of the more important points relevant and necessary for the present study will be briefly discussed here.

According to Schutz, an individual's common sense knowledge of the world is a system of constructs about its typicality, and the meaning a person gives to the world is constructed by referring to her/his current typifications, the totality of which constitutes her/his stock of knowledge at hand. Typifications are structured in consciousness through language, and language provides a vehicle so that complex phenomena can be apprehended simply and immediately in their typified, subjectively essential aspects. Whether in face-to-face interaction or in more anonymous social time and space, aspects of persons, objects, and situations are understood by reference to typicality constructs which are structured in an individual's current stock of knowledge and not by reference to the unique and complete phenomenon prior to typification. Typifications allow us to act in the world without continually reassessing all of our sense data and we develop recipes-for-acting which are apprehended as appropriate to situations. An individual comes to a situation with her/his current stock of knowledge and engages in the process of typifying various aspects of a situation while living it. The typifications in an individual's stock of knowledge, some of which are contradictory, which become relevant at a particular time depend upon the social context and her/his current projects and motives. Knowledge is always contextual and each of us has many sets of typifications of other types of people as well as typifications of the self. The determination of which specific typification will emerge depends upon what is understood to be relevant at that particular time in that

concrete setting. It is the immediate interests and projects one has which determines which aspects of a situation or person will be typified and brought to awareness and which aspects will be ignored. Another point is that there are reciprocal typifications among people. One is subject to the typifications another has of one and one tends to refer one's actions not only to one's idea about oneself but also to the ideas one imagines or knows that others have about one. A person's knowledge of the social world is inherently interactive and social and constructs about the meaning of the world are constructed in relation to and with others. Another characteristic of typifications, or elements within one's stock of knowledge at hand, is that they are changed only to the extent necessary to act in the world, changed only to the extent necessary to explain or act in problematic situations. Typifications are tenacious and because one's typicality constructs do not fit a particular situation one does not abandon them but merely modifies them to account for problematic aspects.

The material collected in this study has been organized by referring to some of the children's essential and core typifications about gender as they were structured in their language and which were the foundation for their acting as gendered persons in a gendered social world. They were the primary typifications about gender which children used in this concrete social setting. In another context, for instance, at home with their parents or under the close supervision of other adults, these typifications would, it is believed, remain as central ideas about gender but

would have been given different expression because, as stated before, the process of typifying is interactive, contextual, and reciprocal. This study will describe those typifications which children shared about gender which were most relevant to them as they lived in this context with 29 other children with little direct supervision or control by adults.

Some clarifying remarks need to be made before proceeding with the presentation of the material. First, the description of what the children knew about gender and what they did in relation to what they knew neither exhausts their knowledge nor their activities. The purpose here is to explicate the essential shared elements of knowledge and types of behavior children themselves connected to being of a gender, and not to describe how gendered persons behaved in general. Some children seemed more complex than others; some exhibited what I would call, in my natural attitude, depth of character; none seemed shallow. All approached their world with relatively complex motivation and a variety of projects, only some of which had to do directly with their knowledge about gender. Very little of their complexity will be evident from the analysis.

On the other hand, the reader should also keep in mind the phenomenological fact that these children did live in their world as gendered persons and that being of one gender and not the other was central to their experience. Similarly, children attributed gender to others in all instances of social contact. To my knowledge, no child ever acted in a situation without knowledge of the

other's gender. The one instance when a stranger's gender was ambiguous and attributing gender was problematic, the student, like the observer, seemed to want to know the other's gender. Gender was important because social meaning was mediated by reference to gender and, specifically, in reference to the essential elements of knowledge about gender which will be explicated here. As Kessler and McKenna (1978) said, "The attributor filters *all* of the actor's behaviors through the gender attribution that was made, and all the actor's behaviors are made sense of within that context" (p. 160). The reader should understand, then, that children approached each situation and each person while implicitly, if not explicitly, understanding gender as a relevant category.

Finally, with one exception, all the statements or phrases that are enclosed within quotation marks were statements or phrases made and used by one or more children. The exception is the phrase "everybody knows," a phrase used to suggest a sense of something being common knowledge rather than it necessarily being a literal fact. Statements enclosed within apostrophes indicate a general sense of individual or group meaning but do not signify statements actually made by participants.

Notes

1. The methodology to be described here is called, variously, the participant observation, participant-as-observer, field research, qualitative observation, and field observation. Participant observation is a term currently employed by many social scientists. It best suggests, I think, the phenomenological fact that the observer is part of the world at the same time she/he studies the world.
2. "A person who accepts the role of observer remains outside the ongoing interaction which constitutes the we-relationship on hand. . . . If the observer is a genuine observer, he remains detached, takes no sides, has no stake in the outcome of the ongoing interactive process. Thus, he must be considered objective by definition. Because for [Alfred] Schutz, the objective point of view is simply the point of view, the perspective, of the uninvolved observer." (Wagner, 1970, p. 35)
3. As Henning (1976) points out, it is when utilizing her/his own experience as a source of data that the participant observer is methodologically closest to phenomenologists and phenomenological sociologists.
4. For a sample of such research, as well as a guide to doing qualitative research, see Lofland (1971).
5. For examples of the use of participant observation methodology within school settings see Eddy (1967, 1969), Jackson (1968), Henry (1966), and Cadmus (1974).
6. I stopped what was playful rock throwing, at one another, by some boys. I intervened when Wanda and Myra had Shelley on top of the jungle gym, terrified because the two girls were sadistically rocking the structure back and forth and threatening to topple it over with Shelley on it. After a few minutes of Shelley's terror, and the two girls' pleasure, I chose to end the event, though it was clear that Wanda and Myra were making threats without the intentions of following through.
7. After the first two days of observation, I observed children to actively seek privacy from me only once, when Michael and Shawn were fighting with Nancy. Later the two boys were expressing their hostility in a conversation. Shawn started suggesting that Nancy had a sexual relationship of a violent nature with her father, who sometimes came to class to observe. When Michael noticed that I was listening, he became embarrassed and cautioned Shawn to hide the sexual drawing he was making.

Most conversations about nonromantic sex also tended to include a touch of violence. Violence without sex was never hidden from me. Of the girls, only Wanda linked sex and violence.

8. I did not fully appreciate the difference between observing adults and children until the night of the Open House. Before the holiday recess the elementary school had an Open House to which parents were invited. In the classroom itself I was cordial and assumed the role of helper to the teacher. I suspended my role as researcher observer, at least to the extent of taking notes. I had decided that it would be impolite of me to take notes around parents and impolite to observe closely without participating, even though the children were there too. I lost this correct insight, however, during the program in the gym. Before I became aware of what I was doing I had assumed the role of observer in the way I was accustomed to doing at the school with the children. A conversation between several parents from another class, who were standing at the gym entrance waiting for the program to begin, caught my attention. I unconsciously sidled up and leaned into the group, obviously listening to their private conversation. When they stopped talking I became aware of the silence. When I looked up, I saw them observing me. Red-faced and with a shrug of my shoulders, I immediately moved away from that group, leaving for another, far away spot. I learned what I already knew. That one cannot treat questions of privacy the same way for adults as one does for their children. I had become so accustomed to taking liberties with the privacy of their children within that social setting I unthinkingly took liberties with parents.

For a discussion of some of the potential similar problems and issues when observing adults, see Lofland (1971).

9. I would recommend that a researcher use a *reliable* tape recorder for interviews. Much color and fullness were lost by my not recording all of the interviews. The one time I tried to use a recorder, however, the tape became scrambled and I lost the entire interview with no chance to get another. It made me gun-shy; thereafter, I depended on written notes.
10. Jimmy was concerned about the answers given by another child and was well aware of the significance and meaning of the answers given for the friendship selection task. The event was relevant to gender and is discussed in the text of the analysis.
11. Some of the comments children gave on the teacher picture-selection tasks did reveal something of what children knew about gender and something about what they knew of the teacher's preferences as a gendered person. Some of these comments are discussed within the text.

CHAPTER IV THE SOCIAL SETTING

The purposes of this chapter are to provide more detailed information on the nature of the social setting including information about the school, demographic information about the students and their parents, and the way the teacher organized the classroom and the students' time. A rather detailed description of how the teacher organized classroom activities and time and approached her task as teacher is provided so that the reader may understand to what extent, and why, the children were able to construct a child-defined social system.

General Information

The school selected for this study is a laboratory school affiliated with a large state university in north central Florida. The school has all grades from kindergarten to 12th, but the elementary school students and the high school students are physically separated from one another and have very little contact.

The school, founded in 1934, was once located on the main campus of the university, but since 1958 has been located close to the university on a well kept spacious site of 34 acres. There are several buildings rather than a single structure. The buildings are relatively modern one-story buildings of the kind where the passageways are open to the outside on one side. The elementary

school classrooms are large and are distinguished by large glass windows and sliding glass doors which open out to a small covered patio area with a concrete floor and a small playground enclosed by a brick wall about three feet high. The small playgrounds are shared by two adjoining classes. Beyond the enclosed playground is a large play area which separates buildings and opens out to quite a large play space used in common by the classes which border it. There are many windows in the school, which provide a feeling of openness and spaciousness. As one looks out the windows one sees trees, plants, shrubs, and, most unusual, a small creek that flows through the school, and divides the elementary section from the high school section. One day a small alligator was seen in the creek, or so the children said. It's a beautiful school.

Unlike public schools children are not assigned to this school, but parents must instead apply for their admission. Because of the generally high academic reputation of the school and the reputation of the faculty, as well as because of its connection to the university, many parents in the community and in adjoining small towns want their children to attend the school. For some parents, but not others, the school's perceived progressive or liberal philosophy of education provides a special incentive. For some the reputation that the faculty has for respecting the dignity and integrity of children is paramount. As one mother told her child who was crying and afraid because he was late to school, "You don't have to be afraid in this school; you know *this* school is not like that." The reputation that the school had about

respecting children was deserved, as I discovered¹ after hours of observation. Because of the various appeals, the school has a long waiting list, especially for some categories of applicants such as children whose parents are white, from the middle and upper socioeconomic groups, or who are connected in a professional way to the university. In any category and for every child admission requires some effort on the part of a parent.

The extra effort suggests that the parents of these children, especially those from lower socioeconomic groups who were least likely to be familiar with the school, were more actively involved, if not interested, in the schooling of their children than a typical parent of a child in a public school.² This inference was supported by some observations. It was not unusual for parents to come to the class to assist the teacher or, more commonly, to observe. Mothers and fathers came to the school.

The event that made me aware of the high level of parental involvement, though it was not necessarily the most significant indicator of involvement, was the Open House and program held prior to the holiday recess in December. The place was packed. At least one parent of every child in the class I observed came to the program, and both parents of most children came indicating that it was not just a matter of having to come because the children were in the program and must be driven. The gymnasium, where the program was held, was filled to overflowing with the families of the elementary school children. Parents stood in the halls of the gym and sat on the gym floor after the bleachers were filled.

This and other events confirmed an opinion that these children for the most part had parents or others who not only loved them but were actively and intimately involved with them.³

At one time in its history the school was racially segregated and admitted only white children, and students were primarily drawn from the children of university faculty and administration. Since 1971, freed from the restrictions imposed by state law and custom by a Federal court order, the school has actively recruited blacks, though they too must apply, so that the number of black children is proportional to the number of blacks in the community. The school also tries to diversify the social and economic composition of its population by selecting children from lower socioeconomic strata and by limiting the proportion of children of faculty. It has only been moderately successful at its attempt to diversify. The following charts show the race, sex, occupation, and amount of schooling of parents of children who were observed.

The university was well represented. According to the information submitted by the parents, seven of the children in this class had fathers who had the Ph.D., six of whom were associated with the university. Two of the six had mothers who taught at the university, presumably with master's degrees or higher. Eight children had parents who were full- or part-time students at the university at the time of the study. Of these eight children with student parents, six had a parent who was a graduate student, two, undergraduates. Of the six graduate student parents three were

GENERAL INFORMATION ON KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

Name	Race	Mother's Occupation*	Father's Occupation*
Bart	White	Elementary School Teacher	Graduate Student. Employed part time
Ben	White	Homemaker	Associate Professor
Betty**	White	Homemaker	Graduate Student. Received the Ph.D. mid year
Brenda	White	Housewife, works part time in family business	Self-employed Small Businessman
Eldon	White	Unknown	Graduate Student
George	White	Homemaker and makes jewelry to sell	Graduate Student
Henry	Black	Secretary at university	Undergraduate Student
Jackie	White	Housewife	Social Service Worker
Janie	White	Secretary	Professor
Jimmy	White	Graduate Student, works part time	Part-time Graduate Student and Lab Technician
Kara	White	Clerk in retail recycling store	Medical Student
Marian	Black	Director of day care center	Chemistry Teacher (divorced, lives out of state)
Pierre	Black	Graduate Student	Policeman
Ralph	Black	Unknown	Sales and Service (divorced, child with mother)
			It appeared that his mother and father did not live together, and he lived with his mother.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS--Continued

Rayette	Female	Black	Unknown	Information unavailable
Sara***	Female	White	Housewife	Clinical Psychologist

*Occupation of parents as listed by parent, usually the mother, on the Information Sheet submitted by the teacher or through observer inquiry.

**Left the school at mid year.

***Entered mid year.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON FIRST-GRADE STUDENTS

Name	Sex	Race	Mother's Occupation*	Father's Occupation*
Anne	Female	Black	Secretary	Salesman with large corporation. Formerly with School Board
Bradson	Male	White	Homemaker, former Elementary Teacher	Professor, University Administrator
Glenn	Male	White	Homemaker	Professor
Julia	Female	White	Deceased. Father remar- ried mid year. Housewife	Baker at health food store
Karen	Female	White	Homemaker	Well driller
Katie	Female	White	Secretary at university	Parents divorced, child with mother
Michael	Male	White	University Instructor	Professor
Myra	Female	White	Assistant Professor	Professor
Nancy	Female	White	Part-time Graduate Student, formerly Elementary Teacher	Graduate Student. Employed part time in laboratory
Shawn	Male	White	Secretary	Electrician, seeking to open his own business
Shelley	Female	White	Waitress	Unknown. Child lives with mother and male companion
Timmy	Male	White	Office Manager	Unknown. Parents divorced, child lives with mother
Victoria	Female	Black	Music Teacher, Elementary School	Elementary School Principal
Vincent	Male	White	Registered Nurse	Plumber

GENERAL INFORMATION ON FIRST-GRADE STUDENTS--Continued

Name	Sex	Race	Mother's Occupation*	Father's Occupation*
Wanda	Female	Black	Unknown	Unknown. Child lives with grandmother

*Occupation of parents as listed by parent, usually the mother, on the Information Sheet submitted by the teacher or through observer inquiry.

studying for the Ph.D. One received it during the period of the study. Of the three children who had a parent studying for the master's degree, one also had a father who was a medical student at the university.

Other of the children had parents who were college graduates. At least two more children had parents who had done some graduate work at the university.

On the cards submitted to the parents by the teacher, from which some of this information was gathered, parents listed occupations of skilled workers such as electrician and plumber and service occupations such as policeman and waitress. But the occupations listed by the parents did not necessarily always reveal the entire story. The waitress, delivery man, and retail clothing clerk had all attended the university or other colleges, but had chosen to participate in what was described by some writers as the counter-culture, by some citizens as the "hippies," which had developed in the community largely in relation to the university. Consequently, while it appeared to the school administration that they were accepting applicants from the lower level service type occupations and therefore assuring social and economic diversity of the school population, the reality, at least in this particular class, was in essential ways otherwise.

Considering the black families separately, the educational level of the black parents was similarly high and was not representative of the larger black community. Of the seven black children five had at least one parent who was a college graduate.

Of the five at least three had a parent who had a master's degree and of the three, one had a parent who had, prior to the time of this study, worked for the Ph.D. and who had been the first black person to be elected President of the Student Body at the university.

As a group fathers were more schooled than mothers. It was sometimes difficult to ascertain the level of schooling achieved by mothers, though they were typically the ones who had filled out the cards for the teacher. The card asked for occupation rather than education so that mothers would put down "housewife" or homemaker" or no answer at all if not currently employed, whatever their previous employment or level of education. For inexplicable reasons two women who were teachers at the university did not list that as an occupation, perhaps because both worked part time or because both had husbands with the Ph.D. who also taught at the university. From the information available all of the fathers who lived with their children were either employed outside the home or were students or both. Of the mothers, all but seven were employed outside the home. In the case of the seven children whose parents were divorced, or for other reasons both were not living in the same household with the children, every mother worked, and the children lived with their mothers or other female relatives. The parents of two more children separated during the period of this study. Those two children also lived in the same household as their mothers. In most cases of divorce or separation it appeared that the father maintained relatively close

contact with his child. One widower remarried during the period of the study.

As in most elementary schools there were more women personnel than men. Of the 11 classroom teachers in the elementary school nine were women; the elementary art and music teachers were women; one of the physical education teachers was a man, the other a woman. Most of the additional personnel with whom these children had contact--librarians, the school nurse, reading specialists, lunchroom attendants, food servers, and the guidance counselor--were women. For the first time in the history of the school the principal was a woman. All of the practicum students and practicing teachers from the university who worked in the class observed were women.

The Teacher

The teacher selected for this study, referred to here as Mrs. Cowan, was one of three teachers who taught self-contained combination kindergarten-first grade classes at the school. My selection of Mrs. Cowan instead of one of the other two women teachers is somewhat embarrassingly revealing of an unscientific bias possessed at the beginning of the study. I had wanted to observe a teacher who fit a vague image I had of a typical teacher, a teacher who would provide me with lots of material about what it was that "teachers were doing to girls and boys to produce stereotypical gender-related behavior." My perspective was implicitly based on the concept of socialization, that children weren't active

participants in creating their reality but merely followed the lead of adults. Based on largely unexplicated assumptions and typified elements of knowledge, I chose Mrs. Cowan from among the three available teachers. One of the teachers had been described to me by my informant who worked at the school as "a young white teacher who is really into research about sex roles." I certainly did not want to observe a teacher who was "really into research about sex roles." Where would I get my interesting anecdotes about teachers imposing traditional gender roles on children? The other teacher who was not chosen was described by the same informant as "an older, middle-aged black woman." "Black woman" was not part of my picture of typical teacher and, in any event, added the possibly complicating dimension of race that I wanted to avoid. Typical teacher was the third teacher described: "white, middle aged. Appears to be somewhat conservative in dress." Yes. That was the teacher I wanted.

Despite the bias inherent in my choice of the teacher, I was fortunate and the research benefited from the choice. Because of Mrs. Cowan's approach which, as might have been expected, did not fit my expectations of a white, middle-aged teacher who dressed conservatively, I was able to observe 30 children who were relatively unrestricted. And certainly they were not restricted in the ubiquitous, numerous, and sometimes petty ways that were characteristic of many of the classroom teachers I had previously observed. In short, I was able to observe children in a natural

setting as they constructed and interpreted social reality without excessive or significant adult intervention.

Mrs. Cowan had a well articulated theory of education and thought of herself as a professional. She had an advanced degree in early childhood education, occasionally attended conventions and workshops on teaching and child development, and was familiar with much of the research as well as many of the current issues in the field. She described her theory of education as "what used to be called Progressive." When I remarked how she consistently used an individualized and open approach with all its difficulties in a class of 30 she laughingly replied, "You know, 'keeping the faith of Progressive education'." She described herself as having "a lot of experience" as a teacher. At one time she taught at the college level, but for the last ten years has taught preschool, kindergarten, and first-grade children. She said she preferred preschool because "that's where you really have a chance to make an impact."

In her judgement the practice of combining kindergarten children and first-grade children in one class was ill founded. "The fives⁴ need a year of their own because they are in a different developmental stage than the sixes and should not be encouraged--and certainly not made--to do much cognitive work." She believed that the "fives need this time to practice their social relationships, to learn to live in groups, and to develop their play skills."

She knew that everyone did not agree and was very aware of the increasing pressure to emphasize academic work at all levels and ages in the elementary school. She disapproved of the increase for the sixes and even more for the fives but has adjusted. "So I use more time for formal skills than I really like to." She understood the change in emphasis to be the result of parental pressure, ruefully adding, "Some people want their children to start reading at four."⁵

Mrs. Cowan strongly disapproved of the large class size. When she had taught several years ago in another school each teacher had a group of 15 students--"about the right size"--and the increase to 30 with only one adult regularly present made it "almost impossible to teach effectively." She complained that the classes at the laboratory school were larger than those at public schools.

Last year Mrs. Cowan did not teach but "took a rest." When she returned on the morning of the first day of school she expressed some feelings of anxiety about teaching this year, particularly regarding parental demands and expectations. She said that she felt "rusty." Later in the year she said that she had "settled down" and was feeling more secure about teaching again. Then at the end of the year she told me she had decided to retire from teaching. She seemed relieved about the decision.

Consistent with her judgement that children of five and six need an opportunity to develop social skills and to learn to live in groups with other children, most of the time during the school day was left relatively unstructured. Only three times during the

day, for approximately one and one-half hours, not including special classes like physical education, library, or music, were there activities scheduled by the teacher where she was the center of attention: during "Group," "Get Ready for Lunch Time," and "Story Time." At these times children were required to sit on the rug facing the teacher, who sat on a chair, were expected to be relatively still, to be quiet, and if possible, to pay attention. As she often said to those children she knew to have short attention spans, especially some of the kindergarten boys, "You don't have to listen, but you do have to be quiet and sit still so that others may hear."

"Group" took place in the morning at the beginning of the school day and, as the name suggests, was in part a ritualized activity to affirm and create a sense of community. General announcements were made by the teacher, the day's schedule of activities and topic for study were discussed by the teacher, children who were absent were welcomed back, absent children were noted, and other clerical chores were completed. During Group children showed and shared those objects they had brought to school. Occasionally one would talk about an experience that she/he considered interesting. Sometimes Mrs. Cowan encouraged these talks and sometimes, for the sake of time, she limited them. During Group Mrs. Cowan taught a lesson to the entire group. The lesson might be one that continued over several days or might only take one day with a new lesson or topic the next day. A variety of topics was introduced, such as health, family structure, and

science. The teacher would teach the short lesson and then proceed by asking the children specific questions. Usually the questions were intended to develop reasoning skills, as well as to focus on specific content, and required a relatively high level of reasoning ability to answer. The more articulate, verbally aggressive, and intellectually mature children would usually respond, and little effort was made by the teacher to actively engage other students. Boys were, as a group, much more active about answering questions than girls. It seemed that they were less shy in a group context.

After Group was over children would begin to work on academic tasks assigned by the teacher during a period of time called "Work Time," which lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour and 15 minutes. At this time children were expected to sit at what the teacher called "work tables," at desks for four or more children, and were corrected if they went to the housekeeping area or to the art table to work. "This is Work Time not Choose Time. You can't do your work in the housekeeping area." During Work Time children could talk freely to one another and were corrected or admonished only when the teacher felt that they were getting out of hand and disturbing her or others, as she worked with individual students. When they completed the assigned tasks, or, in the case of students who seldom completed the task because they were too immature, students were allowed to choose another activity of their choice inside the classroom or outside in the patio

area of the Small Playground. All during Work Time, then, children were talking and playing with one another.

After Work Time was "Choose Time." During Choose Time the children could choose an activity inside the classroom or in the covered patio outside. They might read, do art or crafts at the art table, play with blocks, play in the housekeeping area, play dolls, or do whatever they chose within the specified boundaries, as long as they were moderately quiet and did not disturb the teacher, who was usually working with a single student on some academic task. Choose Time overlapped with Work Time and so was of an indefinite period. Everyone, however, was free to choose for about 15 or 20 minutes.

"Small Playground Time" followed Choose Time. During Small Playground Time children were required to go out into the small playground which adjoined the classroom and was bounded by a low brick wall. There they could play with water, make mud, play on the jungle gym, or the small fiberglass dome, do art or crafts in the concrete area, walk on the brick wall, play chase with one another, yell, talk, "play wrestle" or even have a "real fight," find insects which they sometimes tortured, perhaps inadvertently, and generally do whatever they wished within the bounds of safety or near safety. This was the time the teacher took a short break, and for some reason the teacher aide, Mr. Row, was reticent about correcting the children except when it came to safety. Perhaps he took his cue from the teacher, or being an introverted type, did not feel inclined to intervene. He and I would

sometimes stand and watch as children quarreled and even fought without intervening.

About 15 minutes before the class was scheduled to go to the cafeteria Mrs. Cowan would announce that it was "Get Ready for Lunch Time," the second time during the day that she became the center of classroom activities. During this time the children gathered around the teacher's chair to receive their lunch tickets and generally prepare for lunch. Part of the preparation occasionally included her correcting previous lunchroom behavior, but mostly this time just involved clerical chores. At the end of this time the children, accompanied by the teacher, would walk to the cafeteria. At the cafeteria they were assigned six tables. They could sit wherever and with whomever they wanted at the six tables and were allowed to talk. During lunch the teacher, who waited until all the children were seated, ate her lunch with them at whatever seat was available. After lunch she would oversee the clean-up of the tables with the help of sometimes unenthusiastic students, while the main body of children left to wait on the patio outside the cafeteria and outside her immediate supervision.

For many of the children the favorite time of day followed the lunch period. At this time they went outside to play on the large playground and were free to be as active as they chose, though there was a strictly enforced rule that they not go down by the creek without adult supervision. This time, called by the teacher "Large Playground Time," lasted anywhere from 20 minutes, the usual time, to 40 minutes. The teacher would take a small

break during this period and then would either observe the children at play or, more commonly, observe them for a while and then prepare for the next "Work Time" in the afternoon. After mid-year the children were generally left in my passive supervision.

After Large Playground Time the children were called in and after getting drinks and going to the classroom toilets, which they were allowed to go to anytime they needed to without asking, and then they settled down in a large group for "Story Time," the final time of the day that attention centered on the teacher and that she worked with the entire group at one time. Story Time lasted anywhere from 20 to 30 minutes and everyone was expected to be quiet. Mrs. Cowan did not encourage or generally respond to attempts of children to discuss the stories.

After lunch and Story Time there was another combination Work Time, to finish tasks which had not been completed earlier, and Choose Time. As in the earlier period the teacher worked closely with individual students on academic tasks and did not supervise the other children closely. As at other choose periods some children stuck to one project, some wandered from area to area and group to group, a couple girls sometimes read books of their own, one or two children would just seem to be observing what others were doing. At the end of this time the teacher announced that it was "Clean Up Time" and "Get Ready to Go Home Time" and as the children straightened up the room under the supervision of the teacher they talked with one another, sometimes in the playful, fantastical way that characterized much of

their interaction. Clean Up Time and Get Ready to Go Home Time were just a continuation of the relatively free interaction children had had all day.

One can see that these children were free from direct, close adult supervision much of the day and this freedom was a factor in the type of social structure that they were able to create. It was partly because of the large amount of unstructured time that the most important social system that emerged in the classroom was the one that was created by the children themselves with little or no significant consideration of the immediate opinions or definitions of adults.

The amount of time children were given to choose their own projects and to play without close adult supervision seemed largely to be the result of Mrs. Cowan's theoretical orientation and her commitment to individualized instruction, even in the unhappy circumstances of a combined kindergarten-first grade class of 30 young children.

Another factor that was important in determining the nature of the social structure that eventually was constructed by the children was her response to children's aggression, a response that seemed to be an uneasy alliance between her theory of education and child development and the fact that she was, by her own admission, "still quite tired."

Use of physical force by children against one another was a ubiquitous part of life in the classroom. Though the strongest force was used outside in the playgrounds it was not unusual for

children to hit, wrestle, twist arms, poke, kick, and threaten inside the classroom itself. Sometimes Mrs. Cowan was made aware of the aggression either because of the commotion or because someone told her. She considered such activity disruptive and inappropriate for the confines of the classroom. It is instructive to note that her response to aggression or fighting was not significantly different than her response to playfulness inside the class, such as running. All activity of that sort was considered to be a disruption and a distraction to the teacher.

It must be remembered that Mrs. Cowan was almost constantly involved in teaching students individually, usually while sitting in a child-size chair with the student sitting beside her. She was highly skilled at diagnosing students' learning problems and had a highly developed theoretical stock of knowledge from which to respond to help a child academically. The process of individual instruction was an intense, concentrated, and, so far as I could assess, an effective one. Consequently, when something interrupted that process and disrupted the teaching and learning the teacher's conception of what had happened was largely undifferentiated and she was not aware of what had preceded a situation by the time she was made aware of it. Getting up and investigating the matter in detail would have fully disrupted her teaching of academic material and would have been more tiring and frustrating. Consequently, she responded to her sense of being disrupted rather than to the content of the disruption. She did not usually distinguish between an aggressor and an unwilling participant and

did not inquire about the motives of either. The following event illustrates.

v Day 7. It is Work Time. Mrs. Cowan is in the front of the room with Betty, who is reading from a book aloud. Henry is sitting on the piano bench looking at a book and occasionally talking to the children who are playing in the adjoining housekeeping area. Shawn, who has been roaming around the room, shoves Henry off the bench onto the floor. Henry, startled and crying, says in his uniquely loud voice, "Stop, Shawn!"

Shawn replied, "Shut up, Henry. I want to play the piano." He began to bang on the piano.

Mrs. Cowan, hearing the noise, looks up and seeing the two at the piano and Henry crying says harshly, "I won't have that in the classroom. It's Work Time not Choose Time. Henry, have you finished your work?"

Still crying, Henry walked to his cubby, and Shawn started roaming about the classroom again.

Mrs. Cowan believed that one of the developmental tasks that children of this age had to learn was how to live in groups with one another and to develop social skills that allowed them to live in groups. Her habitualized response to behavior she variously typified as "bothering me with tales," "tattling," and "bringing stories to me" reflected this belief, as well as reflecting the irritation she felt when interrupted by children when trying to instruct other children in academic skills.

Attempts by children to "tell on" one another were greeted by annoyance, irritation and, most usually, a harsh reprimand to the child who was doing the telling. The teacher usually responded with variations of the theme "You have to learn to get

along." Two events from the field notes illustrate when and how the idea of "getting along" was evoked.

Day 5. Jimmy and Shelley are walking toward the blocks. Shelley accidentally and very lightly bumps into Jimmy. Jimmy goes to Mrs. Cowan, who was teaching another child, and whines, "Shelley bumped into me."

Mrs. Cowan, without asking what had happened, answers with annoyance, "Jimmy, don't bother me. You'll have to learn to get along."

Day 10. Bart and Eldon are playfully wrestling on the ground outside. Shawn walks by, watches for a moment, and then kicks Eldon in his back and around his shoulders quite hard. Eldon, sobbing, goes to Mrs. Cowan and begins, "Shawn"

Before Eldon can finish the sentence she says, "Eldon, don't come to me with tales. If you can't get along then don't play."

The intensity of aggression was not an issue for Mrs. Cowan. She responded in about the same way when a child was lightly and accidentally bumped as when one was kicked in the head, an undifferentiated response that came easy as she rarely heard the details and never sought them out. Nor was justice or injustice at issue for her. She did not try to adjudicate disagreements and conflict between children, but tried to get them to deal with the aggression of their peers without relying on her involvement. "Telling," "tattling," and "carrying tales" were discouraged in a variety of ways, including blaming the teller ("If you'd been doing your work it would not have happened"), and by blaming everyone equally ("Both of you are supposed to be doing your work now!"), or by simply ignoring a tale-carrying child.

Sometimes Mrs. Cowan was, or seemed to be, witness to acts of aggression. There were a number of responses typical of such times. Sometimes she appeared to be oblivious to the interaction, as though the children were invisible or as if she saw but did not understand what was happening. At other times she would criticize both parties by giving a general command such as "Stop that!" Occasionally she would single out the aggressor and command her/him to stop, or would rather severely comment with a remark such as, "You're not supposed to *play* in the classroom like that." In a sense such a remark was a denial of the reality and seriousness of the event for the children, neither of whom experienced the act as playful. At other times the teacher was more direct in denying what the event meant to children. Consider:

Day 13. Mrs. Cowan is at the art cabinet, which is above the water fountain where Pierre and Ben are waiting in line to get a drink. When it is Ben's turn, Pierre pushes him out of line and proceeds to drink himself.

It appeared as though Mrs. Cowan had seen what had happened. When Ben complained to her, "Pierre pushed me," she answered, "He didn't mean to. Why don't you find a place to sit for art?"

Pierre's aggression, which he and Ben knew was purposeful, was publicly defined by the teacher as accidental and therefore as something that should be ignored.

From private conversations with Mrs. Cowan at the end of the year it was clear that she generally understood which children were aggressive.⁶ But she did not make such distinctions between children publicly, for instance by criticizing an aggressor, so

that the students would know that she knew. Instead she referred to the idea of "learning to get along" a maxim she felt to be a necessary condition in a situation of 30 children with one responsible adult.

What meanings did the children draw from the teacher's response to aggression? Did they think that the teacher approved of aggression? Was ignorant of what behavior meant, ignorant of socially shared meanings? I tend to think that they basically understood her behavior as I understood it at one level. The teacher was too busy and involved with the demands of teaching to deal in detail or intervene in the social interaction of the children with one another. The idea that adults did not want children to constantly come to them with complaints about other children must have been a familiar one to them despite contrary admonitions such as, "If someone hits you don't hit them back, but tell the teacher." In addition the role of teacher was typified by all the children as a role-type who disapproved of children fighting in school and the role-type retained its power aside from the actions of this specific teacher. The children retained some respect for the threat to tell the teacher because of the role-type and because of the rare times that Mrs. Cowan did respond to telling by harshly criticizing the aggressor. Basically, however, what the teacher's behavior meant to the children was that threats to tell were without significance. Consider:

Day 42. Several children are at the art table. Several boys have joined to keep the girls from using the crayons. Janie appeals to me to "make them share the crayons." I said nothing but continued to observe impassively. The situation intensified until Shawn had wrenched the last crayon from Janie.

Janie threatens, "I'm gonna tell the teacher!" and walks to where Mrs. Cowan is sitting on the other side of the room.

Timmy looks worried and guilty and Eldon, seeing Timmy's expression, says, "Don't worry."

In a moment Janie comes back to the table, obviously unsuccessful in her attempt to recruit the teacher to her cause. Eldon smiles at Timmy, "See, I told you. We won."

Exaggerated by the lack of restrictions on the use of aggression as well as the lack of immediate, as compared to internalized, adult definitions about the meaning of aggression, the children relied upon their own meanings to interpret and construct their social world, a world which was characterized by the relatively uninhibited use of aggression by some children, a world which was then apprehended as the way things inevitably were and which through collective behavior enforced its own definitions of reality. As shall be seen, the meanings used by the children, whatever their position and status in the social structure, had to do with gender.

In addition to freedom from direct supervision and the lack of restrictions and sanctions on aggression, a third factor contributed to the development of a social world in which the children referred almost exclusively to their own meanings rather than to those of adults who were present to construct their reality. This

factor had to do with the relatively relaxed emotional climate encouraged by the teacher by specific patterns of behavior which resulted in children referencing themselves to one another to determine and achieve value and status rather than to the teacher. The teacher achieved this end by not exercising her power to evaluate children publicly by the use of criticism, humiliation, invidious comparisons between children and the use of rewards and symbols. Because she occupied the role of teacher and because she was an adult, the children continued to see her as the most powerful person in the class because she was potentially powerful. But in their day-to-day behavior children looked to one another and to themselves as the locus of evaluation.⁷

Children were criticized by Mrs. Cowan, but the criticism was always related to a specific behavior and was given immediately following the transgression. Criticism was never used as a weapon to establish a case against a child for some future time, and the teacher's annoyance and anger were bounded within the time limits of the event itself. Mrs. Cowan also accepted expressions of negative feelings from children toward her and her demands at the same time she insisted upon certain rules being observed. Critical comments by her were often followed by implicit acknowledgment that behavior was capable of being changed and that the student was accepted though the behavior was not. The following example illustrates:

Day 22. During Group Shawn is talking and pinching Bart while Nancy is showing the group her shells. Mrs. Cowan says, "Shawn, you don't have to listen, but you do have to be quiet so we may listen." Shawn stops talking for a few moments, but soon starts pinching and disturbing Bart again. Mrs. Cowan says, "Leave the group until you can learn to sit quietly." She says this very softly and gently. Shawn leaves the group and goes and sits in another part of the room.

After five minutes, Mrs. Cowan says, "Shawn, didn't you have a rock you wanted to show?"

Shawn is sullen, his feelings are hurt, and he says, "No, I don't want to."

Mrs. Cowan answers, "Well, you're welcome to rejoin the group and share your rock."

Shawn says, "No thank you."

Mrs. Cowan says nothing more to him and the class continues.

Mrs. Cowan directed her criticism to Shawn's behavior not to him. She invited him back, and when he haughtily refused she did not interpret the response as a challenge to her authority as teacher and demand that he come back but instead invited him again. When he again refused she left him alone. Though at other times and on other issues she was annoyed and insistent, this event was typical of her approach. Even when she was annoyed and raised her voice her annoyance was short-lived. At no time did I observe Mrs. Cowan to intentionally ridicule or humiliate a child. She acknowledged their right to have and express their own opinions and feelings.

Mrs. Cowan believed in the uniqueness of individual development and she consistently and easily acted upon that belief in day-to-day classroom life. Academic instruction was given

privately and quietly and basically in an affirming way. The only time a child typically heard comments made to another child about academic work was when standing close by or when a child loudly protested having to do work over and so created a larger audience. Nor did the teacher show a preference for those children in the class who were academically advanced indirectly. Henry, perhaps the least academically skilled of the students, was also the most criticized but not on the basis of his lack of skills. He was criticized because of his voice. Henry had the loudest voice I had ever heard from a young child and he cheerfully and impulsively made unexpected contributions which elicited, "Henry! You musn't shout out like that!" Other teachers commented on Henry's voice, "That Henry. Wow." My opinion about the teacher's critical response to Henry's shouting was that it constituted self-defense. Henry remained undaunted by the temporary criticism.

Like the students, I had no way of determining who was a "good student" academically by observing the teacher's public responses to students. The lack of public evaluation became clear to me when, during the fourth week of school, I realized that I had no idea about who could read, who was an advanced reader, and who was skilled in other ways except for those few students whom I had actually observed in the process of reading or working in their notebooks. I had not even been motivated to discover, until I became aware that I did not know, which students were academically skilled⁸ because of the lack of anxiety, excepting individual instances, about having such skills and the small role perception

of academic ability played in the creation of the social structure by the students.⁹

The power that the teacher had intentionally relinquished was made more apparent one day during Group when Mrs. Cowan called on students who had not volunteered for answers to specific questions that required knowledge of the alphabet and phonetics. Both her calling on specific students and the specificity of the knowledge required were unusual. From the highly anxious, embarrassed responses of those children who could not answer the questions and the disparaging, hateful remarks of a couple of the others toward the nonanswerers, it was obvious that had the teacher chosen to exercise public evaluative powers the impact on the social system, not to mention the impact on individuals, would have been tremendous.

Mrs. Cowan did not introduce a competitive academic or social model nor did she countenance such comparisons or rankings by students. When children tried to enlist her to affirm them in their competitive efforts her responses to them were immediate and consistent.

Day 1. Shawn shows his math work to the teacher with the comment, "I did it better than Michael."

Mrs. Cowan answers, "So. Who wants to hear about that."

Day 1. Eldon says, "See Mrs. Cowan. I'm all finished, and Bart is only half done."

Mrs. Cowan irritably replies, "Eldon, *I don't care about that!* It doesn't matter who finishes first."

Day 2. Glenn tells the teacher proudly, "I'm the first one finished. I beat them."

Mrs. Cowan responds irritably, "It's not important who finishes first."

Day 3. Bart says, "Mine is nicer than Katie's."

Mrs. Cowan answers, "So! I'm tired of hearing things like that!"

By the second week of school children had learned that the teacher would respond with quick disapproval to their attempts to be praised by their making invidious comparisons with the efforts of others. After the second week I observed no more instances of such attempts by children, though they continued to make comparisons among themselves at about the same rate, perhaps slightly lower.

Mrs. Cowan had goals for the students, none of which had to do with centering their attention upon her so as to gratify herself. She encouraged them to be independent of her and depend upon themselves, sometimes with results she would not have predicted and of which she was not aware. In some ways she was a perceptive, intelligent observer who was able to understand the way children understood the world because she was willing to observe before acting as well as to respect their projects and priorities and hold hers in abeyance. A typical, minor example: Wanda, a first-grade girl who alienated children for a number of reasons, was playing with a group of girls when her time came to be instructed. Mrs. Cowan approached the group, but after quietly

observing casually remarked to me, "I was going to call her to read, but she needs a friend right now more than she needs to practice reading." Without disturbing the girls she left to find another student, saying that she would take Wanda later.

The teacher defined the reality of the classroom in broad ways, but the children defined the particulars because they had more significant contact with one another than with the teacher. Because of the amount of unstructured time, her response to aggressiveness, and her not making herself the central and most significant locus of evaluation and thus the center of power, her impact upon the life-world of the children was minimal. However much the general organization she created influenced the social relations of children in ways which were related to gender, her specific behaviors and attitudes, which reflected what she knew about gender, were of little importance.

The reader may be critical of the teacher and the conditions she created or allowed to exist in the classroom, possibly believing, as some parents and other school personnel believed, that she did not retain sufficient control over the students and left them too much room to act without her supervision. At different times parents approached me to talk about "what was going on in the classroom" or what my opinion was of the teacher. Some parents were concerned, some casual. Certain faculty members who taught the children special subjects also made remarks to me which indicated a dissatisfaction with Mrs. Cowan. They were particularly concerned that she did not follow through on matters of discipline

and order. For instance, one day when one of the special subjects teachers was trying to organize the group for an exercise that required that they listen closely and follow directions, she confidentially said, "This class is the worst one we have in terms of following directions. It's hard to get them to follow directions here when they don't have to in their classroom." An informant who worked at the school confided to me that she had been told by an older faculty member sympathetic to Mrs. Cowan, ". . . she's not the teacher she used to be. She was a wonderful teacher before, but. . . ." and then would conjecture as to why her teaching had changed. Mrs. Cowan also made remarks to me intimating that she had been criticized by school personnel about maintaining order. She felt such criticisms were basically a disagreement about what were appropriate expectations for children of five and six.¹⁰

When feasible I listened to remarks by parents, other teachers, informants, and Mrs. Cowan without comment, feeling it entirely inappropriate to play the role of informer or advocate. On the other hand, I understood their concern. Mrs. Cowan did not do some things I would have had her do both in terms of general education and gender education. At the same time I knew that I had learned much that I needed to know about teaching and living with children from observing Mrs. Cowan. On issues of freedom, respect for children's reality, and related issues she was a fine model. It was clear to me that there were no major, or even minor negative consequences for the children who were in her room that year. I think many of them benefited enormously because, imperfect as she

was, she was who she was. To the reader who may, especially after reading some of the following material, have serious criticisms of the teacher I will provide the essence of the response I typically gave to parents who pressed me for a response to their expressions of concern, a completely subjective answer but one which was based on a complex understanding of the total situation from hours of observation. Essentially parents were told, "If I had a child in this classroom I would not be worried and, in fact, I'd be pleased. I think that she's basically a good teacher and, most important to me, she never brutalizes children." That was an honest answer that I would not make about many of the teachers I had observed or remembered having as a child. *All* the children left this classroom with their spirits intact.¹¹ ✓

Notes

1. The respect given the students was not only the result of the highly professional, competent, and generally loving staff, but also the result of an interaction: The parents and children also respected the staff and the idea of education.
2. In all schools, of course, there are interested, highly involved parents.
3. The high level of involvement might be related to the academic background of many parents or perhaps the relatively high socioeconomic level of many, but seems to be more than that. In any event it was evident that the children who were observed were not neglected children.
4. Mrs. Cowan called the kindergarten children fives and the first-grade children sixes. She used the labels publicly to direct the children. Most of the kindergarten children were five when the study began, though a few were four. The first-grade children were usually six when the study began, though one was seven and those who had birthdays in September through December were still five.

5. A mother of a kindergarten boy expressed concern to me that her child was not "learning to read fast enough" and that cognitive work in the class was not sufficiently emphasized. The remark was made during the first week of school.
6. I did not ask her about these events as they occurred because I did not want her to become self-conscious about her behavior and try to change it or, worse, to understand my questions as a criticism of her. Consequently, I do not know how she interpreted specific events. For instance, I cannot say whether she actually understood Pierre's behavior at the fountain to be accidental.
7. For a very interesting functional analysis of a teacher centered evaluative system see the doctoral dissertation of Cadmus, "The Behavioral and Structural Dynamics of Social Stratification as Manifested in a Racially Integrated First Grade Classroom." University of Florida, 1974. The social system described by Cadmus is a radically different system than the one described here, a system in which the teacher centered in herself, as far as possible, all evaluative powers.
8. I had made certain assumptions about the distribution of academic skills, however, based on an informal evaluation of problem solving ability and complexity of understanding and reasoning in social situations. I was occasionally surprised at the results of my later inquiry into reading skills. One student, Michael, who was clearly intelligent, could not read at all and was quite anxious about his reading, as his father was. I learned that intelligence was not necessarily related to the current level of academic skills, something I had "known" through research but had not really believed. Mrs. Cowan was precisely right about the value and necessity of individualized instruction based upon unique individual development.
9. Many children did typify other children as "good students" and, especially, as "good readers," but their perceptions largely followed social evaluations related to other factors rather than to objective measures. Some of the boys, for instance, thought that boys could read and girls could not, a decidedly mistaken evaluation as the girls could generally read better than boys.
10. For example, Mrs. Cowan was criticized because of the behavior of some of the children in her class during the Open House program in the gym. One could see a bleacher full of still, attentive children, but right in the middle, and made the more obvious because of the stillness of all the rest, three boys in Mrs. Cowan's class were playfully tugging, picking, pushing and

talking to one another. Mrs. Cowan did not attend to the three, but other teachers and the principal repeatedly looked at the boys, at Mrs. Cowan, and back to the boys again to no avail. The three continued to play throughout the program. Their play was not significantly disruptive. A few days later she told me that she had been talked to about the behavior of the boys. She felt that the expectation that these children were supposed to sit quietly for an hour in the bleachers was not a reasonable one and that the fault lay partly with the program planners.

11. Nancy left the class to spend half the school day with the class next door because of the classroom situation but not directly because of Mrs. Cowan's behavior. Nancy seemed to be happy with the divided arrangement. This matter is discussed in the study.

CHAPTER V
"GIRLS ARE LIKE WOMEN"

The girls in the class took it for granted that they were going to grow up to be women.¹ From the observations it was apparent that what girls knew about what girls were like derived much of its significance from what they knew about what it meant to be a woman. The girls' knowledge about what women were like provided what phenomenologists call a horizon or background of knowledge which the girls used to understand and interpret their present experience and to choose present actions and projects. What they knew about women provided ways for them to order their experience as girls, to give meaning to what was going on about them and to choose and give meaning to their own actions. One can understand what this knowledge meant to girls by observing them as they played, by considering what they said, by considering what they made and what objects they valued, and by the way they used their bodies.

Each of the girls in this class was sure of her gender identity.² Each was sure she was a girl and was sure that she would grow up to be a woman. The girls knew it was the boys who were going to grow up to be like men. The girls had a firm sense of continuity about themselves as members of a gender, and they were aware that the same was true for other girls. Also, each girl knew

that every woman was once a girl. Consider statements made by Karen and Marian in response to my questions.

Observer: Karen, what can girls do?

Karen: Kiss, hug, play house; be an old lady, be a little girl, a lady. Crochet; write cursive, know how to spell, help children say their words, help boys and girls put on shirts; help children write; help them on the playground.

Karen's answer to my question "What can girls do?" illuminates the nature of girls' identity with women and the way they mixed the typical knowledge about one generation with knowledge about another. Karen mentioned an activity of little girls, playing house; went on to list stages in the female life cycle, ". . . be an old lady, be a little girl, a lady. . ."; and continued with a list of activities associated with one of women's most widely known roles, supervising children, ". . . help boys and girls put on shirts. . . ." When I later asked her, "What can women do?", she impatiently answered, "I already told you!" Then she repeated many of the things she had said about what girls could do.

Marian's answer to the question of how boys and girls are different from one another illustrates that girls identify themselves with women.

Observer: Marian, how are boys and girls different from one another?

Marian: Boys kinda speak like a man and girls kinda speak like a woman.

Marian then impersonates the voices of men and women. She uses an exaggeratedly deep voice for men/boys and an equally exaggerated high, squeaky voice for women/girls.

Observer: Any other ways that they are different?

Marian: They wear different things.

Observer: Why do they?

Marian: (Impatiently) A boy can't grow up to be a lady and a girl can't grow up to be a man and it's been that way since they were babies.

Marian referred to what she knew about men and women to answer my question about the differences between girls and boys. She knew that boys were like men and girls were like women, but she was also aware that boys and girls were not precisely like men and women. She qualified her answer, "Boys *kinda*. . . .", to account for the empirical reality that the voices of boys were much more like the voices of girls than they were similar to the voices of men.

From Marian's answer one may understand that she had typical elements of knowledge about the types men, women, boys, and girls and that she was able to use those elements to contrast the types of people. In this conversation she mentioned the pitch of voice and the type of clothing as ways to tell persons' genders. She disregarded exceptions to her knowledge (e.g., some girls wear pants like boys) knowing that the exceptions were not relevant to answering questions about differences between types. When asked why boys and girls wore different clothing she revealed her knowledge of the continuity of gender identity by implying that a boy could

not wear the same things a girl wore because a boy was going to grow up to be a man. He has been growing that way since he was a baby, Marian said, and it was not going to change now. Though at other times Marian had made statements suggesting that she knew that gender could not change, in this conversation she seemed to suggest that if a person wore clothes of the other gender that she or he might grow up to be a person of the other gender; therefore, children must wear gender appropriate clothing.³ Marian knew that boys must look to men to know about being a boy and girls must look to women to find her direction as a girl. In an important sense Marian understood the way men and women were to be the models for the way boys and girls were supposed to be.

Marian's impatience with my questions reflected the absolute quality of the nature of her understanding about the phenomenon of growing up to be an adult of the same gender as that of childhood, the absolute quality of knowledge about gender in a general sense, and the unchallenged way that children approached their stock of knowledge and its constituent elements in general. To Marian, as to most of the other children, things were the way they were. Everybody knew, or should have known, the way things were, and it was certainly unnecessary, even "silly" as one child said to me, to ask such questions.

Marian and most other children did not easily or readily distinguish average gender differences in the nature of phenomena which had at least part of their origins in the nature of the physical organism, such as the pitch of voice, and phenomena which

were more clearly a matter of human choice and construction, such as the styles of clothing. At one level, both types of phenomena had the same, unquestioned objectivity for Marian. One was as inevitable within her experience as the other. Since she had not yet grasped adult roles and knowledge for distinguishing and categorizing the nature of gender-based phenomena, all differences were equally real differences. Things were the way they were because they could not possibly have been, in Marian's view, another way.

However, even though the children seemed more rigid about what they knew than many adults were, they were at the same time much more flexible and receptive both to new elements of knowledge and to conflicting interpretations of knowledge than many adults. Part of the acknowledged business of children was to learn, and to some extent they experienced and typified themselves as learners. One of the most important of their learning projects was to learn to be like a person of their assigned gender, and, especially, to learn what adults of their gender knew and did, and to learn to distinguish what adults of the other gender knew and did. When observing, one could experience the occasional self-consciousness of children as they learned gender behavior, and it was apparent that at least some of their actions were purposeful choices based on what they knew to be an inevitable and personal future reality.

The attitude some girls expressed about women's bodies and girls' bodies illustrates. It was apparent that girls knew that they were like women and would become women from what they said about themselves, what they said about women, and how they mixed

what they knew about the one with the other. They did not mix typical knowledge about men and themselves in a similar fashion. At times, girls mixed the meanings which had to do with having a woman's body and a girl's body. Consider the following conversation taken from the field notes.

It is the last week of school. I am interviewing Anne, Victoria, and Karen in the small room adjoining the classroom. The three girls are complaining about how hot it is and are distracted by the heat and their discomfort. I want to finish the interview so I suggest that they take off their shirts so that they will be cooler.

All three of the girls are shocked at the suggestion, then embarrassed; they giggle nervously. Karen exclaims, "We can't do that! People will see us." The girls begin to tease one another about the boys seeing them without their shirts on.

I tell them, "I think that it'll be all right. Anyway, the room is private."

The girls take off their tops, an action which is accompanied by more laughter and teasing about showing breasts. "I can see your titties, girl!" They make comparisons about who has the "biggest titties." They alternate between pulling on their nipples to "make them larger" and covering their breasts modestly. Karen teases Anne, "Your titties are small, girl, flat!"

Anne laughs and says, "So are yours. And anyway, I'm not grown up yet, stupid!"

The girls soon settle down, and I resume the questioning. By the end of the interview session they are fairly uninhibited and feel comfortable about not having tops on. As they prepare to leave the room they begin giggling again and discuss whether they should enter the classroom without their tops on. "Not me, you first!" After several minutes of teasing and laughing, they decide to go back to the class without tops.

They leave the room laughing and covering themselves. Only Wanda comments, "You girls gonna' get it comin' out here with your tits showin', hangin' out like that!"

The three laugh and are apparently pleased and emboldened by Wanda's attention. It appears that no one else notices the girls without their shirts, for no one else comments. The three girls begin playing at the art table without further comment.

About half or more of the boys have their shirts off during this hot day. The three girls are the only girls who have their shirts off.

There seemed to be a rule of behavior for girls that they should not go about in public without tops. This was evident both from the embarrassment of the girls and the fact that boys, but not girls, took off their shirts during the hot weather. The rule or restriction, however, did not seem a particularly strong one; after a few moments of hesitation the girls did remove their shirts. And when they returned to the classroom, only one child commented about their state of dress. Notably, the teacher said nothing and did not appear to even notice the topless girls. The girls' modesty and hesitation seemed not to be entirely the result of clearly stated adult norms about the dress of little girls, though there may well have been indirect and subtle restrictions by adults,⁴ but seemed more complex than that.

There are possibilities other than rules which might account for the girls' responses and which might illuminate the meaning of their behavior. It may be that the girls did not always experience reality as a particularly well defined separation between what was real in the present, that is, the sameness of girls' and boy's

chests; and what was potentially real for them in the future, that is, the differences in women's breasts and men's chests. At one level the girls were quite aware that they were not women and that they did not have full breasts like women. "Anyway, I'm not grown up yet, stupid!" But their immediate responses were to cover their chests as if they had full breasts, as if they were like women now. Such behavior did not mean that the girls had a confused body image or that they imagined their bodies to be the same as bodies of women. However, the event does suggest that the girls, knowing themselves to be like women and to be girls who would grow up to be women, appropriated for themselves the rules and meanings which were assigned to the type woman. The girls' identifying with women made what they knew about women, and what was expected of women in the social world in which they lived, relevant to their knowledge about themselves. In this case, the issue was bodies and rules about exposing bodies. Girls knew that it was bad, shameful, and sexy for women to go topless in public. Therefore, despite what they knew in the rational mode about the differences in girls' and women's bodies, they also knew that it was bad, shameful, and sexy for girls to go topless in public. The girls looked to women, and women's situation in a social context, to give meaning to present reality. They patterned their social choices in such a way that future potential defined by gender was apprehended by them as the present.

There is evidence that girls sometimes consciously chose to pattern their behavior after women because they knew the meanings

and behavior appropriate to women to be appropriate to them as girls who were like women. Becoming a woman seemed to be known as inevitable and a matter of purposeful choice and social construction. Consider the following interview conversation with Anne.

Anne had mentioned clothes, hair, faces, and voices as ways to tell the girls from the boys.

Observer: "Anne, how can you tell the girls from the boys if everybody wore the same type of clothes and their hair was the same length and style and their faces and voices were the same?"

Anne: "I could tell by the way they walked."

Observer: "Show me what you mean."

Anne: "This is like a boy."

Anne sticks her chest out, swings her arms, and takes long steps across the room.

Anne: "This is like a girl."

Anne begins to mince her steps, pulls her arms in close to her body, and brings her knees close together.

Anne: "Girls like to walk with their knees together; boys like to walk like men walk. It makes them feel strong. They see men walk more like that. Girls like to walk like ladies. Sometimes they wiggle their hips a little bit and don't act so rough and try to look pretty. Ladies walk more like that, to look pretty so that men will like them more."

Anne knew what type of body image was like a woman and like a man and she also knew that the behaviors had specific meanings depending on one's gender. For Anne, large movements involving gross motor control and large muscles of the body signified strength and masculinity. Small, restricted movements meant

weakness, but, for a woman, also meant beauty. Anne indicated that girls and boys chose to use and display their bodies in ways appropriate to meanings connected to adults of their gender.

It was apparent that girls anticipated being women because they usually pretended to be adult females during their symbolic, pretend play. There were games in which girls were willing to take a male role⁵ but these games were always created and structured by boys and were games where only male gender roles were relevant to the meanings of the games as constituted by boys. For example, in the game of "cowboys and Indians" girls would usually call themselves cowboys rather than cowgirls; the fact that they sometimes did call themselves cowgirls indicates that they made a distinction between a role that was implicitly male and a female role. However, for the girls the roles of (say) cowboys and Indians were more ambiguous in terms of gender than they were for boys. For boys the roles were decidedly masculine rather than seemingly neutral because for the boys playing cowboys and Indians was a way of constructing the essential meaning of masculinity, an issue that will be discussed later. For the girls, when playing cowboys and Indians, gender was not explicitly relevant because there were no roles whereby girls might contrast their gender to the male gender. Even in such male defined games as cowboys and Indians, girls sometimes attempted to create explicitly female roles for themselves, roles which they found to be more compatible with the way that they wanted to play.⁶

However, in games which explicitly provided for contrasting gender roles, what the children called "girls' games," girls rarely assumed primary roles which they knew to belong to men. They would, however, create a pretend male role as an adjunct to their primary feminine role. For instance, the role of "boyfriend" might be played by a girl in order to facilitate the game and the interactions of the primary female characters.

Usually girls would not assume a male role as a primary role when other girls had female roles and when gender was a central part of the meaning of a game. For example, one day Kara and Katie were playing house and Katie suggested that Kara "be the daddy because there needs to be a daddy." Kara refused, saying, "*I* can't be the daddy! How can *I* be the daddy? I'm a girl." When Katie replied, "Well, *someone* has to be the father," Kara answered, "So, we'll have to get a boy to be the father. Jackie will be the daddy." It was clear that not only did the girls know their gender labels and their future gender labels, but they understood that gender was invariant and that there were some roles specifically connected to gender. Kara's refusal to be the father was not simply a refusal to pretend to be something that she would never be. She often pretended to be animals. Pretending to be an animal was a playful fantasy for Kara, but pretending to be a person of the other gender was apparently experienced as a denial of her sense of self as well as a denial of everyday reality.⁷ The game of house was a game which portrayed real, everyday, and familiar roles to children, roles which they anticipated to give meaning and

structure to their lives. Rarely, in such an everyday context, was a girl willing to take a role that belonged to the other gender. In games where gender roles were central girls usually wanted to pretend to be girls or women. Unlike boys, however, girls would assume a secondary or minor role as a member of the other gender.

Girls' Knowledge of Women

The girls knew that they were going to grow up to be like women, and they referenced some of their actions and conceptions of themselves as girls to what they knew about what it meant to be a woman. The concepts of girls and women were, in some ways, interchangeable. What did it mean to the girls to be a woman? What typifications did girls share about the type woman? What images evoked the type in their minds?

For one thing, being a woman meant that one was *not* like a man. Although not so consistently or radically as many of the boys, the girls tended to apprehend gender types as different types, even as opposite types. Although girls and boys knew that the two genders were the same in many ways ("Both have hands and faces," one girl answered when I asked her how boys and girls were the same), they also knew that the genders were different. Significantly, almost every one of the children found it easier to name differences between the genders than similarities because it was the differences, they knew, that defined them as girls/women and boys/men. Gender, they knew, was a dichotomous category.

Eldon made this point when I asked him to tell me about how men and women were different: "That's easy!" he answered enthusiastically. Similarities, however, were another matter: "That's not so easy," he said.

When children wanted to talk about how girls and boys, or women and men, were the same, they tended to refer to basic human functions such as eating and talking. However, even eating and talking were filtered through dichotomous gender meanings. "Women," said Victoria one day at lunch, "like to chew with their mouths open, like this. . . ." Her assertion immediately brought forth a rebuttal from Shelley who insisted, "No! They like to chew like this!" She proceeded to purse her lips and to make tight little chewing motions to show how women chewed.

In general, if something was known to especially characterize one of the gender types, then there was a tendency for it to be thought to be uncharacteristic of the other gender. This knowledge that "women and men are different" involved a sort of negative definition of reality, a way of thinking that suggested that one was not only a certain way, but one was also *not* a certain way. Though there was more life, more power to the positive knowledge that girls had about the type women, and though negative definition of gender types was more characteristic of boys as a group, girls also defined women in terms of what they were *not* to men. Some of the girls' statements suggested that women and men were different. If men were like this, then women must be the other way, like that.

For example, strength was a quality girls attributed to men; everybody knew that "men are strong." However, when girls talked about what women were like or what women did, they rarely referred to issues of strength or, what was commonly considered to be its opposite, weakness. Generally, girls did not think of women as either being strong or weak. On the other hand, because strength was especially relevant for the type man, the issue of strength seemed to be *latent* in the way that girls sometimes imagined women.

Consider:

Observer: Marian, what can a woman do?

Marian: Sweep, work around the house, drive a car, cut with a sharp knife, couldn't pull up a big piece of grass.

Observer: Why?

Marian: Because mans are much stronger than ladies.

Observer: What can a man do?

Marian: Drive cars, cook, work, cut with a sharp knife, pull up a big piece of grass, work, run a bulldozer, give ya' a whippin'.

When asked about her assertion that a woman could not pull up a big piece of grass, Marian answered by referring to what she knew about women as one part of a dichotomy: Women are weak and can't pull up grass, because men are strong and can and women are different from men. Marian's concrete response was obviously a part of her personal experience, though we cannot reconstruct the particulars of the experience. We cannot know from this conversation whether she learned that men were stronger than women directly,

that is, from observing a number of concrete situations where men were successful at doing things requiring strength and women were not, or indirectly. That is, did she learn that men were stronger from having concrete experiences interpreted to her in those terms, until she learned to interpret concrete situations in a similar fashion for herself.

The following event further illustrated the tension between the objective nature of concrete situations and the subjective meaning children gave to them.

Day 61. It is Large Playground Time. Some of the girls are outside playing with dolls and the objects that they have in their purses.

Karen has an old bottle of nail polish which she cannot open. She brings the bottle to me and asks me to open it for her. I try, but the top is badly stuck. I don't want to leave the playground to get a tool or to run the bottle under hot water, for I am trying to observe a number of boys playing. I hand the bottle back to Karen and say, "I can't. It's stuck."

Brenda, who was standing with Shelley watching and waiting for me to open the bottle, says to me and the other girls, "My mother can't open things either; it's too hard. But my dad can."

Shelley joins with, "Ladies can't because they aren't as. . . ." But at that moment the teacher calls the children, and I never hear what Shelley was going to say.

The situation was apprehended not only in terms of its empirical or objective qualities that Barbara could not open the nail polish bottle and she said that it was stuck, but also in terms of what it meant to the girls, that Barbara, *a woman*, could not get the top off because she is a woman and women, unlike men, are not strong.

An essential element of knowledge girls had about gender was that men are stronger than women. Without considering the etiology of that knowledge, whether they knew from direct observation and generalization, or from assuming adult typifications structured through language, we can see that a meaningful causal relationship having to do with gender types was made in a situation where it was not necessarily relevant. The situation could have been explained without reference to gender; most simply, the girls might have said that the bottle cap is very badly stuck and cannot be taken off. Or, the girls might have thought that this person is too busy to take the top off. But children did not apprehend persons, they apprehended men and women, and in every situation they knew whether the person was a boy, girl, man, or woman. Their knowledge of gender gave them a satisfactory reason for explaining the situation. Real life situations which involved persons of a gender type, that is, all real life situations, were likely to be understood in terms of what was known about gender. In this case, something everybody knew was that men are stronger than women. Thus, in situations where strength was understood as being relevant to success, gender might well be understood to be a relevant factor. Just as importantly, however, in situations where the gender of a person was apprehended, and gender was apparently apprehended in all situations, events or objects might be given meaning in terms having to do with strength or weakness, since strength was an essential category connected to gender types.

The meaning an individual gave to a situation might be experienced as subjectively true, might be consistent with what was generally known about types of persons, and might be consistent with concrete events. But, at the same time, it might not be objectively the case. The "objective truth" might be difficult to ascertain, given the intimacy of the knowledge that everybody knew and took for granted as true and the difficulty of conceiving of a situation where knowledge about gender types was not subjectively relevant. In this case, I do not believe that a man, that is, an average man, could have gotten the top off the nail polish bottle. But, from observing the children, I know that had a man not gotten the bottle top off the situation would have been interpreted differently by the girls. The important point is that children, perhaps continuously, apprehended what was happening in terms of gender and in terms relevant to the categories related to gender. In their experience, their subjective meanings were the only meanings around and were perceived as the way things *really* were.

The girls understood what it meant to be women partly in terms of what it meant to be a man. To some extent, the girls' understanding of masculinity fit the way boys understood it, but it is important to know that no matter how similar some of the essential elements of knowledge, such as "men are stronger than women," the complex of knowledge having to do with masculinity was different for girls that it was for boys. It meant different things to girls that men were stronger than it meant to boys.

When girls thought about what it meant to be like a woman or like a girl, they referred directly to typical elements of knowledge about women and girls and not to the negative side of what they knew about men and boys. Using the example of strength, girls typically thought that men were strong and women were pretty, rather than weak, when they used those terms.

The complex of socially shared knowledge that the girls had about themselves as girls who were like women may be analytically divided into three categories. First, and probably most essential, girls knew that women were persons who were mothers. Second, girls typified women as people who were concerned with appearance, or, in their words, "women are pretty." A third essential way girls typified women was that "women are nice." All three elements of knowledge had consequences for the girls in the present and were used to construct and interpret the present. Being like a mother, however, was different from the other two in the sense that it more directly referred to a future, potential role. The girls knew that they were not mothers now. Being pretty and being nice also referred to future behavior, but were also intimately related to girls to the present as girls. Girls said, "girls are pretty" and "girls are nice" but not 'girls are mothers.' Niceness and prettiness will be discussed later. For now, the study will focus on what it meant to be a girl who was like a woman, a person who was a mother.

Mothers Are Women, Women Are Mothers

At a fundamental level being a woman meant being a person who was like a mother. Indeed, from the observations, it might be correct to state that the type 'mother' provided the foundation for the type woman in the girls' stock of knowledge. When girls talked about women, they usually talked about them in terms which corresponded to the ways they talked about mothers. The role of mother was the most common role girls assumed during their play, and the role was incorporated into many types of games, not just games focused upon the life of families. Kindergarten girls pretended to be mothers more than first-grade girls. First grade-girls often included the role of mother in their play, but their interests had expanded to other areas. For those kindergarten girls that liked to play family games, the role of mother was central and apparently totally absorbing to them. Thus, it seemed that knowledge about the female gender types was structured and enlarged upon the foundation of knowledge about the type mother.

In one sense, the type mother and the type woman appeared to be indistinguishable from one another and related to one another in a way that the types father and man were not. The type woman even seemed to be experienced as a subset of the type mother. By contrast, boys seemed to experience the type father as a subset of the type man. The exact nature of the way that the children apprehended the gender types is not clear, but it is certain that most of the girls often pretended to be mothers during play, and boys rarely pretended to be fathers. Instead, boys pretended to be men.

A statement made by Anne hints at how central being a mother was for girls.

Day 47. Anne and Ralph have just come in from the playground where they have been playing cowboys and Indians with a large group. They hear other children singing a cheer:

Boys got the muscles
 Teachers got the brains
 Girls got the pretty legs
 We win the game!

Anne and Ralph substitute their own words:

Anne: The cowboys got the muscles,
 The Indians got the brains . . .

Ralph: The girls got the pretty legs,
 We win the game!

Anne: Lady Indians have babies, and then it becomes more Indians, or . . . if she has a girl baby, then *she* has a baby, and when it grows up, there are more Indians!⁸

Ralph: Boys have guns,
 Girls have

At this point the teacher called the children in for Story Time.

Anne's statement suggests many things, but the only thing that is certain is that she, a girl who seldom pretended to be a mother during play, felt the defining function of women was producing children.

What did it mean to the girls to be a mother and to have children? From the answers that girls gave to the interview questions, especially the question, "What do women do?", and from what they said and did during their play, we can identify three

patterned and interrelated ways that girls apprehended women, as mothers, and mothers, as persons who are women.

First, girls apprehended women/mothers as people who were connected in a special way to a specific setting, a house. Houses were a recurring image produced by girls in the class. When girls were asked what women did they made frequent references to houses. Girls also made references to houses when they talked about what men did, though not so many as they did when talking about what women did. By way of contrast, boys made some indirect references to women being in houses, but made few direct references to houses. When boys answered questions about what men did, not one boy made a direct reference to a house, and few boys made indirect references.

Houses were often the theme of girls' art work and crafts, with the possible exception of people, the most frequent theme. Girls' drawings were filled with houses, and when they played blocks, they built houses. Only once was a girl observed to build something with blocks other than a house, a nonrepresentational structure made of single blocks piled one upon another to a height of about four feet. One day several boys were making boats at the art table from scraps of materials. Anne, Victoria, and Karen became interested in the idea of boats and so built their own, a houseboat. By contrast, houses were an infrequent theme of boys' art or crafts. The most frequent theme for boys was objects of transportation.⁹

"House" was the name of one of the two games called "girls' games" that girls played most frequently. The role of mother was central to the meaning of the game of house. For the girls, houses were symbols for the intimacy and intensity of family life and the importance and value of the role of mother within the family.

Another patterned way girls apprehended women/mothers was as performers of specific activities which were familiar and recurring and which were, or could be, observed in detail by children. The girls knew that women did certain types of things, and that some of the things that women did were different from the things that men did. Girls knew how labor and activity were distributed by gender. Girls knew that both men and women "worked" at jobs outside the house, but they did not typically know any or many of the details about what adults did at work, beyond the eyes of the children. "Work" was an abstract category. Girls knew that the work that men did outside the house was significant to men and to the family, and that this work was an essential part of what it meant to be a father/man. However, though the mothers of many of the girls worked outside the home, the girls did not typically answer the question about what women did with the abstract catch-all category of work, as they did for men. If they named work, it was not the core of their answers. To the girls the essential activities which they associated with women were those activities performed in houses in the role of mother, activities which girls had observed women to do time and again, familiar activities which

had been observed close up and in detail by the girls. Women, girls said, "cook," "feed babies," "make dinner," and, at an even more concrete specific level, "put the salt in the pot," "turn off the fire," and "stir." The preparation and distribution of food was important to children, and it was women/mothers, girls knew, who performed the significant activities associated with food. When girls and boys were asked about women, one of the most common images was of women preparing or distributing food. Other activities associated with maintenance of the house were also frequently mentioned.

Girls knew that they were going to grow up to be like women/mothers, and they knew what women/mothers did, and when they pretended to be mothers, they reproduced the activities of women in relatively accurate detail. "Cooking," for instance, was not an abstraction which essentially represented something unknown and mysterious in the same way that "work" did. Cooking meant to stand in front of a stove and to "stir" something in a pot, to "put salt in the pot," "to turn off the fire so that the food doesn't burn," "to make something to eat." Cooking was both significant and familiar.

The significance of these familiar and repeated activities of women for girls was evident in their arts and crafts. Domestic tools were another major theme of girls' work at the art table, and the girls made pots, pans, dishes, tableware, and other objects from clay and other materials. One girl even made what she designated "an electric blender to mix juice in."

The teacher provided the concrete means for girls and boys to perform the activities which were known to be essential to domestic life. In an area of the classroom which the teacher called the "housekeeping area," and the children called the "house," there was a toy stove, refrigerator, dining room table, pots, pans, and numerous other objects which might be found in a house.

However, concrete objects weren't necessary for girls to pretend that they were performing the familiar domestic chores of cooking, cleaning, and so on. Girls would pretend that they had whatever objects were necessary and then go through the motions of an activity, and so familiar were these activities that the other players would know what the girl was about.

A third way girls apprehended women/mothers was as people who were involved in intimate relationships with other people, most importantly, with babies and children. Women/mothers, girls knew, were responsible for the welfare of children from moment to moment. One could observe this total responsibility when the girls played the game of house where they were constantly orienting themselves to what was happening with their babies. Girls knew that women had a special connection to children, a connection which defined women in an essential sense. What do women do? Girls said that women "have babies," "feed babies," "help their kids read and write," and "help children write cursive." Women "tell kids what to do." Women, girls said during their interviews and during their play, "*take care of*" children and babies.

For the girls, intimate personal relationships were what gave meaning to the type woman. They typified women/mothers in terms of their relationships and responsibilities to babies and children. They typified men in terms of their affective relationships to women, and sometimes children, as well as in terms of their "work" outside the home. Several girls mentioned that men "kissed," "hugged," and "got married." Not one of the boys mentioned such things when asked about what men did. Girls apprehended men within the framework which was relevant to them as girls, that is, within the framework of the family and affective relationships. The affective bonds of marriage and relationships with men supplemented the more primary affective bonds that women were known to have with children. The girls' fundamental image or knowledge about women was of a woman-with-a-child while another image was of a woman-with-a-man. The girls typified women as being essentially involved in intimate relationships with other people. They typified others primarily in terms of their intimate relationships with women or girls.

In summary, girls knew that women were customarily located on a specified place, a house, were engaged in certain specific, recurring activities, and were central to the emotional, affective life of families. For girls, these three elements distinguished women/mothers from the type men/fathers who were typically located outside the home, did generally unknown sorts of things in a variety of roles called "work," and who were not central to the day-to-day affective dimension of family life.

Those elements of knowledge which girls shared about what it meant to be a woman were those elements externalized in the group games girls played. Other things that girls knew about women, typifications about women peculiar to an individual's own biographical life-world, "my mother works at the university," remained important to the individual, but were not socially significant within the group and did not play as decisive a role in the social structure of the classroom as did the shared meanings, the elements of the social stock of knowledge.

During much of their play time girls pretended to be women/mothers and assumed the attitudes, behaviors, and role relations which they typified as being like women. At times, the pretense of being a woman was momentary and played only a minor, transient role in the meaning of an activity. For instance, a girl might pretend for a brief moment to be a "lady" while playing on the swings. More often, however, the pretense of being a woman structured the activities and social relations in a more essential sense, and the pretense was continuous with and constituted the activity. The games of "house" and "Barbie" were the two most common and important games where pretending to be a woman defined a game's meaning. By considering how these games were played and considering the content of the games, one may clearly understand what these girls had internalized about women, how they externalized this knowledge during their play, and what consequences this had on the social structure and relations of the classroom. House will be examined in this chapter, because it focused on the central role of the type

mother for girls. The game of Barbie will be discussed in another context later in the study.

House: A "Girls' Game"

The game which the children called "house" was the quintessential game about being a mother. In fact, the game was occasionally called "mother" by some players. House was the only game that every girl had been observed to play at one time or another. All of the girls knew how to play house and all shared similar meanings about what the game was about. Boys also knew what the game of house was about, but the game had a different meaning for most boys than it did for girls. In this section I will describe how the game was played, where it was played, and who played and will suggest some ways that playing house structured social relations in the class.

House was usually played in the housekeeping area if players were inside the classroom. If the game was played outside, or the housekeeping area was not available, the boundaries of the house might be made from some of the natural boundaries within the class, such as a table, or players might build themselves a house from blocks. When girls built houses from blocks, they would arrange the blocks to form the perimeter or walls of the house, walls which were never more than one block high. Where to put the door was always the most important issue in the construction of a house. Sometimes doorways were indicated by an absence of blocks, sometimes additional blocks were stacked on each side of the

opening to signify the door. Though the girls seemed to enjoy building houses from blocks, the process of construction was clearly secondary to the end result, the creation of a space explicitly bounded and designated as the house. When players were outside, they might simply verbally designate an area as the house, or they might place rocks or other objects to signify the boundaries. In all instances, though, the girls seemed to like to have a well defined space in which to play the game.

Among the girls, there was a wide variation between individuals as to both the amount of time used for house play and how much a girl liked the game of house. Of the seven kindergarten girls, four played house almost every day or every other day. They were Rayette, Marian, Brenda, and Sara. Betty and Kara played house less often and tended to play in spurts, depending on whom they were playing with during a period of days or weeks. Since Kara played with Jackie more than anyone else, she tended to play house in a more atypical situation of boys and girls playing together. Janie was observed to play house, but was not particularly fond of the game. This was perhaps related to what she perceived as her own mother's unwillingness to fulfill what the girls understood to be the typical mother role. When Janie was asked what women did, she answered that they slapped children and left the house and the children with the father, a reference to her mother's separation from her family.

As a group, first-grade girls played house less than kindergarten girls. And, as the year progressed, first-grade girls

tended to play less house than they had earlier. Only Wanda played house regularly toward the end of the year and at least part of her motivation was that kindergarten girls were more receptive to her playing with them than the older girls were. However, Wanda and other of the first-grade girls enjoyed house when they did play. Of the first-grade girls only Myra and, late in the year, Anne, made disparaging remarks about the game of house, though both had played at different times. I can only speculate that Myra did not like house because she usually liked to read alone or because she simply thought the game was boring. She described it as a "stupid game." Anne came to dislike house because she had come to like the more active, outdoor games which she typified as "boys' games" more than the sedentary, indoor type games like house.

Some kindergarten boys, especially Henry, Jackie, and, less often, Ralph, occasionally played house more than the girls who played least often. Like the first-grade girls, the kindergarten boys decreased their house play towards the end of the year, and by the end of the year only one boy, Henry, played at all. For reasons which will be discussed later, most of the rest of the boys had begun to actively avoid playing house. Most of the first-grade boys were observed to play house no more than once or twice, and some of them, notably Timmy, Shawn, and Bradson, never played.

It was partly because of the high participation of girls and partly because of the meaning that the game came to have, that house was known to be a "girls' game." In fact, it seemed that the participation of girls was necessary to sustain a game of house.

Usually, if all the girls left a game of house, if a majority of players became boys, or if the interaction came to be dominated by boys, the nature of the game would change so that the game was no longer considered to be house. The game might become one narrow aspect of house, usually "cooking," an activity which did not require roles and in which the focus was upon a more mechanistic process rather than upon human relationships. For instance, if one of the players had assumed the role of the family's dog, a role that girls playing with just girls never assumed, the game might change to that of a dog chasing other dogs or people. Or, if boys came to dominate, the group might disperse altogether.

The reason that girls were necessary for the game of house seemed to have to do with the way the children typified the behavior of different members of the family and the differential importance of the various gender-based roles within the social life of the family. As children begin to play, the role of mother would emerge as central to the meaning of the game and the interaction of the players in accord with the forms of action and relationships that the children knew and pretended as being appropriate for all of the players in their family roles.

The different roles players would pretend were Mother, Father, Little Girl, Little Boy, and Baby. One of the first projects in any game of house was to choose or assign the various roles. Boys and girls would almost always choose roles for themselves which were gender appropriate. That is, girls would choose the roles of Mother, Little Girl, or Baby, boys the roles of

Father, Little Boy, or Baby. The role of Baby was seldom assumed by anyone; dolls were babies.

In house, the role of Mother was an active role which involved performing a variety of concrete tasks, and, with individual variations, the role of Mother was recognizable from person to person and game to game. Everyone knew that it was Mother who "cooked the dinner," "fixed the coffee," "cleaned the house," "went shopping for food," "changed the baby," "fed the baby," and, to a very limited extent, told Little Girl and Little Boy "what to do."

The role of Little Girl was also an active role, a role similar to that of Mother. Little Girls were sometimes portrayed as being exaggeratedly immature family members who were occasionally subject to having tantrums and otherwise displaying problematic behavior which made it necessary for the Mother to scold them. More often, Little Girls were portrayed as being like Mother. Little Girls helped their Mothers do all of the things that Mother did, and Little Girls also initiated work of their own as well. In effect, of course, when the girls pretended to be Little Girls, they were pretending to be themselves, and so one saw how the girls typified themselves as participants in their own family life. Several girls' answers as to whether they would want a girl baby or a boy baby when they grew up sums up this typification: "A girl because she would help me around the house."

In contrast to the roles of Mother and Little Girl, the boys' roles did not have much substance. Unlike Little Girls, Little

Boys were not helpful, but were portrayed by boys as being problematical or as wanting to leave the house to go outside to play. Boys did not often assume the role of Little Boy. Boys who played house liked to pretend to be Fathers. Boys and girls knew Fathers were the most powerful, if not most essential and important, family members. Girls usually liked to have boys join the games of house and welcomed them as Fathers. Significantly, when boys joined the games as Fathers, they more often than not became the center of the girls' attention and the focus of the game. Consider:

Day 27. Nancy and Kara are in the housekeeping area. Kara is the Little Girl and Nancy is the Mother. Nancy tells Kara that it is time to set the table for dinner, and then she begins to feed the (doll) baby. Jackie enters the area and says, "Hi, I'm the Daddy."

The two girls smile at Jackie, and Nancy says, "Hi Daddy, hi darling. It's time for dinner." Jackie replies, "Hey, Daddy's going to work." Nancy objects, "No, you can't because I took the car. It's time to eat now, Daddy."

Jackie, smiling and happy, sits down at the table. He obviously likes to play the role of Father and Husband. Nancy begins to set the table. Jackie begins to pretend to eat, which annoys Kara. She critically says, "Hey! You're not supposed to eat yet!" She hesitates, apparently remembering what the game is about and to whom she is talking. With a soft voice and a smile she says to Jackie, "Did she tell you you could eat yet, Father?"

Jackie doesn't answer, but smiles and says, "Well, I have to go to work." Jackie gets in a pretend car and drives off, saying, "I don't want to be late for work." The two girls continue playing as before, and Jackie, after observing for a few moments, leaves to play elsewhere.

For the boys to maintain a game of house with its full meaning and typical structure, it would have been necessary for them to go beyond the typical role of fathers and to participate in the social life of the house by performing some of the tasks and "taking care" of people as they, and the girls, knew women did.

A few boys tried to do the familiar tasks, especially cooking. But unlike girls, boys were task oriented when they cooked. To boys, cooking meant to gather around a table, without assuming roles, and mix water, bang pots and pans around, and design elaborate recipes. The pretended social life did not typically extend beyond the task itself; there was no intimacy in sitting down and eating together or gathering family members about. The task, rather than the relationships, was the end and purpose of the pretend play. Boys, like girls, did value the relationships with one another during play but for boys relationships were not the object of the game, what the game was about. The boys did not call their cooking games house.

When the game was called house and was played in a specific area designated as the house, children assumed family roles and boys assumed the role of Father. Boys relished the idea of being the Father or Daddy. Among the boys, only Henry sometimes tried to assume the role of Mother. And even Henry did not want to be the Mother as girls understood the idea; Henry wanted to be the "boss of the cooking." Henry liked to cook, that is, he liked to play with mud and water and he liked to control the process of cooking rather than be directed by others. Sometimes, when he felt that

things were slipping out of his control, such as when another player was adding too much sand, too much water, or stirring too much, Henry would loudly announce, "I'm the Mama!" Henry knew, as everyone knew, that "mothers cook" and that cooking was a type of activity that belonged to women/mothers. By claiming the role of Mother, he claimed both the knowledge associated with the role and the rights associated with the knowledge. In Henry's words, "I'm the Mama and I'm the boss of the cooking!"

Sometimes some girls would actively resist boys doing things girls knew belonged to Mothers to do, much less explicitly assuming the Mother role. One day Ralph picked up a doll from the crib and held it affectionately. Brenda's immediate response was to take the doll from Ralph, with a proprietary air, something she would not have done with a girl. When he picked up the remaining doll to rock it she seemed more agreeable. Sometimes girls were verbally explicit about what was proper. "You can't cook the dinner! Only the Mother can cook the dinner!" And girls knew that they were like Mothers, so only they could cook the dinner. Generally, however, girls were willing to have boys play with them and assume whatever tasks they wanted in the game of house. Boys usually did things they knew men did.

Boys knew that girls, not boys, were like women; and like Henry they knew that certain types of activities, though familiar to boys, belonged to girls because of girls' identity to women. There was a clear, though subtle tendency, for first-grade boys to attribute the domestic knowledge and the right to define and direct

domestic activities to girls, since the knowledge was associated with women, even when the girls had not assumed specific pretend roles and even when they had not asserted a right to define or lead in play. Three separate times I observed high status first-grade boys defer to girls who were younger and less socially dominant when the activity of playing with mud and water was called "cooking." Kindergarten boys did not defer to girls about cooking. Each of the first-grade boys assumed the role of assistant to the cook, waiting and asking for directions. "Should I get more sand now for the pie? More water now?" The three boys acted as though the girls actually knew more than they did about making mud pies. But of course they were not making mud pies; they were "cooking," and girls, who were like women, knew how to cook. Even the most aggressive, physically dominant boy, Shawn, was observed to briefly assume a subordinate position in relation to a quiet, nonassertive kindergarten girl when the two were playing with pans, water, and sand outside. Shawn's deference did not last long, however, for he soon changed the meaning of the play from "making blueberry pies" to the manufacture of "bombs," which he promptly threw at Ralph and Henry, who were playing close by.

It was previously stated that the role of Mother was structurally central and essential to the game of house, but it would be more correct to say that the Mother-Child dyad was structurally central. Both parts of the role relationship were valued by girls, and there was little conflict observed between girls as to who would assume which active role, Mother or Little Girl. The

role of Baby was typically assigned to a doll and was thus a passive role. At times, all the players were Mothers. At other times, one girl might choose the role of Mother, while another chose the role of Little Girl. There was a tendency for older girls to choose the role of Mother and assign the role of Little Girl to younger players, but this was always agreed to, or rejected, in a friendly fashion. Age distinctions made sense to the girls and seemed to constitute a legitimate basis for the distribution of roles. When a girl played alone, she would assume the Mother role, the active role, and have a doll be her baby. For girls, there was always a Mother-Child relationship. The Father-Mother or Father-Child relationship was peripheral, in the view of the children, to the family life of houses.

In addition to being a game which girls primarily played, house was also a game which *small groups* played. When the number of players was more than four, at the most five, the game quickly lost its structure and meaning, and the unity of the group was not sustained. At such times the players would either begin to play another game, break into smaller groups, or disperse altogether. The breakdown of the game and its change into something else might, of course, be welcomed. Again, such changes usually occurred when boys joined the game and increased the size of a small group of players. Girls seldom attempted to join an already large group. It seemed that they had a better sense of what the game was about, or at least, a different sense of what the game was about, and they were aware of the lack of room for new

additions. In such cases they might stand and watch a game without trying to join. Boys tended to enter games of house anyway, and when the group became large they suggested new, more masculine type meanings for the play. For instance, the idea of a robber trying to break into a house was one theme introduced by a couple of boys when girls were playing a typical game of house; the girls changed their theme eagerly.

The main reason that house could not be sustained with a large number of players seemed to be related to the essential meaning that the game had for players. Playing house meant to create the everyday life-world of the family, the affective, personal, particularistic relations of family members. In short, playing house meant to create intimacy. Pretending to be intimate, like being intimate in adult reality, was easier in small groups than among many. Intimacy in the game of house required talk as well as action, and shared talk about what one was doing was as important, if not more important, to the players as action.¹⁰

The importance of intimate, personal relationships to the meaning and value of the game of house, and to the role of Mother, seemed to necessitate small groups and also determined the nature of social relations between players in other ways. First, there were no significant hierarchical relationships in the game of house, not in the pretend roles nor in the real life relations between the girls. Though the girls thought the social relations between family members were hierarchical to some extent, and almost all of the girls whose fathers lived at home with them

answered that fathers should be the bosses in families when they were specifically asked, the essential interpersonal relationships which they portrayed in a typical game of house were based on affection and personal relationship rather than upon authority. Even when Mothers gave direct orders to Little Girls and Little Boys, it was considered a perfectly legitimate part of the role of the child to resist the orders and throw a tantrum; Mothers and children often compromised during the game. In addition, because everyone could be a Mother, the game was essentially a game of relationships between equals, of persons who were like one another. No Mother was the boss of any other Mother in the house, but was a friend of the others. When Mothers gave directions to others in the game, they typically gave them in the form of requests, suggestions, or otherwise indirectly as part of a personal relationship between friends. Wanda and Nancy were the only two girls who ever tried to "be the boss," the girls' words, in a game of house and they quickly learned to modify their behavior because other girls said that "no one can be the boss."

The game of house was also a game of accommodation and cooperation rather than conflict or competition, both in the pretended, structured roles and the social relations between players in the process of playing house. Competition and conflict were not part of the structure or meaning of the game and the importance of maintaining a spirit of intimacy and of personal relationship generally precluded incidental competition and conflict. Girls knew that Mothers did not compete with other Mothers as Mothers. At

least these girls did not express such knowledge. Instead they emphasized cooperation, helpfulness, and friendship between Mothers. Nor do Mothers compete with their children, they "take care of them" and "help" them, according to the girls.¹¹

The following portion of a game of house is presented here to illustrate how the girls played the game, to illustrate the congruence between the pretended role relations and the actual, immediate relations of the players, and to illustrate how girls integrated the performance of specific tasks with the affective dimensions which were vital and central to a game of house.

Day 32. Betty, Brenda, and Marian were playing house in the housekeeping area with Marian playing Brenda's mother, Brenda playing a little girl, and Betty playing a mother who has a doll for her baby. Marian also has a doll for a baby in addition to Brenda. The girls say that they are cooking dinner as they play at the toy stove.

As they work, Brenda/Little Girl says, "Mommy, we have to get this dinner ready soon, or it will burn and we won't get any." Marian pats Brenda on her head, and Brenda snuggles up to her Mother/Marian.

Then Marian says, "I know, baby, just wait and I'll feed you and then put you to sleep." Brenda contentedly pouts and snuggles closer to Mother/Marian.

Betty, the other mother, asks Marian, "Will you stir my soup, Mother? I have to check up on the baby." She walks over to the crib and peeks in the baby's pants to see if they are dry or wet. Then she picks up the baby doll, puts it to her chest, kisses it on the head and says to Mother/Marian, "My baby is wet, and I have to change its diapers. Don't let my dinner burn, okay, please?" Betty lays the baby on the bed and takes off its diapers.

Mother/Marian goes to the stove and begins to cook. Putting her hands on her hips, she says to the other two players, "This is a hard recipe--chocolate pancakes." Marian adds more water to the bowl and stirs it, splashing water on the floor. Noticing this, she says, "The house is getting so dirty . . . will you help me, Little Girl, clean up the floor?" Brenda gets a rag from the chest and wipes up a small portion of what has become a large puddle.

Betty is holding her baby, burping it and feeding it with the baby bottle.

Brenda tells her Mother, Marian, that she "wants to go shopping."

Marian at first objects, "The dinner's not ready," but quickly agrees, "Okay, let's go. Put on your coat, baby, or you'll be cold outside." After Brenda puts on an old scarf, Marian walks over to the crib and gently picks up the other baby doll. Marian asks Betty, "Will you take care of my baby? I'm going shopping with my little girl for some food."

Betty takes the second doll and holds it with the other.

Marian and Brenda begin to plan what they want from the store.

The game of house was how girls externalized an important part of what they knew about being women/mothers and about themselves as persons like women. Houses were metaphors for Mothers. Mother was a role that signified intimacy and personal, affective relationships with others. Mothers' labor and knowledge were oriented towards others, towards taking care of others, particularly children. Mothers were known to be central to the day-to-day life of families; families were central in the day-to-day life of mothers. When girls played house, they intended to have a good

time and to be like women/mothers with others who shared similar knowledge about the importance and meaning of being a woman.

There were several unintended results of girls' playing house and pretending to be like women of which girls were unaware. Girls' cognition of events and objects was filtered through meanings that had to do with gender. At one level, girls tended to apprehend things primarily in terms of what they meant for personal, particularistic, affective human relationships. Activities and objects were approached within these meanings. It has already been shown how boys and girls approached cooking differently. To boys, cooking was a task composed of specific parts; for girls, cooking was a part of human relationship which centered on one's essential role in taking care of others within an affective, personal realm. Some researchers have proposed that the different approaches are reflected in different cognitive styles and styles of intellectual functioning of the genders. Demonstrating that, however, is well beyond the scope of this study.

The consequences of girls' Mother/house play for the social relations and social structure that developed within the classroom were much clearer than the impact upon cognitive style. Though girls also liked to play in large groups, playing house encouraged the development of small group play among girls. Small group association encouraged the development of more egalitarian social relationships rather than hierarchical social relations. This tendency toward equality of participation among players was supported by the content of women's roles as girls understood them. Girls' house

play also functioned to segregate girls and boys into separate play groups, though girls liked to play with boys and liked to have boys play house with them. However, as boys understood the role of Father, there was nothing for boys as Fathers to do in the game of house other than to have dinner and go to work. This typification of men/Fathers as being unconnected to the house and day-to-day family activities contributed to boys playing games other than house and contributed to house being named a "girls' game."

Finally, girls' house/Mother play functioned to create the concrete reality of girls' own typified knowledge about women and girls in the social context of the classroom. Girls knew that they were like women. They knew women were in houses, taking care of children, and doing certain types of things of a very concrete, everyday sort. Girls played a game called house, pretended to take care of children, and pretended to perform certain types of concrete activities. Girls, by creating this concrete reality which was observable to everyone in the class, showed themselves, and boys, that what they knew was indeed the case. Girls were like women.

Girls: On Being Like Women

The girls felt good about being girls and about knowing they were like women. Girls especially valued the role of mother. Most girls valued the types of activities mothers were known to do and developed a sense of being competent when they pretended to do

things mothers did. Virtually all the girls valued the mother's relationship with children. Though the girls knew fathers had more power than mothers because, according to girls, they were bigger and stronger than women and mothers, characteristics related to power did not particularly appeal to most girls who preferred the women's intimate relationships and expressive mode.

Two sets of questions were asked of all the children to assess their attitudes and preferences about gender. One question was "If you were grown up and were going to have a baby, would you want a girl baby or a boy baby?" Then each child was asked "Why?" Though a few girls said "both" or "either," most girls said they wanted a girl because girls were nicer and prettier than boys. The other question was "If you could have a man teacher or a woman teacher next year, which would you choose?" "Why?" Most girls showed a clear preference for women, partly because of the way they interpreted the strength and power of men as contrasted with how nice women were. Consider:

Observer: If you could have a man teacher or a woman teacher next year, which would you choose? Why?

Wanda: Woman, because I like woman. Mans don't do no good.

Anne: Woman, because I don't like men that much.

Observer: But you do like boys?

Anne: (smiling) Yeah, I love boys.

Shelley: A woman because she isn't that mean.

Janie: Woman, because I don't like man. 'Cause my Daddy's Dad died. But I like my grandma.

Kara: Woman because they are the prettiest. Some girls are mean.

Rayette: Woman, 'cause I like 'em.

Vicky: A woman because she's much better and she isn't mean, not as mean as a man. I don't like men that much.

Observer: What about boys?

Vicky: Yes, some.

Brenda: A woman 'cause she's good. A man spansks too hard.

Marian: A woman because she would be a better teacher, better than a man. A man whips you too hard.

Myra: Man. Because I had a woman teacher before.

Sally: Man. Because I'd like my father to be a teacher.

Julia: Man. 'Cause I've had a woman before. Maybe a woman.

Karen: Woman! 'Cause I like 'em, better than men.

Katie: Both, because I like both.

Nancy: I would say a woman or a man because I like both. I don't want a hippie man.¹²

Most of the girls seemed to like the type woman better than the type man; no girl expressed a clear preference for men. The girls who preferred women seemed to think that women were nicer and less violent than men. Some girls seemed to be afraid of the physical power of men. It must be stressed that such fear was what girls felt about men as a type, and not necessarily how they felt about men as individuals in face-to-face interaction, or as personal types. For instance, the girls' fathers might be the prototype for typical man, but Daddy was more than typical man. Face-to-face interaction provided the means for girls to experience an individual man in his uniqueness, as well as a member of a type. On the other hand, even in face-to-face interaction people are typified to some extent as members of types. One may reasonably assume that an important dimension of many girls' apprehension of men whom they did not know was fear. Even men whom girls did know might be apprehended as persons who might cause harm to children or others. In contrast, girls did not seem to fear women as a type. It is unlikely that girls experienced a dimension of fear when encountering women for the first time. Girls liked women and liked the idea of being like women.

Summary

Girls knew that girls were like women and would grow up to be women. Girls showed how they typified women by what they said during the interviews, what they said to one another and boys, and by their participation and construction of games. There was considerable evidence that girls consciously chose to model themselves after women because of their knowledge that girls were like women.

Girls shared several typified elements of knowledge about what women were like. First, they knew that women were different from men, and girls defined the gender types by their differences, though not so radically as boys did. Girls knew that women were interested in appearance, were nice, and were mothers. They liked the idea of being like women and liked women and girls better than men and boys.

The typification of women as mothers was girls' central and defining idea about the type woman. Girls knew that mothers/women were people who did specific, well known concrete activities in a specific place, a house. They did these domestic things and stayed in houses in order to "take care of" the family, especially children. Women and children were understood by girls as having a special and intimate connection to one another.

Girls actualized their typified knowledge of women-as-mothers by assuming the role of mother when they played. Mother was the most common role girls assumed. Girls most often assumed the role of mother in a game they sometimes called "Mother" but usually

called "house." In the game of house girls pretended to do domestic work, to "take care of" babies and children, to help other mothers, and in general to create an intimate, personal atmosphere for family life. Though girls knew that fathers were more powerful than mothers, because they were bigger, and were the authority figures in families, these power and authority relationships played a small and insignificant role in girls' house play. Because fathers were "at work" and not at home, mothers were understood by girls as being the most important and relevant persons in houses and in families. Even when their own mothers actually worked beyond the home girls still understood houses as being where mothers did their most important work. Girls emphasized fathers/husbands' affective relationship to mothers and children rather than father's relationships of authority. However, the mother-child dyad, and not the father-mother dyad was the most important emotional relationship and was structurally and phenomenologically central to the game of house and girls' ideas about women.

Girls' house play was related to a typical girls' pattern of play different from that of most boys. When girls played house they played in small groups, which seemed necessary to achieve the sense of intimacy. They had intimate cooperative, noncompetitive, and nonhierarchical social relations with other girls, both in pretend and in actuality. There were no roles for recognized leaders in the game of house. The structure and organization of girls' play groups seemed to emerge from the meanings and

necessities of their games, though in other contexts girls enjoyed playing in large active groups with leaders.

Girls' house play also contributed to the segregation of girls' and boys' play groups, though this was not girls' wishes or intentions. There were simply no satisfying gender roles for boys in the family-oriented game of house. This separation of girls and boys ultimately contributed to the children's ideas that girls and boys were different types of people rather than essentially similar people. House, which was at least partially created and sustained by girls' knowledge about what women were like and their knowledge that they were like women, was seen by children as evidence, in the form of objective reality, that girls were indeed like women and that women/girls were different from men/boys. This will become clearer later in the study.

Notes

1. Bettelheim (1977) raised the question of whether children really believe that they are going to one day be adults. The issue is important to an understanding of children's reality. However, a more limited type of investigation is being proposed here, and it need not directly concern us whether, at some level of consciousness, children doubt the inevitability of their becoming adults. During these observations they acted as if they knew that they would one day be adults, and no child ever expressed to another any doubts that she/he was going to grow up.
2. Money (1972) has made it clear that children may know that they are of one gender even when others identify them as the other gender.

Recently I observed an eight-year old girl who had not yet become "resigned" (her father's words) to the gender she had been assigned by others at birth. Though there was no physical ambiguity about her biological status, she believed, at one level, herself to be a boy. Her father reports that as a very

small child of about two and a half years, she realized that other people thought she was a girl and were going to insist that she be a girl. Upon realizing this she became very upset and insisted on her boyness. She now fully understands that others believe her to be a girl and that she is not exactly like a boy, but is biologically like a girl. However, she continues to exhibit those gender role behaviors and attitudes of boys as they are described in this study. She wants to wear boys' clothes, associate with boys, and even denigrates girls and the idea of associating with them. She is intelligent and has stopped insisting that she is a boy but continues to be 'like a boy.' Recently, she has begun fighting.

3. Ullian (1976) found that children of the developmental age of about six thought that persons *must* observe the social rules for gender in order to maintain what they knew were inevitable biological statuses.
4. In some societies there are strict restrictions about the dress of even very young girls. For example, in the Mesoamerican community studied by Paul (1974) by the age of two or three little girls have learned to feel shame about showing their bodies and, unlike little boys of the same age, are extremely modest. She writes, ". . . little girls learn to . . . keep pulling their skirts demurely over their knees and to drape tiny shawls over their heads" (p. 291).

Little boys can run about with no pants on.

- There are, however, some adults in American culture, and not among special ethnic or religious groups alone, who do strictly
1. enforce rules of dress for girls. On several occasions I have observed parents to take care that the bikini tops of their daughters, girls quite a bit younger than those studied here, are pulled down so that their nipples do not show. Because children have no breasts the tops tend to slide up under their arms. Three of these times involved fathers reproofing their daughters somewhat harshly because their tops were out of place. The behavior of other parents, especially of mothers, seemed to be of a more habitualized nature, stemming at least partially from a desire for order. I have also observed a girl of about three cry and demand that she be given a bathing suit top, as she was embarrassed to be seen without one.
 5. By contrast, only one kindergarten boy, Henry, was ever willing to assume a female role implicitly or explicitly.
 6. See Chapter IX for a discussion of the way girls tried to join the large group play by creating female roles for themselves.

7. The idea that gender was an objective element of reality which was invariant and which should not be changed, even during pretend games and fantasies, was not an idea expressed only by children. Two practicum students from the university tried to organize several of the children to put on a play one day. There were several parts in the play: flowers, rocks, mice, ducks, black sheep, the sun, and a little boy part. The two women university students asked for volunteers for the roles. When the part of Little Boy was presented, Victoria was the only child to volunteer and she did so quite enthusiastically. The university students were firm and equally energetic with their refusal. "A boy," one said, "has to be the Little Boy!" Children should pretend to be rocks, flowers, and animals but the university students could not accept their being, even in pretend, members of the other gender. It was clear from the way they responded that their motivation was not based on consideration of mental hygiene, but upon repugnance that one might want to change from one gender to the other.
8. For an excellent discussion of the reproduction of mothering generationally, its effects upon feminine and masculine personality, and its consequences for social and economic structures, see Chodorow (1974, 1978).
9. Erickson (1968) has observed older children playing with blocks and has found results similar to the ones reported throughout this study. He suggests that the different uses males and females make of space may be attributable to differing experiences of their bodies, with females experiencing the importance of their "inner space" and males a thrusting tendency toward outer world space. He goes on to postulate social structures as being congruent with this essential somatic experience. His primary assumption, necessary for his explanation, is that gender is an inherent, basically biological and innately psychological phenomena. The reader is referred to Kessler and McKenna (1978) for a discussion of the scientific construction of social reality.
10. Turner (1974) has made the point that talk is not "just talk" but is itself a form of action. Talk may be complaining, pleading, bragging and so on, all with the same words at times.

Girls' games and processes were criticized by some boys as being "just talk." As Bradley complained, "All they do is stand around and talk." Talk may be subtle and provide the foundation for an active and rich inner life; this was one dimension of girls' talk.

11. A frequent question of researchers is whether there are differences between girls and boys in nurturing behavior or in levels of compassionate behavior. In terms of this group of children, the answer is complicated by the boys' much higher level of physical aggression and by the fact that boys expect other boys to tolerate a higher level of stress or pain before saying that something "hurts" or that they want to stop doing something. Accepting pain was more a part of what it meant to be a boy to boys. However, if one separates positive acts of nurturing or compassion from negative acts of destruction or aggression, the question and the answer can be made somewhat clearer. If nurturing and compassion are defined to mean an *active* interest or intention to do something to help another person who is in some way hurt or suffering, were there differences between girls and boys in the amount of such behavior? The answer is tentative, but there did *not* seem to be significant differences in nurturing behavior between the genders.

The word significant is used here to mean that one would say, "Yes, girls, or boys, do more of that kind of thing. . . ." rather than statistical significance. There may have been a statistical, average group difference not apparent using the methodology of participant observation rather than, say, systematic observation.

During their pretend play, however, girls and boys both exhibited the pretense of compassion, but the patterns of pretense were radically different. Girls would be compassionate in the context of family and domestic life, boys in the context of war and group conflict. Boys would be compassionate to their comrades in arms, but their emphasis was upon their own heroic efforts to help their comrades. Girls' emphasis in pretend was upon the helping in itself.

There were also slightly different patterns of compassionate and nurturing behavior during what the children sometimes called "real life." Most important, girls were willing to show and accept concern for and from persons of either gender equally. *Some* boys, however, seemed more willing to both show and, especially, to accept, concern from boys than girls. Boys seemed to think it was demeaning to them to accept concern from girls.

For now, it is important to remember that individual differences in concern for others were far more dramatic than gender group differences. There were children of both genders on either end of the spectrum, from concern to indifference, or even pleasure, in the pain of others.

12. One might object that elementary school teachers are usually women and the answers might simply reflect this bias. However, the quality of the answers, plus the fact that boys typically chose men, seems to sufficiently deal with this objection. In addition, the answers were supplementary to the observations in which girls sometimes implied similar ideas.

CHAPTER VI
"GIRLS AND WOMEN ARE PRETTY"

But what particularly surprised me in the women's recollection was what "trifles" from a prisoner's point of view (but not at all from a woman's) they could be thinking about there [in prison]. Nadya Surovtseva, pretty and still young, hastily pulled on stockings that didn't match to go to her interrogation, and there in the interrogator's office she was embarrassed because the interrogator kept looking at her legs. . . . And Aleksandra Ostretsova . . . summoned to interrogation, she would have an animated discussion with her cellmates whether she should dress simply that day or put on her evening dress. (Solzhenitsyn, 1975, p. 228)

The boys got the muscles,
Teachers got the brains
Girls have the pretty legs,
We win the game!

Cheer sung by Nancy, Betty,
Ralph, and Henry¹

An essential element of the social stock of knowledge about the types women or girls was that women and girls were, or were supposed to be, pretty. When the girls in this class pretended to be women, they often pretended to be beautiful or pretty. What they knew about pretty women they also knew about themselves as girls. This section will discuss what the concept of "girls and women are pretty" meant to the girls.

What did it mean to the girls that girls as girls were pretty? As with other elements of knowledge about gender from the social or shared stock of knowledge, the idea of prettiness had different meanings depending on an individual's biographic

situation and history, on her personal stock of knowledge, and on the social context. For instance, the notion that girls were supposed to be pretty had a different meaning for a girl like Katie, who thought herself to be pretty, than it did for a girl like Betty, who thought herself not to be pretty but to be ugly. It was also apparent that for some of the girls, prettiness was a more central concern than it was to others for whom being pretty was less important.

Regardless of differences between individuals, there were shared meanings about being pretty, meanings which were elements of the social stock of knowledge. In order to understand what it meant to girls to be girls, one must understand the concept of pretty and its connection to girls.

What Is Pretty?

The girls' concept of pretty meant that there were some concrete and observable objects or ways-of-being which were "pretty" and some which were "not pretty." From observing girls at play, from their arts and crafts, from other objects they produced or valued, and from their answers to questions, I can present a list of some of the more important and universally agreed upon things girls named as pretty. Girls said that long hair was pretty and prettier than short hair, that dresses were prettier than pants, and that floor-length dresses were especially pretty. Decoration, such as lace, on clothes was said to be pretty. Colorful and flimsy fabrics were typically thought to be prettier than

subdued colors and sturdy materials. Wearing cosmetics was pretty. Earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and rings, especially large, elaborate rings, were all known to be pretty. Julia said that her stepmother's ring was "beautiful, because it has five huge fake diamonds in it!"

The girls knew ways-of-acting as well as objects were also pretty. Girls often pretended to be women while they played, and at times a focus of their play was their bodies. When girls pretended to be "beautiful ladies," "princesses" and other distinctly female roles of a romantic nature, they assumed typical body postures. A girl would consciously use her body as a way to communicate to the others that she intended to be playing the role of a woman or lady by assuming body movements that were constrained and constricted, jerky, and precise. Girls would hold their hands out with limp wrists, walk with mincing steps, often accompanied by exaggerated swaying movements of their hips. A seated girl would inevitably cross her legs at the thighs, would move her shoulders back and forth in an especially exaggerated pose, and would lower her chin to one shoulder while she raised the other. Sometimes girls would roll their eyes upward or lower their chins and cock their heads and look out through rolled eyeballs. Rapidly blinking eyelashes were typical. Such portrayals were usually presented and accepted with humor.

If one wanted to represent what being pretty was in girls' ideal images, the answers some of the girls gave when asked the question "What do you want to do when you grow up?" would be

useful. Consider these answers: go-go dancer, majorette, circus girl, ballet dancer, and bride. In all of these images, the factor of being seen, of being looked at, was essential. In all, the suggested action was secondary to the fact that one was in the spotlight.

The children of both genders consciously linked, if not absolutely identified, the qualities that girls knew to be pretty with being a girl. The most universal of those "pretty" qualities, such as long hair and dresses, was those aspects that girls and boys most often named as being differences between girls and boys and were the concrete ways children most often attributed gender or identified the gender of others. When the children attributed gender they also attributed meaning. Long hair was not simply long hair, but was a meaningful statement about girls as girls. The exact meaning differed depending upon the gender of the attributor, but children of both genders knew that long hair and dresses, for instance, had something to do with being girls and being pretty.

The children subjectively experienced as objective reality both the knowledge of the differences between girls and boys and the knowledge of what was pretty. Every girl and, to a lesser extent, boy, knew that dresses, long dresses, and long hair really were prettier than pants, most shorts, and short hair. Everybody also knew that dresses belonged to girls; they greeted with indignation or treated as a joke the idea that boys could wear dresses. The children's dress supported the typical

knowledge about the appropriateness of certain types of clothing. The boys did not wear dresses, nor did any wear his hair as long as it would grow as some of the girls did.

Thus, in circular fashion, the specific typifications which were part of the social stock of knowledge, e.g., "Girls wear dresses, boys do not" and "dresses are pretty, prettier than pants," all gave support to the more essential knowledge that it was girls who were pretty and not boys, that things like a girl were pretty, and things like a boy were not.²

Another thing that the qualities of prettiness had in common was that they tended to be nonfunctional; they tended to be decorative and to emphasize appearance rather than action. Being pretty meant that girls as girls were interested in how they looked to other people. Pretty suggested an external locus of evaluation; to be pretty one must be seen to be pretty by others. It is the nature of prettiness that the prime evidence of achievement of that state is how others respond to how one looks. There are few changes that one can make upon the external world to show that one is pretty and few objects that one can build or produce to prove prettiness, though there are objects that symbolize beauty. Since one must act upon the self to be pretty, one needs to look at the self, the public or physical self, to see how one looks to others. For two of the girls, the importance of observing oneself was represented by the images on their lunchboxes. The boxes had an image of a young, elaborately dressed girl looking into a full-length mirror. The words Junior Miss were written on the boxes.

For two other girls the importance of seeing how one looked to others was symbolized by the little mirrors they brought to school inside little purses, purses which also contained brushes, combs, light-colored lipstick, and mild smelling perfume.

"Pretty Girls" and "Strong Boys"

Kindergarten and first-grade girls used their bodies to portray themselves as beautiful or pretty women in the way previously described. To both the older and the younger girls the restricted movements meant that women were pretty, but the older girls tended to have a more complex understanding of the meaning of such behavior. Like kindergarten girls, the first-grade girls appeared to focus on the most obvious and dramatic aspects of the larger culture and the social stock of knowledge from which they created their reality. There was a difference, however, in what the two age groups knew, both in terms of the specific typifications and, more importantly, in how they perceived and created relationships between elements of knowledge, relationships which might be more implicit than explicit. Both groups knew that being pretty meant to have small, restricted, precise and delicate movements, and both knew that women and girls, who were pretty, were supposed to have such movements in contrast to boys and men. Both the younger and the older girls also knew that "men and boys were strong" and "stronger than women and girls." Only the older girls, however, regularly connected these two elements of knowledge and perceived that there was a socially defined relationship between being

pretty-like-a-girl and being-strong-like-a-boy. Many of the older girls knew that the prettiness that belonged to girls as a type but not to boys was not to be contrasted with ugliness but with strength. As Karen said during an interview, ". . . Boys are stronger, girls are prettier. Girls need to be taken care of." Most of the younger girls knew that being pretty like a girl meant to be delicate, have restricted movements, and not be rough but they did not explicitly contrast girls' prettiness and boys' strength. They had not learned that prettiness and strength were dichotomized gender constructs at an explicit level. First-grade girls were more cognizant of the dichotomized nature of prettiness and strength. Consider again Anne's answer when I asked her to show me how she could tell boys from girls if they were dressed the same, had the same length and style of hair, and the same faces and voices:

Anne: I could tell by the way they walked.

Observer: Show me what you mean.

Anne: This is like a boy.

Anne sticks her chest out, swings her arms, and takes long steps across the room.

Anne: This is like a girl.

Anne begins to mince her steps, pulls her arms in close to her body, and brings her knees close together.

Anne: Girls like to walk with their knees together, boys like to walk like men walk. It makes them feel strong. They see men walk more like that. Girls like to walk like ladies. Sometimes they wiggle their hips a little bit and don't act so

rough and try to look pretty. Ladies walk more like that, to look pretty so that men will like them more.

Later, Anne added,

A girl thinks she's the prettiest. A boy think he's the toughest. A girl learns being cute is acting like a woman, and a boy tries to be like a man and be tough And when they have a dress on, I walk different, to not be rough but be pretty, and keep my knees together.³

Anne, who was the strongest girl in the class and possibly the strongest child, knew that girls were not supposed to be strong "like men" but were supposed to walk with their knees together, to walk with small, mincing steps, because such behavior was thought to be pretty like a woman. Though Anne knew such things about being pretty, she, and other girls, also knew that being strong was a good thing for girls as well as boys, and Anne talked about being a karate teacher when she grew up. Girls knew that being strong was socially valued; at the same time they knew that being strong was unlike being pretty.

Other girls also knew that relative weakness and helplessness, in contrast to the strength of boys and men, was part of what it meant to be pretty and to be a girl. This knowledge was reflected in some of their behavior and conversations. For instance, one day several kindergarten and first-grade girls were at the art table making clothes for their dolls from scraps of material. Their conversation revolved around how pretty the dolls looked with their new clothes. It then moved to the subject of "boy-friends" and "dates" for the dolls. Soon, Brenda and Janie

remarked that they had boyfriends from their neighborhoods.

Julia joined the conversation with "My boyfriend loves me and protects me from other boys who want to take me away from him." Then Karen began to assert how her boyfriend fights other boys for her and "protects" her. Boys fighting for their girlfriends were pleasing images to those girls who suggested them, representing as they did evidence of a girl's value as a girl. The girls articulated an implicit sense of helplessness and, at the same time, interpreted that helplessness in a positive, affirming way.

At least some of the boys also understood the significance of such images of female helplessness and male aggression and strength in a way complimentary to that of some girls. One day Shawn and Michael had a fight which Shawn called "play" and Michael called "real," while Katie, Michael's girlfriend, watched and cheered Michael. Shawn playfully asserted to Michael that the "winner gets to marry her," though he did not like Katie and was somewhat jealous of her relationships with his best friend, Michael. Katie did not promote the fight.

Nancy was adept at structuring a role for herself which reflected what she knew about strength, beauty, and weakness in a more systematic and meaningful way. Nancy liked to play outside with the large active group composed primarily of boys, but did not particularly like to play with their rules or their definition of what the game was about. Consequently, she often tried to create a more meaningful role for herself, that of a "beautiful and helpless princess" who needed to be "saved" from the boys who had

"captured" her by other boys. "Pretend you capture me and tie me up! Help me! Help me! Save me!" She would sometimes "faint" and have to be carried away by the boy rescuer, a difficult task. Soon she would be "captured" again and have to be rescued by a boy again.

Helplessness and powerlessness were explicit in the attitudes and roles taken by girls like Julia and Nancy when they played such games, but the subordination and dependence inherent in the roles were not the defining part of the girls' experience when they typified themselves as "helpless and beautiful." On the contrary, such girls invested the roles with power and experienced themselves as persons with power, the ability to get others to do as they wished. By virtue of weakness and helplessness, defined as being beautiful, these certain girls had a feeling of control, a feeling of defining events and their own roles in them. To the limited extent that the roles allowed the girls to participate in the games, and to be central characters, the girls maintained their sense of achievement. For their part, boys may have understood that the girls actually had some power and influence in such roles, but boys always typified the female roles as weak ones.

The tendency of some of the older girls to contrast the strength of boys with a positive conception of their own presumed weakness occasionally influenced how they perceived events in the real, everyday world as well as in the pretend world of play. Consider:

Day 16. The students are in the area outside of the cafeteria waiting for the teacher to return to the classroom. In this area there is a place where junk food is sold to the older students. The place is closed now, and Anne and Shawn are sitting upon the concrete counter, which is about three feet off the ground, swinging their legs and commenting about what is happening.

Julia walks up and, directing herself to Shawn, asks him, "How did you get up there?"

Shawn indifferently replies, "Simple."

Julia says, "It's not simple for girls."

Hearing this remark, Shawn becomes more interested in the conversation and answers, "I know, because they're not so strong, not strong enough to get up."

Julia says, "I know. So tell me how to get up."

Shawn says, "Simple," but does not tell Julia how to get up on the counter.

Anne listens to this conversation, but says nothing.

The teacher then calls the class to go back to the classroom.

What this event meant to Julia is not clear. From observing her, I know that she liked Shawn as a "boyfriend" and admired him as the "strongest boy in the class," but I do not think that Julia purposely cast herself in the role of weak and helpless girl in order to manipulate Shawn's attention and perception of her.

What was clear was that Julia did not experience the business of being weak or physically less competent than others as a negative thing but as a characteristic attributable to girls as a type. Therefore, despite Anne's presence on the counter top, Julia referred to her own status as a girl to explain why she

she found getting up on the counter a problem, and she asked Shawn, the opposite type, a boy, how to get up. Boys, Julia knew, were strong and physically competent. Julia did not even look at Anne, who was sitting right beside Shawn, and seemed unaware of her presence on the counter.

One possible reason Julia found such a self-definition and group definition as acceptable instead of unacceptable as some might have found it, including all the boys, was because the idea of weakness and helplessness so easily fit into the positive, valued way girls typified themselves as girls, the way that they typified being pretty as being dichotomous to strength. The idea that boys and girls were different types and that prettiness belonged to girls while strength belonged to boys made a definition of oneself as weak in some ways a positive definition. It made it easier for girls not to try or not to exert or push themselves. The different ways most girls and most boys approached activity requiring physical exertion reflected this tendency. Most girls seldom exerted effort comparable to most boys. Some girls would not even try to do a physical activity at all, though they were as strong and as physically competent as many boys, who grunted and pushed and made themselves continue to try. The only girl who always tried and pushed herself in ways comparable to most boys was Betty. From an interview with her father, it seemed that part of her motivation rested in feelings of inadequacy in relation to an older sister, who was described by the father as very intelligent. He said that Betty, who was in my view very bright, tried

to get them to acknowledge her value by being athletically competent, something the parents also valued. In essence, Betty's atypical behavior stemmed from her personal biographic history rather than from the common stock of knowledge about girls.

Girls not trying as hard as boys tried did not mean that girls were consciously motivated to be incompetent or less competent than boys. For one thing, boys pushed themselves because of what they knew about what it meant to be a boy. Some boys just did not "try," they pushed themselves to their limits. Many girls tried, but had no extra motivation, as the boys did, to push themselves. Girls did not try to be incompetent, but it was true that the girls' image of what was girlish was an image of relative passivity, and this passivity, sometimes interpreted as a sort of gracefulness, had to do with being pretty. Consider some remarks made by Nancy:

Observer: Who has more fun, girls or boys?

Nancy: Girls have more fun because they are *beautiful* and they're *nice*! Boys are monkeys [she does an imitation of a boy/monkey by jumping around and moving her body rapidly] . . . climbing trees like monkeys. Girls are not as active; they're beautiful.

Observer: If you have a baby when you grow up, would you want a girl baby or a boy baby?

Nancy: A girl, because they grow up to be nice and beautiful, and I couldn't handle one [a boy], because they're too active and they *yell*. (Emphasis Nancy's.)

"Girls," said Nancy, "are not as active; they're beautiful." Nancy was an exception in the way she described behavior as *active*, a word rarely used by the children, but her picture of girls in contrast to boys was one most other girls shared. Kara, for example, complained during an interview that boys ". . . run around too much, just run around and play monster games and be's nasty and makes noise."

The most important meaning the girls' relative inactivity had for girls related to the way girls typified themselves as "nice," an idea that will be discussed in the following section. However, quieter and more subdued behavior was also part of what it meant to be pretty. Beautiful girls, unlike boys, did not act like monkeys, did not climb trees.

But the girls, including Nancy, did climb trees and do other things which required the use of their large muscles and included some risk. Girls were often quite loud, and many girls were louder than some boys. During any playground period one might see girls "running around" and "making noise," climbing trees, swinging by their legs from the jungle gym, balancing on the tops of playground walls, chasing one another, and jumping off walls, tables and other structures. Girls were active. There was no indication that girls perceived such activities negatively when other girls did them. Girls did not seem to view such activity as being inconsistent with being like a girl or with being pretty. In everyday activity girls did not connect activity and beauty, and girls typically performed such activity without comment as to

how the girls perceived themselves as girls. There were a few times, however, when girls did provide comment when engaged in such activities, indicating that they were somewhat aware that such behavior by a girl was not what was typified as being like a girl.

Consider:

Day 19. Janie is swinging by her legs from the jungle gym. She says to Nancy and Wanda, who are standing nearby, "I'm a Tomboy. Look at me, I'm a Tomboy."

Day 42. Marian is climbing a tree in the large playground. Shawn and Bradson are in the tree, and Julia is playing underneath the tree.

Marian says, "My brother always calls me a Tomboy, because I climb trees."

The responses of the others to Marian's remark to become competitive about their own tree climbing relative to Marian's brother. Shawn, Brad, and in turn, Julia, say, "I can climb trees better than your brother."

Marian says nothing in response, so I ask her, "What's a Tomboy?"

She answers, "A Tomboy climbs trees."

I ask, "Is Bradson a Tomboy?"

Brad quickly answers, "Yes."

Marian says, "No," but does not continue and looks puzzled.

Marian had had the experience of being called a "Tomboy" when she climbed trees, and she knew that the designation "Tomboy" was meant to be some sort of statement about how unusual or notable it was that she climbed trees. She did not know, however, that being a Tomboy meant one was a girl who did things like a boy, who did

active things. But she did know that Bradson was not a Tomboy when he climbed trees although she was one when she did.

We can understand the contrast of Tomboyishness with prettiness when we contrast what physical motions and activities were involved in being a Tomboy with being pretty, a contrast of large muscles and movements with small, delicate restricted movements.

In the following event we see an example of a second-grade girl from the class next door making a statement which she meant to account for her behavior which she knew to be different from that typically expected from girls.

Day 29. There is a child from the class next door swinging by the legs from the jungle gym in the small playground. After observing for a short time, I cannot be sure whether the child is a girl or a boy. I consider various clues and tentatively decide that the child is a girl.

In order to find out the gender of the child, I ask, "What's your name?"

The child enthusiastically replies, "Susan," and then adds, as if she understood my motivation for asking, "I'm a farm girl. I live on a farm, and I'm so tough. I kick our classroom door open, right here." She points to her foot. "This is my boyfriend Bobby."

Bobby is swinging on the bars too but says nothing.

Julia, who has been observing, says, "Girls can't do that." She means girls can't hang by their legs as Susan is now doing.

Susan answers, "I can. Farm girls can."

Susan's self-typification, "farm girl," provided her with a valued explanatory scheme to account for her active behavior and her

somewhat ambiguous appearance. The typification was consistent with her personal and social identification as a girl, however incongruent her behavior and appearance with what everybody knew girls were like.

Both the typifications "farm girl" and "Tomboy" provided girls with ways to integrate what they knew about themselves, that they were people who liked to do active, rough, risk-taking things, with the meanings that prevailed in the social stock of knowledge, that girls were too delicate, afraid, and weak to climb trees or kick doors.

A comparison of the understanding of five-year old Marian, who used the term Tomboy, with the understanding of seven-year old Susan, who typified herself as a farm girl, illustrates a clear developmental sequence in the acquisition, construction, and understanding of typical knowledge. Marian seemed to have been handed the term Tomboy, and she used it without fully understanding what it meant. She was not fully cognizant of the types of people to which it applied. Susan, in contrast, fully understood the meaning of the title farm girl, and she used the term appropriately and quite precisely. It seemed that she understood why I was asking her her name. Perhaps others had asked similar questions, or had even commented on how atypical a girl she was so she had come to understand others' motivation in questioning her in such a fashion. It would be interesting to know whether Susan had constructed the typification farm girl for herself or, like Marian, had inherited it from others. In any event, it was clear that she

had a way of being herself, maintaining her identity as a girl, and being proud of the way she was as a girl. Farm girls, Susan knew, were supposed to be different than other, regular girls.

At the same time, Susan's introduction of her boyfriend, Bobby, might have been a statement on her part that she was like other girls, although she was different. To girls, having a boyfriend had a special connection to being like a girl was supposed to be, that is, being pretty.

Having a Boyfriend Meant a Girl Was Pretty

Being pretty meant something to first-grade girls, or especially to first-grade girls, beyond certain observable and agreed upon qualities like long hair and long dresses or walking with one's knees together. To first-grade girls being pretty meant that one would have a boyfriend, and having a boyfriend, in turn, meant that one was pretty or was evidence that one was pretty. To most of the girls, who preferred to play with girls and who liked girls better than they liked boys, having a boyfriend seemed to be more significant as evidence of value rather than as a positive result in itself. A contrast of the behavior of the two girls and the two boys who were involved in "boyfriend and girlfriend" relationships illustrates the point.⁴ The two girls, Nancy and Katie, were often observed to present their boyfriends to other children as a source of prestige and status. In short, they indirectly boasted. The two boys, Glenn and Michael, were never observed to display any behavior even remotely suggesting that they viewed the meaning of

the relationships in terms of prestige, though both boys were as affectionate and involved as the two girls. To the boys, the value of the relationship was essentially private, and the meaning that the relationship had for them was not particularly relevant to the way they understood what it meant to be a boy, though some of the behavior and meanings of the girls did definitely enhance some of the values the two had as boys who-were-like-men. For instance, Nancy's portrayal of herself as a weak and helpless princess who had to be saved by a strong and courageous fellow enhanced Glenn's value.

Girls other than Nancy and Katie also talked about boyfriends who were not in the class in a way that signified a source of prestige for them. Most girls, however, never mentioned boyfriends at all except in their symbolic games. It was in the game of "Barbie" that the relationship between being pretty and being loved and having a boyfriend can be clearly seen and understood.

No activity was more definitely identified as being a "girls' game" than the game of Barbie,⁵ which was sometimes called "dolls." Unlike other games identified by girls and boys as belonging to girls, the game of Barbie was played exclusively by girls. No boy was ever observed to play Barbie, nor was a boy observed to show any interest whatever in the game or in playing. In fact, boys expressed more negative feelings about this game than they did about any other activity typified as belonging to girls.

At different times during the day, inside and outside, girls might be observed in small groups of two, three, or occasionally

four playing Barbie. With the exception of Wanda and Myra, most of the first-grade girls played Barbie fairly regularly. The game was most popular with Shelley, Julia, Karen, and Victoria. Kindergarten girls never played Barbie, but they did show an interest in the game by standing quietly and observing the others as they played. Occasionally, a kindergarten girl would ask to join the play, but would be refused, usually politely, because of the shortage of dolls. One had to have a doll to play, and, unlike the baby dolls, the teacher provided no Barbie type fashion dolls for the children.⁶ The girls who owned the dolls and brought them to school, Shelley, Victoria, Julia, Karen and Katie, were first-grade girls and generally preferred to share their dolls with other first-grade girls, who were more likely to be their "best friends" and who understood the meaning of the game better. The girls who owned the dolls shared the dolls and the doll clothes.

Barbie dolls or fashion dolls were not meant to represent babies like the dolls which were available in the housekeeping area. Barbie dolls were female young adult or teenage dolls.⁷ The dolls were about ten or eleven inches tall and their bodies were slender with long legs, torsos, and arms. They had movable legs, arms, and eyelids, and heads that could turn from side to side. All movements had to be made by the girls; the dolls did not move otherwise. Sexually mature, the dolls had small, high breasts without nipples. The pubic area was not detailed, and the dolls had no body hair except that on their heads and eyelashes. The hair of the dolls could be combed and washed and was

always long. The faces of the dolls were notable only for their lack of expression, though the girls thought the faces beautiful. Each doll had clothes which could be removed, and the girls usually had more than one outfit for each of the dolls.⁸

There were three interrelated elements present in all games of Barbie: the appearance of the dolls, the relationships of the dolls to boyfriends, and the relationships of the dolls to one another. The following is a typical game of Barbie and is presented so that the reader may know what it was like for the girls to play a game with the fashion dolls, a game some of them played many times during a week.

Day 60. Julia, Shelley, and Victoria are playing dolls on the rug near the blocks. Kara is standing close by and is closely observing the older girls as they play.

Julia has traded dolls with Victoria and now has a black fashion doll. Julia had previously given one of her dolls to her best friend, Shelley, so that each of the girls has a doll. The girls trade the doll clothes and talk about combining different parts of "outfits," the name the girls give to the clothes. After they trade clothes, each doll has two outfits. The girls are very companionable about sharing the clothes, and though Julia has the most doll clothes, she willingly shares them with the others.

As the girls dress the dolls, they talk.

Shelley begins, saying, "Pretend I'm the daughter and I'm going out on a date."

Julia responds, "Okay. 'Dear, what are you going to wear on your date?'"

Shelley answers, "I don't know. Sister [to Victoria], can I wear that evening gown of yours?"

Victoria hands the gown to Shelley and says, "I have a date, too. He's very handsome."

The girls continue to dress the dolls and suspend their pretense for a time. Julia tells them about her stepmother's ring ". . . a big ring with five huge fake diamonds in it!" In a little while they resume their pretend roles.

Victoria says, "Sister, you've been getting dressed for an hour. We'll be late for our dates."

Shelley, laughing, says, "Titty bopping." Shelley and Victoria move their dolls together so that the dolls' breasts touch. All three girls laugh.

Shelley says, "Oh shucks. Where'd I put my eyebrow pencil? I'm gonna use it." She gets the pencil from the little case, which also has makeup, combs, a mirror, and an instrument which curls the eyelashes. Shelley looks at me as she puts the eyebrow pencil on the doll's face and says, "You don't like to wear makeup, do you?"

I answer that I don't wear makeup.

Shelley shrugs her shoulders and continues to apply pencil to her doll's face.

Victoria has finished dressing her doll and says, "I'm the pretty one."

Julia replies, "I'm a beautiful princess."

The girls accentuate their remarks about the dolls with limp wrists, cocked heads, and fluttering eyelashes. Shelley flicks her wrist, tilts her chin to her shoulder, blinks her eyes, and begins to talk in a whispery, breathy voice, "Dear . . . well, let's go on our dates now."

Julia turns and says to Kara, who has been silently, closely, watching, "Call the game Girlfriend and Boyfriend."

Shelley says, "Oh to me. I'm gonna get married. Who's gonna be the boy? I'll go get one of my gingerbread men." She gets the man from her cubby and says, "My gingerbread man is too short; he's shorter than my doll. I'll use something else, G.I. Joe, I'll just pretend."

Shelley makes kissing sounds and puckers her lips.

Julia makes kissing sounds and closes her eyes.

Victoria watches them, while she changes her doll's clothes to another outfit.

Shelley mentions, "I'm gonna get a Barbie Country Camper for Christmas."

Julia answers, "I'm gonna get an Easy-bake Oven and some new clothes for my Barbie. She'll be beautiful . . . more beautiful."

The teacher announces that it is time for clean-up, and the girls begin to put their things away.

The name of the game was "Girlfriend and Boyfriend." Going out on dates, getting married, kissing and otherwise engaging in intimate relations with "pretend" but always handsome men was an ever-present feature of the game, a feature always preceded by the most important question, "What shall I wear to be beautiful?" The girls seemed to believe that women/girls achieve value through relationships with men and they achieve relationships with men because they look beautiful, because they can be seen to be beautiful.

The most valued relationship was the relationship between the girls, signified by the intimate, supporting, friendly relations of the dolls. As in the game of house, the girls assumed familial relationships. The relations of mother-daughter and sister-sister were almost always part of the game and were essential to it, but they were not what the girls said the game was about.

What the game was about was the relationship of the girls to men. As in house, the other important "girls' game," the meaning

of the game had to do with girls or women in intimate relations with other *types* of people. In Barbie, as in house, girls practiced orienting themselves, or their future, projected selves, to others who were different from them, and it was the essential element which structured part of the central meaning of the game. As we shall see, this type of pretense was much different than the games of the boys. In the games called "boys' games" the pretend relations, like the actual, immediate relations, were between and about boys/men who were like the players themselves. In most boys' games there were no female roles or children's roles. Boys learned to orient themselves to other boys. Girls, meanwhile, were learning to construct meaning and value in relations with men and boys and children, though they actually valued and cherished their relationships with other girls.

In both the games of house and Barbie participants were oriented to intimate relations with others, but there seemed to be an essential difference in the way they experienced these two games. When the girls played house and assumed the role of Mother, they appeared to be experiencing the emotion they were pretending. When they pretended to be expressing their love to their babies, the affective dimension of their behavior seemed to be congruent with their pretense. That is, they seemed to be feeling affection manifested in an unself-conscious, gathering-in, protective posture. In the game of Barbie emotions were experienced at a different level. There seemed to be little congruence between the feelings that the players were pretending, love, personal, intimate

interest in a boyfriend, and the feelings that they were having. Instead the girls were, in effect, in the position of observing themselves through their alter egos, the dolls. They were engaged in pretended intense feelings with others, while they were essentially interested in their own appearance rather than with another substantial character or personality. The boyfriends were without substance, and we know nothing about them other than knowing that they were handsome, an attribute which served to confirm that the doll/girl herself was beautiful.

Like the game of house, Barbie had no competitive elements which were central or necessary to playing the game. Instances of competitive or conflicting behavior were incidental to the shared meanings and did not regularly occur as part of the interaction. The tendency of certain girls, especially Julia, Victoria, and Karen, to initiate invidious comparisons about appearance ("My dolls are the most beautiful of all and have the nicest clothes.") offended the other players and caused them to feel hurt. Such comparisons countered the essential unity of the game, which was partially based on the pretense of intimacy and affection, sometimes causing girls to withdraw from the game altogether. Thus, any impulses to be competitive or to show hostility were mediated by the need to maintain an atmosphere of unity, friendliness, and support so as to maintain the meaning of the game. In general, playing at familial and romantic intimacy promoted norms for behavior which encouraged cooperation. When playing Barbie,

most girls supported other girls in their fantasies of being beautiful and having boyfriends.

Competition based upon appearance and having a boyfriend did, however, play a central role in another activity of some first-grade girls. Players did not have a name for the activity. Using their categories, I call the game "Who's the prettiest?" The activity combined the knowledge that girls were supposed to be pretty with the knowledge that pretty girls have boyfriends to create the most competitive of girls' gender-patterned activities. The following is a typical account of the game.

Day 27. Katie and Shelley are leafing through a song-book which has pictures in a 19th century motif. The women are wearing long dresses, wide-brimmed hats, the men the suits of the period.

Katie is holding the book and turning the pages. She begins the game by pointing to the more elaborately dressed of the two women on a page and asserting, "That's me."

Shelley points to the other woman and says, "That's me."

Katie says, "I'm the prettiest!"

Shelley says nothing, but as Katie turns the page, Shelley quickly points to the woman in the foreground who is holding a parasol and who is the center of attention in the scene, "That's me."

Katie, obviously disappointed, points to the two women standing in the background and says, "That's me."

From this point the girls compete to claim the identity of the woman who is the most desirable, the one whom the girls most want to be like. The characteristics of the most desirable are agreed upon, tacitly, by the girls. Desirable women have the

most elaborate dresses, the longest hair, are pictured in the foreground and, most important, are with men. On those pages where there are men and women, the girls become more excited and somewhat anxious about which will get to be the woman who is pictured with the man. The girl who fails to make the claim expresses disappointment and mild resentment toward the other.

Katie holds the book in a manner that gives her an advantage. Shelley complains, "You're not being fair, Katie. You won't give me a chance!"

Katie shrugs her shoulders and answers, "So. You do too have a chance." She does, however, show the picture so that Shelley may see it better.

The two continue the game until the book is completed.

Julia and Katie were the two girls who played the game most often, and they were the only girls who were observed to initiate it with others. They always asked first-grade girls to play rather than kindergarten girls. Though some first-grade girls, notably Anne and Nancy, seemed to dislike the game and only played once or twice, all of the older girls understood immediately what the game was about and what the criteria were for choosing among the figures.

Neither kindergarten girls nor boys seemed to understand what the game was about. Michael, observing Katie and Shelley playing one day, joined them and selected the men for himself. But when he became aware that the girls were having some strong feelings about the activity, he withdrew and observed them with a puzzled expression. Kindergarten girls sometimes watched the first-grade girls play and occasionally took the same book the others used and tried to play the game themselves. When the younger girls played, or

tried to play, the game was completely without bad feelings, mainly because they considered the criteria they used to be silly rather than serious. Kindergarten girls would playfully argue over who was going to be the girl and who the boy because both girls wanted to be the girls, but they would also choose to be balloons, flowers, animals, and other objects. In essence, the kindergarten girls weren't playing the same game as the first-grade girls.

The meaning of the game was known to be relevant to both girls and adult women. One day I was sitting near Julia, as she was leafing through the music book. Julia attempted to initiate me as a participant in her game.

Day 31. Julia shows me a picture in the music book. The picture is of two women standing together to one side and another woman standing alone to the other. In the center of the page is a man who is looking at the woman who is standing alone.

Julia points to the woman standing alone and says to me, "That's me." Then she points to the two women standing to the side and says, "That's you." I say nothing, but look at the picture impassively.

Julia looks at me for a moment, waiting for me to respond. Julia seems to assume that I, unlike other participants, do not understand what the game is about. She makes her meaning clearer by adding, "They're jealous because he chose her." Again she looks to me for a response. Getting none, she leafs through the book for a while longer and then leaves.

Julia was neither hostile nor hateful when she asserted that she, rather than I, was the woman the man chose. She was merely asserting that she was of more value using those criteria by which value for our mutual type was determined.

Unlike the game of Barbie where there were unlimited men so that everyone could have a self-affirming pretend relationship with a man, the pictures in the book, like real life, presented men as a limited commodity, a commodity whose value derived not from unique human qualities but from the potentially self-validating public nature of the relationship. Status and an affirmation of one's beauty as a girl were at least part of what having a boyfriend meant for these six-year old girls.

Were most of these girls motivated, in ongoing interaction with other girls, by feelings of competition around appearance and its symbols? The answer is clearly no if we consider the interpersonal relationships and interaction of the girls in its totality. It is important to understand that the emphasis girls placed upon appearance and having boyfriends took place primarily within the context of pretend games, games where girls assumed the roles of teenagers or adult women, and only a fraction of this type of play was competitive. In most of it the girls were supportive of one another in positive ways. Beyond the context of such games, there were few instances where girls were observed to be competitive or negative with one another about appearance. Those few times, the presence of significant, high status boys seemed to be a stimulus for certain girls, but not most, to make comparisons or to be competitive, hostile or jealous. "Who do you think is the prettiest, Glenn? Me or Vicky or Anne?" asked Karen. And Julia, in the presence of Katie with whom she was having an argument, asked Michael, "Michael, you aren't Katie's boyfriend, are you? You don't

love her anymore, do you?" Such behavior and meanings were clearly based on a more subtle understanding of what the girls understood to be significant to adult women. Kindergarten girls never displayed such behavior, and, as we have seen, they did not share the same understanding of the importance and meaning of women's relatedness to men along a romantic dimension. Although the kindergarten girls did include romantic elements into their play as mothers, the romantic themes were certainly minor. It was also clear, however, that kindergarten girls watched and learned from first-grade girls.

In real life, unlike in the pretend games, girls were more interested in other girls than boys and they liked girls better than they did boys. It was to other girls, not boys, to whom they referred their behavior and meanings. Only twice, when the interaction involved only girls, did I observe a girl to make a direct, negative remark about another girl's appearance. Once Wanda was criticizing Nancy to Anne and she said, "Ugly old Nancy is going to ugly old Hoover's class; thinks she's so ugly." Wanda did not actually believe Nancy to be ugly, but was simply being hateful to Nancy. The second time involved two kindergarten girls, Betty and Marian.

Day 64. Marian, Brenda, and Betty are playing in the small playground in loose association, climbing and swinging from the bars and walking on the edge of the wall. Betty has a sad expression on her face. She seems preoccupied and a little angry. She asks Brenda, "Are you Marian's friend?"

Brenda does not notice what Betty is saying and she continues to hang by her legs, saying nothing. Then Betty, looking in Marian's direction, adds, "Brenda, I know something you don't know. Do you want to hear?" Again, Brenda does not respond.

A few moments later Betty says to Marian: "You can't love me anymore, Marian, because I'm going to move."

Marian sighs and answers, "You say that every day, Betty." Marian swings on the bars, while Betty stands silently, looking hurt.

Later, after Marian has gone, Betty tells Janie, "I don't like Marian. I like Brenda better. Brenda has nicer clothes, and she has prettier hair with no tangles in it." Janie does not answer, and Betty continues to look unhappy.

Like other children in the class, Betty liked Marian and wanted to be her friend because Marian was friendly, cheerful, supportive, positive, fun and independent. She was the most popular of all of the kindergarten girls. Marian was friendly to Betty, but Betty wanted more attention and intimacy than the other girl offered. When she did not get the desired attention, she felt hurt and rejected and she wanted to express her feelings of being rejected, so she criticized Marian's hair and dress. Marian was actually quite well dressed and had a large number of fashionable clothes and imaginatively styled hair.

On the surface it might appear that Betty was indicating that appearance was an important criteria she used to choose friends and to evaluate the worth of other girls. There were some very subtle indications that some girls might use prettiness to assess a girl's value, but it was clear that it was not a primary criteria.

More likely, it seemed that appearance and its symbols, dress and hair and boyfriends, were criteria girls used to assess their own adequacy and value more than the value of other girls, and it was in this way that prettiness played its role. Betty, who had the fewest and oldest clothes and whose hair was seldom styled, seemed to be making a statement of her feelings about being rejected by Marian in terms that were relevant to her as a girl who did not have the symbols of prettiness, which, to some of the girls, constituted beauty. Most adults would have said that Betty was a very pretty girl. Betty's statement was one expressing her own anxiety about her appearance and value rather than any real indication of the way girls chose and valued their friends.

However, most girls only seemed to feel at most a mild concern over the adequacy of their appearance. Some girls, especially those who possessed many of the symbols of prettiness, especially clothes, seemed to feel no anxiety at all. On the other hand, consider this statement by Marian, a girl who was self-confident and well dressed.

Observer: Marian, if you were grown up and were going to have a baby, would you want a girl baby or a boy baby?

Marian: A girl. No, a boy. Then I wouldn't have to worry about a boy crying all the time 'cause I'd let my sister take care of him, because then I wouldn't have to worry about buying a girl a dress.

Marian knew that part of a mother's job with a girl was making her pretty by acquiring the symbols of beauty. But she knew,

perhaps from personal experience, that the task was a worrisome one. According to Marian, even though boys aren't as good as girls, it would be better to have a boy because of the worrisome task of constructing prettiness for girls.

Considering the important role that appearance had in some of the girls' games, the attention that girls gave to symbols of appearance, especially in making their arts and crafts, and the universal nature of the knowledge that girls were expected to be pretty, it is interesting that issues of appearance seemed to play such a minor role in the immediate social relations of girls with one another.

There were subtle indications that a girl's possession and use of the symbols of prettiness which will, hereafter, be referred to as prettiness for the sake of brevity, were among the factors that determined a girl's prestige with *some* girls. For others, it was not at all clear that prettiness played a significant role. Prestige, or status, were apparently dimensions of girls' selections of playmates, associates, and those they called "friends." But prettiness was without question not the primary criteria girls used to award prestige or to select friends and playmates.

To understand why prettiness did not play a more important role, it is useful to contrast girls' social relations with those of boys. Girls' social relations were generally nonhierarchical, especially when compared to boys'. Leadership among girls was similarly diffuse and girls acknowledged no leaders among themselves. This, too, was in vivid contrast to boys, who actively and

eagerly acknowledged leaders. As we have seen, part of the reason for girls' nonhierarchical, leaderless social relations may have been the type of games they played when they pretended to be women.

In any event, prettiness could have conceivably been a foundation for girls' development of social hierarchies and leaders. After all, prettiness was an acknowledged relative consideration, and it was possible for boys to say that one girl was prettier than another, and for girls and boys to rank order girls along the dimension of prettiness. Boys used one of their central criteria for boys, that of strength, in such a manner. But this possibility ignores part of the basic nature of prettiness as girls understood it.

Unlike strength, girls' criteria for prettiness were essentially dependent upon the subjective apprehension and judgement of others. Girls could not *prove* themselves to be pretty with the same conclusiveness and concreteness that boys could prove themselves to be strong. Prettiness was fundamentally passive. Girls could acquire the symbols and behavior of beauty, but ultimately the attribution of beauty depended upon the agreement of others. Strength, by contrast, was fundamentally active. The symbols were very important, but ultimately, judgement depended upon one's actions in and upon the world. When someone got angry at a girl, that person could deny that she was pretty, thus denying her the necessary confirmation of her prettiness. One's denial of a boy's strength could itself be conclusively denied, in turn, by the

concrete actions of the boy himself. He could, as some boys did, "beat up" the unfriendly denier.

The dependence of prettiness upon the actions and judgements of others was illustrated by the rise and fall of Katie's star in the classroom social structure. At the beginning of the year Katie and Michael had been "boyfriend and girlfriend," but after a while the affair ended. Katie subsequently lost status with both girls and boys, but for different reasons. The reason Katie lost status with some girls seemed to be because she had lost prestige by losing one of the symbols of prettiness, having a boyfriend. One day before the relationship was over, Katie had told Julia that Michael loved her because she was "the most beautiful." One day after the relationship had ended, Julia and Katie were arguing and fussing about something at the art table. Michael was there, too. During the argument, Julia, ever alert to issues of appearance, turned to Michael and said, "Michael, you aren't Katie's boyfriend, are you? You don't love Katie anymore, do you?" Katie was taken aback by that line of attack and retreated in hurt frustration from the table and the argument.

Because of the tenacity of some of the stereotypes about women's behavior with other women about men and jealousy, it must be firmly and clearly stated that Julia's behavior, here and at other times around the same issues, was unusual among the girls. However, it does illustrate girls' essential typifications about girls and women.

In addition to the other-directed, passive nature of prettiness, a closely related factor which contributed to girls' and boys' respective typifications about gender resulting in very different sorts of social relations was the girls' idea that "girls are nice," an essential typification that will be examined in the next chapter. The point here is that "niceness" seemed to be intimately connected to "prettiness" in the girls' construction of social reality. The idea of niceness helped to keep the idea of prettiness from becoming a central theme girls might use to organize their social relations in an openly competitive, hierarchical fashion, as boys did. Among other things, niceness meant that one did not boast about oneself or say things about others that made them feel bad about themselves. In real life, though, some girls did boast and say mean things to others.

Significantly, however, girls almost never said that they were relatively prettier than other girls or said mean things about other girls' *appearances*. Even when girls were angry with other girls, including those whom they did not particularly care for, they rarely referred to the others' appearance to express and ventilate their anger. When they did express their anger by referring to appearance, it was in an indirect manner, for instance, as Julia did with Katie in the incident described, or by criticizing the appearance of a fashion doll, or, more abstractly, by criticizing the art work of a girl by calling it "ugly" instead of "pretty," the usual term girls used to refer to arts and crafts. The latter criticism was perhaps especially salient when

the content of the arts had to do with appearance, a common theme of girls' art. But girls usually did not make direct negative comments about another girl's appearance, either in face-to-face interaction or away from her hearing. Similarly, girls only indirectly boasted about how pretty they were as individuals. Some girls would claim that their fashion dolls were beautiful, or that they themselves were beautiful when they had assumed some pretend, fantasy role during play, but they very rarely said that they, the real life individual girls, were pretty.

Prettiness, like niceness, was feminine to girls, that is, was being like girls were supposed to be. If one was mean to another, either by criticizing the other or by suggesting invidious comparisons by boasting, one detracted from the gestalt of one's femininity. Therefore, if one was mean, one detracted from one's femininity and one's prettiness. It was ugly to be mean. And since issues of prettiness were of central concern to girls and their feelings, it was particularly ugly, perhaps, to be mean about appearance. In any event, there seemed to be an unspoken rule among girls that one did not say mean things about another's appearance or boast about one's own appearance. Most girls would never suggest, for instance, that they thought they were the prettiest in the class. Similarly, girls would not typically say that others were ugly, or even not as pretty as they. It was also possible that the relatively passive, dependent, other-directed nature of prettiness supported this niceness. If girls said others were ugly then they might make themselves more vulnerable

to being called ugly too. However, I don't think girls acted from consciousness of vulnerability but more from simple rule-like typifications. And, indeed, many of the girls were typically nice and kind with others.

Whatever the complex of reasons, issues of prettiness and ugliness having to do with real-life individuals in the classroom remained largely implicit, unspoken, and semi-private. Consequently, they were less available for use in organizing social relations of girls in an active sense. Those girls for whom prettiness was an especially salient category had few social vehicles to propound their view of the importance of prettiness to other girls, girls for whom prettiness was being like a girl, but for whom prettiness remained a relatively vague concept of secondary importance. Girls whose biographic histories were scantily clad with issues of prettiness might sustain their opinion of its secondary nature without serious social consequences.

By contrast, boys' typifications about strength and weakness were verbally and behaviorally explicit and a central concern of public and social life among boys. Issues of strength were almost constantly in the foreground of boys' social interaction within groups and, thus, had far more power to impose themselves on an individual boy's awareness regardless of his biographic situation. Consequently, such issues as strength contributed in obvious ways to the structure of social relations of boys and in ways of which boys were largely aware.

Girls' attention to prettiness and the knowledge that girls, like women, were concerned with appearance, effected the social system children created in ways similar to those previously described for girls knowing that they were like women who were mothers. Games like Barbie and games of house and mother, based as they were on intimate, personal, and familial relationships, further habitualized girls to a style of interaction and to practicing social relations which emphasized cooperation, equality among players, accommodation to the desires of other players, and relations based on affection and personal connection to others within the context of small groups. This style of play was quite different from that of boys, whose play groups were typically structured around competition and hierarchical social relations, cooperation and accommodation within a larger, more impersonal group structure, and social relations largely based on the idea and use of personal and impersonal power. Though far from the most important factor,¹⁰ these different types of group structures seemed to contribute to the differing senses of unity that the genders had about their gender group. Girls tended to be more personally committed to a few other girls, whereas some boys, certainly not all, were committed to the *idea* of the large group of boys with whom they regularly play, a group positively identified by boys as a boys' group. Boys might feel hostile toward individual boys within the group, however.

Because girls' games based on prettiness were entirely concerned with girls' interests and were irrelevant to boys as

boys saw it, the games contributed to the segregation of girls and boys into different play groups. In turn, this segregation supported and increasingly solidified the idea that children of both genders had that "girls like to play with girls, and boys like to play with boys," an idea that supported and represented the concept that girls and boys were dichotomous types who had radically different interests and styles of acting in the world.

Finally, by playing games based on appearance and intimacy, girls created in the immediacy of the classroom a social world similar to that of adult women as the girls understood it, a world which confirmed and validated the knowledge girls had referred to create the world. In this way, girls secured the typical knowledge about girls and women and what they were like, making it more real, firmer. Simultaneously, by assuming roles based on appearance and romance both in girls' games and in their social play with boys, e.g., "beautiful and helpless princess," girls also confirmed the boys' knowledge about girls, especially the knowledge that girls were people who were weak and relatively powerless. As we will see, this element of boys' knowledge had significant consequences for the nature of the social structure.

Perhaps one of the most important results of the girls' knowledge that girls were supposed to be pretty, with its complex of meanings, had to do with cognition itself. What girls knew about the significance of their appearances helped to structure their attention and interpretation of events and objects in their lifeworlds. When considering the world, girls often gave meaning to

the world by using categories of appearance relevant to them as girls. Girls' knowledge about appearance sometimes determined how girls constructed their social reality. Consider:

Day 44. A practicing teacher from the university has brought a nondescript, square, brown, cardboard box of the sort one might find at a supermarket to class. She gathers all the students in front of the class and begins the lesson by saying, "I bet you can't guess what's in this mystery box! Who wants to guess? Raise your hand."

Several children raise their hands. The woman looks around and dramatically calls on Victoria. "What's in the box, Victoria?"

Victoria eagerly answers, "A wedding dress!"

The teacher says, "No" and then tells them what is in the box.¹¹

Girls tended to encounter an uncertain world in terms of what girls knew to be significant to them as girls. A wedding dress, signifying as it did both prettiness and the attention and prestigious social relationships believed to flow from prettiness, emerged in Victoria's consciousness from all of the possibilities in her world. One need only imagine a boy answering that a groom's coat or a wedding tuxedo was in the box to appreciate the difference in the categories and relevancies with which boys and girls constructed their reality.

In the following section I will discuss another element of knowledge essential to girls as girls which had more of an immediate impact upon the social structure and social relations developed in the classroom, especially upon the social distribution of power by gender, the knowledge that girls as a type were "nice."

Summary

Girls knew that girls, like women, were interested in their appearance, interested in being seen to be pretty. This was an essential part of what it meant to girls to be like girls and women.

Though both kindergarten and first-grade girls knew that girls were supposed to be pretty, and though both groups agreed on many aspects of prettiness, the first-grade girls had a more refined, explicit knowledge of what prettiness meant. Kindergarten girls shared some of their ideas but at a more intuitive, implicit level. Consequently, prettiness was more important to first-grade girls, both as an organizer of knowledge and as a motive in actual social relations. Kindergarten girls retained a relatively greater interest in house and mother play, whereas first-grade girls played more games having to do with appearance.

Girls contrasted prettiness with boys' strength. Strength for boys, like prettiness for girls, was generally considered a positive attribute by girls. The dichotomization of prettiness and strength contributed to girls' understanding of prettiness as something opposite to strength. Fragility, delicacy, dependency, helplessness, and other forms of weakness were sometimes typified by girls as prettiness. Girls were ambivalent, however, about this characterization of themselves as weak, knowing as they did that strength was valued and weakness was not valued. Nevertheless, girls liked the idea that women and girls were pretty.

Unlike any of the typifications boys had about their gender, girls' typifications of girls and women as pretty were related to girls' and women's perceived personal relationships to members of the other gender. "Pretty girls," girls knew, "have boyfriends," and having a boyfriend meant that one was pretty. Some first-grade girls understood a girl's prestige to be essentially connected to her real or fantasized romantic relationships with boys and men. This connection was most evident in the game of Barbie, but was also occasionally exhibited by certain first-grade girls in their interaction with other children in the classroom. In contrast, boys had no essential typifications whereby they linked their prestige as boys to having a positive relationship with girls. As will be discussed later, certain elements of boys' knowledge suggested that boys who were connected to girls were less than other boys.

The findings also suggest that prettiness was not used explicitly and publicly by girls to rank order other girls in terms of prestige, though there was some suggestion that some girls may have made such evaluations privately. The relatively minor role of prettiness in the social relations of the girls seemed to be related to two factors, the essentially passive, other-dependent nature of attributing prettiness, and the apparent link between being pretty and being "nice," another essential characteristic girls attributed to girls and women.

The games of prettiness where girls pretended to be interested in their appearances, boyfriends and husbands, and going out

on dates helped to structure social relationships and modes of interacting in essentially the same ways as the game of house. Girls played with other girls in small groups, played cooperatively with no recognized, legitimate avenue for competition, and created egalitarian pretend and actual social relationships without any formal leadership roles or recognized leaders among the girls in real life.

Like the game of house, the game of Barbie served to create as objective reality those subjective elements of knowledge girls had used to create the game. Everyone could see girls playing Barbie. Everyone could see that girls, but not boys, were interested in how they looked, in romantic and intimate relationships, in being inside houses, and in playing with other girls. Barbie contributed to the segregation of the genders and the children's knowledge that boys and girls were different.

Notes

1. This cheer has been a part of child culture for at least 25 years. I remember doing the same cheer as a child of eight.
2. I did not observe a corresponding tendency on the part of either girls or boys to attribute girl-likeness to everything that was said to be pretty if such things had no explicit connection to gender. However, almost everything that was thought or said to be pretty seemed to have to do with gender to girls.
3. Anne almost always wore long pants or shorts to school. One day, however, she wore a dress, because her mother was going to take her somewhere after school. The entire day Anne was pulling the edge of her short dress down; acting subdued, was self-conscious when she walked and sat down, looked generally uncomfortable, and tried to keep her "knees together."

4. While it might seem peculiar to talk of "involved" six-year olds in the context of romantic relationships, the term fits. All four of the children were, in varying degrees, very much concerned with and focused upon their partners during the time of their relationships. Nancy and Glenn were "boyfriend and girlfriend" for a little over a week when Nancy ended the affair when Glenn tried to kiss her, a behavior she had been promoting in a teasing way. "Kissing boys," she announced to him later, "is out of the question!" Michael and Katie had a relatively intensely affectionate, mutual relationship for about a month during which time they referred much of their behavior to one another. That ended when Michael decided that Katie wanted to spend too much time inside "doing nothing," while he wanted to go outside with her and play in the large group with other boys.
5. Barbie is the brand name of a specific type of doll known in the toy trade as fashion dolls. Because Barbie was the first, or at least the most popular among the first of such dolls, the children tended to use the name Barbie generically. Those girls who played the game most often, however, distinguished between the brand names and would occasionally object when the dolls were misnamed. Their corrections were typically a way of asserting social superiority, however, as they also typically called the game Barbie even when there were other kinds of dolls being used. Boys usually called the game Barbie and did not distinguish at all between the dolls.
6. Mrs. Cowan commented to me that she "regrets that girls have started playing with adult type dolls at this age. They used to start playing with that type of doll at about ten." Unfortunately, I did not ask her why she regretted the early use of the doll, assuming that she regretted it because the girls were "growing up too fast," an often heard adult objection to the behavior of girls which centers around appearance, clothes, and boyfriends.

As to why these dolls appear earlier, one may only speculate. Perhaps because of the demographic changes in the larger society, girls leave mother-type play earlier as they have fewer role models for infant-mother play and see it as less important than girls previously saw it. Just as likely the reason could be attributable to the advertising campaigns of toy companies who recognize that more money can be made from the fashion dolls, fashion clothes, and other paraphernalia than from a baby type doll, even one that speaks, walks, and wears diapers.

When I was a child of about ten I played a game similar to Barbie with movie star paper dolls and paper clothes which sold for about 20 or 30 cents for everything. Beach houses and country campers were left to one's imagination. Now one can hardly find any paper dolls in stores, and none that are comparable to the ones we used. Betty Grable was our favorite.

7. There was a male doll of the genre, Ken, who was called "Barbie's boyfriend" by the manufacturer. Though girls sometimes mentioned Ken when they played, no girl ever brought a Ken or male doll of any kind to school.
8. The doll manufacturers state that the single most popular costume, the single best seller year after year, withstanding all changes in fashion, has been the *bride's dress*.
9. Some of the first-grade girls, especially Shelley, Julia, and Kim, often asked me questions alluding to my appearance. Shelley was especially critical of my dress or lack of dressiness. Because I fit, in some ways, her typifications of what a young woman was supposed to be and look like, she expected me to fit her image in other ways. For instance, she seemed to think that I should wear nicer clothes, makeup, more jewelry, and so on.

An event which happened midway through the school year helped me see how some girls typified me in relation to their expectations for women. Shelley and I were walking down the hall together when a child from another class asked, "Is she your little girl?" Though Shelley and I had had little personal contact, I answered, "No, but that would be nice if she were."

Shelley waited a moment and then said to me, "No. I wouldn't want to be your little girl. You'd make me wear my hiking boots and blue jeans every day."

Two boys also commented on my dress. Primarily, however, within the context of my not having a variety of clothes. Shawn asked me, "Why do you wear the same skirt every day?" I did not wear the same skirt but similar skirts of denim. His remark was surreptitiously critical, but more in the context of class, rather than gender, distinctions it seemed.

10. The most important factor in boys' commitment to their gender group was boys' typifications that "boys are better than girls." See Chapter XI for a discussion of how this idea contributed to the boys' construction of unified gender groups.

11. I did not record what was in the box in my field notes, but am certain that it had nothing to do with wedding dresses or with appearance and its other symbols.

CHAPTER VII "GIRLS ARE NICE"

The third of the three essential elements of knowledge girls had about girls was that "girls are nice." This section will describe what being nice meant to girls and how girls used this knowledge within the social context of this classroom.

The concept of niceness, the idea that things or people or types of conduct were nice or not nice, had importance and meaning to the girls that it did not have for the boys. Girls used the categories of niceness, and those which suggested states opposite of niceness, more often and with more intensity than boys, who used the concepts more sparingly and in a context largely unrelated to gender.

Though girls referred to the terms more often than boys did during child-to-child interaction, they did not use these terms as frequently as the boys used such gender-related terms as "strong." Girls did not go about talking about being nice, and they did not relate or define practically all elements in the environment to questions of niceness or not niceness.

However, when I asked the girls about characteristics of girls or boys, about their social preferences and about differences and similarities between girls and boys, I was struck by the frequency of the term nice. Niceness emerged as a primary element of the girls' knowledge about the types girls and women

and helped them to determine what was relevant in their perception and construction of their life-world. "Girls," girls would say, "are nice." And more precisely, "Girls are nicer than boys."

What has to be understood by the idea of nice as the girls used it? Being nice sometimes meant different things to different individuals depending on the context. For instance, both girls and boys thought that people who let other people join play groups were nice. Children said that their friends were nice and that people whom they did not like were not. Children who shared with others were nice, and people who helped others with their school work were nice. Nice was a subtle, varied, and complex idea in some ways.

There were, however, some meanings which girls basically shared that specifically referred to gender differences. For one thing, the typification "girls are nice" meant that girls were more likely than boys to do what adults told them to do and to observe and obey adult limits.

Observer: Marian, what can girls do?

Marian: . . . pay attention better than boys.

Observer: Why?

Marian: Because they act nicer, because they are gooder. They do everything their mothers tell them to do.

Observer: Julia, who has more fun, girls or boys?

Julia: Girls, 'cause boys get into trouble.

Observer: Why?

Julia: I don't know. They do things that they can do at home and can't do in school. Girls act nice in school.

From what girls said, they expected to be valued and rewarded for doing what adults told them to do, for accommodating to adult expectations and rules. They expected, apparently, to be told that they were nice and were, in Kara's words, "good girls" for helping mothers around the house, an activity girls frequently alluded to during their games. And they expected to be rewarded, or at least to escape punishment, for not "getting into trouble," especially in school. Girls expected boys to be punished for their poor behavior in school.

Some girls suggested that girls were nicer than boys because boys were noisier and more active than girls. Kara complained that boys ". . . run around too much, just run around and play monster games and be's nasty and makes noise." Myra and Victoria both said that they would want girl babies because, among other things, boys were "hard to handle" and girls were "nicer and easier to handle." One part of the meaning of being nice for most girls² was not being so loud or active as the boys.

"Nice Girls" and "Mean Boys"

Within this social context the most important thing that being nice meant to girls was not being aggressive, especially physically aggressive. Nice people did not use physical force against others, especially offensively and especially against the person who was making the judgement. To some children it seemed that a child who hit could still be considered nice as long as they weren't the ones being hit and hurt. It was aggressiveness,

among the meanings girls shared, which really separated girls and boys along the dimension of "nice" and its polar opposite, "mean." "Nice people don't hit; mean people hit." "Girls are nice; boys are mean." Consider:

Observer: Whom do you like to play with best in the class?³

Myra: I like to play with girls. Boys are mean; they hit.

Observer: Do girls have fun?

Marian: Yes.

Observer: Do boys have fun?

Marian: Yes.

Observer: Who has more fun, boys or girls?

Marian: Girls have more fun, because boys are always beatin' up on each other and makin' each other cry. Boys are too mean, too tough.

Observer: Karen, would you want a girl baby or a boy baby if you have a baby when you grow up?

Karen: A girl baby. (Why?) I'd want a girl baby because they're nicer; they don't beat on you.

Girls knew that the type 'boy' was a type who fights. Girls also knew that boys could "beat up girls," as well as each other, and "make them cry." The girls accounted for this difference in fighting behavior of girls and boys in a number of ways. They sometimes said "boys are bigger,"⁴ "boys are stronger and can hit harder," and "boys know how to fight better." Most of the girls

saw themselves as being at a disadvantage not only because of these assumed physical differences and the differences in knowledge, but also because "boys are mean and like to fight."

What the girls knew about the ability and willingness of boys to fight was supported by group behavior patterns which were readily apparent to them, as they were to even casual observers. Though some boys never began fights and did not like to fight, as a group boys were involved in far more aggressive encounters, physical and verbal, and their aggressive behavior was far more intense than girls', linked as it was to essential meanings of masculinity. Most of the intense aggression which took place in the classroom involved boys rather than girls, and rarely did intense fights take place when only girls were involved. In addition, boys' play was characterized by what boys called "play fighting" or "pretend fighting" where boys wrestled around on the ground, sometimes for minutes at a time. Often, however, pretend fights became real fights or were sometimes real fights thinly disguised as play by one or both of the participants.

Though most play and real fights were between boys, girls were also subject to being hit, and intense cross-gender aggression, initiated by some boys, was not rare. No girl in the class lacked the experience of being hit by a boy. With the exception of Anne, all of the girls were somewhat afraid of many of the boys and were conscious of the potential of boys to cause them pain, a potential they generally did not attribute to girls and certainly not to girls as a type, for girls, as the girls knew, were nice.

Some of the more physically timid of the girls seemed to be concerned with questions of their security much of the time when they played with boys, especially when they played outside where boys tended to want to play rough. Observe how Shelley tried to incorporate the idea of being nice into a game she was playing with two boys whom she liked, but was nevertheless a little afraid of when out-of-doors.

Day 32. Today there are an unusual number of girls and younger boys playing with the large group of regular players, most of whom are boys.

The group seems to be so large that the play is relatively unstructured. There are several competing themes of play, and no theme which unifies the entire group.

For the moment, Shelley, an infrequent participant in the large group play, has the attention of several children. Shelley describes herself as a "witch" and then changes her title to that of a "fairy."

Michael and Bart join Shelley in her fantasy when she "freezes" them by putting them under a "spell." The boys stand as still as possible.

Shelley, pointing her magic wand at Michael again, says, "Buzzle! That makes you be nice to me, Michael!"

Michael just stands and looks at her for a moment and then shakes his head and says, "You can't do the same thing twice, Shelley," and he and Bart leave to join another group.

When Shelley used her power to make Michael be nice to her, she meant that he should play with her without playing rough and without hitting her or playfully wrestling. She knew that Michael was a nice boy, but she also knew that, like the type boy, he liked to play rough.

When Shelley introduced the concept of nice and the idea that power, a central concept for boys, would be used to cause another to be nice, the boys lost interest in her fantasy. Niceness was uninteresting and irrelevant to most boys, especially during outside play where they were free to do as they pleased, at least as far as adult intervention went. Shelley's introduction of the idea of nice revealed her to be, in Michael's estimation, a person who was not fun to play with and a person who did not know how, or was unwilling, to "play right," that is, to play by the boys' rules and meanings. The desire of most girls to have others, including boys, play nice ultimately contributed to girls and boys playing in separate play groups. Girls tended to play with other "nice" girls and to avoid playing with "mean" boys.

"Nice Girls" and "Mean Girls"

The girls in the class knew that "girls are nice," and when they imagined girls in the mass, they imagined them as nice, as people who were not aggressive and with whom one did not have to be afraid of being hit. But girls distinguished between girls as a type and girls as individuals. Girls also knew that there were "mean girls."

Observer: Janie, whom do you like to play with least?

Janie: Boys. Boys are mean. I don't like Wanda, she's mean.

Observer: Kara, would you want a woman teacher or a man teacher next year?

Kara: A woman teacher 'cause they are the prettiest. Some girls are mean. Timmy's mean.

Note in several of the girls' answers how the category of pretty sometimes evoked the category of nice, directly or indirectly. The two were intimately related, it seemed, in their usual sense though they were separate constructs at another level.

During their interaction with one another, girls did not refer to other girls as being like boys. However, when asked which girl or boy was most like a person of the other gender the idea was meaningful to girls. Girls, like boys, used a variety of criteria to answer the questions. For some girls, one set of criteria was niceness and meanness.

Observer: Karen, which girl is most like a boy?

Karen: Wanda is *not* like a girl. She's mean and takes stuff away. Janie is mean and fights. Girls are smarter. Boys are stronger; girls are prettier. Girls need to be taken care of. (Emphasis hers.)

Consider Anne's comment about "tough" boys and "cute" girls made during an interview.

Anne: Boys like to put their chests out, to look tough. And girls don't want to look tough; they just like to sit down and don't do nothin' tough. They think they might get hurt.

Girl learns being cute is acting like a woman, and a boy tries to be like a man and be tough. Some girls like to look like a boy and *do boys' things like wrestle, fight, pick on other people.* Wanda does, Brenda, and Jimmy. (Emphasis mine.)

Anne and Karen expressed the girls' sense of niceness as something essentially defined by an absence of action on girls' part rather than of positive action. Like prettiness, niceness was typified as passivity, a passivity characterized by Anne in the concrete terms of girls' sitting down and not doing anything for fear of being physically hurt. Being like a boy/man required that one do something, or give the appearance of being able to do something. Being like a girl/woman required that one do little, and that one give the appearance of powerlessness. At one level, because aggressive action was thought by girls to belong to boys and to be a natural part of the way boys were as boys, aggression by boys was considered to be somewhat legitimate. Offensive physical aggression by girls, however, was almost never considered to be justified. Aggressive girls were "mean girls."

Because of the dramatic difference in both the amount and intensity of all kinds of aggression, physical and verbal, between girls and boys, as groups, it was rather easy to forget or ignore girls' aggression, particularly their physical aggression. However, as I carefully examined my field notes, I found many notations of instances of aggression initiated by certain girls. As Karen said, "Girls are nice, and mean sometimes."⁶

Though the word mean had a number of uses, the most universal meaning it had for the girls within this social context was in reference to a person who hit or threatened to hit others offensively or "first." When the label was applied by girls to girls, it roughly corresponded to how aggressive a girl was. Aggressive girls

were invariably called mean. However, some girls might be considered to be mean by some girls and not by others and at some times and not others. Even the "meanest girl" was said to be "nice sometimes" by particularly generous girls like Sara.

Who among the girls was said to be mean by other girls? Only one girl, Wanda, was consistently referred to as a "mean girl" by almost everyone else, including those children, boys and girls, who played with her. Wanda hit and, more importantly, threatened other children fairly often, but not nearly so often as the most aggressive boy, Shawn, and many said she was "the meanest girl in the class." Nancy was on the way to gaining the label "mean," but halfway through the first semester, she began to spend a large portion of her time with the second-third grade class next door. She had been unable to adjust to the social environment, mainly to the boys' use of physical force, and her absence eventually began to soften her impact and the opinions of others. Nancy was unusual among the children in that she would, sometimes in a near rage, defend smaller children when they were being attacked by larger children, including the toughest boy in the class. She typically lost these fights, and this contributed to her unhappiness, especially as she was given virtually no support from other children in her defense of smaller ones.

Other than Wanda and Nancy no other girls were typically called "mean girls," but several were said to be "mean sometimes." Janie, who was perhaps the smallest child in the class and was the youngest, rarely hit anyone, but though generally quiet, she often

talked of violence and threatened others and was hypercritical at times; therefore, some children thought her mean. Janie's style of talking provided an interesting counterpoint to her large blue eyes, china doll-like face, and long waist length blond hair. Visitors who typified her as a sweet little girl were often brought up short by her images. Brenda, Katie, Karen, and Rayette occasionally hit others, and their victims sometimes said they were mean, but most children did not think them mean. Anne, Julia, and Victoria hit others perhaps once or twice during the entire observation period and were not called mean. Sara, Betty, Kara, Marian, and Shelley were never observed to hit anyone first and rarely hit in defense. Such girls were never said to be mean girls. Myra was a special case, for me but not for the girls. She never hit anyone and was not thought to be mean, but in fact she was a person who seemed to get pleasure, if laughing and smiling can be taken as indications, from the pain and especially from the fear of others. Though some of the girls seemed to be aware of her tendencies, she wasn't thought to be mean because she was so physically nonthreatening.

To whom were girls mean? With the exception of Nancy, who would attack even the toughest of the boys if she felt justified, girls who hit offensively usually restricted their aggression to certain kindergarten boys and to certain of the girls. The kindergarten boys whom girls hit most often were Henry and Jackie and, less often, Jimmy, Pierre, and Ralph. When girls hit other girls, they typically hit girls who, like themselves, were somewhat

aggressive. Consequently, Nancy, Wanda, and Katie hit or threatened each other more than they bothered any of the others. However, Wanda did threaten, but not hit, almost everyone. With the exception of Wanda, when girls were mean, they usually did not hit the most gentle of the boys, like Ben and Vincent, nor did they hit the least aggressive or most gentle girls.

The girls' pattern of aggression was related to a number of factors. For one thing, girls were not eager to get hurt and so avoided hitting those who could clearly "beat them up" and "make them cry." Consequently, a girl like Wanda did not want to "mess with" the bigger boys or with Anne. Another factor was proximity. Some girls hit other girls and some of the younger boys because they were more likely to be in association with them and thus to have disagreements about property, place, and other rights. The level of another's resistance to demands was also a factor. Fighting, if one may properly call one or two hits a fight, was usually the result of interaction, and those who were more likely to resist the demands of others were more likely to come to blows with the aggressive. Thus, those who were more submissive, those who had a less volatile, more even-tempered disposition, or those who were able to define the situation in ways so that they might reasonably dismiss or ignore the aggression of others⁷ were less likely to become involved in fights and less likely to stimulate someone to hit them.

"Boys Know How to Fight Better than Girls"

When Kara said, "Boys know how to fight better than girls," she was correct. The boys did know how to fight better than girls, even mean girls. With the exception of Anne, those girls who were observed to fight had a characteristic style of fighting which was different from that of most of the boys.⁸

Most girls were clearly not at home with their bodies when fighting. Girls never wrestled, though one might grab another by the arm, and they vigorously objected to such intense contact even when they knew that it was intended to be playful. Girls rarely hit others as hard as they could have. Sometimes a girl would hit with a closed fist, usually on the back or arm rather than on the face, but more often she would hit with an open hand, often overhanded with more wrist than total arm action, a manner of hitting not designed to inflict much pain. Physical fighting was clearly an unfamiliar activity to most girls, even to mean girls, and something even the most aggressive among the girls did not enjoy.

Another characteristic feature that distinguished girls' fights from those of boys was the duration of the fights. When girls fought with other girls, the physical part of the encounter lasted only a moment or two. In all cases where a girl was a participant in a longer fight, the other participant was a boy. Depending on the tenacity and intentions of each girl, a fight between girls usually consisted of one or two hits. Rarely did a fight escalate to the point where one girl might hit another more than three times.

The following event is provided to give the reader a picture of a fight between two girls, one of whom was known as the "meanest girl in the class."

Day 17. A group of girls is at the art table. Wanda has accumulated quite a large pile of material to use and is quietly working. Katie, without asking, grabs some scraps of material and a bottle of glue from Wanda's collection and looks defiantly at her.

Wanda responds by hitting Katie on the arm with her open hand and then holds her hand up threateningly.

Katie says, "Stop, Wanda!" and hits Wanda on her arm, like Wanda, with open hand and lightly.

Wanda grabs the material Katie had taken and, giving Katie a threatening look, holds her open hand over her shoulder again, a gesture of threat.

Katie pouts and mutters, but then leaves to look for more material in a drawer. Wanda continues to look sullen for a few moments, but then again becomes absorbed by her project.

Though some of the kindergarten boys were afraid of Wanda, and thought that she could beat them up, even the least physically competent of the boys knew how to use his body more effectively in fights than all of the girls except Anne.⁹ Most of the boys soon learned that even girls who were bigger than they were less to be feared than they had first imagined.

It was obvious that fighting was relatively foreign to girls. Unlike the pretend play of boys, none of the girls' fantasies or favorite shared games involved themes of aggression or conflict of any sort. They never practiced play fighting during their games, but instead pretended intimacy, accommodation, and romantic and

familial relationships. Not only was the act of fighting unfamiliar, but it was in some ways an implicit denial of their social identity as girls. "Girls," girls said, "don't fight."

Wanda was named by three girls as the girl most like a boy because of her fighting.¹⁰ As Anne said, fighting, wrestling, and picking on people were "boys' things."

Niceness, Meanness, Friendship, and Status

The girls' interaction with one another, their choice of friends and playmates, the nature and quality of their friendships, and a girl's status among girls were more complex than the same phenomena among boys. To a large extent, girls' friendships' patterns and status considerations would require further investigation to be explicated for this study. Boys, as well as girls, made subtle distinctions and choices around issues of friendship and status. But boys, unlike girls, had some significant and defining ways that they chose friends and attributed status which they recognized and articulated as having to do with gender. Girls did not articulate the number of gender-related distinctions that boys did.

However, the business of being nice, that is, of not being mean or hitting other girls, was a central criterion girls used for selecting friends and playmates. It also provided a minimum standard of behavior. The girls disliked girls who hit. Therefore, the girls disliked Wanda, the girl who hit the most and who was named the "meanest girl." Many girls avoided playing with Wanda to avoid being hit. Wanda also had the lowest status of any girl in the classroom.

Not wanting to play with someone who hits you may not seem a very remarkable standard for association, but it was a criterion which boys did not apply about boys in the same way when assessing the value and prestige of other boys. For boys, there was a definition or meaning applied to aggression which made it acceptable, even encouraged, boys to hit others. No similar definitions prevailed for girls' aggression.

Boys sometimes fought because of what they knew about being boys and what boys were like. Girls never fought to be seen to be like a girl. Almost all of the girls' physical aggression was limited to a specific situation and to a concrete and immediate goal. Girls never looked for fights.

When a girl hit another girl, it was intended and taken as a statement of personal dislike, a statement clearly meaning 'I don't like you,' a statement intended to hurt not only the other's body but also her feelings. Girls never hit their friends, whereas a boy might hit a boy he called his friend, though not usually his best friend, and still consider the other a friend after the immediacy of the fight. For boys fights sometimes had to do with increasing one's power in an impersonal way. For girls hitting another girl was more personally meaningful and less meaningful in terms of relations of public power and prestige. When a girl hit a girl, it usually involved a dispute over property, place, or interaction of an immediate sense. It involved the concrete goal of wanting to have her own way rather than to enhance her place in a hierarchy of the group as an entity. Consequently, girls who hit

girls lost the chance to have those girls play with them or select them as friends, or to attribute prestige to them.

Girls Hitting Boys

Girls' motives for hitting boys were somewhat more complex than their motives for hitting girls. In addition to the reasons they hit other girls, certain girls occasionally hit boys for impersonal reasons, for motives that had little to do with the individual boy or a girl's general feelings toward him.

Some girls sometimes displaced anger against one person or situation by hitting an uninvolved bystander, who almost always was a boy. The aggression was usually so mild and so arbitrary that its recipient did not notice it or choose to respond. For instance, Katie hit George, who happened to be standing close by, when she was reprimanded by the teacher. Nancy jabbed Pierre in the ribs, again lightly, in a similar situation. Brenda occasionally gave pokes to Henry and Ralph that they did not notice, seemingly just in passing. Once she was observed to walk by George, who was quite popular with girls and boys, and to squeeze a wet paper towel on his head. She had a small smile when she did. George did not become aware of the water until she was across the room and then ignored it, apparently without stopping to explain the wetness.

Girls' aggression in such cases was meaningful because girls were never observed to hit, poke, jab, or wet other girls in similar situations. When a girl hit another girl, it meant that she

disliked the girl and so was willing to lose her friendship and goodwill, for this was what such aggression meant to girls; aggression among girls was always personal. Perhaps girls hit boys because, wanting to express some resentment or hostility against another person, they knew that they were more likely to get away with it with boys. Most boys were simply more accustomed to roughness than girls and thus, not only were they less likely to take it personally, they were less likely to notice such pokes and jabs. From the observations it was apparent that girls were more cognizant than many boys, though there were notable exceptions among the boys, of minor physical transgressions by others against them.

Alternatively, or in addition, it might be that such petty and arbitrary aggression of certain girls against boys was an expression of intergroup hostility. Girls might have believed that boys, known as a type to be mean, deserved to be hit because they were mean and hit girls. The petty, unnoticed nature of the act might be conceived to be similar to a slave cook spitting into the master's soup. The master never noticed, but the slave derived a sense of satisfaction from the act, however small.¹¹

Though these explanations are consistent with the observations, they are basically conjecture. Girls' motives for these petty acts of aggression against boys are unclear.

"Mean Boys" and "Nice Boys"

All of the girls typified boys as a type who fights, as a mean type of person. On the other hand, what girls knew about the type boys was mediated by what they knew about the typical or expected behavior of individual boys. The girls were in close association with boys and engaged in ubiquitous face-to-face contact with them, much of it friendly, some of it intimate. Consequently, girls were able to comprehend boys in their uniqueness in addition to apprehending them as typical members of a group with typical patterns of behavior. When girls talked about boys as a group, they often talked about "mean boys." When they talked about individual boys whom they knew, they made distinctions between the type and the specific boy. Familiar boys were considered in terms of their typified individual characteristics as well as in terms of their typified group characteristics, as personal types as well as members of a gender type.

Observer: How are girls and boys different?

Myra: They act different. Boys would be mean, hitting each other. I don't like boys, but I like Glenn, he's not mean.

Observer: Who has power in the class?

Betty: Boys have power because they are tougher. Boys are stronger. They're mean; most of the boys I don't like are.

Observer: Whom do you like?

Betty: Ralph; Michael; Ben.

Day 72. Victoria and Anne are talking. Victoria says to Anne, "Boys are mean. *Some* boys are nice." (Emphasis Victoria's.)

Girls comprehended boys in their uniqueness and complexity and, though they typified boys as "mean" and preferred girls to boys, most of the girls in the class liked boys. However, there was always the possibility that the typified knowledge about boys would structure how girls felt about boys without their considering exceptions. Kara, for instance, played with Jackie more than she played with anyone else, including any girls. They sat together during lunch, looked for each other at the beginning of the school day, constantly referred their actions to one another. Yet, during an interview at the end of the school year, Kara asserted that she didn't like boys because they were mean. When asked, "What about Jackie?" she acted surprised and regretful, "I forgot about Jackie. I like him. He's my friend."

At one level, any boy may symbolize all boys to girls. We have already seen how some girls displaced anger onto boys. In the following event recorded in the field notes, we may observe an unusual instance where a girl's aggression toward a boy was more forceful and the symbolic importance of the act of displacement more evident and explicit.

Day 29. Shawn, Wanda, and Vincent are at the art table. Shawn has forcefully taken crayons from Wanda, and she is furious and frustrated because she is afraid of him and afraid to retaliate or try to retrieve the crayons.

She settles for verbal aggression and threatens instead of taking action against him, "I'm gonna get you, Shawn!"

Shawn leans across the table, inviting and daring Wanda to make good her threat. "Try it, try it, and you wouldn't like to, Wanda."

Wanda answers, "Yes I do, *boy!*"¹² but makes no move toward Shawn. Shawn looks at Wanda and shows no fear whatever, still inviting her to hit him. This infuriates Wanda, and at this point she slaps Vincent hard across his face and, looking across to Shawn, threatens, "I'll go over there and slap me some boys!"

Shawn ignores her threats and continues to act indifferent.

Vincent, rubbing his cheek, just opens his eyes wide upon being slapped, and then shrugs his shoulders and continues his work. (Emphasis Wanda's.)

Wanda wanted to hit Shawn, but, afraid of him, she expressed her anger and frustration toward him symbolically by slapping Vincent, thereby gaining a sense of satisfaction as though she had slapped and defied Shawn himself. Wanda knew that Shawn was tough, powerful, strong, and mean, a boy like girls thought boys were. It was for his boyness that she slapped Vincent, and she made the meaning of her act clear when she said, "I'll go over and slap myself some boys!" She effectively substituted one object of her aggression for another, as though they were interchangeable, because they were of the same type, despite Wanda's knowledge that Vincent, who was gentle and nice, was not like Shawn and not like Wanda's immediately relevant image of a mean boy.

We know that Wanda had two images of Vincent in her mind at the same time, both relevant to the situation at hand, the image of Vincent as a typical boy, a "mean boy" like Shawn, the prototypical mean boy, and a typification of Vincent the individual boy, a "nice

boy" and one not likely to strike her back despite the fact that he was unafraid of her, was bigger than she, and had won fights with her in the past. Wanda's prediction of Vincent's behavior showed an extremely subtle understanding of who he was, as well as a willingness to take some risk. I would have predicted that Vincent would have become enraged at her aggression, as most other boys surely would have. It seemed, however, that he, having been a party to the interaction between Wanda and Shawn, sensed that the slap and the pain were not personal but were meant for Shawn, and so he chose not to respond to Wanda in her own terms.

This event, as well as similar but more subtle events, illustrates some girls' tendency to consider all boys as so intimately associated by virtue of their membership of the type boy that the girls' knowledge about the group, the shared typifications in the social stock of knowledge, effectively transcended at one level of consciousness their knowledge about individual uniqueness and differences among members of the type 'boy.' Girls were never observed to displace anger to other girls in a similar fashion. This may suggest a tendency for girls to apprehend other girls more in individual or personal terms or to see girls as fundamentally "nice" unless they were actually being mean. On the other hand, it may indicate a tendency for some girls to feel hostility towards boys as a type, especially in situations where a boy was acting in a manner consistent with the typified knowledge which constituted the type boy, in this case, "boys are mean." In any event, we can see how boys who did not fit the expected pattern of boyish

aggression were nevertheless to some degree subject to the same perceptions or responses from girls.

"Mean Boys" or "Strong Boys"?

All of the girls generally agreed that girls were nice and boys were mean. Mean and nice were polar elements of the dichotomy girls saw in gender. Most girls also distinguished among boys, saying that *some* boys were nice. However, girls did not necessarily agree as to who among the boys was nice and who was mean even though they agreed upon what behavior constituted being mean. Though almost all girls considered some boys, such as Ben and Michael, to be nice boys, opinions varied on many other boys with such factors as personal association or friendship and situational factors playing big roles. For instance, Kara thought her close friend Jackie was very nice, though other girls thought him mean. And, depending on the situation, a girl might describe a boy as nice or mean whom she might otherwise think of in the opposite way.¹³

Personal meanings helped to determine which boys were perceived as mean or nice, but there were also shared gender-based meanings that helped girls determine whether a particular boy, who was an aggressive boy, would be typified as mean or nice or whether other categories would be used to construct a typification of a particular aggressive boy. The most important of the alternative meanings some girls used for understanding and typifying the aggressive behavior of some boys was the meaning the boys

most often expressed about their own behavior. Successful use of aggression meant that one was strong, while being strong meant that one had power.

Girls knew that boys were supposed to be like men and that being like a man meant that one was supposed to have power. Girls knew that men were more powerful than women, and they attributed men's superior power to larger size and strength. Girls knew that boys "liked to look strong," that boys were "stronger than girls," and that being strong and being like a man was a source of value and prestige for boys. In turn, this power of men helped girls define what it meant to be a woman.

Girls varied as to how they characterized this power of men and boys. Some girls, like Betty, judged the power of boys in a negative manner as she applied the girls' standards of value to boys as well as girls, values relating to intimacy and personal relationship, and nonaggressiveness and not hurting others through the use of physical force. "Boys have power," Betty said, "because they are tougher. Boys are stronger. They're meaner. Most of the boys I don't like are." Other girls were more ambivalent and were attracted as well as repelled by the power of men and boys. These girls still preferred girls to boys because girls were nicer, as well as being "like" they were, but, at the same time, they tended to admire those boys who had power, even when it came from the use of physical force, though use of offensive force *by girls* was firmly rejected by these girls. Thus, unlike girls like Betty, who unhesitatingly typified offensive aggression as

"mean," some girls might refer to other categories either in lieu of "mean," or, in addition to "mean," which characterized the behavior, and the boy, in a more positive manner.

The way girls felt about Shawn, the "toughest boy in the class," provides an indicator of the extent to which they interpreted boys' mean behavior in the context of a boy's personal power, for Shawn was both powerful and mean using the girls' criteria for defining meanness in the abstract. Shawn could be considered to be primarily mean or primarily strong depending on the social meanings one applied. The matter is made even clearer if a girl not only named Shawn as a boy she especially liked, but also named those boys who had relatively little power but were not particularly aggressive as boys she especially disliked. The matter is complicated, however, for those boys who were least powerful also tended to be the boys who were less mature and less socially adept. Therefore, they were liable to be unacceptable in other ways. Still, for complicated reasons, a boy's inability to deal effectively within the boys' dominance system was an important factor in determining some girls' opinions of boys. Other girls might not have cared for certain of the "weaker," less powerful boys, but they also said that they did not like Shawn because he was so mean. Boys who were merely aggressive but not particularly successful in their aggression were unequivocally typified as mean by virtually all girls.

The following conversation among several girls illustrates their several aspects of their knowledge of power. Power was

socially distributed by gender; power was socially distributed among types of boys; and the power hierarchy among boys was understood even by nonparticipating observers.

Day 68. Prior to this conversation at the art table, Julia had been talking with Shawn and encouraging him in his campaign to "get Nancy," whom Julia did not like. She even told Shawn that Nancy wanted him to beat her (Nancy) up. Julia was obviously stimulated by the encounter with Shawn and by the idea that Shawn was going to hurt Nancy. When she sat down at the table with Marian, Janie, and Shelley, she continued the theme of Shawn and Nancy.

Julia says to Shelley, "Shawn is going to beat up Nancy today." Shelley frowns, but does not reply and continues to work. Janie joins the conversations with, "If Shawn tries to beat me up, I'll get my brother to beat him up."

Julia: "Your brother would be sorry to fight with Shawn, Janie."

Janie: "My brother's eight."

Julia: "Anybody can beat Janie up."

Janie: "Not a baby."

Julia: "Timothy is only one, and he'll pull your hair out."

Janie: "I'll kick him in the face."

Julia: "If you do, you'll find yourself crying all the way back to your house." She says this very heatedly and indignantly.

Shelley: "Because of his mother?"

When Shelley mentions the baby's mother, Janie counters with a higher card, her father, thereby introducing another male into what had been primarily a conversation pitting representative males against one another to defend or defeat females.

Janie: "My father! I'll be glad I'm gonna be moving so I won't come to school anymore."

Janie's tension continues to mount, as Julia again threatens her with Shawn. Marian and Shelley listen intently, eyes wide, and faces tense, as they draw. The level of the hostility and the threats of boys beating up girls are apparently disconcerting to both.

Julia: "I'll get Shawn to beat up you and your brother."

Janie: "I'll be watching him out the window, the big fag!"

At this point, Janie switches the theme of aggression to someone else whom almost everyone dislikes and who is also vulnerable.

Janie: "I could even beat up Jimmy."

Shelley: "Yeah, he's just a little boy."

Janie: "Anyone can beat up Jimmy or Henry or Ralph, right? Or Pierre or Jackie."

Julia and Shelley agree, Marian says nothing, and the conversation ends.

Though Janie and the other girls were not active participants in the social interaction of the boys which determined relative power ranking, they, like most of the other children, understood what categories, strong or weak, were relevant for considering boys and used these categories in the same way that boys did to place boys in a hierarchical status system which was based at least partially upon physical aggression or the threat of physical aggression. Even though Janie made the claim "I could even beat up Jimmy," she knew that the categories of and distinctions between strong and weak, as evidenced by whom could beat up whom, were particularly relevant to boys and not to girls. She said, "Anyone can

beat up Jimmy or Henry or Ralph, right? Or Pierre or Jackie," but, in fact, Janie knew that she could not beat up any of these boys. She usually submitted or withdrew from aggressive physical interaction with them. Despite her claims, Janie did not include the girls in "anybody" because she knew that, with a few exceptions such as Anne, Nancy, Wanda, and possibly Katie, those boys who were named could beat up almost all the girls. When Janie named these boys, she intended to name weak persons, and she knew that girls *as individuals* did not count in the naming of weak persons, that girls were not subject to the same criteria or expectations as boys.

Though Janie was afraid of Shawn, she also liked him. During the picture selection interview, Janie chose Shawn fourth when asked whom she liked most and wanted to be her friend, and Shawn was the first boy she chose. The very last among those she liked and wanted to be her friends were Ralph, Henry, Wanda, Jackie, Pierre, and Jimmy, five weak boys and one mean girl. Other girls also named Shawn among those whom they liked best despite his aggressiveness and the fact that he never played with girls except when they joined the boys' games outdoors. Similarly, these same girls also named the less powerful boys last.

In addition, when Janie was asked to name the boy most like a boy, she named Shawn and gave as her reason, "because I like him." She named Jimmy as the boy most like a girl "because I hate him." She disliked the boys whom she had said, "anyone can

beat up," a description she gave contemptuously, and liked the boys who beat up many people, including girls:

Because of girls' conflicting meanings about boys' aggression, Janie could make the statement that she did not like to "play with boys because they are mean," that is, because they hit and hurt other people, and could then name Shawn, the most aggressive person in the class, as the boy she most liked, apparently without feeling conflict. In addition, Janie sometimes played in a friendly way with those boys whom she named as ones she disliked and never played with Shawn, who essentially gave no attention to her whatever. Like some of the other girls, however much Janie disliked meanness, she nonetheless was attracted to power, even when it was derived from aggression.

To some extent then, Janie and other girls accepted the values and definitions boys applied to their behavior *as boys*. Essentially, that successful acts of aggression and the consequent increase in power exempted a boy from the designation of mean.

In her argument with Julia we can observe how Janie changed her perception of herself from that of a person who would likely be Shawn's victim to that of a person who was like Shawn. Clearly intimidated by Julia's threats of Shawn's aggression, Janie typified herself as an aggressor when she said that she could beat up Jimmy, a boy who was a frequent victim of aggression and who, like many girls, felt powerless in the face of Shawn's use of force. Later in the study we will see how Jimmy also tried to identify himself with Shawn.

Recognizing the importance of the use of force, Janie identified herself with those boys, particularly Shawn, who had power and expressed contempt for those boys without power, even as she feared powerful boys who used force. Power through force was something Janie knew belonged to the types boy and man and not to girls and women. Once she had accepted force as not only belonging to boys, but as being of positive value for boys, she also accepted the construction of the social system as one in which the dichotomized meanings having to do with gender prevailed, meanings which resulted in girls and weak boys being subject to the use of force by strong and aggressive boys. Implicitly, then, Janie must have contempt for herself as a girl, as a type opposite to boys, and as a member of a type not even included in the group of people who struggled for and acquired power in the classroom. By accepting power through the use of force for boys, Janie could sustain her knowledge about gender while helping to sustain and create a social system that punished offensive aggression by girls, like Wanda and Nancy, but rewarded it for boys.

For a variety of motives, including a mixture of fear and admiration, some girls tended to give more positive, supportive response to boys who were mean and powerful than to boys who were mean and weak, or nice and weak. Boys who were nice and moderately powerful or powerful were well liked by almost all girls. When girls interacted with dominant boys they were more likely to defer to them, to accept their suggestions, to wait for boys to make suggestions, and to generally approve of them, albeit in a

relatively passive manner. Such girls were more likely to reject the younger, lower status boys outright, to ignore or reject these boys' suggestions, and to criticize them. These girls did this despite the fact that they were also more likely to play with the less dominant boys than the more dominant, be they mean or nice.

To an extent, then, the girls' accepting and even positive responses to boys who successfully used physical force to achieve power affirmed and legitimized the boys' created social structure which was based upon the meaning of masculinity and its relationship to physical power. On the other hand, there were few specific references on the part of most girls to issues of strength or weakness. Most girls did not commonly articulate such categories and divisions as Janie did in the unedited conversation previously presented. Consequently, though there was an affirming function related to the positive social responses and a disaffirming function related to rejecting responses, the interpretation of why these few girls affirmed or rejected, liked or disliked, was left implicit and was dependent upon the discernment of each boy's interpretation and construction of meaning. Each boy varied widely in his understanding of what his position was in the social structure and why he held such a position. Henry, for instance, was almost totally unaware that many children held him in low esteem. Jimmy, on the other hand, was highly sensitive to the fact that "no one liked" him, and he correctly attributed his not being like a boy was supposed to be as part of the reason. He did not,

however, attribute the dislike to his whining, perhaps a more important reason. In any event, almost all boys, whether of low or high status, were more concerned with how other boys typified them along the boys' dimensions than they were with girls' opinions along boys' or girls' most relevant categories.

Girls' opinions and response to boys generally had more impact upon how they typified themselves as girls than upon boys. In general, girls' opinions of boys' aggression was assessed by reference to the girls' categories of "mean" and "nice," or the intimately related but nonetheless separate categories of "pretty" and "strong." Girls who emphasized the latter categories were more likely, it seemed, to give positive meaning to boys' aggression, though there was not a precise correlation. Personal, biographic meanings played an important role, too.

Despite the positive meanings that a few girls gave to some of the aggressive behavior of certain boys, girls did not encourage such aggressiveness. Julia, however, was an exception. Shawn's power and his position as the most powerful boy was especially significant to Julia in a way that it was not to other girls, though Julia's meanings nonetheless derived from the socially shared knowledge of girls about what girls and boys were like. Julia, more than other girls, used the meanings dichotomizing boys' strength and girls' prettiness/weakness to assess the meaning of boys' aggression.

Since Shawn was the boy who was known to be the most powerful and the strongest, Julia exhibited behaviors which

functioned to encourage Shawn's own positive estimation of his aggressiveness and which supported Julia's ideas about her relationship as a girl to powerful boys. After the first month of school, Julia increasingly began to affiliate herself with Shawn. These attempts annoyed Shawn at first, but they became increasingly pleasant to him, for he soon recognized that she admired him and this confirmed his own view of the world and his place and meaning within it. Julia praised Shawn's strength and power and his ability to win fights. Unlike any of the other girls, but like many boys, Julia sometimes introduced the topic of Shawn's power into conversations with him. Not only did she praise him, but she also directly contrasted his power, his fighting ability, with that of other children and even with adults. Sometimes her questioning started aggression between Shawn and other boys, though that was not necessarily her intention. An example:

Day 49. Julia, Brad, and Shawn are sitting at a work table.

Julia asks Shawn, "Who do you think would win, Brad or you?"

Shawn does not answer.

Julia demands an answer, "Brad or you, Shawn?" Shawn says nothing, but begins to wrestle with Brad.

At other times, however, Julia did actively try to get Shawn to fight with others.

Day 51.

Julia: "There's a boy in Mrs. Albert's class who says he can beat you up, Shawn."

Shawn: "You already told me that. Who?"

Unlike boys who made such comments, Julia could make these challenging sorts of statements to Shawn without feeling that she herself might also become an active participant, one who was subject to the same evaluative criteria as Shawn. She could stimulate aggression and firmly remain an observer.

Alternatively, Julia would occasionally typify herself as the prize that boys fought over and Shawn as her protector and rescuer. One day, when Shawn was picking on a scared Shelley, Julia told her best friend, Shelley, that she had better "get used to Shawn . . . because there's this kid who's trying to beat us up" and Shawn would protect them. Shelley, who avoided Shawn because of his aggressiveness, was bewildered by Julia's approach and meaning. She knew Shawn was the toughest boy in the class, but also knew he was the meanest. Julia's approach was effective, however. Shawn was flattered by Julia's admiration and did not pick on her as he did other girls.

Despite her support and encouragement of Shawn's aggression, Julia should in no way be considered to be a significant impetus to it. Shawn was highly motivated to be aggressive by what he knew about being a boy, and he used as his primary referents the responses of other boys within the class and not the girls' responses. Julia's behavior was significant because it revealed

how girls' meanings about themselves as girls help to define their expectations and typifications of boys. Though Julia's behavior was atypical of girls, it reveals a potential that is entirely consistent with some of girls' meanings about gender.

The Ways Girls Responded When Boys Were Mean to Them

Aggression through physical force was a defining characteristic of life in this classroom. It was something visiting adults commented upon, a factor of which all of the children were aware and which they took into account during their social interaction, something that helped to structure social relations, especially power relations, among children in the class. Most of the significant aggression was initiated by boys, *though not by all boys*, and not by girls. We have discussed some of the meanings that girls used to give form to the aggressive behavior of boys: That boys were "meaner" than girls; that boys could also be considered individually as nonaggressive or "nice" boys; and that the determination of mean boys or not mean boys was mediated by considerations of the masculine meanings of strength and weakness. Some of these meanings fit with what the girls knew about themselves as girls and what they knew about the social distribution of power by gender: That men, and boys who were like men, were supposed to be powerful, and that women, and girls who were like women, were not powerful but nice and pretty.

The girls' responses as recipients of the boys' physical aggression helped to determine the distribution of power both

individually and by gender within the classroom. And girls' responses to the physicality of some boys helped to establish the essential structure of social relations within the classroom, primarily by separating girls and boys and by confirming girls' and, more importantly, boys' knowledge about the essentially dichotomous nature of the genders.

The girls' responses to the boys' aggressiveness must be considered within the context of what girls knew about the superior strength of boys relative to girls. Most girls lived with the assumptions that "boys were stronger than girls" and that "boys could beat them up" if they wanted to. Consequently, most girls felt some fear, some feelings of helplessness and powerlessness in their relations with boys, especially boys with whom they were not usually intimate. The language many girls used reflected their typifications of themselves as helpless relative to boys as a type. Most girls did not usually describe aggression between girls and boys as being a "fight," but instead talked about "boys hitting girls," "boys kicking girls," and "boys being mean to girls." The girls' meanings about "prettiness" as helplessness were entirely insufficient compensation for girls' real feelings of helplessness with tough boys. Girls thought of boys as "mean" at such times, and themselves as helpless and passive and "nice." By contrast, boys seldom used similar phrases expressive of passivity when they described aggression involving boys and girls. Boys were more likely to speak of such encounters as being a "fight," even when girls were getting the better of them. At one

level, use of such language was descriptive because girls did tend to be more submissive during fights than even the most submissive of the boys. But at another level it reflected different expectations and meanings. To be like a boy, boys knew that they had to be active during fights. Girls could assume the stance of unwilling participant and even victim and be like girls and boys thought girls were like. Consequently, Shelley could appeal to me, without shaming herself *as a girl*, "He hit me, but if I hit him back, he'll hit me again and it'll hurt" when Pierre, who was smaller, younger, and not particularly confident of himself with fighting, and she were having a fight. Shelley's response boosted his confidence. This does not mean that Shelley might not feel ashamed that she was powerless, but her identity as a girl would not be challenged by virtue of her powerlessness. When she was helpless in the face of a "mean boy" she was being "nice" like girls were known to be.

The girls' most common response to the boys' aggression or threats of aggression was to *submit to the aggressor*, either by physically withdrawing or by displaying any number of submissive gestures, such as scrunching up the shoulders to accept a blow or by giving a potential aggressor a lot of space. Girls and boys learned to identify typical situations and people which promised to produce some sort of conflict or attack, and it was not unusual to observe a child assessing a situation and then moving to avoid it altogether, knowing that to become involved was to appear to invite aggression or even to challenge an aggressor.

After the first week of school most of the children were aware of who would fight and who would submit. Those girls who consistently submitted to aggression and threats without any resistance were no longer often attacked by the most aggressive boys like Shawn. By submitting, a girl acquiesced to the meaning or definitions of the situation promoted by the aggressor, that the aggressor was tougher and stronger. The boys who defined events in those terms subjected everyone to a ranking of dominance. Most girls, however, immediately and implicitly submitted to a low rank, thereby effectively removing themselves from the arena. Nevertheless, no one was ever completely free from threat of aggression.

Some girls submitted to everyone's aggression. Others used this response for the larger aggressive boys, but they would resist, in a limited fashion, smaller boys and some girls. By contrast, there were no boys in this class who regularly submitted to everyone, and there were few who did not resist in some form the aggressiveness of even the toughest.

A number of girls often displayed a second response. They would submit or withdraw from physical aggression, but they showed their displeasure by *verbal criticism* of the boy or boys concerned. Sometimes the verbal response was relatively mild or, if not mild, was reserved for those boys least likely to respond to such criticism with a more physical response. In general, both participants understood that such criticism was essentially submission and acceptance of the superior power of the aggressor.

Nonetheless, girls who accompanied withdrawal with verbal aggression seemed to get satisfaction from it. With the exception of Shawn, who was more concerned with the meaning of aggression than with any concrete advantage such as getting property, boys accepted such critical remarks without continued physical aggression.

Janie and Wanda were the most verbally aggressive girls in the class, and they always supplemented whatever response they gave with criticism. They were also the only two girls to express cross-gender hostility in directly sexual terms. For instance, after Shawn twisted Janie's arm behind her back and threatened to "break [her] arm off" if she continued to try to get some crayons, she retorted, after retreating, "I'm gonna bring a snake to school and scare Shawn. Color his dingdong and cut it off!" Some children made a connection between sexuality and power, which is prevalent in some elements of the larger culture, early in life.

Typically, however, most girls' verbal resistance was limited to remarks such as "You're going to be sorry," "You're a mean boy!" and to remarks denying that the boy had power to do what he was in fact presently doing, for instance, "You can't take my paper!"

The third type of response was *limited physical resistance* usually accompanied by verbal criticism. Many girls used this response for smaller or less aggressive boys; but only two girls used it as a primary way of responding to aggression by larger or more physically competent boys. When dominant boys or boys who

were less dominant hit Wanda or Katie, they sometimes chose to respond by hitting the boys back. The intensity of the response at the physical level was always limited, usually to a hit or two. Neither of the two girls ever chose to escalate a fight with any of the more aggressive boys, though they were sometimes willing to continue with the less aggressive. However, the girls would not continue to fight if a boy showed a determination to go on regardless of the cost to him. Both girls would quickly withdraw from the physical contact, but they would be verbally aggressive.

Submission and withdrawal, mild or intense verbal criticism, and a limited sort of physical resistance were the most typical responses girls gave to most boys' aggressiveness. When the aggressor was a particularly dominant type, all of the girls in the class except two typically submitted in one way or another to the boy's power. Nancy and Anne *resisted aggressive boys with force comparable to the force used by the boys*. They would "fight back." Only these two girls fought back when fighting back involved more than a limited interaction of short duration and relatively low intensity. Since power in the classroom was understood to primarily refer to physical power based on the use or potential use of physical force, and since the social distribution of power was related to the successful use or threat of such force, this meant that only Nancy and Anne challenged, through their behavior, the socially shared knowledge that it was boys who were powerful because only boys used force.

Nancy and Anne

Nancy and Anne were similar in some ways. Both liked to play with other girls better than with boys and were interested in and participated in games known as "girls' games," though Anne did become critical of games like Barbie and House, and of girls in general, by the end of the year. Both girls sometimes liked to play outside with the large group composed primarily of boys, though the two girls had quite different styles of playing these outside games (see Chapter IX). The girls dressed and acted in ways identifiable to other girls and to boys as being the way girls were. Both were secure in their identities as girls, and both were intelligent, academically accomplished, articulate, and imaginative.

The two girls were different, however, in some important ways which helped to shape their experience in the classroom. Anne was easygoing and quick to sluff off the ubiquitous petty acts of aggression which permeated life in the classroom. Unlike most girls, Anne did not interpret most aggression as personal in its essence. This attitude was similar to that held by the most socially successful of the least aggressive high status boys like Michael and Garr. Anne was able to accept a "mean" dimension in the behavior and intentions of others without interpreting the meanness to be central to the meaning of the encounter. Meanness, she knew, was a part of its meaning, but so, then, was friendliness. Anne, however, was rarely intentionally mean. This acceptance of some meanness or aggression, an attitude which

characterized the behavior of most of the more socially mature boys and which was something most, but not all, of the other boys appeared to be learning through participating in social life throughout the year, distinguished Anne from the other girls. They typically were intolerant of physical aggression toward them at any level, even when it was actually not aggression or meanness but "rough" play.

Anne's attitude was summed up when asked what she would do if someone hit her. She answered, "If someone hits me and it doesn't hurt, I ignore it. But if it hurts, I hit them back." Consequently, Anne was rarely observed to "really fight," but she also did not submit to aggression by withdrawing or passively accepting hits. The following event was typical of Anne, but not typical of other girls.

Day 120. Anne, Shawn, and Michael are in the playground and are playfully feigning karate chops and kicks to one another. Without provocation, Shawn shoves Anne fairly hard, clearly not totally with a playful intention. She is aware of this. So is Michael who, surprised that Shawn has shoved Anne, observes the situation silently.

Anne says nothing to Shawn, but gives him what she calls a "hard look," a warning look, during which she apparently assesses her feeling and Shawn's intentions.

Shawn takes the warning and once again starts to playfully make karate chops to Anne, as though the shove had been part of the play. He is aware that she is aware that this was not the case. He does not want to challenge Anne.

After a few seconds, she spontaneously smiles and begins to talk about an idea about the karate play which apparently occurred to her while watching Shawn, "Hey Shawn, what if we pretended to. . . .? Remember when we pretended to. . . .?" The play continues.

Like many of the boys, Anne could distinguish between "play fights" and "real fights" and was willing to use those categories to understand actions directed toward her. Consequently, there was a gray area of her experience which could be interpreted as play or for real. For Anne, the criteria for making the determination was the other's intentions when the blow was struck, his intention immediately afterwards, and, also, simply, whether or not it hurt. If it did not hurt, why fight? Unlike many boys, she was not caught up in the boys' issues of dominance, so she was, with the possible exception of Michael, the person who was most easygoing about aggression among those who were also extremely competent physically. She was a person who neither submitted nor sought fights.

In contrast to Anne's easygoing, forgiving disposition Nancy was more volatile, though also affectionate and caring. She, like most other girls and some boys, did not accept aggression as a part of play, but interpreted aggression as central to the meaning of interaction, rather than as just a part of interaction. At the same time, Nancy recognized that some children, especially boys, liked to "play fight" and to play rough. However, when she was involved, she responded almost totally to its negative element.

However, Nancy did try to accept some rough play within the outdoor games.

Although Nancy was not offensively aggressive ("mean"), she was relatively quick to respond to physical aggression with verbal aggression or physical force. More than any other child in this class, Nancy would fight on another child's behalf, especially a smaller child whether a girl or a boy. She would become indignant and sometimes almost enraged when she saw one child make another cry. "How dare you!" was what she said at such times.

In addition to giving different meaning to aggression, and having different types of dispositions, Nancy and Anne were unlike in another gender-related way, their styles of fighting. Unlike other girls in the class, both were willing to engage in sustained fights, though neither liked to "really" fight. Anne, but not Nancy, occasionally liked to play fight. Nancy used her body during fights in a way that was typical of the other girls, with open hand and with more wrist action than arm action, while Anne fought more in the manner of those boys who were especially competent fighters, using her large muscles and full arm action. Anne was confident in the strength of her body, but Nancy was not, and Nancy seemed to have a fear of being hurt and a lack of knowledge of her potential strength. Consequently, Anne won the only "real" fight in which she was involved, whereas Nancy, who was involved in several, often lost to smaller boys and invariably lost to those her size or age. Nancy would have lost more fights had she not been willing to use weapons which were available, like metal

lunchboxes and brooms, against boys when they became particularly threatening or when she became particularly angry. Consequently, though even the least competent fighters among the boys could tell that Nancy was not a "good fighter," many boys were somewhat wary of her because of her willingness, exceptional for children of both genders, to use objects as weapons. Nancy was simply unwilling to submit herself or other children to aggression without responding, sometimes at great cost to herself or others.

Unlike some of the boys, Nancy's use of physical force was not motivated by a focused desire to increase her prestige or her personal power. At no time did she purposely seek out vulnerable people against whom she might be physically dominant. More often than not she fought those likely to defeat her. Nancy's motivation was much more diffuse, idiosyncratic, and, especially, defensive, when compared to the motivation of aggression for most boys.

On the 30th day of school Nancy ceased to be a full-time member of the class. On that day she began to attend morning sessions with the second-third grade class next door. The reasons for Nancy's unhappiness in the class, and her subsequent withdrawal, were complex, and only tentative explanations can be given which suggest how they were related to gender, and were perceived by other children to be related to gender.

From the second week of school Nancy had had hostile relations with some of the first-grade girls and some boys who resented her behavior. Nancy was assertive and wanted to play a

central, leading role in defining activity, and at times she tended to be somewhat rigid in her demands when others did not respond positively to them. Some of the other children, boys and girls, described her as "wanting to be the boss" or "wanting to have her own way." As we have seen, girls did not have a positive conception or typification of girls as "bosses," and their play groups did not encourage or support the idea of leaders or of hierarchical social relationships between girls. In girls' games, players were generally considered equals, both in pretend roles and in real life, and within the intimacy of small group play, suggestions rather than directions, were the norm. First-grade girls especially criticized Nancy's attempts to take a leadership role for herself; kindergarten girls were less critical since they tended to allow first graders some measure of leadership, but even they did not accept Nancy's assertiveness. Thus, many girls were not particularly friendly to Nancy because of their interpretation of her behavior within the context of her being a girl, and some avoided her and rejected her outright.

By contrast, the children rarely leveled criticism at certain boys who, without question, did want to have their "own way" and the children even encouraged assertive, defining, and demanding behavior by certain high status boys. The behavior of high status boys was not defined as being an imposition of their demands because their definitions of the game and their assertion of leadership roles were congruent with the meanings boys had about being boys who were like men. It was also congruent with the

hierarchical pretend role relations of boys. Thus, there was cooperation among boys as they established dominant roles. Boys were looking for leaders. Consequently, the boy who wanted to be a leader seldom had to deal with a negative social typification ascribed to him, as Nancy did. Such images, of course, increased Nancy's anxiety and her desire to take control and to define events.

Boys sometimes invited Anne to assume a leadership role during the large group "boys' games," but never invited Nancy to assume such a role. Had Nancy been able to define play roles along the lines of masculine images the boys might have responded more positively to her assertiveness, but she used girls' meanings instead of boys' meanings (see Chapter IX).

Nancy's interaction with Shawn also contributed to her unhappiness. Shawn, who had a campaign to "get Nancy," "beat up" Nancy several times during the last few days of her full-time stay in the class. Unlike most of the other girls, Nancy would not submit to Shawn's power but would fight back. Unlike most of the boys, Nancy's fighting style was so awkward, so like a girl's, that she posed no threat to Shawn, presented no reasons he should respond to her resistance with anything other than his fists. Because she resisted and because she so clearly lost the fights, she became for a period of time the focus, along with a kindergarten black boy, Henry, of Shawn's aggression. After several minor encounters in which Nancy inevitably left, crying, Shawn commenced on a full-scale campaign to "get Nancy" during the sixth week of school. This campaign was notable for the quality and

quantity of child violence in the near presence of adults and notable for Nancy's fear and the level to which she was shaken.

Shawn's escalation of violence against Nancy coincided with the teacher's increasing public criticism of Nancy. The criticism coincided with Nancy's mother's complaints to the teacher of her child's unhappiness in the class. The relatively harsh treatment the teacher gave Nancy, such as singling out Nancy's behavior ("Nancy, you're keeping the whole group waiting!") when others were doing precisely the same thing, seemed to stimulate Shawn's aggression towards Nancy. The teacher's criticism, which tended to focus the entire group's negative feelings upon her, served to weaken Nancy's position and make her more vulnerable. It was especially salient as teacher criticism was so unusual in the class. Mrs. Cowan probably had no conscious intention of undermining Nancy, but the mother's complaints, which were implicitly taken as a complaint against the teacher and may have been intended as such, made the teacher more aware of Nancy and those behaviors of Nancy which showed her to be the problem. If Mrs. Cowan had been conscious of her own negative behavior, and if she had realized the result, I am certain that she would not have continued with it.

Like Nancy, Anne resisted boys' aggression. But because boys knew Anne was strong, would and could fight back, and because most liked her, she was rarely the focus of aggression. Unlike Nancy, when Shawn finally provoked Anne sufficiently so that she became angry and fought him, Anne won.

Because of Anne's disinclination to submit to aggression and because she was physically competent as a fighter, though unaggressive, many boys typified Anne as a person with power. Girls were less aware of that aspect of Anne than boys. She wasn't "mean" to them and they weren't as concerned as boys with questions of power. However, most of the girls knew that Anne, a girl, was unafraid of boys and could fight. Almost all the boys liked Anne. Anne's status with the girls was more ambiguous. Most seemed to like Anne, and a few liked her exceptionally well. There is some suggestion, however, that at least a couple of girls, Julia and Myra, disliked Anne. They named her among the last in the picture selection. Julia also mentioned that Anne "fights" in response to the question about who had power in the classroom. Because I witnessed no events which might account for Julia's and Myra's dislike of Anne, and because Anne was exceptionally personable, it seemed to me that the two girls might dislike Anne because she would fight back when attacked. Because I did not ask them, and because the evidence is lacking for that view, it must remain at the level of unsupported but suggestive speculation. Most girls seemed to support girls' defensive efforts against others who were aggressive.

Summary

The third of the three essential elements of knowledge girls shared about what it meant to be a girl and a woman was that "girls (and women) were nice."

Like the other essential typifications about gender, the idea that "girls were nice" was dichotomous and was given its meaning in relation to the contrasting idea that "boys are mean." Being nice meant a variety of things to girls, but in this context being nice was understood as a relatively passive phenomenon, one defined by an absence of action. Girls were nice because, unlike "mean boys," they did not hit and otherwise physically hurt other people.

Girls' typification of boys as mean, a typification not shared by boys, who interpreted the meaning of their behavior otherwise, was supported by differences in group behavior patterns, differences supported and encouraged in turn by boys' typifications about boys and men. Boys as a group were more physically aggressive than girls. Girls as a group, *in contrast to boys*, were not physically aggressive. But some boys did not hit others offensively, and some girls did. Girls recognized these exceptions to their typifications with the idea of "nice boys" and "mean girls." Despite acknowledged exceptions, most girls liked girls better than boys and preferred to play with other girls because of boys' aggressiveness and their fear of being hit and hurt by boys.

All girls agreed about the meaning of girls' aggressive behavior. Girls who were aggressive were called "mean," and "mean girls" were generally avoided as playmates and were disliked by other girls and by boys. Consequently, the "meanest girl in the class" learned to modify some of her aggressive behavior so

that she could participate in the social life of the classroom.

Girls did not necessarily agree on the meaning of boys' aggressiveness, despite their objection to it in general. *Some* girls were ambivalent about some boys' meanness, unless the meanness was directed toward them. Boys who were successfully aggressive, who "won" fights with other boys and girls, were awarded prestige by a few girls, though the same girls said that they disliked boys "because boys were mean." The reason for some girls' ambivalence seemed to have to do with other meanings girls had about themselves as girls, and boys' meanings about aggressiveness which boys used to attribute high status and prestige. Boys' *successful* aggression could be typified by girls and boys as being evidence of strength, and boy's strength was positively valued by girls as part of the gender dichotomy "strong boys, pretty girls." Physical aggression by boys, but never by girls, was understood as being somewhat legitimate because "that's the way boys (and men) are" and because "they are strong." And strength was known to be a good thing.

Since there were no girls in this class who were both physically aggressive ("mean") and good fighters ("winners"), it is impossible to determine what girls would have made of such a girl. Because there were no shared meanings about girlness which would have supported such behavior I would conjecture that a "mean" successful girl would have been given low status by girls and deprived of

social support. Boys would have been more likely to award such a girl higher status than girls would.

Girls' niceness, their lack of aggressiveness, was consistent with the ideas girls had about their being like women who are like mothers and their being pretty, as contrasted to strong. The idea of "nice girls" produced similar social results as the other essential typifications. Because girls were afraid of being hurt by boys, they tended to withdraw from and avoid the rough outdoor group play. This contributed to the social segregation of the genders and the perception of the segregation by girls and boys. This separation from outdoor play was especially significant to boys, as we will see. Because boys' aggressiveness contributed to boys having their way in conflicts with girls, who knowing they were vulnerable to "strong, mean boys" tended to submit and withdraw from conflict, boys' aggressiveness contributed to their having more power as a group than girls as a group. Both girls and boys were aware of this asymmetrical distribution of power by gender. This distribution of power, in turn, confirmed girls' and boys' ideas about boys being powerful types, like men, and girls, who were like women, being weak and powerless types relative to boys and men. As will be discussed later in the context of boys' meanings, this knowledge, and its objective reality, had an important impact upon the social structure the children created and upon the further development of gender-based meanings.

Notes

1. Julia's answer revealed either her prior experience in school or her idea of what being in school was supposed to be like. In this classroom boys seldom "got into trouble" and were reprimanded about the same number of times and with the same intensity as girls, despite the objective fact that they engaged in more behavior that in a traditional or highly structured situation would be thought to be problematic by a teacher.
 2. Some girls, like Anne, did not agree that the boys' high level of activity and noise meant that they were not nice, though Anne did say that to be nice a girl should not be, in her words, "screechy." (Screechy means noisy in a shrill way.)
 3. At this point in the interview no mention had been made of gender, including the terms, girl and boy. When the children responded in terms of gender, it was they who introduced the category.
 4. What girls knew about the boys in the class being bigger was only partially the case, if at all. Though the boys *on the average* were slightly heavier than girls and perhaps a little taller, the differences weren't significant enough to account for the girls' perception about boys being bigger. There were many girls in the class larger than some boys even within the same age group, and across age groups first-grade girls were either taller or as tall as all of the kindergarten boys. The tallest and heaviest child in the classroom was a girl, Myra. Myra was quite overweight, however, and did not look powerful.
- The idea "boys are bigger" seemed to be related to the impact of boys' aggressive behavior as a group and to the typifications that "men are bigger than women" and "boys are bigger than girls," both parts of the social stock of knowledge for both genders.
5. For a discussion of the norms for boys' outside play, which were sometimes called "playing right," see Chapter IX.
 6. Knudson (1973) found girls to be more verbally aggressive than boys. Among these children boys were more verbally and physically aggressive. Boys' physical aggression was almost always accompanied by verbal aggression.
 7. An *even-tempered disposition* often seemed to be the result of being able to define the situation in a particular manner which depended upon the meanings a child had at hand as well as upon what was happening.

8. I have heard adults and older boys refer to this style of fighting as "fighting like a girl." No child or adult in this setting made such a reference.
9. Betty used her large muscles extremely well for athletics, but did not ever fight, though once she was observed to playfully wrestle for a brief moment.
10. Significantly, no boy named the unpopular Wanda as being like a boy.
11. A reader of this study suggested to me that "the old liking him and wanting to get his attention theory" might be the reason girls engaged in petty aggression against boys. However, girls did not seek boys' attention in these examples, but wanted to go unnoticed. In addition, the only times even a hint of such flirting behavior was suggested was during the outside game of Kisseey Girl when the girls chased the boys to try to kiss them.
12. Some of the black children tended to use gender labels as expletives in a way that white children did not, unless they were assuming the behavior of their black playmates. Brenda, who played with Marian, Henry, and Ralph, sometimes adopted the mannerisms of her friends when they were acting out some typified mannerisms of blacks, usually in a playful, self-conscious way. At these times Brenda used the word *boy* as a perjorative term.
13. The term *aggressive boys* or *aggressive boy* is my typification of boys' behavior that is offensively aggressive. The terms refer to situational behavior rather than to what a boy may be fundamentally like in his overall behavior. It is substituted for the more awkward term *when a boy is aggressive* or *when boys are aggressive*. Shawn was probably the only boy in this class whom I would typify as an aggressive boy type.

CHAPTER VIII
"BOYS ARE LIKE MEN"

Each boy in the class knew that he, like the other boys and unlike the girls, was going to grow up to be a man and not a woman. Each boy knew that every man was once a boy as he was now, that no man was once a girl. It was women, boys knew, who were once girls. Just as knowledge about what women were like provided a background of knowledge for girls to know about themselves as girls, knowledge about what men were like provided a background of knowledge for boys to know about themselves as boys. The boys explicitly and implicitly referred to this background to understand what it meant to be a boy and to socially construct themselves as boys. This was apparent from observing boys, from listening to what they said, from considering their arts, crafts, and other objects they created or valued.

Each boy was sure of his gender identity at a core level. No boy thought himself to be a girl or thought that he would grow up to be a woman. Though boys might worry about what it meant to be a boy who was going to be a man, no boy in the class wanted to be anything other than a boy or a man. As a group, however, boys did seem to have some conflict, within themselves and with others, about what it meant to be a boy and about whether they could be like a boy was supposed to be. For many boys, being a boy who was

like a man seemed to be more problematic than being like a woman was for girls.

Boys' identity with men was indicated by the way they sometimes used the words which refer to the adult male and the young male interchangeably and by the way they used the adult labels to refer to themselves. For instance, when asked whether he wanted a man or a woman teacher next year, Jackie answered that he wanted a man "because a man wants a man teacher, and a girl wants a girl teacher." Both girls and boys used the adult gender titles to refer to themselves and other children within the context of some of their pretend play when they publicly and consciously had assumed the role of an adult. Boys, however, spontaneously referred to themselves as men beyond the structured play of symbolic games. For instance, a boy might say something like "Okay, men, pull!" as Ralph did when a group of boys was trying to move a heavy mat. Girls never called themselves "women" or "ladies" other than in pretend games, and some girls sometimes resisted boys' assumption of the adult male title, saying such things as, "You ain't no mens, stupid!" They also resisted when boys called them "women" outside the structure of games saying, "I'm not a woman; I'm a girl!" At such times girls were not only denying the objective reality of the designations, but were denying what the boys meant to say when they used such titles. Girls recognized that boys were sometimes trying to make claims of strength and power when they called themselves "men."

There are a number of possible explanations to account for the difference in the way boys and girls used the adult labels, but none seem conclusive and the matter is complex. We can speculate that the answer might have to do with the more problematic nature of boys achieving the meaning of manhood, and thus be reflective of a desire to stake an explicit claim for their own boyhood and manhood. Being a woman was connected to being a mother, a concrete, observable, and nonambiguous state which every girl knew she could be in real life, just as in the pretend games of house and Barbie. Being a man was less definitely attached to a specific role or state of being and was more ambiguous. Boys had to actively work to achieve the meanings of manhood. As we will see, a boy has, to some extent, to *prove* his manhood and his boyhood. Boys might have used the adult designations more because of the greater tension that they associated with being a boy, tension which might be related to the competitive nature of masculinity, as many boys understood it, or to the normative value attached by boys to maleness as compared with femaleness. Most of these issues and possibilities will be discussed later in the study.

The boys knew that boys were like men, and part of what it meant to be a boy was that one was supposed to be like a man now. In some essential ways, being "like" a man meant that one was supposed to be *the same* as a man.

Day 13. Shawn and Glenn are in the large playground. Glenn has a small shovel which he and Shawn are using to try to dig in the hard ground around one of the saplings. It appears that they are trying to dig it up.

Shawn watches Glenn as he unsuccessfully tries to break the ground with the toy-like shovel. Shawn remarks, "That's a small shovel."

Glenn nods his head in agreement and replies, "A small shovel compared to the one we've been using, a man's shovel."

Glenn continues to try to break the ground, and Shawn says, "My grandfather has a shovel. My uncle uses it, but he's not very strong, to dig up some roots. My uncle pulled some out, but they weren't very big. We need a man's shovel's." [Shawn's uncle is 12.]

I wait for a few moments for the boys to continue, but they have apparently finished talking. I ask, "What's a man's shovel?"

Glenn: "A shovel that men use when they dig."

Observer: "Can women use the shovel?"

Glenn smiles and says, "No, women can't dig."

Observer: "Why can't women dig?"

Glenn: "Because women are fragile."

Observer: "What does fragile mean?"

Glenn: "They're softer."

Observer: "So women can't use the man's shovel because they are too fragile?"

Shawn: "Yes, women are too weak."

Observer: "You boys can use the man's shovel, but *I* can't use the shovel."

Glenn frowns as he looks up at me and says, "*Some* women can. Women who are big can."

When not in face-to-face interaction with women, some boys occasionally suspended what they knew about being children and about the strength of women relative to children. At such times, the boys constructed present reality from knowledge which involved not only what was presently so for them as boys but what was potentially so for them as boys-who-were-going-to-be-men-and-who-were-like-men-now. In this example, Shawn and Glenn tried to appropriate the strength of adult men for themselves.¹ Shawn and Glenn knew that they were "children" and that children were not as strong as adults, whether men or women. However, they also knew things which they experienced at the nonrational level as also true. They knew that "men are strong" and "women are weak," that they were boys and that "boys are like men, who are strong." They used the dichotomous constructs of gender to construct their meanings rather than referring to the phenomena themselves. When confronted directly with contradictions to their meanings, "You boys [who are children] can use the man's shovel, but I, [an adult, a woman], can't use the shovel?", they modified their constructions to the extent necessary to account for their immediate experience and those aspects of it which made their previous constructions problematic. 'Women can't use the man's shovel because they are too fragile' changed to "*some* women can. Women who are big can." The two retained without question the idea that boys could use the man's shovel because boys were like men now, as well, as people who would be men in the future.²

In considering what "being a man" meant to boys, it must be pointed out that individuals had unique typifications of men. Since no boy or girl knew precisely what any other knew about men, no child's images of what men were like were identical to the images of any other. Within each boy's subjective stock of knowledge, there were elements of knowledge about men which were not shared with most, or perhaps any, of the other children. The differences depended on a boy's biographical history, his life-worldly experiences. Ben, for instance, knew "men" as people who read books and newspapers, who liked to play chess, and who liked to play with little boys. Other boys never seemed to connect reading, chess, and companionship with little boys to men. To another, such as Timmy, being a man meant that one was a person who seldom talked, a person who spoke in sentences of only a few words when he did talk. These unique elements of knowledge that individual boys had about men mediated other knowledge which boys shared with one another about men. For instance, for Ben being a man might always signify some gentleness in social relationships. If Ben knew, as "everybody knew," that the type "man" was strong, then his type "man" might be typified as of a gentle-and-strong nature. In the future, Ben would enlarge his stock of knowledge about the type "man" from these essential and fundamental elements he knew as a young child.

However, because a boy's typifications from the social stock of knowledge were shared with other boys, then the knowledge was also socially shareable, unlike the unique typifications of an

individual's stock of knowledge. Socially shared knowledge, unlike individual knowledge, was something that boys could easily talk to others about and be understood, something that could be shared during games and used to give meaning and structure to play; it was the knowledge that made social life possible among the children. Consequently, since social knowledge was reaffirmed in social encounters, what "everybody knew" about the type "man" had far more impact on the social life the boys constructed than those various typifications that constituted part of an individual's own subjective stock of knowledge. As boys came to know that certain elements of their stock of knowledge about boys and men were shared by other boys and were essential to social interaction, such knowledge was further strengthened and validated because of the wish for sociality.

What Are Men Like? Not Like Women

Each boy knew that gender was dichotomous. Each knew that men were not like women, that men and women were different, and that if one was like a man then one was not like a woman. Boys, more than girls, tended to define what it meant to be a person of one gender by explicitly contrasting it with the other. For boys, if one gender type was said to be 'like this' then the other was likely to be said to be identified in extreme and opposite terms. For instance, where girls said, "Women are pretty, men are strong" boys typically said, "Men are strong, women are weak." Though some boys showed that they had subtle typifications about

gender, they would often follow the other boys in defining the meaning of gender in stark, contrasting terms.

What Are Men Like? Men Are Tall, Big, and Strong

According to the boys in this classroom, "men are big, tall, strong, and have large muscles." More precisely, boys knew that men were taller, bigger, stronger, and more muscular than women.

When they played, boys would often consciously pretend to be men, and sometimes the pretense took the form of dramatizing a man's body or what boys knew to be characteristic of a man's body. It was obvious when a boy was pretending to be a man and have a man's body. Typically, the boy would push his chin into his throat and, frowning, talk with a deeply lowered voice. He would thrust his chest out, pull his shoulders back, pull his elbows away from his body and thrust them forward to dramatize the musculature of his upper arms, arms presumably too large to hold close to the trunk as the boy regularly held them. The portrayal was completed by a characteristic manner of locomotion. The boy would stride, rather than simply walk, with his legs thrust stiffly out, usually slightly bowed, in an apt portrayal of bulging muscles in movement.

Partly because the pose was too awkward to be maintained indefinitely and partly because the boy would lose interest, such portrayals of men's bodies were usually of short duration and presented humorously. Such dramatizations were usually accepted by onlookers with similar humor, if not somewhat derisively by some

of the more verbally aggressive children, especially if the boy making the portrayal was not known to be a strong boy himself.

The knowledge that men were big, tall, large, and had big muscles was a fundamental, essential part of what it meant to be a man or to be like a man for every boy in the class. At one level, the boys' typifications about men's large size, muscles and so on were known apart from more complex meanings associated with the knowledge. But what boys knew about men's physical nature mediated and gave meaning to other typifications boys had about men and was sometimes used to account for or explain other, less fundamental knowledge about men. For instance, boys typified men as people who "go to work" and they knew men went to work because they were larger, stronger, and so on, than women. Boys also knew that "men have short hair" and many, especially the younger boys, knew that "men have short hair because they are strong." Jackie, however, said that men got to be strong "because they got the shortest hair." However boys used the elements of knowledge about strength and size, all the boys agreed that size, and all that flowed from larger size, was the essence of masculinity.

What Are Men Like? Men "Do Things," Are "Brave," and Adventurous

Men were seen by boys as types of people who acted in the world, who were active types or, as the boys sometimes put it, men "did things." The types of things boys knew men did were characteristically things which were exciting and required some risk taking. Boys typified men as "brave" and "not afraid to do

things" in contrast to women who, according to many boys, did not do things requiring bravery or courage but who were more fearful and "stayed home and didn't do nothing."

The boys' images of men as courageous and active were externalized daily by boys as they played with one another and pretended to be men. These games will be described later in the study. Such images were also present, though in a muted, more everyday reality-based form, in the answers boys gave to my question "What can men do?" Consider:

Vincent: Men can chop down trees, saw a tree, pick up a piece of pipe, light his cigarettes with matches, crank a car when it ain't started, make a trap for a bear or a fox, cut down a bad tree, kill deers, kill a fox.

Bradson: Work, [be a] boxer, policeman, fireman.

Glenn: Play baseball good. He's tall, he wears a sport coat. (Who?) My father. Work.

Timmy: I don't know; go to work.

Shawn: Watch t.v., beat up things, catch an alligator.

Ralph: Put out a fire, come to rescue people, be a policeman, drive a tractor, pick up dirt--a woman can't do those things--put it down again.

Bart: Work. Chop down trees, light the fire, buy bikes.

Eldon: Climb a tree. Work, make a

Pierre: Be a son. Work.

Ben: Go to work, bring kids to school, be a teacher too, read a newspaper.

Henry: Work. Work on cars.

Jackie: Catch alligators, be a fireman.

Consider how many of the boys gave answers which referred to situations or acts which were especially exciting or violent or which required courage or a high level of physical activity. Ben, the most gentle boy in the class, mentioned that men could be "teachers, too," like women, but other boys made references to roles or occupations that the children considered to be dangerous and heroic such as fireman and policeman. The boys' choices of verbs expressed the tension and excitement in their images of men. Men "chop," "cut," "saw," "rescue," "kill," and "beat." Boys experienced men in face-to-face interaction regularly, but they focused on the dramatic and exciting meanings associated with being a man rather than more mundane, everyday meanings. Even acts which might be considered to be mundane apparently achieved significance for boys within the context of what they knew about men as exciting types. For instance, Vincent answered that a man "lights his cigarettes with matches," making reference to fire and matches, both familiar and prohibited sources of danger to small children. Of all the things boys have observed men to do, the boys tended to mention those things suggesting excitement when asked what men did. When asked what women did, the most common answer was that women "cook."

One need only contrast the boys' answers about what men did with the girls' answers to the same question to more fully understand that the boys' choices were significant and not simply a reflection of objective reality, for of course, some men do "catch alligators," and it is typically men who catch alligators when they are caught. The answers reflect what boys understood *to be*

relevant to the type "men" among the many activities of men.

Unlike girls, boys did not typically talk about men in personal relationships with others, either in terms of roles, e.g., husband, or concrete activities, e.g., kissing. Not one boy mentioned, as girls did, that men "kissed," "hugged," "got married," or "had children." Nor did boys talk about men dressing, undressing, taking showers, wearing underwear, writing, singing, bowing, or "getting saved" as girls did. Because boys knew they were going to be like men they focused on those attributes which they understood to be most meaningful to men. Girls, on the other hand, seemed to focus upon those qualities of men which they knew to be meaningful to women, and to themselves as girls who were going to be women.

Boys knew that they were going to be men, and when they talked about what boys were like, they often used some of the same terms which they used to describe what men were like. For one thing, boys knew that boys, like men, were active types who "did things." When asked whether "girls or boys had more fun," several boys referred to the amount and type of activity.

Observer: Do girls or boys have more fun?

Shawn: Boys because boys *do more* than girls. Like girls do zero.

Jackie: The boys. They get to play some things, while *girls do nothing* like cooking and stuff.

Bart: Me. Boys 'cause they learn more and *do more*.

Ben: (He considered the question a long time before finally answering.)
I don't know. Boys I think; they play more games a little more; they *do more things*.

Ralph: Boys 'cause they get to play a lot more than the girls. The girls *stay in the classroom* and color.
(Emphasis mine.)

Many boys considered those things that were typified as girls' activities as "doing nothing," and they used the standard of boys' typified activities to determine where doing something and "doing nothing" began. Like the boys, most girls used their own gender's standards for defining activity. What boys understood as active and doing something, many girls typified as "loud," "mean," "too noisy." However, girls were not as critical of boys' activities as boys were of girls'.

Boys also typified boys as "strong like men" and "much stronger" than girls. Even boys who thought of themselves as weak boys thought of boys as a type as strong. The idea of strength and weakness was implicit in many of the statements that boys made about girls, about boys, and about objects and events. Sometimes the idea of strength was used to account for girls' not doing the things that boys were said to do. For instance, when asked "What can boys do?", Jackie answered, "Make things. Make the U.S.S. Enterprise. Boys can do all the things that girls can do." He was then asked whether girls could do all the things that boys could do. He answered, "Nope. Karate, strong things."

Boys sometimes used the same heroic images and terms they used in talking about men when they talked about boys and when they contrasted girls and boys. During the interviews, boys often illustrated how brave and unafraid boys were by contrasting the boys' bravery with the girls' fear.

Observer: What can girls do?

Shawn: Talk, jabber.

Observer: What can boys do?

Shawn: Kill bears. A girl can't because she's afraid.

Observer: What can girls do?

Jackie: Catch turtles if they're strong enough. Catch bugs if they want, even; if they're not scared. Boys are not so scared as girls.

Observer: If you were grown up, would you want a girl baby or a boy baby?

Jimmy: A boy. We can dig up plants like my dad and me, and girls are too afraid.

Observer: If you were grown up, would you want a girl baby or a boy baby?

Bart: Boys. 'Cause boys are nicer and don't scream much, and girls are too afraid.

What Are Men Like? They Are Powerful

What boys knew about men's larger size and bigger muscles, about men's activities and about men's courage and risk-taking behavior all combined to produce an image of a type of person who has power, a person who could act in and upon the world. In fact,

power was a word and a concept frequently used by boys, but not by girls, during their pretend games. Since power seemed to be so prevalent a theme among the boys, each child was asked the following questions which related to the idea of power so that there would be a more explicit rendering of their concept of power.

1. Who do you think should be the boss or make most of the decisions in your family? Why?
2. Do you know what power is? What is it?
3. Who has power in the class? Why?
4. Who has power in your family? Why?
5. How does a person get power?

Though girls did not use the concept of power when they played with one another, they seemed to understand the concept in much the same way as the boys, but the idea did not mean the same thing to girls because they knew that they were going to be like women who, in relation to men, girls knew were less powerful. Girls' concepts of power will be explicated here so that they may be considered within the context of what boys knew about men and power.

Girls' and boys' understanding of the concepts of *power* and *boss* were consistent with what the words mean to most adults in the natural attitude. The word boss suggested two basic meanings to children. For one thing, boss suggested the person who had the most power, the most ability to make others do what one wanted. It implied force. On the other hand, boss also suggested authority, the legitimate *right* to tell others what to do and the right to make them do what one wanted, independently of one's ability to enforce one's authority.

Boss was a word sometimes used by children in their conversations with one another. Boss could have a positive or a negative meaning. In their interaction with other children, girls tended to use the term as negative. Since girls tended to play mostly with girls, and since there were no roles for girls in "girls' games" which allowed for explicit hierarchical role relations or relations of authority, other than the basically intimate and personal mother-child relations, girls disliked girls trying to "be the boss." Girls did not invest the rights of authority in their play relations with other girls.

Boys tended to use the word boss more positively. During boys' games there were almost always formal hierarchical role relations of some sort. Someone was always invested with the legitimate right to tell someone else what to do. The only times I heard boys use critically the idea of boss was when they criticized Nancy for "always trying to be the boss."

The concept of power was apprehended in more complex and sometimes inexact ways than the idea of boss. Unlike boss, which children knew concerned human relationships, the idea of power might mean either an impersonal or nonhuman physical force such as electricity or gas or a human-like ability to act in forceful relations with other people or objects. Usually those who comprehended power as being impersonal and nonhuman also conceived of power in personal human terms too. In some of their games, boys combined the ideas about power, investing human or human-like creatures with the power of electricity, gas, nuclear energy and so on. Boys knew that one

with power might not always also have authority. On the other hand, boys tended to distribute authority to other boys based upon the successful use of power or force. For girls and boys, both power and authority, being the boss, were mixed ideas and were related to gender.

Even children who answered that they didn't know what power meant indicated by other answers that they did understand that power meant that one could get one's own way with others. Pierre shrugged his shoulders when asked what power was, but when asked who had power in the class, he answered "God." Similarly, Kara answered that Shawn and the teacher had power in the class after saying that she did not know what power was or what it meant. Shawn was the acknowledged "toughest boy in the class."

Every child knew that power was socially distributed among individuals and among groups. Some individuals had power, some did not. Some types of people were known to be powerful, while other types, especially in contrast, did not. The children also knew that having power was mutable, and a person might well have power in some contexts and in relation to some people and be virtually powerless at other times with others.

What types of people, according to the children, had power? When asked who had power in the class, many children named adults: the teacher; the practicing teachers; and the teacher aide. Several children named me despite my never intervening and seldom talking.³ Power was implicit if not explicit in the fact of being an adult and all that being an adult signified to children.

The children associated certain roles or titles held by adults with power. Teachers, captains, and kings are examples of roles children knew have to have power. The titles and roles suggested relationships of authority and submission to children.

Children also knew that age was related to power. Older people had more power than those who were younger, with the one who was the "oldest" having the most power. On the other hand, among a group of people who were of the same general age, children knew other factors might take precedence over age. Michael, for instance, was aware of these factors. When Katie countered Bart's claim that he could beat her up by asserting that he could not because he was only five and she was six, Michael argued, "No Katie. It's not how old you are; it's how strong you are." Nonetheless, children knew that being older per se, even within categories of people, was a reason power was said to belong to some rather than to others. Age tended to legitimize the use of power, and age was an element of authority.⁴

Being the oldest was a response the children typically gave with other accounts for power, most often size. The children knew "bigger" people have power over smaller people, and the "biggest" people have the most power of all. As small people in a world quite obviously dominated by those who were larger and as people aware of their own power over those who were smaller, children knew that getting one's way had much to do with one's relative size. Size was central to children's ideas about power.

In everyday life, children used and responded to subtle sources of influence, influences apparently having little to do with physical size and strength. But those influences they articulated and knew best, both in everyday face-to-face interaction and during the interviews, usually had to do with someone being able to take effective action because of that person's physical relationship to the world. One could effect action because one could make material changes in things and people. The children often explicitly named being the "strongest" and having big muscles as being the source and cause of power and authority. The bottom line was, could one make someone do as one wanted.

The adult reader, who is perhaps more aware of subtle sources and uses of power, and of authoritative checks upon the use of physical force, might find it difficult to appreciate how these children so fully associated power and authority with such radically physical factors as size, muscles, and the ability to swing a "hard belt" or to "knock down doors." Consider:

Day 1. Mrs. Cowan is telling the children about the school, where things are, how it is organized and so on. A girl asks, "Where is the principal?" Mrs. Cowan answers, "She is in her office."

An unidentified boy loudly exclaims, "*She!* She must be six feet tall!"

Another boy excitedly asks, "Can she break through the room?"

Mrs. Cowan appears not to hear either comment, though they are yelled in the children's excitement, and continues with her discussion.

We can see how the children connected authority with physical power and how they connected physical power with large size and great strength. Many children in the class seemed to think of the principal as the boss of the school, as a rather anonymous, respected authority figure and a powerful person. A few children thought of the principal as a person who sometimes punished children for "being bad," and they had conversations about being "sent to the principal to be spanked."⁵ The principal, then, bossed the school through force. The principal must be "six feet tall" and perhaps able to "break through the room." To boys especially, roles which suggested authority or power suggested the ability to use force which suggested size and strength through muscles.

We can also see that boys associated power with masculinity, with being like a man. The role of principal was known to be a powerful role, and the boys who spoke were shocked that the principal was a woman and not a man. Note how the boys modified what they knew about roles of power and gender only to the extent necessary to accommodate their problematic new experience. When a woman holds a role formerly thought to belong to a man, because of a man's larger size and strength, she must not be like the type woman but must, in essence, be like the type man. She must be big and strong and it is men, boys knew, who were big and strong.

Father was also a role associated with power and authority by almost all of the children. When asked who should be the boss within the family, almost every child whose father lived with her or him, and some whose fathers did not, answered that the father

should be the boss. Similarly, when asked who had power in her or his own family, they most frequently named the father as the person with the most power, though the question did not suggest that only one person be named.

The children attributed father's physical power to a variety of causes: Fathers "eat the right foods" and "exercise"; fathers inherit muscles from their fathers; the "Heavenly Father gives fathers power" which He "don't give to women." Even though the children gave a variety of accounts as to how or why fathers have more power than others, almost every child agreed that it had something to do with physical strength, an attribute children knew to be inevitably attached to fathers and not to others.

Most children perceived fathers as having more power and authority than mothers and children because they were "older," "bigger," and "stronger." No child said that fathers had more power because they were men. Yet the children knew that fathers were men. Though they did not mention gender as a reason for the distribution of power, the answers which they gave which attributed power to size, strength, the use of physical force, and, within families, age, were so intimately associated with knowledge about gender types that naming such elements was essentially the same as giving gender itself as the reason. The role and title "father" were inescapably one linked to gender for children by this age.

Children knew that men were powerful because they were stronger, larger, and older, and these were the most fundamental sources which were known to account for power, including men's

power. Children also knew that men were powerful *as men*, and individual men were known to have more power than other types of individuals regardless of deviations from what everybody knew about the distribution of size and strength and age. Consider the answers Nancy and Julia gave when the elements in their stocks of knowledge about typical father and typical man did not fit what they knew about power and their own fathers.

Observer: Who has power in your family?

Nancy: My daddy.

Observer: Why

Nancy: He's the oldest. (She pauses as she considers this and then says), No, he's the youngest. Because he has big muscles.

Observer: Julia, who do you think should be the boss or make most of the decisions in your family?

Julia: The daddy.

Observer: Why?

Julia: He's the oldest. Well, not the oldest in my family. Daddy's the tallest.

At this point Julia shows irritation as she realizes that her father is also shorter than her new stepmother.

Julia: Still my daddy 'cause that's who Mommy always asks.

Julia and Nancy first referred to their typical knowledge about fathers/men and power. Older people and bigger people have more power; fathers/men are older and bigger than anyone else in

families. When the girls realized that the typified elements from the social stock of knowledge were not true of what they knew about their own fathers, they changed their reasons for their fathers' being the most powerful rather than changing their answers to other family members.⁶ Both girls immediately cast about for other reasons to account for the power and status of their fathers. Nancy referred to her father's "big muscles" and Julia presented a new category which reflected a more subtle aspect and symbol of power: People who are "asked" are people who have power. Mommy always asks Daddy.

When asked who was the boss or who had power in their families, the image of Daddy, who is a man, typically emerged; shorter fathers, younger fathers, and shorter and younger fathers still retained the status of most powerful, the status of boss. When concerned with the cross-gender comparisons implicit within a family, questions of the distribution of power transcended the important categories children typically associated with power and rested on a category equally fundamental, that of gender. Those elements associated with power were almost precisely those elements associated by children with the type man.

Consequently, objects, activities, roles and types of situations which children associated with men were often perceived as having to do with power. And factors associated with power were often understood as being man-like or masculine. Such factors were more likely to become symbols for power or to be thought to be causes for men's power if they were shared by a number of

children, that is, if they were part of the social stock of knowledge rather than just typification from an individual's personal stock of knowledge unsupported by others. For instance, many children knew that men's and boys' names were powerful in and of themselves. Similarly, short hair length was known by some children to be powerful, rough, or strong. Symbols of masculinity were perceived as symbols of power. Some children, however, knew things that other children did not. Consider Jimmy's response to a question about being the boss.

Observer: Jimmy, whom do you think should be the boss or make most of the decisions in your family?

Jimmy: My dad.

Observer: Why?

Jimmy: He always does things; he does the laundry.

Like other children, Jimmy typified fathers/men as active types who "did things" and men's activity was known to be at least partly the result of their superior strength and size. Men were able to "do things" because they were big and strong. Jimmy, like most of the other children, typified his dad as powerful and as the one who should be the boss. Because Dad did the laundry, Jimmy associated doing the laundry with the power he knew his father had. People with power, Jimmy knew, do the laundry. Activities connected to men come to be symbols of power if they are repeated and particularly if they are socially shared symbols connected to many or most men. Because doing the laundry was not a

typical or socially shared activity of most men, one imagines that Jimmy, at some point, will come to know that Dad's power is unrelated to doing the laundry. Nevertheless, we may also imagine that Jimmy will retain his idea that it is the things that fathers/men do which merit power and social prestige.

We can see by other answers Jimmy gave that he also had socially shared elements of knowledge about power and masculinity to supplement his ideas about doing laundry.

Observer: Who has power in your family?

Jimmy: Dad.

Observer: Why?

Jimmy: He can knock down doors, shoot a bow and arrow.

Observer: How does a person get power?

Jimmy: By big muscles.

Authority, the right to have another do as one wishes, was partially considered to be the same thing as power, the ability to have another do as one wishes. During boys' play groups, this became especially clear. A boy who could imply the use of force could assume a mantle of authority. But children also distinguished between power and authority. Money was understood to be a source of authority by at least some of the children. Consider:

Observer: Who do you think should be the boss or make most of the decisions in your family?

Shawn: My father, mother, because they're the biggest. My father mostly. He runs the whole house

because he works more and earns more money.

Bart: Daddy. He can spank more and it's hard. And he bought the house. He paints the house, and so does Mommy.

Victoria: Daddy. (Why?) 'Cause he bought the house. He paid the money; he saved it.

Wanda: A man. (Why?) 'Cause a man buys the house for ladies.

Shawn, Bart, Victoria, and Wanda knew that fathers/men should be the bosses in houses and families because of the money they earned from work; the acquisition and control of money was understood to be connected to certain rights and privileges. These four children seemed to be describing an objective and perhaps inevitable relationship between money and work, and authority and power. On the other hand, when one considers that each of these children had mothers who worked full time outside the home for money, that Wanda had no father who worked for money for her family, that Bart's mother, a teacher, made more money than her husband, a student and part-time worker for the last few years, the matter of money and work and authority may seem to be more complex.

What Are Men Like? Men "Work"

Many of these children's mothers worked outside of their homes or had previously worked outside their homes. In addition, the children said that women could be "scientists" or "teachers"

or "artists" as well as many other roles known as work. Nevertheless, they did not name work as being what women did with the same frequency of prominence that they named work as an activity of men. Both boys and girls named the single word "work" more than anything else when they were asked "What can a man do?". The work of women outside the home had a significantly different meaning to children than the "work" men were said to do.

Children apprehended men as people who worked because that was what they knew to be significant and time consuming among their father's activities. The following is a typical example of a boy pretending to be a man in the role of father in the game of house, the only game where boys were ever observed to pretend to be fathers. Notice what was of central importance to Bart as father, and to the girls as other family members in relation to father.

Day 22. Marian and Brenda are playing in the housekeeping area. Both girls are mothers and are feeding their babies (the dolls) and preparing dinner. They put the dolls in the crib and begin to dress in the old clothes and to talk about "going out, shopping and on a date."

Bart has been watching them with interest and now seeks to join them. He picks up the old purse and tells Brenda, "Hey Mother, I'm going to get some money from the purse. Fifty-five dollars, no fifty-five cents. I'll be the daddy."

Brenda and Marian look at each other and shrug their shoulders, continuing with their play and ignoring Bart, but not with hostility.

Bart picks up the toy phone, dials a number, and has a conversation in a deeply lowered voice about cars: "Yeah, a car with brown on the side . . . that's the one."

Marian and Brenda have not assimilated Bart into their play and continue to ignore his attempts to join and his remarks to them. The girls are absorbed in their own fantasies about clothes and dates and the question of who is going to "take care of the babies" while they are "gone out." The two girls are sitting under the table and are partly hidden by the tablecloth, a very intimate space.

Bart put on the old tie and joins the two girls under the table. He pretends he is driving a car and makes engine sounds. The two girls look at one another and then at Bart but say nothing. Bart tells Brenda, "You stay out because you have to go to work, school." Then he adds, "Now I'm going to let you out," as he sees Brenda preparing to leave the space.

Marian and Brenda crawl out from under the table and begin to take the old clothes off, folding them neatly and putting them away in the old cabinet. Marian says, finally acknowledging Bart as a player, "It's time to fix dinner. What do you want for your dinner, Daddy?"

Bart replies, "Give me fifty-five cents. I have to go to work."

Marian shrugs and says, "Okay, husband, if you say so."

Bart crawls under the table (into the car) and says, "Come on, ladies. I'll drop you off on my way to work."

Brenda answers, "We have to stay home with our babies."

Bart then drives off and in a moment gets out of the car and, after watching the two girls play for a moment, begins to play cars with some other boys.

The event illustrates what family life in the home meant to girls as Mothers and what family life meant to boys when they assumed the role of Daddy. When Marian accepted Bart as the Daddy she tried to assimilate him into the game of intimacy and

personal family relations meaningful to her as a girl by suggesting that she would serve him dinner and that the family would eat together. When girls played house with boys as fathers, they typically acknowledged boys' authority as father by an offer to fix and serve him dinner. The boy, in turn, was expected to be relatively passive as father, thus acknowledging the girls' importance as mother within the home and at the same time accepting the ritual of authority offered to him in the form of dinner being served. Boys/fathers became the center of attention in the game but not the central figure; the Mother remained the central figure because of her activity.

Boys had different ideas about family life. Bart, the father, tried to create a meaningful role for himself based on what he and the other boys knew to be essential to being a father/man. Fathers were people who achieved prestige, importance, and value by virtue of what they did beyond the home. They achieved their status within families by orienting themselves to the world beyond the family. Bart talked of money to be spent beyond the home, impersonal phone calls made to nonfamily members outside the home, cars to drive away from the home, and perhaps most important, work to go to beyond the home. In short, Bart was orienting himself to the world beyond the home while the girls were essentially orienting themselves to the home and to domestic labor and personal, intimate relationships within the home.

"Work" was an important concept relating to what it meant to be a man and to be like a man, but what did it mean to boys that

"men work"? The boys knew that fathers/men worked, but what that specifically meant in concrete terms appeared to be unknown. Boys rarely observed their own fathers at work and because of the mystery and diversity of fathers' work, it was something that was unshareable with others. Boys never pretended to be "men at work" or "fathers at work." We may contrast this with the detailed knowledge that both girls and boys had about what women did: "cook," "clean the house," "take care of baby," etc. The most concrete thing boys seemed to know about men's work was that one went to it. "Going to work" was a concrete, observable and reproducible activity. Men got into cars and drove away from the home. "Work" itself seemed to be more significant in an abstract, symbolic sense than in terms of specific knowledge. Work seemed to achieve its primary importance for boys as one part of a dichotomy, the other part being home. Work symbolized the world beyond the home: the outside, a world which was relatively unknown, unbounded, unlimited; a world without predictable, familiar patterns of behavior; a place which was at once threatening and dangerous and exciting and appealing. Home was an inside, sheltered world; a world known in its particulars; a bounded and a safe place where people did predictable, familiar things.

Inside the home was where women and children, "especially girls," stayed. Outside the home was where men, and boys, "did things." As houses increasingly signified women-with-children to boys, boys identified them as inappropriate places for themselves as boys. As younger boys learned what the older or more socially

mature boys already knew about the gender significance of the house, they increasingly began to reject the game of house, and some contemptuously labeled it as a game for "girls and babies" and, even more disparagingly, "a stupid game."

Despite women's working outside the home, the home was the place where these children knew women as mothers, and mothers as women, performed their most significant, meaningful activities. Home was where mothers/women "took care of others." Outside the home, "at work," was where boys knew that men performed the activities which men thought to be most significant to them as men. Nevertheless, girls and boys said that they thought that men/fathers should be the bosses in families-at-home despite the home and family being more closely associated with women/mothers. Women's work in the home was clearly not regarded as a source of power, authority or prestige for women/mothers *in relation to men* even within the family and regardless of how important such work was to these children who were dependent upon their mothers to "take care of them" and, especially, to "cook" for them. Women's work at home was not comparably prestigious to children as men's work away from home.

Girls and boys had different typified attitudes towards women's and men's work, however. Though girls knew that fathers were the bosses and had more power, girls did accord a lot of prestige and significance to mother's activities. Girls liked mothers/women. Many boys accorded mothers/women very little prestige as well as little authority or power. A few boys typified

women's domestic work as "doing nothing" when asked what their mothers did. This was the same way some boys typified girls' play when they pretended to be mothers and women.

For boys and girls, the "work" that men did outside the home contributed directly to their authority and power within the home. "Daddy's the boss because he paid for the house." At the same time, men's outside work symbolized for children, especially boys, how physically powerful, brave, adventurous, and even large fathers were, and how justly deserving of authority. Because they were strong and had big muscles or in effect, had power, men were able to leave the safety and familiarity of the home to venture outside into an unknown world of work and other men, a world without women and children. Women's work beyond the home was not given the same significance or meaning, evidently because being a woman did not have the same meaning for them as being a man. When a woman went outside into the world to work, it meant something different to children than a man's work. Children knew that women's real work was in the home with children.

In essence, these children, especially the boys, tended to apprehend men's physical being as the underlying, fundamental essence of men's existence. Boys knew that men were able to "do things" and be things in the world, things which gave men authority, because of their larger size and greater strength. Children knew that men were the bosses over others, including women, and they attributed men's authority to their physical power based upon their larger size. Working outside the home, and making money, were

symbols of men's physical power to boys, a symbolic effect of their power which was at once identified as a cause of authority. Dad's the boss because "he works more and makes more money." The person who makes the money buys rights and obligations from others. At one level, children simply typify fathers as the bosses. To the extent that they attributed authority to a cause, they tended to attribute it *essentially* to physical power, something which was typified as the essence of masculinity. Authority, then, was for children an abstraction of men's physical power. Authority tended to be seen by children as masculine.

Summary

Boys knew that they were like men and would be men when they grew up. From observing them it was apparent that they organized many of their projects and made many of their choices in view of what they knew to be relevant to men. Many boys experienced their task of being boylike/manlike as more problematic and difficult than girls experienced their task of being girls-like-women. Among other gender-based reasons, the problematic nature of masculinity seemed to reflect the competitive based meanings of masculinity shared by boys, as well as the existence of unlimited and hierarchical masculine roles. For boys there was no single defining role for reaching manhood as motherhood was, to some extent, for girls.

Boys had individual and unique typifications of what men were like but their shared typifications from the social stock of knowledge were more significant in their construction of social reality with one another. Boys' shared typifications seemed to revolve

around two essential ideas. The first was that men were unlike women, that the gender types were dichotomous types and for some boys, radically different types. The second had to do with men's bodies. Boys typified men as big, tall, muscular and strong, especially as bigger, taller, more muscular, and stronger than women. It seemed to be knowledge of the assumed differences in men's and women's bodies that provided the foundation for boys' knowledge of men.

Boys also typified men as brave, adventurous, and able to "do things." At one level boys simply knew that these were the ways that 'men' were, and the typifications were independent elements of the social stock of knowledge, existing independently from explanatory schemes about why this was so. At another level, boys accounted for men's bravery, adventurousness, and activity by reference to their size and strength. Men, but not women, were able to be brave and so on because their bodies enabled them to act effectively in the world, to be powerful in the world. Boys typified 'boys' in precisely the same terms as they typified men.

Not only were men powerful, but their power was largely considered to be legitimate. Boys knew men had authority as well as power. Most boys and girls knew that men should have the most power and be the bosses in families because they were bigger and stronger. They should have power and authority because their bodies made them more powerful.

Boys and girls also typified men as people who "go to work." Men's/fathers' work for money outside the home contributed to

men's/fathers' authority and power within the home. The main thing that "work" meant to boys was that fathers did things away from, and not in, the home. Homes were places mothers and children were. Because father was big and strong he was able to go outside in the world to work. Mothers' work for money had a different meaning, first because mothers' place was known to be home and because mothers' women's work did not signify physical strength, because women, unlike men, were not known to be strong and big.

Unlike girls, boys did not essentially connect the type man with personal and intimate family relationships to women and children. Boys emphasized men in roles other than that of father at home. This was in contrast to girls for whom the role of mother was central. Rarely, and only when playing house with girls, did boys pretend to be fathers. Most times when boys played, they pretended to be 'men.'

In the following chapter on "boys' games" we will see how boys actualized in their own play the constituent elements of the type man. We will see how they created roles of physical power and conflict, roles of authority, and games where the only pretend characters were masculine and no parts were provided for women or children. We will see how boys made the idea of men-away-from-homes a factual reality by playing pretend games outside and we will understand what they made of this. The rules for boys' games will be discussed, and the reader can apprehend how boys effectively, though not necessarily intentionally, excluded most

girls from their games through the enforcement of the rules for "playing right." The rules constituted an articulation of what boys understood to be men's and boys' way of being in the social world. In effect, we will see how boys constructed a social reality within the classroom that reflected the essential structure that they imagined for masculine social relationships and masculine types.

Notes

1. Appropriation of adult male strength by boys relative to women was sometimes actively encouraged by adult women in this situation. Mrs. Cowan and other women, teachers and nonteachers, were observed to encourage this view of reality by making statements that in effect suggested that these five- and six-year old boys were stronger than they, the women, usually by contrasting the masculinity of the boys with their own femininity. For example, "You're so strong. What would I do without you boys?" Such statements were *never* made to girls.
2. In one sense the meanings which the boys used are no less "real" in a social sense than the objective relationship of relative body weight and ability to dig with a full-sized shovel. There are women who know, or who act as if they know, that they can't dig with a shovel because they are too weak.
3. Because of my noninterventionist posture, I was surprised and somewhat disappointed that they named me a person with power. Upon reflection, however, I realized that the answers the children gave were congruent with objective as well as subjective reality. Had I chosen to act, I could have been the second most powerful person in the classroom, second only to the teacher. The children simply made explicit what was implicit but no less real. Being perceived as a person who does not use power is not the same as being perceived as a powerless person.
4. Mrs. Cowan shared the children's typification that age was one source of power and authority. She also shared their typification that men were the bosses or heads of families, the persons with the most authority. When, during a teacher-directed discussion of the organization of families, Bart volunteered that his mother was the oldest person in his family, the teacher

insisted that he "*must* be mistaken," and that his father was really the oldest. Bart was correct, for his mother was the oldest. Mrs. Cowan had been teaching a lesson on families and the respective ages of members and had always presented the father as the oldest, a presentation that appeared to children as a proscription as well as a description of typical families.

5. This was not the role played by the principal at this school and it certainly was not the role which the faculty theoretically conceived of as belonging to the principal. However, I did observe two times when adults threatened children with a trip to the principal's office for "being bad." Early in the year a harried Mrs. Cowan threatened Kara with such a trip for her continued crying at being left at school by her mother. Another time a practicum student threatened to send Janie for "fighting." The principal was, incidentally, close to six feet tall. To my knowledge she could not break through rooms.
6. Among the children only Vincent followed the logic of his first answer about power without denying it or adjusting it to fit the circumstances of his family. He said that his mother should be the boss because she was "the biggest." Vincent was the only child in the class who lived in a typical nuclear family situation who said that his mother should be boss. The only other children who answered mother or both parents were children who lived apart from their fathers or, in Janie's case, whose mother had recently left the home and the children with the father, something named by Janie as giving power to her mother. Later during the interview, however, Vincent joined the other children and said that his daddy had power in his family because ". . . he got big muscles. He's the smartest because he made a car."

CHAPTER IX
"BOYS' GAMES": PRETENDING TO BE LIKE A MAN

At this point, the games that boys called "boys' games" or "games boys play" will be described, for in these games boys typically pretended to be men. In boys' games the boys created shared images and structured their social relationships through rules for play which were connected to what they knew was essential to being a man or like a man. Because the rules of play were difficult for some children, girls and boys, to observe, the playing of these games had a number of important consequences for the social structure of the classroom and for the way children consequently apprehended the meaning of events. By explicating the elements common to these games, one may even more clearly know what boys imagined to be important about being a man and see how boys constructed masculinity with one another.

The games the boys most frequently named as being "boys' games" and which were often played by a large number of boys¹ with only scattered participation by girls were the following: "Monster"; science fiction games such as "Martians Against the Earthmen," "Moonmen Against Men from Jupiter," and other unnamed space games; "Cowboys and Indians"; "Cops and Robbers"; "War," which was sometimes called "Soldiers"; and "Cars" and other games which were played with blocks inside rather than in the playground. Most of games were played regularly, in groups of five or more boys,

though girls sometimes played, and had regular players.

Monster

Monster was a popular game which was introduced, perhaps invented, by Eldon early in the school year. In the game one player took the role of Monster, and the other players were the ones the Monster was after. The basic structure of the game was simple. The Monster would chase the other players and try to catch or tag them. Occasionally, the Monster would choose "Helpers." More rarely, everyone would chase the Monster. Eldon almost always assumed the role of Monster and was sometimes called Monster even when the game was not being formally played. He enjoyed the title.

The boys developed the particulars of a specific game of Monster as they played, and the details changed from time to time because many of the players, especially the Monster Eldon, had vivid imaginations. All of the players defined their roles in loose coordination with one another and maintained at the same time both the unity of the group and the flexibility for the individual player. Sometimes, these roles took rather interesting forms. For instance, one day the Monster called himself the "Monster from Under the Ground," and the other players, on Michael's suggestion, identified themselves as "Men Who Live in the Sun." The following was a typical segment of a game of Monster and gives a better sense of what the game was about.

Day 14. Eldon is the Monster. He begins, saying, "Pretend I can make you turn to stone by touching you." Eldon chases the boys and touches Michael who immediately "turns to stone" by standing as still as he can.

Bradson then proposes, "If I can touch him with my hand, he will turn back; my hand has an electric charge in it."

Eldon begins to guard Michael from the others who are trying to touch him and turn him back into a "Moving Person." They have now identified themselves as Moving People Against the Monster. While the Moving People try to free Michael, Eldon tries to guard Mike and at the same time he tries to turn the Moving People to stone. Eventually, Glenn is able to touch Michael on the back, while Brad is occupying Eldon's attention. Michael runs away, and the Monster starts chasing everyone again.

Science Fiction Games

Even more popular with the boys than the game of Monster was the variety of games with science fiction themes. As in Monster the game was one of conflict between opposing sides or teams,² but in science fiction games the players divided themselves into two approximately equal numerical groups. The two groups were also approximately equal in terms of playing skills and social power, as well as numerically because each team was usually headed by a highly skilled leader who was a high status player. This boy would invariably bring him at least one other skilled player so that the sides were rarely lopsided.

The science fiction games were often given a proper name by the players, but less frequently the games were left unnamed. The details of the games, named or unnamed, were quite fluid and changed often within a period of play, but the basic structure

remained that of opposing sides chasing each other, capturing each other, or rescuing their fellows from the opposition. As in all of the games played outside by the large group of boys, there was a good deal of physical contact between players, some of it playful and rough, some of it rough and not quite so playful. A description of one game of "The Earthmen Against the Martians" will provide an account of what a typical science fiction game was like.

Day 21. Bradson is the "captain" of one side, and Michael names himself the "Leader" of the other. The teams are selected and then each team starts shooting the other team with their "fasers" which are laser-like guns adopted from a popular science fiction television show. During the game the players fall dead when shot, but get up and continue fighting in a moment. Sometimes a player gives an explanation for his recovery as Glenn does, saying, "You killed me, but you didn't know that I could come back to life in two minutes because of the rays of the sun."

Brad replies, "Yeah, but I shot you again and now pretend that the sun's gone and it's night."

Glenn agrees, but counters, "But you didn't kill me, because my suit resists fasers and it only injured me." Then Glenn calls to the other Martians who have been engaged in their own conflicts with other Humans, "Rescue me, rescue me! I've been hit!"

All of the Martians run to rescue Glenn by tagging him on the hand, while the Humans try to keep Glenn a captive and capture the other Martians.

Soon the players are grabbing one another and wrestling until Bradson, apparently sensing that the unity of the game is about to degenerate, says, "Okay, okay! That's enough! Now let's pretend that"

At this point the teacher interrupts and calls them to go inside.

Cowboys and Indians

Science fiction themes are relatively modern, but the boys also played the familiar Cowboys and Indians. Like Monster and the space games, Cowboys and Indians was played outside in the large playground, involved a good deal of running and rough physical contact at times, and had a basic structure where the players divided into two opposing sides who were said to be against each other. Players chose to be either cowboys or Indians, apparently preferring neither, and then tried to shoot each other, capture each other, kill each other, and rescue each other while using the images of the old American West. It was not unusual for players to modify the basic theme and introduce science fiction elements into a game of Cowboys and Indians in a way, however, that maintained the basic structure as well as its meaning.

Some of the girls liked to play Cowboys and Indians, too, and girls played Cowboys and Indians with the large group more than they played any of the other "boys' games."

In addition, some girls played "Cowboys," a game with Old West images played without boys, quite different than that played by boys in some essential ways. First, there were no opposing sides, and all of the girls imagined themselves to be on the same side. There were no identified leaders in a girls' game of Cowboys in contrast to the boys who always had a "Boss of the Cowboys" and a "Chief of the Indians." In addition, conflict and competition played a minor role in the girls' fantasies if they were present at all. There were essentially no violent images and

never any rough contact between girls. Typically, girls in small groups of two or perhaps three would mount their imaginary horses, and, occasionally making clicking horse hoof sounds with their tongues, they would "gallop" about the fringes of the large playground. Since I didn't gallop about with them, it was difficult to hear their conversation, but it seemed as though the girls' version of the game had more to do with exploring, adventure, and horses and almost nothing whatever to do with competition and conflict. I never observed girls to shoot each other during Cowboys, but once a girl did pull a gun on an outlaw "hiding near the swings . . . I mean the mountains," and shot at him.

"Cops and Robbers" and "War" and "Soldiers" were not as popular as Monster, the science fiction games, or Cowboys and Indians; but the large group did play them regularly.

Cops and Robbers

In Cops and Robbers, a game seldom played by any girls, the players again divided into two groups. There seemed to be a decided preference among many of the boys to be cops or policemen, but there was always at least one high status, skilled player who was willing to be a robber and other boys who were willing to join him and his side. The cops would try to arrest the robbers, who were said to have committed a crime, and the robbers would resist arrest or, when arrested, try to "break out of jail," usually with the help of their fellow robbers. As in the other games, there was much shooting and dying and rising from the dead to fight again.

War or Soldiers

"War"/Soldiers" was a game which had images of war or conflict between nationalities as a theme, and usually players would divide into the Americans and the Russians. Some boys clearly preferred being Americans, so those boys who had no preference assumed the roles of the Russians. Russians and Americans shot, killed, captured, and bombed one another with a variety of weapons including machine guns, jet planes, and "fasers." There were no civilians in these games, only soldiers.

"Boys' Games" Played Inside

The children were not allowed to go outside to play whenever they wished, though they did spend a great deal of time there. The most popular games boys played when they were inside the classroom were the various games played with blocks or with toy vehicles or with both blocks and toy vehicles.

Boys played with blocks and cars more than girls, who showed relatively little interest in either. At times it appeared that girls and boys were playing with blocks and cars together, but usually the children were merely playing side by side rather than playing a unified game with one theme. Boys usually played blocks or cars in groups of two to four, sometimes five. The group nature of boys' block playing was largely a matter of choice, but the limited number of activities, the limited space, and the recognized communal ownership of the teacher-owned objects contributed to the larger groups that played.

The boys described activity involving the use of blocks in two ways: as "playing with blocks" or as a specific game, for instance, as playing "wagon train," "space ship," or "fire station." For most of the boys the construction of the edifice with the blocks was as important a part of the play as the theme of the game which emerged. This was in contrast to the girls for whom the theme was primary. However, boys rarely used the blocks simply to construct an object without intending to use it for further play. Sometimes the theme emerged spontaneously from the object itself. "It looks like a cave . . . let's play caveman and tiger!" Sometimes boys made an object represent a preconceived image such as a boat, spaceship, or animal cage. The most common types of structure the boys made were objects having to do with transportation such as cars, rocket ships, boats, wagons, fire trucks, police cars, and roads, bridges, and airports to use with the toy vehicles. Boys also made "wild animal cages," "caves where monsters lived," "cages for human captives," and a "huge cannon to shoot at the enemy."

Boys gave names to their games. For instance, when they built a wagon from blocks, they called the game "Wells Fargo," and they played "War in Outer Space" on a rocket ship they built.

Though the themes of the games played inside were similar to those played outside, there were differences. For inside games the boys did not divide themselves into two opposing sides. Instead all were said to be against a common enemy or against a harsh, impersonal environment. The games played inside did not

actually involve much rough physical contact, but the images the boys portrayed were as exciting, physical, and adventurous as those they presented while outside. The teacher restricted the boys' physical behavior more while they were inside, but their fantasies were their own and were uncensored. Action was the mode.

Action was also largely the point of the game when boys played inside with the toy cars, especially when they played with others rather than alone. Cars did not merely drive down the street, but raced down the street at "a thousand miles an hour" and crashed into one another. Airplanes "bombed them" on freeways, hurricanes "smashed them to bits," or bridges felled them by "collapsing on them." Even boys who played with cars more cautiously when alone, would sometimes eagerly participate in fantasies of power and destruction suggested by their playmates.

Boys, and to some extent, girls, identified the toy cars and the games played with cars as being something that had a special connection to boys. "Cars," said the children, were "boys' toys." Nonetheless, girls played with cars at times but in a manner which reflected the different meanings that cars had for girls and for boys. Girls usually played only a very short time, spent almost no time constructing structures such as roads for the cars and did so in a relatively imprecise manner,³ and drove the cars relatively slowly and carefully. In short, the few girls who sometimes played with the cars usually did so when they were searching for something to do or wanted to play with the children

who were already playing with the cars. Girls seemed to have very little interest in the cars.

Common Elements in "Boys' Games"

Though each of the games played by boys had its unique qualities, which depended on the specific theme, there were several elements which were common to all of the games and which reflected the way boys saw themselves as boys and the way they understood what was relevant and important, within the social group of the classroom, about being men.

All of the games had similar images of men. First, there were no men who were imagined as being in any relationships with women or children, and none of the fantasized and unoccupied other roles in the games were female figures. The image was of men in relation to and in reference to other men. This was in radical contrast to the games which children identified as being "girls' games." In girls' games, girls constantly referred themselves to fantasized others, sometimes to real others who assumed pretend roles: to babies, to small children, to men in roles such as husband and boyfriends.

Another part of the image of men was of male groups in some sort of competition and conflict with one another. Games were never free-for-alls with everyone being against everyone else. The one game where one player was said to be against all the others was Monster, and, significantly, the role of Monster was never assumed by one of the highest status boys but always by a

middle status boy, usually a kindergarten boy. The one time a high-status boy volunteered to play the role of Monster, when Eldon refused, some of the other first-grade boys objected and suggested another kindergarten boy, Ralph. Power was being with the group, and the single player who was outside the group, while imagined to have more power individually, had less power than those who belonged to the group because they were part of the group.

The strong images of heroism and camaraderie in the games also reflected the importance of group membership. Members of opposing groups were always in conflict with one another, but members of the same side were loyal to one another and pretended to take risks for one another. Perhaps this was part of the reason that the highest status boys did not assume the solitary roles, like Monster, though such roles were central to the games. The Monster could be strong and brave, but, lacking comrades, he could never be a hero, an image that required friends or companions.

The images of violence, especially violence through brute strength, towards the enemy were as important and essential to the meaning of the games as the images of heroism. Players would talk about "killing," "torturing," "beating up," "destroying," members of the opposing side in a variety of ways and with a variety of weapons, which were always a part of the games.

Sometimes the images of violence were more impersonal as when a spaceship had to "dodge a falling star." Nevertheless, these impersonal images retained the quality of requiring a player to pretend to act effectively against a strong force in order to

survive, for the boys' world was largely a world of conflict and conquest and survival required action, bravery, power and ingenuity.

Another compelling but more subtle part of the boys' images of men during their games had to do with ingenuity and competence. Brute force was good, but force combined with cleverness was even better. By devising imaginative schemes ("Pretend I injected you with water that turns to ice in your veins and made your eyes freeze so you don't see me"), players managed to extricate themselves and others from difficult situations, even from death.

Another element which was usually present was the existence of an explicit hierarchy of authority within a group of men. All members of a group were not equal, as they were in girls' games when girls pretended to be women. Sometimes a leader would be at the head of a chain of command which reflected levels of power within the group. For instance, there might be a captain and a lieutenant, and boys clearly understood that a captain outranked a lieutenant. A first-grade boy would usually proclaim himself the leader of a faction with ready assent by other players. Occasionally, other players would suggest a high ranking boy be the leader. Kindergarten boys did not usually try to name themselves as leaders and when they did, they were usually ignored. Leaders had some veto power over whom they would accept for their side, and some potential leaders often rejected some boys and girls, sometimes because of personal dislike, race, inadequacy in the game, gender, or because of a combination of these factors. A boy who took the role of authority was actually invested with

some authority by the others. He pretended to be the boss and he was the boss.

Altogether the images boys portrayed as they pretended to be men were images of masculine power, heroism, courage, ingenuity and extraordinary strength, of violence, dominance through force, conflict and conquest, in short, of strong and powerful men who were outside in the world with other men "doing things."

Being outside rather than inside was another essential part of the images boys had during these games. With the exception of cars and the games played with blocks all of the games identified as being boys' games were played outside in the large playground rather than inside. And all of the games were played in a *pretend* context which was basically outside. Boys pretended to be in outer space, in the jungle, on mountains when they played. When the boys pretended to be inside anything it was typically something that was moving through the outside like a car or a space ship or in something that symbolized adventure and danger like a cave or a cage. When playing just with boys, boys never were observed to pretend to be inside an everyday building such as a house or a school. This was in contrast to the girls who often pretended to be inside even when they were actually playing outside on the large playground. Some boys mentioned where boys and girls played as being a significant difference between girls and boys. They dichotomized the areas and designated the outside as where boys were and the inside for girls. Some boys said, "Boys like to play outside,

girls like to play inside," and "Boys play outside, girls play inside."

Girls, however, knew that they also liked to play outside and so did not say, as some boys did, that the inside or the outside had a special relationship to being like a girl or a boy.

But when boys talked about playing outside they were referring not only to an objective place but to what the place meant to them. The outside, for boys, symbolized action and adventure. If one went outside and played games that might just as well be played inside, as girls did when they played games like house and Barbie outside, to the boys they might as well have been inside. Being outside meant that one could do things that required freedom from restriction and freedom of action, not sitting about in groups of two or three playing with small dolls and putting on and taking off the doll's clothes.

Saying that a person liked to play inside meant to boys that the person was not, like the type boy, interested in action, in doing things, in playing rough, in all the things that boys knew that they as people who were like men were interested. Being inside meant to be interested in those things and ways of being of girls and women. Thus, when asked, some boys named other boys as being "most like a girl" because, they said, such and such a boy "liked to play inside," which meant that the person was not active, adventurous, and rough "like a boy."

Another factor common to all of the games was that they were played in a rough way. If the boys were outside they would wrestle,

fight, roll about or fall to the ground, yell, and do all manner of activity. If they were inside they would stand about and submit by "let's pretend" that they were doing such things. In all the games, players were either active or pretended to be exceptionally active.

Each game had common images of men, was played or pretended to be in the same place, and had a common style of interaction and behavior. One factor that all of the three elements had in common was that each was understood and said by boys to be "different" from the ways girls played. Each was presented during the interviews by some boys as what distinguished boys from girls. "How are girls and boys different?" 'They play different games, different places, different ways.'

The Development of the Outside Play as "Boys' Games"

The games that have been described came to be the only games which were played outside in a large group. And they came to be played almost exclusively by boys, with girls participating only on an irregular basis.

Day after day the same group of boys, Bradson, Eldon, Michael, Shawn, Glenn, Ralph, Bart, Ben, and George, would run from the lunchroom, race to the large playground, and quickly organize the game for that day. The boys looked forward to the games and sometimes would talk about what would be played while they ate lunch. No girl, including Anne, participated in the games or in the lunch time preparation at the same level as this group of boys.

It had not always been like that. At the beginning of the year almost all of the children had tried to play together in a large group during what the teacher called "Large Playground Time." At one point on the first day there were 18 children playing together outside. Playing with a large number of children was exciting and appealed to kindergarten and first-grade children, boys and girls. Soon, however, most of the girls and quite a few of the younger or less mature boys had completely given up their attempts to play with the large group and had left to play in small groups or alone.

There were a number of reasons why children stopped trying to play with the large group. For girls one reason was that Bradson, an influential and articulate boy, began to organize the players so that girls and boys were on separate sides.⁴ One day he successfully defined the theme of play as "The Ugly Witches Against the Boys Who They Are Trying to Eat." On the second day he modified the game of cops and robbers to "The Best Police Force in the World Against the Robbers," whereupon he promptly named himself as Chief of Police and announced, "only boys can be on the Best Police Force in the World." He also tried to exclude Ralph because Ralph was black, but Ralph insisted upon being a Policeman and was finally allowed to join, with the stipulation that he could not be a lieutenant. No girl resisted Brad's definition of the situation. Of the boys, only Michael was willing to join the girls as a robber. One result of the separation was that the sides were unbalanced, as most of the girls had trouble catching and then

holding onto the rougher boys. And not only were girls and boys separated from one another, but girls were defined as a bad group and worse, perhaps, as "ugly" witches.

Some of the girls became discouraged with playing in the large group because of this turn of events. By the time Katie and Nancy, supported by their two influential boyfriends Michael and Glenn, had successfully introduced games which gave girls positive though still separate roles to pretend, the enthusiasm of many girls for playing with the group had waned. By the fourth day of school only Katie and Nancy were still playing with the group, though other girls joined once games where girls had girls' roles were established. It wasn't that girls were unwilling to assume male type roles. It was just that they weren't willing to play the way the boys thought that the roles demanded. Several of the younger boys also had dropped out of the game by the fourth day, so that the size of the group changed from about 18 to about eight or nine.

The reasons the girls and younger boys eventually stopped trying to play were complex, but were related to whether girls and boys or just boys would determine what the game to be played was going to be about and what roles were accepted and assimilated as part of play.

Girls as Girls in "Boys' Games"

For about the first month of school Katie and Nancy were sometimes able to play a central role in selecting the game. At

such times the girls introduced themes and roles which reflected girls' typified interest in appearance and romantic relationships with boys. Because these attempts were fairly successful and accepted by boys other girls would join in the games. Later, when such games and themes had been rejected by boys, certain individual girls would try to introduce roles for themselves which had to do with nurturing relationships and personal, familial relationships such as wife, nurse, and mother. In effect, girls were trying to play house and to create games of intimacy. These attempts of girls to join in this way were always unsuccessful, and after a few moments the girl would leave the area to play something else.

The first of the themes having to do with appearance and romance was introduced on the fourth day of school and was the game of "Sister, Sister," a game the boys called the "Wildest Witches," where girls pretended to be "beautiful and helpless princesses" who were sisters. At the same time, the boys pretended the girls were "witches" who were dangerous and had to be captured.⁵ The girls would run from the boys who were trying to capture them. Sometimes the girls had allies among the boys, a strategy that served to make the sides more balanced because the boys were in general more skilled players, and that made the games more violent and exciting because the boys fought with one another over a "wild witch." Even the girls' male allies referred to the girls by the boys' term of "witch."

Though the game of "Kissy Girl" was not introduced until about the 11th day of school, it was by far the most successful of the games where girls played a central and equal role in the fantasies. The game was introduced by Katie and was played every day by the large group for seven days and intermittently thereafter for about a month. It was played occasionally during the last month of school.

Katie was always the Kissy Girl, a title which she relished, and the game of Kissy Girl was never played without her. Other girls were encouraged to join the game by Katie and were designated as "Helpers." Helpers were recognized by both the boys and Katie as being subordinate to Katie. This was the only game where a girl was in an explicitly and significantly superior role relationship to other girls. Girls who tried to assume a lead role in the game were likely to be rejected as Helpers by Katie, who was extremely possessive about the role and the rights associated with it.

The object of Kissy Girl was for Katie and her Helpers to chase the boys, catch them, and then kiss them. Sometimes Helpers were allowed to kiss boys, but at other times they were directed by Katie, or by the boys themselves, to be brought to the Kissy Girl who would kiss them. At such times, the boys would usually pretend to resist, using minimal force, put on a big show of "hating to be kissed by the girls," and call to their "brothers" to help them get away.

Of the girls, Katie had a lot of control and power in the game, occupying as she did the central role. She sometimes rejected certain of the younger boys as players, either by ignoring them or rejecting them outright. She almost always accepted all of the girls who wanted to be her Helpers, though she occasionally said that Nancy could not play because she thought that Nancy wanted "Michael to love her instead of me."

The same boys who rejected others as players in the boys' games were likely to reject others in the game of Kissy Girl. Henry and Joseph were often told that they could not play, but more often rejecting boys would deny girls the right to play by making such comments as, "I'm not gonna let myself be kissed by a fat girl [Myra]!" as Shawn did or "No black girl's gonna kiss me! No way!" a comment made by Bradson, which was typical of him. The recipients of these remarks never indicated by their behavior that they were aware of their meaning, though it was clear to other players.

The images girls introduced into the large group play were blended with the images of boys pretending to be men. Consequently, when boys and girls played together in a game like "Sister, Sister" ("Wildest Witches") or "Kissy Girl," the games were less violent than most boys' games, but more exciting and active than the games girls alone played. There wasn't so much talk of killing and torture, and weapons weren't often mentioned. Nor was there any concern with the small details of everyday family living such as cooking

the dinner and cleaning the house. The combined games were different from either girls' or boys' games.

After the first month of school, however, girls had lost most of their power to say what the game was going to be, and it was the boys alone who defined and gave meaning to play. The games they created and played then were the science fiction games, Monster, Cops and Robbers, War, and Cowboys and Indians, the games that came to be called "boys' games."

The reasons that boys without girls were able to name the games were complex, but generally had to do with the greater number of boys who played, the appeal that the masculine images of violence had for the boys, importance and nature of the behavioral expectations which came with the masculine images, and because for girls to define games with important female roles they apparently had to have the support of at least one high status boy. Most boys would do what high status boys wanted to do and would follow their lead much more readily than the lead of any girl. Thus, when Nancy and Katie gave up or lost the affection and attention of their boyfriends, they also lost prestige and standing among the boys and the ability to determine large group events. They were no longer listened to. The change in the behavior of other boys toward them was sudden and dramatic and correlated partly with the end of their "boyfriend girlfriend" relationships.

At that point, then, the outside large group games were created and controlled by boys listening to and responding to other boys. The result was different games with different images

and correspondingly different expectations for behavior, that is, different rules for playing. Boys' games had boys' rules. Most of the girls and some of the boys were unwilling or unable to play by boys' rules.

Boys' Rules for "Boys' Games": "Playing Right"

The boys who observed, demanded, and generally sustained the shared, normative expectations or rules for playing with the large group sometimes called the rules "playing right." The rules began to emerge on the first day of school and through repeated use became more institutionalized and more complex in meaning. They eventually acquired significance beyond the immediate context of large group play.

The idea of "playing right" came to refer to a number of things. At the beginning of the year it was used mainly to note violations of specific expectations some boys had for behavior during large group outside play, violations which made it difficult to sustain playful interaction and the meaning of games. The phrase "You're not playing right" meant, among other things, that because of the absence or presence of a specific behavior, a person was an inadequate participant who other boys did not want to play with because her/his presence made the game "not fun."

Because players used the rules with one another over time they came to know who played right and who did not so that the phrase came to be used to refer to specific people and their typical, expected behavior. Boys might say, "Michael plays right" or "Jimmy doesn't play right." Later it was used to refer to

categories of people, those who played right and those who did not. Belonging to one of the categories came to be associated with one's status or standing among the boys. Those who were said to play right acquired prestige, those who were known to not play right were regarded by the rule-followers as deficient, not just as players, but altogether. The membership of the groups changed gradually as more people came to observe and understand the rules, but the relative status of the groups, and the rules themselves, remained fixed.

Eventually, the idea of playing right came to be explicitly connected to gender. Despite acknowledged exceptions among boys and girls, boys said, "Boys know how to play right, and girls don't play right. The linkage of the norms with gender had, in its turn, an additional influence on how children understood what observing or not observing the rules meant, as well as an important influence on how some of the boys chose to act. This influence will be discussed more fully after the rules have been presented.

It was clear that the boys firmly believed that the way they wanted to play and wanted others to play with them was objectively, incontrovertibly, the only right way to play, because only by observing these rules could the "boys' games" they enjoyed and thought important be sustained. The rules were not essentially intended to be a means of acquiring status, of discriminating between types of people, or of excluding others from play, though this was how they functioned and eventually came to be understood, but were thought to be the way boys should play because they

reflected the boys' typifications of themselves as boys.

The boys' ideas of what it meant to play right can be considered in terms of four interrelated, overlapping normative expectations which taken together constituted the idea of playing right. Sometimes a particular phrase was used by boys, other than playing right, to identify specific rules of behavior and when this was the case I have identified the rule by the same phrase.

"Playing Right": Boys' Norms for Boys' Games

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| 1. "Know what the game's about" | A player should be familiar with the specific images, the general theme, and the structure of the game as it was usually played. |
| 2. No phrase was used other than "playing right." | A player should pretend that the play was real. |
| 3. "Do things" | A player should be physically active in a way consistent with the images. |
| 4. "Play rough" | A player should be able to participate in interpersonal interaction which might be intense or even involve some risk of being hurt. |

1. "Play Right": "Know What the Game's About". A player who "knew what the game was about" understood the general meaning or theme of the game, understood how details fit within the theme, and understood how the game was usually played by the group. Players were allowed a wide latitude within themes but there was a shared sense of what was appropriate for a game. When a player behaved inappropriately or made a comment or contribution which

others thought was inappropriate she/he risked being thought of as incompetent by others and would be judged to be a person who "did not know how to play right." Henry was a boy who was judged by most of the others to be an incompetent player. Consider:

Day 34. Several boys are standing about choosing sides for the game of "Martians versus the Humans." They begin to suggest details for the game. Henry, who rarely plays, eagerly and loudly suggests, "Pretend that a monster is going to come and get us and put us all in jail."

Brad makes a face of disgust at Henry and contemptuously says, "That's not the way you play, that's not what the game is about."

Henry showed that he did not know what everybody should have known. He did not know that "Martians versus the Humans" was about two sides being against each other, about group conflict in outer space, and not about the entire group being against some imaginary third party and being put in a place as mundane as a jail. Some players were more ready than others to point out deficiencies, and Bradson, a boy who was racially prejudiced, was especially ready to tell Henry that he did not play right and thus could not play.

The determination of whether a suggestion was a good idea or a "stupid" idea depended to some extent on who made it, but, more importantly, it depended upon the ability of a player to imaginatively fit what he had suggested into the theme so that it made the play more interesting to others. For instance, Eldon was able to introduce a science fiction image, the idea of "*Vulcan* Indians," into a game of Cowboys and Indians because he understood what the game was about well enough to suggest a deviant particular. After

initial skepticism ("There's no such thing as a *Vulcan* Indian!") the others accepted the idea, because it made the game of Cowboys and Indians more fun. When a player knew what the game was about, he/she could devise and present exciting images for "let's pretend" that made the game more interesting since the images made sense to everyone. Even if a player was not adept at suggesting new images or twists in the game a player who understood its meaning could at least participate and support the images suggested by others and thus sustain the collective meaning and the group interaction. To be accepted as a participant, however, one did not need to be adept at giving exciting meaning, but there were minimal levels of understanding which were expected.

Sometimes behavior which was usually acceptable in the outside games was unacceptable because of the necessity of maintaining the meaning of the game, and continuing play without interruption. For instance, rough play was typical among players, but one had to know about the game in order to know when to play rough and when to not play rough. Consider:

Day 17. The game is Monster. Nancy is playing and when her attempt to change the game to one which focuses upon her as a "helpless and beautiful princess" fails, she begins to play the game of Monster too.

Nancy chases the Monster Eldon, grabs him, and does not let him go. Eldon, who is smaller than Nancy, objects as she continues to hold him, "Don't fight. Only I [the Monster] can fight!" She still will not let him go.

The other players stop playing, because the captured Monster cannot chase them. When she continues to hold

Eldon, Glenn gently says to Nancy, "The game is not to stop and fight. That's not what the game's about."

Nancy, who has said nothing while she holds Eldon, just looks at Glenn, shrugs her shoulders, and leaves to play on the swings.

The game of Monster was not to stop and fight the Monster but to run from him and to try to help one another should the Monster, with his greater power, catch one of your fellows. Because the Monster was only one against everyone else, the game would quickly end if everyone chased Eldon. Eldon tried to explain this to Nancy when he said, "Don't fight. Only *I* can fight." Nancy did not understand what the game was about and played rough, something she was often criticized for *not* doing, when it was inappropriate and in a way that threatened the continuation of the game.

However, in a similar situation in a game of Monster Shawn also played too rough with Eldon and as a result, interrupted the game. But Shawn, unlike Nancy, was a high status boy because of his roughness and, more importantly, he provided meaning for his rough, deviant behavior which showed that he knew what the game was about. Consider:

Day 52. Eldon is the Monster. He says, "When I catch you, I can turn into a frog. Rivet, rivet." All of the boys begin to run away from Eldon.

Shawn introduces another image and says, "If we all jump on the Monster at the same time he doesn't have enough power to turn us into frogs."

Shawn and Timmy jump at Eldon and knock him to the ground. Bart runs up and jumps on Eldon too. The three boys are piled on top of Eldon, who is on the

bottom. Then Shawn stands up and kicks Eldon hard in the back of his head, while Bart and Timmy, who know nothing of this, are piled on top.

Eldon is crying and very angry and yells at Bart because he does not know it was Shawn who kicked him. The other players just stand around and watch. The game breaks up, as the Monster crawls inside one of the large pipes and cries.

In contrast to Nancy, Shawn gave his behavior meaning which was an extension of the frog theme introduced by Eldon and which was consistent with the primary meaning of the game as it was usually played: that the Monster was more powerful, but that all the boys together could defeat the stronger but unheroic Monster. By prefacing his "too rough" behavior with the remark, "If *we all* jump on the Monster at the same time. . . ." Shawn initiated the other players into his fantasy and aggression so that the meaning of his behavior could be understood and accepted, though the game itself soon ended. Unlike Nancy, Shawn was not considered to be incompetent or a poor player because he knew what the game was about. If any of the others thought that Shawn had played too rough none of them said anything or gave any indication that they thought so.

Nancy, who caused far less serious consequences with her roughness, was considered a poor player because she did not provide meanings which fit into the way the game was regularly played or provide for deviance, as Shawn did. Nancy was adept at providing meaning when she pretended a female role, a role which was basically not aggressive, but was not good at creating images within the

context of male images without female roles. Unfamiliar with the images consistent with roughness, she was simply rough.

To a large extent a boy's prestige among other boys rested with how well he created images, which depended on his knowing what the game was about. Several boys were adept at providing new meaning or enlarging upon the suggestions given by others. Not only a boy's prestige but his power had to do with how well he played the game and provided meaning. Brad was perhaps the most adept and motivated at creating images which enabled him to increase his personal power by assuming a pretend role of authority thereby controlling the images, and thus the behavior, of others. A good example was when he changed the game of cops and robbers to "The Best Police Force in the World," a change which caused other players to want to be cops under Brad's command as Chief of Police. Brad understood the appeal that superlative images had for the other players. As Chief of Police he was able to say who would be on his side and who would not, thus assuming the role of a person able to reject as well as command others. Brad knew what the game was about.

Knowing what the game was about had to do with being familiar with masculine images and meanings, because for boys the games were about being like men. Though girls understood the general themes and structure much of the time, they weren't as skilled as boys in providing meaning that was satisfying to the whole group, which was composed primarily of boys. Only Anne among the girls was adept at giving meanings that were as much fun for boys as the meanings that

the boys themselves provided. She was able to provide such meanings because she understood what was important and relevant to boys from the boys' perspective, she was able to follow the other rules, and she enjoyed the excitement of the boys' images.

2. "Play Right": Pretend That the Game Was for Real. It wasn't enough to know what the game was about and to know what the images and behavior meant. Players believed that a person could know, but simply be unwilling to play right because she/he wasn't willing to act as if what was being pretended was really happening. Such players did not give support to the images of the game. This can be illustrated by an example:

Day 10. Michael, Glenn, Eldon, Brad, Ralph, Shawn, Timmy, George, Nancy, and Katie are playing Cowboys and Indians in the large playground.

Several times, Katie, who is a cowboy, has been captured and every time she acts irritated and says, "Let me go; I'm not playing." After being released, she enters the game again, smiling slyly.

Michael complains to Katie and then to another player, "Every time she's caught she says, 'I'm not playing'."

Later during the game Michael 'shoots' Katie who, aware that she has been shot, looks defiant and then runs away to continue playing. Michael yells to Katie, "You're supposed to die, Katie!" She ignores him. Michael complains to Glenn, "Katie doesn't play right. When you shoot her she doesn't die. She *never* dies!"

Glenn agrees, "Yeah."⁷

A player was expected to support the images of the game in an active way so as to give life and richness to the pretend world. For some images it was not enough to lend verbal support. One had

to follow through with action so that the pretense was believable. Boys had conventional expectations for certain types of images.

Dying was perhaps the most important convention. When one was shot one was supposed to die, and dying meant falling on the ground, not running away. Death was temporary, about three seconds or so, but one did have to die. If a player wanted to enlarge upon her/his death rather than simply fall down and then get up, she/he could provide an explanation which also added to the richness of the game. For example, after George had fallen dead to the ground he immediately told the killer, "I have a secret ingredient in my blood that I inject which brings me back to life." Players did not usually stop to question the logic of such contributions as George's; they just made the game more fun. Very competent players could make their deaths a focus of the game because dead people were allowed to give directions and suggestions about the game when they died. Glenn made his death a focus when he said that dying made him have germs "that killed anyone he touched on the other side." Upon hearing this, everyone started running from Glenn, who became the central figure in the game.

When Katie refused to die she did not play the game right. By denying her death she denied the pretend world that made the game fun, the world where Michael was powerful, had a weapon, and could kill and conquer others, and she denied the possibility of danger, excitement, and risk. In essence, she denied for Michael and for the other players the whole fantasy and the meaning of the game. Michael always died when he was shot and he expected Katie

to reciprocate; he played both victor and victim and so should she. Michael assumed that Katie knew what the game was about and was simply unwilling to play right, as evidenced by her defiant look when she ran away.

To some extent Michael's view of Katie's behavior was correct. She knew that she was supposed to die. On the other hand, most of the girls often failed to observe the boys' conventions, and dying was the most common breach, and the matter seems more complex than mere bad sportsmanship or selfishness.

Part of the problem seemed to be that most girls did not really understand what the game was about in the same way that the boys did. Girls understood the game one way, boys another. We have seen that some girls tried to define the game in their own terms with an equal or major female role, but that more often than not they were unsuccessful, and the boys' definitions prevailed. But the boys' definitions weren't particularly significant to most girls, who liked the games of chase, but weren't interested in the elaborate images of violence, heroism, and conflict. Thus, girls' commitment to boys' fantasies was limited, and their understanding of the significance of certain images to boys was similarly limited. The knew that boys expected them to fall down on the ground and die when shot, but, lacking the feeling for the violence that the boys shared as boys-who-were-going-to-be-like-men, they did not share the boys' estimation of importance of the violent images for the game, so they did not fall down and die. What did dying

and conflict have to do with what it meant to be a girl-who-was-going-to-be-like-a-woman, even if one was a 'cowboy'?

Even if girls did understand the significance of boys' conventions they might not observe them because they did not want to play so physically rough or actively, thus breaking an additional one or two of boys' rules for playing right. Girls didn't want to fall down when killed, and it was difficult to pretend to die standing up.

In vivid contrast, many boys seemed to relish dying and playing rough. When shot they would dramatically roll around on the ground, clutching their abdomens, while lending verbal support to their actions ("Augh . . . he got me, I'm dying!"). Even more dramatically boys would pretend to be pretending to die, only to suddenly rise with a machine gun or other imaginary but lethal weapon to use against the enemy. "Pretend I'm not dying, only wounded!" Dying could be a rough business, and most girls, as some boys liked to say, "don't like to play rough."

Most girls broke the rule for pretending that the game was real more than most boys, even those boys like Henry and Jimmy who were considered by others to be extremely inadequate players. Henry and Jimmy had a tendency to keep running away even when they knew that they had been shot, but even these two boys followed through more than most girls, even girls who were typically much more likely to observe rules of reciprocity in other, more gender-neutral contexts. Of the girls, only Anne typically

followed through sufficiently well enough to satisfy the expectations of the other players who were rule-followers.

3. "Play Right": "Do Things". The boys who regularly played outside wanted their games to be active and they expected others to "do things" when they joined rather than "just stand around and talk." Boys considered it a mark of social incompetence and a basis for exclusion when a person tried to join the play in a passive way, or when a person entered the area where a game was being played and "got in the way." Consider:

Day 24. The game is Monster and is being played around the large concrete dome in the playground. The dome is "the mountain where people can be safe from the Monster."

Glenn and Michael are on top of the dome and are discussing strategies to use against the Monster, Eldon. As they talk, Myra and Julia, who consider themselves part of the game but who have only stayed about its fringes, climb to the top of the dome and sit down. Michael objects, "No! No girls are allowed up here!"

Brenda, who is in the process of climbing up, responds, "No! Girls only!"

Michael and Glenn are frustrated and glare at the three girls, who are now sitting and talking on the top of the dome. The boys shrug their shoulders to one another.

"Why aren't girls allowed on the dome?" I ask.

Michael replies, "Because girls don't look well with the Monster." Glenn nods his head in agreement. Brenda lifts her chin to them defiantly. I point out that Nancy and Katie are playing Monster.

Glenn explains, "Nancy and Katie run around instead of bugging us."

Michael and Glenn were boys who welcomed girls into the games so long as they played right, but when they sat around and got in the way of the activity, and in that way spoiled the boys' fantasies, the two rejected girls. Boys typified girls as an inactive type, in contrast to boys, so that when Michael wanted to enforce the rule about activity he considered it legitimate⁸ as well as convenient to use gender as a basis for exclusion. Instead of the more personal "You can't play," which was used for boys, he said, "No girls allowed up here."

In general, girls rather than boys failed to observe the boys' expectations for maintaining a relatively high level of activity. Part of the reason was because when girls tried to join in the large group play by taking on female roles, especially those which were oriented toward the domestic world, they were less active and "got in the way." Consider:

Day 51. The game is Cowboys and Indians. Julia has been watching and wants to play. She approaches Michael, who has temporarily stationed himself under a tree so he can "ambush some cowboys." Julia sits down and, crossing her legs, says to Michael, "Pretend I'm an Indian wife, okay Michael?"

Michael answers, "Okay, the squaw." Michael then runs off and joins the game of shooting, killing and adventure. Julia sits under the tree and watches for a while and then gets up and leaves to play with Shelley.

Day 33. Karen has been standing about near the fringes of the area where a large group of boys is playing. The game is Martians versus the Humans. She speaks to Shawn, who is standing nearby waiting for a new attack by the Humans, "Pretend I'm your wife, okay?"

Shawn replies, "No, pretend you're the nurse."

Karen says, "I'll bring some food for you."

Shawn answers, "No. No food nurse."

Shawn then runs to the large group of boys.

Karen watches for a while and when Timmy runs by she says, "I'm the nurse'" Timmy glances at her and runs to capture Vincent. When Brad comes near, she says, "I'm the nurse."

Brad says, "Who cares? Not me. But you're in the way of our game."

Some boys tolerated girls' attempts to establish domestic roles, essentially to play house within the context of boys' games, with grace. Other boys rejected the girls outright and expressed contempt for them, as Bradson did. Regardless of how boys dealt with such attempts, it was clear that they considered girls who played in this way "not fun to play with," as Bart put it when talking about Brenda, because they did not run around and help create the boys' view of what the world, and the game, was about.

4. "Play Right": "Play Rough". Regular players of boys' games expected everyone to be able to "play rough." The phrase "playing rough" was usually meant to refer to rough physical contact between players. Grabbing, holding, bumping, shoving, "play fighting," and pushing, and having all of these things to one, were examples of rough play.

Left without immediate adult supervision and interference, roughness seemed an inevitable part of the behavior of the boys when they played in the large group outside. It mirrored their

pretend images of men, images which gave the games meaning, and it mirrored boys' images of themselves as people who were like men. Boys often said, "Boys play rough."

Playful roughness was just part of what the game was about, according to the boys who regularly played and created the games. Michael, a boy who was rarely hostile or purposely hurtful toward other children "for real," as children put it, enjoyed rough, playful contact. In the following event he expressed how many boys took playing rough for granted.

Day 32. Several boys and girls are playing a variety of loosely connected and structured games outside. There are a number of girls and boys who do not usually play in the large group games, so the group is unusually large. Both the size and the membership seem to contribute to the looseness of the structure, and the large group breaks up into small groups with competing themes.

For a number of reasons, Julia becomes angry with Michael and threatens to tell on him because he "hit her," though this is not the real reason she is angry. Michael did not actually hit Julia, but bumped her as he pretended to be a wolf jumping up on her. Angrily she yells, "I'm gonna tell the teacher on you, Michael. You hit me!"

Michael is worried and appeals to Julia, "But that's *just the way we play*." Julia ignores Michael's appeal and goes inside to tell the teacher.

Meanwhile, Michael stops playing and stands waiting with a frown on his face, obviously concerned that the teacher will be angry with him. He waits until Julia comes back and triumphantly reports, "Mrs. Cowan said for you to come and see her, Michael."

Michael repeats his explanation, "But that's just the way we play."

At that point all of the children are called to come inside and the event ends. But Michael, not realizing that the busy teacher has forgotten about the whole thing, continues to worry about what is going to happen to him. He sits frowning and anxious for the rest of the day.

Boys often said that boys play rough, though all boys did not play rough, and that this was an important difference between girls and boys. Playing rough was just part of what it meant to boys to be like a boy and, as Michael said, was just the way boys played in the outside "boys' games."

Some children seemed to enjoy playing rough. A good player who knew what the game was about was quick to give rich meaning to roughness and was adept at interpreting roughness in terms of the theme of the game so that the play could continue smoothly, sometimes even when the roughness had been the attempts of an aggressive player to "really hurt" another. Mildly rough behavior was relatively easy to assimilate as a fair part of play, because it was consistent with the masculine images of the game. One could see those who liked to play rough laughing as they wrestled about on the ground and made up stories about their roughness. For instance, when Bart and Eldon were wrestling, Bart said, "Pretend we're two monster men fighting and that we're on the edge of quicksand, and one of us is going to fall in, maybe!" Such ideas enriched the game for boys.

On the other hand, many children did not like to play rough, including some who were regular and accepted players in the outside games. Such players rarely initiated rough contact with others.

However, it was not necessary to enjoy playing rough or to initiate roughness with others in order to play right. The determining factor was the meaning one gave to such play as reflected by the way one responded to roughness.

Consider the following two events and compare the responses which were given by Ben, a regular player, with those given by Jimmy, who rarely played, neither of whom really liked to play rough.

Day 46. The game is Cowboys and Indians. Bart, an Indian, playfully grabs Ben around the chest from the back. Ben, who has been watching Shawn and Michael, frowns at the suddenness of the contact. He then takes hold of Bart's arm and struggles to prevent him from wrestling him to the ground, not, however, by trying to wrestle Bart down and thus to dominate the encounter, but by trying to disengage himself from Bart's hold. The boys remain locked in a standing position in a physical stalemate.

Bart lets go of Ben, and the two begin to talk about what they were doing, about what was happening, in a manner consistent with the theme of cowboys. Bart then feigns a karate chop to Ben, who responds by shooting at Bart as he rides away to join the other cowboys, who have gathered by the large dome, fighting a group of Indians hiding behind the trees.

Day 68. The game is "Martians Against the Humans." The students who want to play are gathered around the large dome where Bradson is seated alone. He is directing the game and trying to designate the sides. He notices Jimmy standing with the group and says, "You can't play, Jimmy."

The children begin to run about, signaling the start of the game. Glenn, another who likes to give others chances to play, seeks to include Jimmy as a player by grabbing him and "capturing him."

Jimmy loudly and whiningly objects, "No! I'm not playing!" Glenn immediately lets go of him and runs off to play with the others, and Jimmy turns and runs toward the classroom.

He comes back shortly to report triumphantly to Brad, "Bradson, Mr. Turner, the part-time teacher aide, said that I could be a Martian, too, and play."

Bradson ignores Jimmy. Jimmy stands and watches while the others play.

Ben, a quiet, gentle, reflective boy disliked the rough jarring contact, but he wanted to play and wanted to be part of the boys' group. He knew "boys play with boys" and enjoyed some of the exciting images of the games. He sometimes liked to be active, but always with a measure of reservation, which kept him physically and emotionally a bit outside the group. A typical Ben pose during outside play was of his standing on the periphery of a tightly gathered group of boys who were, for instance, watching two other boys wrestle, hands behind his back or in his pockets, leaning forward so that he might observe and listen but not be incautiously drawn into the center of activity. Even the most cautious of observers was likely to find herself/himself directly involved at some point, and Ben was no exception. Sometimes he was roughly engaged by another player, but despite his not liking to play rough he was willing to because he knew that rough play was something expected of a player and a boy. Ben never initiated roughness, but responded to it in a way that satisfied the other players, who considered Ben one of them, a boy who played right.

Ben's specific response to rough play depended on the nature of the contact and who was involved. Sometimes he would playfully respond in kind, but more often he would either patiently try to disengage himself, as he did in the event described, or he would try to withdraw by mildly objecting ("I don't want to wrestle right now."). Whatever Ben's response, he never disrupted the game or made it unpleasant for other players, and he never called the legitimacy of the roughness, and the boyiness, into question.

Like Ben, Jimmy also wanted to be included in the boys' group. He knew the boys' rule of association, "boys play outside with boys, girls play inside with girls," a rule that became progressively more explicit through time. But unlike Ben, Jimmy could not accept playing rough as an integral and necessary part of boys' large group play, though he knew that images of men's roughness were an essential part of the games. And unlike the girls and other boys who were unwilling to play rough, Jimmy often insisted upon playing. When he would inevitably encounter even mild rough contact he would whine, loudly object, cry so as to attract an adult's attention, or go and "tell the teacher," thus threatening the autonomy and continuation of the game as well as making it unpleasant. Since telling the teacher was largely futile because of the teacher's belief that children had to "learn to get along," the boys soon learned to ignore Jimmy's complaints and to exclude him from the games at the outset. If included, such poor players as Jimmy would spoil the game by their unfriendly and excessive complaints.

In one way Jimmy benefitted from being in this class. Because of the teacher's unwillingness to intervene on his behalf, and because he wanted to play with the large group of boys because he wanted to be accepted as a boy who was like a boy, Jimmy learned to modify his behavior. By the end of the year some boys began to tentatively accept him into their games. He learned to accept some mild roughness, and they learned to modify their roughness towards him. He never was fully accepted, however, because he never fully accepted the boys' rules for playing right nor understood their value.

"Play rough" was the hardest rule for players and nonplayers to observe and it was the most determining of who played and who did not. Girls and boys who could observe the other rules failed to observe that one. There were two main reasons for the problematic nature of this rule. First, some children simply did not want to play rough and were offended by even the mildest rough physical contact with others. For girls this dislike was connected to what they knew about girlness and the meaning of roughness. For boys the dislike was more a matter of personal style.

Another factor which made playing rough especially problematic was the essentially competitive nature of the social structure which the boys created in the classroom. Recall the content of the boys' images in boys' games, the heroic images, the images of conflict and dominance through physical force, the images of hierarchical relationships of power and authority, and especially the images of violence. In the boys' fantasies, heroes were the boys

who could successfully dominate others through ingenuity and, more importantly, through force. To the extent that the images of masculinity through force in the games were the images boys had about being boys in everyday life, albeit in muted, more reality-based form, such images should be expressed in social interaction beyond the structures of pretend games. In fact, boys did use these images in everyday interaction. Consistent with the typified knowledge about masculine strength and power and the relative, hierarchical conception of such power, an essentially competitive type of social interaction and structure was created by boys that was both part of and separate from group play and the idea of playing right.

The competitive social system, similar to what some social scientists call a hierarchy of dominance, was interactionally inseparable from group play in that both the content and the norms for play supported the creation of the dominance structure. Behaviors that were related to playing right were also related to considerations of dominance, and outside group play was a primary context for establishing dominance by boys. "Play fighting" became "for real fighting" when one player sought to intentionally hurt and thereby dominate another, to "beat" the other and establish himself as a strong and tough boy. Dominance behavior, however, transcended the idea of playing right within group play because it took place in every available social context both actually and symbolically.

Estimation of dominance occurred in acts of play as well as nonplay. Because playing rough was a rule for playing right, the line between "real" and "play" fighting was ambiguous, and the refrain "I was only playing," because it was so often true, justified real, intense aggression. Playing with the outside group made one especially vulnerable to acts of aggression that were really acts of physical dominance. Even though players could often tell the difference between "real" and pretend aggression, the requirement that boys be able to play rough, and the lack of other norms for "boys'" behavior, provided sufficiently strong meanings for "real" aggression that encouraged such aggression. The emphasis on the masculine symbols of strength, power, and physical force provided meanings which were both positive and sufficiently ambiguous, so that aggression and real fighting rather than play fighting were accepted when successful. The development of the dominance hierarchy will be fully described in the next section.

"We" and "They"

Through time, most of those who played with the large group outside began to express a sense of membership in a group, a sense that they were like one another and different from nonplayers. They developed a sense of "we" and "they," those who play right, and those who do not.

Because of the masculine themes of the games, because only Anne among the girls was willing or able to play the games as the regular members' boys played them, and because of boys'

typifications about the gender meaning of association, location, interests, and shared values, membership in the group was increasingly identified as having a special connection to gender. Playing with the group meant that one was more like a boy than a nonplayer was. Some regular players began to refer to membership with phrases such as "boys who play outside," "boys who play with boys," "boys who play boys' games," "boys who play right," and, finally, "boys like us." Sometimes nonmembers who were boys were identified by members by omission from a listing of members' names, by listing their names in a series, or by the negative of the phrases, mentioned above, which were used to talk about members. As a group girls were assumed to not belong and thus were not explicitly included in such listings and implicit evaluations. Not all of the boys used such phrases but each understood what was usually meant when they were used. They knew that the speaker meant not only to describe objective patterns of participation but also to say something about the relative merit of the individuals and the groups, that merit was related to gender, and that players were more like boys than nonplayers. How often and with what specific intent a boy referred to membership in the group depended on how important issues of rank and status were to him, how much emphasis he gave to the dichotomy of the genders, and his personal style. Michael and Ben, at one extreme, rarely made such references. Bradson and Eldon made them quite often and always with the intent of distinguishing between those boys they considered to be like them and those whom they considered to be different.

Whether a person was said to belong to the group was largely related to whether he played regularly with the group. Those boys who played virtually every time a large group was formed were Glenn, Bradson, Michael, Eldon, Bart, and Ralph, all of whom were highly committed to group play and its norms. Shawn, George, and Ben played most times a group was formed and they were also committed, though less so than the others. With the exception of Ralph, all of these boys were described by the other regular players as belonging to the group. Though Ralph was a regular and committed player who was good at observing the norms and had a cheerful disposition, some of the other boys occasionally identified him as a nonmember. For one thing, Ralph was sometimes confused with his good friend, Henry, another black kindergarten boy, who almost never played right. Even the teacher sometimes called Ralph Henry, to Ralph's chagrin. Ralph was also excluded, not from play but from inclusion in the sense of group membership, because of racial prejudice. Those boys who cast him in the second-rate role of nonmember were those who were observed to occasionally make racially slanderous remarks.⁹ Other boys, however, always included Ralph as a member.

Timmy and Vincent were marginal members who did play with the group as regularly and they were sometimes characterized as outsiders. Timmy, however, always publicly named himself as belonging, though he seemed to sense his marginality. Timmy was not liked by some of the children as he had a sly, secretive side to his personality. Vincent did not identify himself as a group member and was

apparently indifferent to whether the others included him or not, though he was aware that they had a sense of membership and was basically aware of its meaning. Vincent was liked well enough by most of the children, and well liked by others, and could easily observe the rules when he chose, but he liked to play by himself, with nonmember boys, or with girls, and was largely unconcerned with how he was characterized.

Kindergarten boys were less likely than first-grade boys to be regular players. Four of the kindergarten boys, Jimmy, Jackie, Pierre, and Henry, rarely played with the group and were always named as nonplayers by those boys most eager to cast others in those terms. Jimmy was rejected and excluded when he tried to join the games. Pierre, Jackie, and Henry stopped trying to play when they learned how the games were played. All four boys found the rule for playing rough especially difficult.

The four boys did not have a group identity of their own. Jackie's primary companion throughout the year was Kara, though he played with Pierre and Henry quite a bit. Pierre and Henry were close friends, though both boys often played by themselves. Unlike Pierre, Henry was equally willing to play with girls as with boys and he also was a good friend of Ralph, who helped him out in a number of ways, for instance, with his school work. Jimmy was the most isolated person in the class, but because of the fluid nature of relationships even Jimmy could usually find someone who would play with him. Jimmy did not like to play with girls, nor did

they like to play with him, finding his "tattle-telling" and whining offensive.

With the exception of Jimmy, who was more intellectually, but not socially, mature than the other three, none of the four was aware that they typified by other boys as not belonging to a special group, as having low social status, of what belonging to the outside group meant in terms of gender identity, or even that the other boys had a sense of themselves as members of a group. As the three became more aware of these factors and came to know what being in the group signified, they began to participate in group play, observe the rules, and identify themselves as belonging to the outside group. Since their knowledge increased as their participation increased, none of the three ever seemed to have a sense of being an outcast or being excluded in any way. Of the nonmember boys, Henry was apparently the least aware of his low status, the most content with his own style, and the least eager to be assimilated into the group of boys.

For Jimmy, who seemed to have a sense all along of both his status and the gender-related meaning of participation in the group, not belonging was quite painful. He knew that his acceptance as a boy depended upon his playing, but it was hard for him to stop his whining and his ubiquitous attempts to get adults to intervene for him. It was difficult for him to follow the rules for playing right, because they conflicted with his other habitualized behaviors, learned in another context. As previously stated,

he did make some modifications, so that later in the year the others sometimes accepted him as a player.

Girls and the Boys' Rules for "Playing Right"

Most of the girls just stopped trying to join the large group games when they learned what the rules were and how the game was going to be played, especially when they realized how rough it was going to be.

Unlike boys, girls were not motivated to play with the group so that they would be socially accepted as a member of their gender. They did not have to play with the group in order to create public bonds of association which served to secure their gender and social identity, as boys did. Boys who did not play with the group were occasionally castigated by some of the players and thought to be less than boys should be because "boys play with boys outside, and girls play with girls inside," an axiom of most boys' knowledge.

Additionally, the rule for playing rough, a rule which reflected what it meant to boys to be a boy, was counter to what girls knew about what it meant to be a girl, for girls were known to be "nice," not rough. Since girls liked to play with girls in what were called, especially by boys, "girls' games," they had an alternative which was socially acceptable to others of their gender. And, like boys, girls considered the opinions of same gender people as more significant than those of the other gender.

Girls rarely felt that they had to play in a way that was incompatible with their individual styles, as some boys like Ben and

Jimmy did. If the rules for boys' games were problematic for them, as they were for almost every child at one time or another, then they would leave the game to play girls' games or less active, less rough games of their own creation somewhere else. Unlike boys who did not play with the large group, there was no negative social meaning attached to girls as individuals, at least by other girls, to those who didn't play outside with the large group.

However, because some girls were attracted to the games and to the large group, leaving the group was not always experienced as a personally satisfying alternative. The enthusiasm of girls for large group chase type games was evidenced by the large numbers who joined games like Kissy Girl where they were not expected to play so rough, games where girls were the aggressors who chased boys and thus could define the intensity and type of aggression. Such kissing was usually typified by boys, and in that play context by girls, as an act of aggression, but it was very mild.

However, since the games that were usually played had totally masculine themes with no female role instituted by boys, certain individual first-grade girls who wanted to play occasionally tried to circumvent the rules, especially the rule for playing rough, by introducing solitary female roles for themselves. Consider this example of that pattern:

Day 59. A group of boys are playing a combination of Monster and Wild Dog. The object of the game is to rub members of the other team on the back "to make them soft."

Eldon, the Monster, runs up to Julia, who is standing in the middle of the area where the game is being played, and grabs her and tries to rub her back.

Julia vehemently objects, "I'm not playing! But then adds, "Can I be your wife, though?"

Eldon just ignores Julia and begins to chase someone else.

Julia then runs up to Shawn and says, "I hope you know that I'm Eldon's wife!" Shawn also ignores Julia, but she continues, "I'll fix the Monster up and feed him meat before he leaves."

The boys continue their game, and Julia just stands and watches. In a few moments she leaves to play with Shelley, who is playing Barbie.

Julia's attempt to join the game was an attempt to play house within the game. Her offer to feed the Monster meat before he left was reminiscent of the girls' offer to fix their husbands dinner before they left the house to go to work. In Julia's view of what the game was about, she was the wife, and Eldon was the Monster-husband on his way to work.

The reason that girls tried to assume female roles in the outside games was not, however, simply because they were attracted to the familiar themes of domestic intimacy, though there was that positive dimension present. Initially girls had been willing to assume male-defined roles such as "cowboy" or "robber." But pretending to be a man or masculine type demanded male ways of playing in the game, and when girls took masculine pretend roles boys expected them to behave in ways consistent with what the boys knew about what it meant to be like a man. Therefore, girls tried to take female roles so

that they could play with the large group without having to fall to the ground and die, without having to be grabbed, shoved, bumped, held or otherwise play rough. In essence, they assumed distinctly female roles so that they would not have to play by the boys' rules.

The girls knew, and knew that the boys knew, that the female roles of wife, mother, squaw, and nurse, roles girls tried to assimilate into large group play, did not involve the player in aggressive action because such roles were typified as nonaggressive roles, unlike the masculine ones. Thus, in taking on such a pretend role the girl effectively announced that she agreed to play by certain definitions and rules and not by others. In short, she agreed to play as a girl not a boy. Whoever heard of shooting, killing, fighting, and wrestling with a mother, wife, nurse or squaw?

Though such attempts to join the outside group were successful insofar as the girls avoided roughness, the attempts were unsuccessful because the girls were not really full participants and were not considered to be part of the game by boys. If boys responded to girls at all it was only to acknowledge the girl and then to ignore her. Boys responded in terms of what they knew about the role relationships in real life. Men, boys knew, go out into the world and do active things with other men. What women did at home had nothing to do with what men as men do with one another in the man's world beyond the home.

Significantly, all of the attempts of girls to join the games by assuming female roles were initiated by first-grade girls and not by kindergarten girls, though the younger girls did join games like

Kissy Girl once the games were in progress. Kindergarten girls were more likely to try to join the game as regular players, to avoid the games altogether, or to try to form their own active play groups with chase themes. As in the game of Barbie, played only by first-grade girls, the tendency of girls to define their own roles by referring to the roles of boys and men and to use boys' roles and meaning to construct their own meanings increased with age. By contrast, as boys aged they increasingly defined themselves in relation to members of their own gender, excluding or ignoring girls and women.

Among the boys only the younger, less socially mature boys were excluded from the games or chose not to play. Among the girls, however, it was quite different. Girls who were otherwise socially adept and intellectually mature, that is, who knew how to adapt to the social demands of the classroom and whose stock of knowledge was well developed as viewed from the perspective of the larger, adult society, were quite likely to fail to meet the expectations the boys had for the games.

For the younger boys it seemed to be a case of not having yet learned or consolidated what they were clearly in the process of learning and what the other boys had already learned, that is, what it meant to be a boy. By the end of the year all but Henry would show evidence of having learned such meanings as they began to play with the large group and to observe its rules far more efficiently and with more enthusiasm than they had previously.

For the girls it was not a question of social or intellectual maturation. They weren't on their way to knowing what would be necessary to be able to play in the games with the boys. All of the rules, and all of the images which mirrored the rules, were things boys learned in such detail and with such enthusiasm because they were boys who were going to be like men. Girls would never learn what it meant to be a man so that they could participate in the social world as the boys participated in it, because they knew that they were going to be a type of person the opposite of a man, a woman.

Boys who were aware of the social significance and meaning for boys of playing with the boys' group had to choose between not playing, and losing status, or playing in a manner that might not be personally compatible for them. Ben, for instance, said, when asked whether he had rather have a girl baby or a boy baby, that he had rather have a girl because "girls were fun to play with." Yet, because he knew that "boys play with boys" and "boys play rough," and because he was attracted to the more exciting images of boys' games, he tolerated a style of play which was "too rough" for him personally in order to be part of the boy's group. Girls never had to face such a choice.

Summary

In the games boys called "boys' games" boys externalized and objectified what they knew about what it meant to be a man, knowing as they did that boys were like men. Boys knew men were active, strong, brave, and rough and some boys created games where they

pretended to be active, strong, brave, and rough. Boys knew men were outside, beyond the home and away from women and children, and some boys created games which were either played outside or pretended to be outside, and which had no roles for women or children. Boys knew men had hierarchical role relationships based upon power and authority and they created pretend roles which reflected these relationships. Not only did the content of the images and the place where the games were played reflect what boys knew about men and what was most relevant and essential to men, as well as meaningful and shareable with other boys in this social context, but boys had rules for playing "boys' games" which functioned to support the reality of their images of men.

The rules were sometimes called "playing right" by boys and had several practical consequences for the social relations in the class as well as supporting the boys' images of masculinity. First, the rules facilitated and insured the continuation and autonomy of the games. Because players agreed upon how games were to be played, play could and did continue relatively smoothly with a minimum of unfriendliness and outside intervention by adults, both of which would have distracted from the pleasure of the game and the fantasy upon which the games were based. Men are not, after all, interrupted and told how to behave.

The rules for playing right also supported the boys' masculine notion that the world was a hierarchical world, a hierarchy of relationships based primarily upon power derived from physical strength. Because some boys stopped playing because of their

unwillingness or inability to follow the rules, especially the rule for playing rough, players divided boys into two groups, one of which was said to be stronger, better, and more like boys than the other group, thus creating an actual hierarchy of power within the class. Boys who did not play were sometimes said to be "afraid to play" and follow the boys' rule for playing rough. Such boys had lower status and prestige than boys who played. The division of boys into two groups or types of boys supported the competitive, hierarchical concept of masculinity which was part of the themes of the boys' games and it supported the notion that the world was divisible along the dimension of strength and weakness. This division, in turn, encouraged some feelings of anxiety on the part of some boys about their adequacy as boys.

Because the rules reflected masculine meanings which were not compatible with feminine meanings or interests, the rules served to separate girls from boys so that the typification that children had had from the beginning of the year that "girls play with girls, boys play with boys" was validated by real life experiences. Though it was the intention of a few boys from the beginning to separate boys from girls, gender separation was not the intention of most boys in creating and sustaining the rules. The rules for playing right were normative expectations which flowed from what boys knew about boys and men. As Michael said, "That's just the way we [boys] play." Though girls were occasionally excluded from playing because they were girls, it was more significant, especially at the beginning of the year, that girls voluntarily left the games rather

change their responses so as to be able to follow the boys' rules. Some girls tried to introduce girls' meanings and images into the games but these attempts were largely unsuccessful.

The separation of most of the girls from the games most of the boys played and identified as "boys' games" supported the socially shared knowledge that the types of games, the location of the games, and the style of playing belonged to boys and not to girls, who were known to be different than boys. The separation supported the idea that the children had that the world was one divisible in its most essential aspects by gender.

In general, because the rules reflected what boys knew about masculinity, about the meaning of being a man and a boy, the institutionalization of the rules served to further solidify the typifications of masculinity from which the rules sprang. The subjective meanings structured in the consciousness of boys about the type man, present when they came to school, soon achieved the status of objective, observable, concrete and predictable reality. Boys knew and shared certain ideas about men, they externalized what they knew through their play and sustained their knowledge with rules for participation in boys' social life. They were then able to apprehend the products of their shared knowledge and activity, in the form of social structures and relations they had created, as objective reality, as the way things really and inevitably were.

Notes

1. There were games named by boys as being "boys' games" which were not often or ever played during the year. Typically they were games of organized sports such as football, basketball, and baseball. Some boys apparently played such games in organized teams outside of class.
2. Boys used the terms "teams" or "sides" to describe any relationship between groups of people who were said to be "against one another" or "against each other" in a game or in any situation.
3. Some boys also never made roads or other structures for the cars, and others made such structures haphazardly. Some boys, however, seemed to be engineering roads, bridges, drawbridges and so on. They would make precise measurements about the width of roads, assure themselves that the road surface was smooth, that the drawbridge would stay up and so on. All of this engineering activity, usually a solitary enterprise, typically preceded a period of time when the players would join and would happily destroy the structures they had spent so much time creating by racing the cars into one another and crashing them together. No girl was ever observed to engineer a road or other object for vehicles.
4. Brad's immediate motivation was jealousy and a wish to increase his role and power in the game. His best friend, Glenn, was in a "boyfriend and girlfriend" relationship with Nancy and was not, until Brad changed the game, paying attention to him. Brad correctly understood that if he made the game one of "girls against boys" he could separate Glenn from Nancy and re-establish himself as a leader. Brad was observed to use such strategy for similar ends more than once.
5. Neither Glenn nor Michael intended to deprive their former girlfriends of influence. It was just that when the two boys lost interest in the girls as "girlfriends," they once again became interested in the images of boys most relevant to them as boys, images which had nothing to do with female roles.
6. In this event, Katie actually broke two rules for playing right. She also broke the rule for "playing rough," which will be discussed later.
7. When I questioned Michael about the exclusion of the girls he was a little embarrassed, as if he felt that he was not playing fair, or thought that I thought so and was being critical of him. Before I asked, however, he seemed to feel fine about the exclusion. Boys do not typically show remorse or discomfort from excluding girls.

8. The same boys who made negative remarks about race never made such remarks about Anne, also black and a girl as well. Apparently Anne's extreme competence as a player and her physical strength, coupled with her intelligence and humor, exempted her from such public devaluations.

CHAPTER X
"STRONG BOYS AND TOUGH BOYS": "BOYS LIKE US"

Boys typified boys as "strong" and "tough" and especially as "stronger and tougher than girls." Boys sometimes publicly labeled other boys according to the pattern of response they exhibited in situations involving acts of aggression. Depending on his response to aggression a boy would be labeled as either "strong and tough" or "weak." Some boys made and used categories of groups of boys and referred to them as "strong boys" and "weak boys."

Such labeling and categorization appears to be almost identical to the categories some boys used to distinguish between boys who played right and those who did not, described in the previous chapter. Boys' typifications of boys along the dimensions of playing right and being strong and tough were in practice intimately related. There was substantial overlap in terms of the membership of the two typified groups, the specific interaction which provided the concrete basis for determining membership and assessment, and the meaning that membership had for boys. In addition, the typifying by boys of those who played right and those who were strong and tough functioned to create and support similar social relations and essential elements of knowledge. Both served to separate boys and girls, both were systems for ranking the genders and for ranking boys individually and by group, and both were

based upon the meaning that strength, larger size, and power had for boys as masculine types.

However, there were differences in both the criteria and the meaning of the two interactive systems, differences which were sometimes recognized by boys, though most times only implicitly. The determination of who played right depended on a complex of factors which were sometimes quite subtle, involving as they did characteristics of imagination, physical skill, knowledge of rules and meanings, and one's response to rough play and aggression. If a boy could play right then he could integrate and balance all of these factors. The parallel system of ranking and typifying boys which will be examined in this section depended on boys' subtle behavior and understanding to some extent, but was much less dependent upon the continuity and structure of an organized game and the necessity for cooperation as well as competition so that play could proceed. Consequently, the use of force could be more direct and less inhibited. The division of boys by boys into the strong and tough or the weak was more fundamentally based on the actual use of physical force, rather than the symbolic or pretend use of force, than the division of boys into those who played right and those who did not. In both systems, however, the competitive use of force was central to the structure of social relations, reflecting the boys' knowledge about boys who are like boys being strong, unafraid, and not like girls.

It must be understood that reckoning of rank by physical dominance was only one dimension of status although an important

one. This dimension interacted with other factors to determine a boy's overall status in the social group; friendliness, appearance, perceived academic ability, race, and other factors indirectly mediated by gender were taken into account as well as factors directly associated with gender such as the ability and knowledge of how to play in the boys' games. Nevertheless, dominance and the use of the meanings having to do with power and its connection to masculinity were, along with playing right, the major factors which determined a boy's status in the class. In essence, the meanings and behavior associated most directly with gender played a paramount role for boys in determining a person's position and importance in the social group. The children were aware, and became increasingly aware, of the connection between gender-related meanings and social acceptance.

All of the boys, with the possible exception of Henry, and most if not all of the girls were aware of the dominance ranking of children, of who was "tough" and who was not, of who could "beat up" whom. There were, however, important differences in the meaning that ranking by dominance had for girls as contrasted with the meaning the system had for boys.

Perhaps even more than boys, the girls understood the question of "who was the toughest?" to be a question which applied to boys and not, in general to girls. Girls knew that it was the boys who wanted to be strong-like-men, not girls. Being strong and tough was not relevant to girls as girls because they knew "girls are nice" and "girls don't like to fight." Girls had other

interests and concerns which had no direct connection to the idea of aggression or physical superiority through the use of force. Therefore the social interaction which determined rank was only of secondary importance to most girls, in contrast to the central place questions of rank had for most boys. As we have seen, girls varied in the meanings and value that they gave to those boys who were ranked high or low in the hierarchy, but for the most part girls' main interest in dominance had to do with being concerned about which boys were likely to hit them. Most girls did not view the struggle for dominance as having much to do with them, but they were subject to aggression and were involuntary participants in the interaction which determined rank order. Every child in the class was a participant at some level, whether willingly or unwillingly.

Because most girls' responses toward aggression were characterized by submission or ineffective resistance, and because boys shared with girls the knowledge that "boys can beat up girls," everyone tended to put girls as a class or type at the bottom of the dominance hierarchy. "Girls are weak" was an essential element in the shared, social stock of knowledge. "Girls" were put at the bottom of the hierarchy despite the fact that individual girls, such as Anne, were known to be effective fighters who could beat up boys and win fights when necessary. That most girls' responses were predictable and typically submissive provided part of the foundation for the dominance system. Boys observed girls' submissiveness and it was given profound meaning by boys, who knew

themselves to be different from the way girls were. Girls' submission validated the knowledge boys had that weakness was like a girl.

The easy submission of most girls to acts of aggression served to support, affirm, and concretize the typified elements of knowledge which had stimulated the creation of the system of ranking in the first place: Girls *were* weak. Consequently, though girls were participants, and never totally freed themselves from being participants, boys and girls increasingly came to think of the struggle for physical superiority, the struggle to become the "toughest person in the class," as being something that concerned boys and not girls. Girls as a type were always considered to be at the bottom of the ranks. This assumption became more pronounced over time as girls earned their ranking, as they submitted, withdrew, acquiesced, and lost fights. Therefore, this discussion of the social interaction will focus on the boys, just as the boys focused and typified the interaction. Girls were subject to the use of force, but were not subject to the same normative expectations *as* girls as the boys were, nor were they motivated in the use of force by the same meanings that boys were motivated by.

Criteria for Toughness: "Beating Up,"
"Winning," and "Losing"

The dominance ranking of boys by boys was not exactly correlated with objective or quantifiable measures such as age, size, strength, and the level and amount of aggression, though each of these factors played an important role both in the outcome of a

fight and in terms of their symbolic value prior to an actual encounter. For instance, bigger boys usually won fights with smaller boys, and larger boys were seen as being stronger and tougher prior to interaction. Interaction, however, modified some a priori assumptions about dominance, and eventually some boys who were shorter, weighed less, not as strong physically,¹ and not as aggressive were ranked higher and known to be tougher and stronger than boys who were taller, heavier, stronger, and more aggressive.

Ultimately a boy's rank had to do with an assessment of whom the boy could "beat up," not "beat up," or get "beat up" by. Such estimations were sometimes stated explicitly and publicly, for instance, as Ralph did by way of reckoning his and Eldon's relative rank. "Eldon can beat up Henry and Jackie, but he can't beat up me or Bart and Shawn, and Brad can beat up Eldon easy."

Lacking judges and a formal system of evaluation, the reckoning of rank was somewhat ambiguous. There was a decided tendency, for instance, for most boys to rank themselves higher than others would rank them, but, in general, boys agreed about the rank that others held in the hierarchy. Though rank initially leaned heavily toward factors with symbolic value, such as size, eventually the determination was made primarily on the basis of fights, who won and who lost fights.

Boys often used the labels of "winner" and "loser" as well, as the idea of "beating up," to describe the outcome of the many aggressive encounters, petty as well as serious, which took place

in the class. Losing a fight signified relative weakness, and winning meant that one was strong. Depending on a boy's rank prior to a fight the outcome might precipitate a change in his status in either direction.

There were fairly clear and agreed upon ways that losers and winners were known to participants and observers and the criteria applied to girls as well as boys. Perhaps one of the clearest ways that a person would be seen to have lost was if she/he cried. Even if a person was getting the worst of a fight in terms of actual physical blows and damage inflicted, if the opponent cried there was a good chance that the noncrier would be considered to be the winner, unless the difference in the damage inflicted and the force used was too great. In either event, crying during a fight was considered to be a sign of weakness and to some extent usually embarrassed or shamed most boys.² Girls seemed not to be as embarrassed by crying. Though many boys, including some highly ranked boys, occasionally cried, crying was thought by some boys to be more "like a girl" than "like a boy," and this connection magnified, and may have been part of the source of the idea that crying meant weakness.

Another way a person could lose a fight would be to withdraw or, in the words of the boys, "quit" or "give up." When a boy was willing to continue fighting even when he was losing he was not so much a loser in the eyes of the other boys as if he quit. Quitting meant that one was afraid. As Bart said, "Eldon quit me because he was afraid; 'cause I'm stronger than him."

On the other hand, if a boy continued fighting when he was losing badly, and especially if he continued and also cried, continuing carried a more ambiguous meaning, partly because he publicized his crying.

There were ways to quit or leave a fight more gracefully, admitting defeat but at the same time saving some face and some rank. One could give up gracefully in a fight by accepting the blows of an opponent without returning them, but only before a prolonged fight had developed or before one had cried. Another way of quitting a fight and maintaining a degree of face or prestige was to submit to blows, or withdraw from the area, and then to threaten the other verbally. Another tactic was to submit to blows without returning them, thus discontinuing the fight, as few boys would continue to hit another who did not hit back, and then deny that the blows hurt. "So! That didn't even hurt!" While such gestures as threats and denial modified the victory of the winner most boys would accept such face-saving gestures from others. In both cases, however, whether face was saved by verbal threats or by denying pain, and thus denying a clear victory, one ran the risk of having the winner continue the fight by provoking him. Boys soon learned who would accept face-saving gestures and who would not. That knowledge became a factor in determining who was the toughest because a boy could either gain an edge or get into worse trouble. Accepting a compromised victory by accepting such threats and denials was sometimes seen by some boys as an

indication of weakness because they thought it showed that a boy who was a winner wanted to stop fighting even if he had to compromise.³

If statements of denial of pain and threats against a winner were made by losers in clearly uneven fights, however, and especially if the loser was crying, the making of such threats seemed to result in a loss of prestige, presumably because everyone knew they were so absurd.

Another way in which boys decided who had won or lost a fight was in terms of actual physical dominance. Who hit the hardest? Who hurt the most? But even this factor depended largely upon the face that a boy was able to present to the world and upon the way he was able to define events. Boys who were adept at the interactional dynamics of fighting and who understood what being strong and tough meant knew how to behave in ways that showed they could, in the words of the boys, "take it!"⁴

In some circumstances the acknowledgement of pain gave an advantage to one's opponent and encouraged him to continue fighting. "Taking it," accepting pain, showed that one was able and willing to continue.

One could show that one could take it by not showing emotion, remaining impassive when one was struck, and remaining impassive when one was hurt, perhaps while denying the pain verbally. In such ways, a boy could simultaneously deny the other's power and ability to hurt while showing his own power by demonstrating that he could endure what would have been painful to

others. Shawn, the most dominant and aggressive boy, was especially adept at maintaining an impassive, impersonal posture in the face of pain. He was also adept at maintaining such a posture when he hit and hurt others. Shawn had strong emotions, both in terms of aggression and feelings of affection and dependence, but did not usually express them, preferring instead to express a sense of power.

One of the most important things in determining winners and losers, and thus rank, was a willingness to fight. To achieve or maintain a high or even a moderate status among the boys a boy had to be, or appear to be, a person who would fight. He had to let other boys know through his actions that he would fight if pushed beyond his own individually determined limits; that he would resist aggression at some point; that in engaging him another ran some risk, even if the risk was minimal, of being hit back and possibly hurt; or, at the very least, of attracting the attention of adults because there would be a two-way fight.

A boy who would never fight and who always submitted to aggression ran the risk of inviting aggression from those boys in the class who looked for opportunities to dominate others so that they would be seen as strong and tough. Though girls and boys were subject to aggression, the fact of one's boyness made one more subject, because girls as a type were, increasingly, expected not to fight but to submit. If a boy submitted, one usually reaped more prestige.

Since several of the boys were relatively equal in fighting ability, size, and strength, but not equally aggressive or desirous of being the toughest, knowing a boy's limits was an important part of achieving status. A boy who actively tried to be dominant risked his position and prestige should he make the mistake of being too aggressive by overstepping the bounds with a boy who could, if pushed, beat him up or at least hold his own in a fight. A boy who wanted to be tough had to know the meaning of others' behavior and had to know with whom and when to be tough. Toughness required judgement.

Glenn and Shawn

From each individual boy's point of view the struggle for dominance, more precisely, the struggle to establish the individual and group identity of boyness, must have seemed as though it centered upon the boy himself, upon his body, anxiety, relief, feelings of competence, his sense of pleasure and fun. Perceiving events, each may have felt that all were directly related to him, that he was the center of things, even at those times he felt left out. Girls did not seem to apprehend events of dominance in so personal a fashion unless they were more directly involved.

Aside from this centeredness upon the self, however, boys considered the main event to be primarily between two boys, Glenn and Shawn. They were the main contenders for the boys' title of "strongest in the class" and "toughest in the class." Though any single boy might at some point name himself as second behind the toughest, because few seemed willing to claim the title itself, in

general, everyone agreed that Glenn and Shawn were first and second.

Because these two boys were phenomenologically central to the social life and interaction of boys, the experiences of Glenn and Shawn will be described here in order to describe the importance, development, and meaning of hierarchical social relations between boys which were essentially based upon power and the meaning of masculinity.

Glenn

For about the first four weeks of school, perhaps a bit longer, Glenn was perceived by most of the boys, especially those boys who played in the large outside group, as being the most important boy in the class. He was the boy who had the most influence, the boy to whom one looked for leadership and initiative, the boy with whom one tried to ally oneself in matters of conflict about purpose or opinion.

As the teacher had said, ". . . there's a lot of leadership among the boys in the class, good leadership, especially among the first-grade boys," most of whom seemed to regard each other as equals. Still, even the other high status first-grade boys understood that Glenn was the most influential boy and understood that Glenn's opinion in matters held weight in what would finally be decided by a group of boys. Kindergarten boys were much more active and direct in expressing their admiration for Glenn and in showing that they considered him to be their leader. They would often check things out with Glenn to find out what he thought

before forming a firm opinion or making a decision: "What should we do now, Glenn?"; "Isn't that right, Glenn?"; "I'll ask Glenn and see, okay?" At the beginning of the year the younger boys seemed to have a sense of awe toward Glenn.

What was the basis for Glenn's being perceived as the leader of the boys? Why was he perceived as leader from the first day of school before there was any significant obvious interaction between children? The single most important characteristic which distinguished Glenn from the other boys was his size. Glenn was the tallest boy in the class. It was this characteristic, the fact that he was about two inches taller than the next tallest boy, that all of the other boys were aware of and that some talked about.⁵ Several times during the first weeks of school some of the younger boys expressed admiration for Glenn because of his size.

Day 9. George and Eldon are talking as they play cars in the class. George offers the comment, without apparent stimulation, "Wow! Glenn is so tall, almost six feet tall. He's the strongest one in the class. When I stand beside him I have to look up to him. I like Glenn the best!"

Eldon enthusiastically agrees and affirms his own presumed relationship with Glenn, "Yeah, Glenn's my buddy."

To the boys, size meant strength and Glenn's height meant that he was "the strongest one in the class" and thus the most admirable.

Glenn was aware that he was bigger than all of the other boys and possessed a highly favorable sense of himself partly because of his size. Several times Glenn commented to others about his being

the "biggest one" and the "biggest boy." One day when he was talking to me about his father, whom he admired, he observed that "My father is eighty, and he's very tall, like me."⁶ When asked what he liked best about school he answered, "That I'm the biggest one in the class." Like the other boys, Glenn had a high opinion about larger size.

The importance of size was clearly related to gender. One day Glenn boasted that he was the biggest in the class, while Julia was listening. Julia, who was quick to assert herself in some ways, though among the girls she was also most likely to lend active support to the boys for their view of themselves, immediately denied Glenn's claim. "No you're not, Glenn! Myra is the biggest one in the class." Obviously frustrated, Glenn responded to Julia's correct observation by saying, "No she's not. I am. Anyway, that doesn't matter, Julia. I'm the strongest. She's a girl." Size for boys meant that a boy was strong. A girl's size had a somewhat different, somewhat ambiguous meaning for boys. Even for girls, however, larger size meant more strength, but Myra was quite overweight.

About girls in general Glenn was ambivalent. Glenn knew and said that girls were "softer" and more fragile" than boys and he felt somewhat protective of them, particularly in the group play which had as its focus the helplessness of girls and their need to be "saved" by boys, games like "Beautiful Princess" and "Sister, Sister." Glenn rarely played with girls in "girls' games," but was relatively receptive to girls joining the large group play if

they would "play right." When girls joined, he did not play as rough with them as he did with boys and seldom initiated rough physical, playful contact with them. He occasionally tried to assimilate them in their own terms in female roles.

On the other hand, Glenn also expressed some feelings of contempt for girls! "Girls' games are stupid"; "They never like to do anything fun"; "They don't know how to play right." Still, Glenn was not rigid in his interaction with girls and seemed to feel quite friendly toward individual girls, naming Anne as the person he liked best at the end of the year interview.

Like many of the children in the class, Glenn was serious about his academic work and thought it important. And like some of the others, he liked to rank himself academically and was competitive, though no more than most. Relative to the other boys, Glenn was about average in academic achievement. He was slightly below average when compared to girls.

Glenn was competitive in the games outside, but no more than most boys. His behavior in the large group, of which he was a regular and valued member, was characterized by fairness and a general willingness to let everyone play so long as they would observe the rules for playing right. Unlike his best friend Bradson, Glenn did not actively seek to exclude others from the games, and when marginal players joined he sometimes tried to assimilate them into the play. He wasn't particularly imaginative, but could make up suitable images for the games and knew what the games were about.

Glenn liked to play rough, but was not particularly aggressive and seldom initiated real fights. When other boys were aggressive toward him his typical response was to treat the aggression as play by responding playfully. If pressed, however, Glenn would fight and was an effective fighter, partly because of his size and partly because of his self-confidence and sense of himself as, in his words, "strong like a boy."

Glenn was a relatively fair type of boy. For instance, during the last two weeks of school Eldon, a smaller, younger boy, began to hit Glenn, softly at first and then, as he gained confidence, with some force. Then he yanked Glenn's hair; at that point Glenn started crying. When Eldon bragged how he had "made Glenn cry," an act that in Eldon's eyes gave him prestige because Glenn was a high status, strong boy, Glenn replied, quite honestly, "I just didn't want to hurt you, Eldon."

Glenn also tried to give smaller, younger boys "chances," not only to play in games, but to achieve. For instance, one day George, a small kindergarten boy, and Glenn were tossing stones into the center of an old tire. George was serious about the task but Glenn was casual, laughing and having fun. When George got three of his stones in and Glenn had only thrown in two, George began to crow about how he had "beaten Glenn" and how he was "better than Glenn." That was more than Glenn could take. He announced that he had "let" George win to give him a chance. George did not believe Glenn and told Glenn to show him. Glenn casually threw several stones into the center of the tire, one

after another. George was surprised, but not as surprised as I. That type of active giving, noncompetitive behavior was rare among the boys. The point is that Glenn felt quite secure of himself as a boy so that he did not feel the need to always demonstrate his superiority.

The following event seemed to sum up for me who Glenn was:

Glenn asked me to read a book to him. The library book he had checked out had a picture of a Union soldier and a Confederate soldier, holding their respective flags, on the cover.

Glenn pointed to the Union soldier and confidently and proudly told me, "He's an American fighting man. Americans always fight on the good side for what's right."

Glenn's status among the boys was largely related to the meaning his unique size had for them, along with his leadership qualities, though because of the number of other leader-types, they were not exceptional among the boys in the class, and his ability to "play right." It was not necessary for Glenn to establish his superlative position in the boys' hierarchy by actively asserting himself. His size and his self-confidence were prima facie evidence of his superiority as a boy. Until the 31st day of school, most of the other boys took it for granted that Glenn, the "biggest boy in the class," was the strongest and therefore the best. On the 31st day Shawn effectively challenged that assumption.

Shawn

Shawn had been a major focus of the observations from the first day of school. It was difficult not to attend to him because he was so often the center of action and the center of other children's attention. Within the relatively unstructured environment of the classroom, Shawn, like the other students, was allowed to pursue his own initiatives, his own projects. Shawn's project, reduced to its essentials, was to be liked by others and, in his own words, to be "the toughest and strongest boy in the class," to be "number one." It is difficult to separate Shawn's desire to be liked and his desire to be the "toughest," for in his view the two were interactive and in some ways inseparable. Shawn believed, though not without contradictory feelings, that if he was acknowledged to be the toughest others would like him.

The idea that Shawn wanted people to like him might have seemed to a casual observer to be untrue if one understood and evaluated Shawn's behavior only in terms of its most dramatic and visible elements and in terms that most adults would use. He was seemingly constantly engaged in combat and conflict with others in the class, conflict which was almost always initiated by him.

Over the observation period literally hundreds of instances of Shawn's aggression were recorded. Many of the behaviors were petty: poking someone in the back at the water fountain; knocking over another's blocks; walking through a group of children playing on the floor instead of around them and stepping on a few toys or fingers in the process; confiscating all of the crayons so that

only he or his allies could use them; pushing, shoving, hitting.

Other acts were more serious. One day he kicked a child hard in his head while the other was playfully wrestling with a third boy on the ground. He hit and hurt a kindergarten girl all day until she was reduced to sitting at her desk and crying to go home. He jumped feet first into a pile of boys who were wrestling on the ground and kept them from getting up until the one on the bottom started screaming from fear, frustration, and rage. He terrorized Henry for days at a time until the younger boy cringed every time Shawn came close to him. Shawn's petty acts of aggression were ubiquitous, his more serious acts not uncommon.

Shawn was as verbally aggressive and threatening, in his impassive, aloof, distanced way, as he was physically aggressive. Some examples:

"Daniel will never get a chance to get me. I'll tear him up."

"Shut up, or I'll shut you up."

"I'll beat her to death tomorrow."

Machines, especially machines for transportation and weapons, were a common image in boys', but not girls', games.⁷ They suggested to boys activity and change, but more than that, suggested power and were sometimes symbols of violence used for violence. Except when they imagined themselves as robots or machines in distinctly human form, boys usually imagined machines as adjuncts to men. Shawn took the imagery one step further and sometimes

identified himself as a machine, usually a machine of destruction and violence, oftentimes a machine that was out of control.⁸

Day 79. "I'm the automatic killer. I crush people to death."

Day 84. A group of children are playing with clay. Shawn begins to "bombard" their work with pieces of clay and says, "The smash machine is out of control," as he destroys their work with his fists.

In addition to being strong and competent as a fighter, Shawn was able to establish himself as a tough boy, and eventually as the "toughest boy in the class," partly because he, more than any of the others, oriented himself in the world and interpreted the world in terms of power. His relatively narrow focus upon masculine power as dominance over others, as contrasted with other interpretations of reality and emphasis upon other meanings of masculinity, resulted in his consistently acting in those terms. He had learned patterned ways of acting which typically maximized his power and prestige and minimized risk to himself, both from other children and from adults.

Shawn had a number of conscious strategies to maximize his power. Among the more obvious was to threaten or attack those whom he was sure he could beat up, that is, smaller and younger children, and to generally avoid direct confrontation with those who were likely to effectively resist his aggression. Shawn was also adept at assessing vulnerability of children who, in most circumstances, might be able to withstand his aggression or even to

beat him. He would wait until such children were, for whatever reasons, more vulnerable than usual and then he would attack them, defeat them, and thus establish himself publicly as a better fighter and the "winner." Shawn himself was rarely similarly vulnerable, and he consistently maintained a cool demeanor, remarkable for a boy his age.

Another effective strategy of Shawn's was to hit, shove, or kick others when they weren't looking or weren't expecting a blow. By getting the first hit, sometimes the only hit, he had the advantage of facing a person who had just received a shock because he/she had not braced or prepared herself/himself emotionally or physically. Such unexpected blows sometimes brought tears when similar but expected hits would not have. And tears heralded defeat in a fight.

By knowing whom to fight and whom to leave alone, by attacking others when they were vulnerable, and by using the tactic of a surprise attack Shawn increased his wins, and thus his power, with minimal risk to his own standing in the hierarchy.

Shawn also had strategies for dealing with adults. Despite the fact that the children were essentially free from direct and continuous adult supervision most of the time, and especially when they were outside in the playground, there remained some risk of adult intervention into hostile or aggressive interaction. Like other children, Shawn was cognizant of the possibility and had developed ways to deal with intervening adults. Though sometimes ineffective, his methods were useful enough so that he used them

regularly. The strategies were similar to those used by other children, but Shawn was simply more adept.

For one thing, Shawn knew not to disagree with adults and when possible to agree with what they said. Consider:

Day 4. Lunchtime. The group is outside on the patio waiting to go back to the classroom. For no apparent reason, Shawn hits and then kicks Jackie. Jackie, crying, hits Shawn, who stands there impassively and says, "That didn't hurt," though Jackie hit him hard.

Shawn's remark frustrates Jackie, who becomes angrier and angrier, and he kicks Shawn harder, though none of his blows are comparable to the force Shawn had used against the unsuspecting Jackie, who is younger and much smaller. Shawn remains impassive, but, as he dodges Jackie's swing, he pounds him once more on the back.

Jackie is very angry and frustrated and begins to cry very loudly, so loud that it is inevitable that he attracts an adult's attention. Seeing this, Shawn tactfully concedes, "Well, it did hurt, kind of."

Henry, who happened to walk by at that moment, laughing, is slapped by the red-faced, crying, and furious Jackie, who believes that Henry is laughing at him for crying. Henry, shocked by the slap and on the verge of tears, demands, "Why'd you do that?"

At this point, Nancy's mother, who has observed none of the preceding events, walks up to the group of children and asks: "Do you think that that is the right way to behave? Do you, Shawn?"

Shawn immediately replies, "No, ma'am."

She then asks, "Do you, Jackie?"

Jackie, still crying and sobbing, is so angry and frustrated that he does not attempt to answer and tries to pull himself from her grasp. She then lets go of Shawn's arm and focuses entirely upon Jackie, ignoring Shawn.

She begins to lecture Jackie on being a ". . . nice boy . . . don't hit other children . . . fighting in school. . . ."

Shawn observes this scene for a few moments as Nancy's mother, formerly an elementary school teacher, holds the struggling Jackie firmly, while he sobs deep uncontrollable sobs, and talks to him about being a nice boy.⁹

Shawn then looks up at me, aware that I have observed the entire incident, and shrugs his shoulders, smiles a small smile, and runs away to join the other children who have started walking back to class.

Shawn knew the typified adult rules for behavior in school and he understood that in some situations and with some adults the appearance of compliance to rules was as important as compliance itself. He knew that some adults did not want to hear explanations, but wanted to tell or teach adult and conventional rules and expectations for in school behavior: "Children aren't supposed to fight in school"; "If someone hits you in school tell the teacher, but don't hit them back"; "Nice boys don't fight." What such adults wanted from children, or so it must have seemed to Shawn, was recognition of their authority. Shawn was willing to acknowledge adult authority, for in some ways he believed in authority and in rules, but he also understood that adult reality was not the way it really was in the classroom, not for boys anyway. Being a "nice boy who did not fight" was not the primary way to achieve or maintain status among the boys.

Other techniques used by Shawn and some of the other children in situations where they were apprehended in the act of attacking others were to lie outright and thereby confuse the facts,¹⁰ to

take advantage of a generally confused situation by walking away, or to misrepresent what had occurred by misrepresenting the spirit of an encounter. For instance Shawn hit Eldon hard when Eldon playfully called him "fat old Shawn." When the teacher asked, in response to Eldon's crying, "What happened?", Shawn answered indignantly, "He called me 'fat old Shawn'." After shaking her finger at Eldon, the teacher said, "Just ignore him, Shawn."

Because it was not always possible to redefine events in such a way that one could be sure of avoiding adult criticism, it was better to avoid the attention of adults at all, even when it was necessary to compromise one's dominant position.

Day 32. The children are in the room, and it is work time. Mrs. Cowan is working with a single child a few feet away from where Shawn, Nancy, and Bart are sitting at a table. Shawn tells Nancy to "Shut up!" She does.

Shawn then orders Bart to shut up, but Bart, who is talking and laughing with Eldon, continues his conversation. Shawn stands up and hits Bart very hard in the back with his fist. Bart, shocked and in pain, cries loudly.

Shawn realizes that such loud crying is sure to attract the teacher's attention. He says to Bart, "I'm sorry." Then he holds his hand up and shows it to him, "But it sure did hurt my hand. Look how red it is."

Bart shoves Shawn. Shawn stands there for a moment and then walks back to his seat. Bart, still crying softly, goes back to work.

Shawn did several things to try and appease Bart so that he would not attract the teacher's attention. First he apologized, then he described himself as a victim of his own aggression, and

then he let Bart shove him without returning the shove.¹¹ By accepting the shove he, in effect, settled accounts with Bart so that they were, in the words used by some students, "even," thus depriving Bart of the right to tell on Shawn. The person who was the victim became the aggressor with two possible results. Either the victim was satisfied and was less likely to cause a scene and attract adult attention, or if an adult did intervene the original aggressor now had the option of the truthful response, "Well he hit me, too." This counter was used by other boys in similar situations.

Shawn versus Glenn

Shawn came to realize that for the other boys to name him as the toughest and strongest boy in the class he would have to beat up Glenn. Despite Shawn's more aggressive posture and more people being afraid of Shawn than Glenn, other boys continued to name Glenn as the toughest and the strongest because he was the biggest. For the boys the foundation of power was physical and they knew that the "biggest boy in the class" must necessarily be "the strongest and the toughest." They would take this for granted until it was shown to be otherwise. Therefore, in order to overcome the symbolic meaning that Glenn's singular size had for the other boys, Shawn had to confront him directly and had to win a fight with Glenn.

But Shawn had observed Glenn closely and understood that beating him up would not be easy. Like Shawn, Glenn was aware of

the importance for boys of being strong like a man and he, too, used the symbols and language of strength and power effectively. He was strong and self-confident and though he did not like to really fight he could, as he had shown during play wrestling and a couple of real fights.

On the other hand, Shawn knew that Glenn was not as tough as he, because Glenn was not tough all the time. Shawn had watched Glenn cry and he knew this to be a sign of weakness. He observed Glenn to assess his vulnerability and at different times, when he had sensed that Glenn felt vulnerable, had tentatively initiated aggression towards him only to terminate it when it became apparent that Glenn would not submit but was prepared to fight. Shawn did not want to really fight Glenn, he only wanted to beat him.

Like the Wicked Queen in the tale of Snow White, Shawn asked Eldon, "Eldon, who's the strongest in the class?" He was not satisfied with Eldon's unhesitating answer, "Glenn's the strongest," and replied, "No, Glenn's weak." The next day the following events occurred.

Day 31. Glenn has been visibly upset all day for some unknown reason. Earlier, during work time, he had cried in frustration when he had to redo some of the arithmetic problems. Later, when Eldon playfully pushed Glenn into Pierre, who had not seen what had happened, Pierre angrily hit Glenn hard in the stomach. Glenn's stomach and feelings were hurt and he protested, but because he had bumped into Pierre, did not hit him back.

Shawn had seen this interaction between Pierre and Glenn and had seen him cry earlier. Apparently sensing Glenn's vulnerability, Shawn kicked Glenn in the

back while he was sitting on the ground outside. Crying, Glenn got up to fight Shawn, who had moved away a few yards. Instead of pursuing Shawn, however, he just stood and cried.

Later at the water fountain, Shawn yanked Glenn's hair, and Glenn began to cry again.

Other boys had watched these events and had seen Glenn cry. Later Shawn boasted to Bart, "Did you see Glenn cry today when I hit him? He thinks he's a big man, strong man, but I beat him. He lost."

Glenn had clearly "lost" the fight with Shawn, and no boy seemed to question the fight on any other level, for instance, as to whether it was a "fair fight." All seemed to agree on the general meaning of the event, and the question of which boy in the class was the toughest and the strongest had been decisively answered. Shawn was, as he said, "Number One."¹¹

The following day Shawn consolidated his victory when he hit Glenn hard on the shoulder. Glenn's response to Shawn's unprovoked aggression was to tell Shawn, "Beat up Henry and Pierre. They pulled my hair." Henry and Pierre were two low status, low ranked kindergarten boys. Later during that week I observed Glenn tell another boy, "If you don't stop that I'll tell Shawn." Glenn had been demoralized by Shawn and his appeal to Shawn to intercede on his behalf with smaller, younger boys was a clear statement of recognition of Shawn's ascendancy.

However, Glenn's servileness was brief and he soon began to behave as he had previously: confidently, unaggressively, fairly, and with a willingness to fight defensively.

After the day of the fight Glenn's status in the eyes of the boys, particularly the younger boys, dropped. But he was still recognized as a strong boy and a boy with whom one did not casually initiate aggression.

Significantly, after the 32nd day, Shawn did not seek Glenn out for further direct aggression. Shawn was well aware that Glenn was a formidable fighter and that if challenged another time he might well beat up Shawn. Shawn had the recognition of his victory over Glenn, having been named the strongest and toughest boy by the other boys. Thereafter he would limit his aggression towards Glenn to verbal threats and would choose younger, smaller children to emphasize his physical prowess publicly.

Shawn as "Number One"

After he beat up Glenn, other boys recognized Shawn's supremacy. Those younger boys who had openly admired Glenn now spoke in admiring tones about how tough and strong Shawn was. Consider:

Day 40. George's mother, who regularly helps out in the classroom, was discussing the "ways of boys" as she saw them, while we watched the children out on the playground. In the middle of our general discussion, she commented, "An interesting change has happened. Until recently George would talk about 'Glenn this' and 'Glenn that' at the dinner table at night. 'Glenn was the greatest!' Now, it's 'Shawn this' and 'Shawn that' and 'Shawn's so strong,' and on and on at dinner. I asked him, 'What happened to Glenn? You liked him so much before.' George said that Glenn was 'too much like a baby; but that he still likes him some'."

Even more than Glenn had been, Shawn became a model for some of the other boys, and at times boys explicitly referred their

behavior to Shawn. For example:

Day 45. Bart, Eldon, Henry, and Pierre are playfully wrestling on the floor. Ralph and Vincent are watching. Ralph is excited and says to Vincent, "Now I'm gonna be like Shawn!" as he jumps on top of the boys on the floor.

Day 53. Eldon comments to Michael and George, "I can take care of Pierre and Henry at the same time, just like Shawn can do."

Just as if there had been a public formal announcement of the change in status, everyone now understood that Shawn, rather than Glenn, was the most important boy in the class.

Not only was he recognized to be the strongest and toughest boy, but he was also well liked by almost all of the boys and by some of the girls.¹² The responses that children gave on the friendship selection task as well as the intensive observations support the idea that Shawn was popular. Indeed, a number of boys named Shawn first as the person they liked the best and wanted to be their friend.

It was not difficult to understand how Shawn was liked by other high status boys, whom he usually did not attack for tactical reasons. He had some attractive qualities. He was fairly intelligent, physically attractive, fairly articulate; obeyed the rules promoted by the teacher that had to be obeyed; had, if not a fertile imagination for images in games, an adequate one; was above average in athletic ability; and was loyal and affectionate to his friend, Michael. In addition, he observed the rules for boy's games and was a regular participant in group play.

Nor was it hard to understand why children deferred to Shawn and accorded him a certain type of status related to power. Successful aggression creates its own definitions of what has value and there is nothing like being "beat up" a few times to engender a healthy respect, if not affection, and acknowledgement of power.

What was difficult to understand was how Shawn was liked by those children whom he had hurt many times, typically in the most unfair circumstances and without reason other than their proximity and vulnerability? How could Henry, Pierre, Eldon, Jimmy, or any of the girls like Shawn?

And why was Shawn liked by those children, such as Glenn, Michael, and Anne, who could have conceivably engaged in the same level and type of aggressive power-seeking as he, but did not?

A number of possible answers was considered. I speculated that the boys, in particular, possessed no values which mitigated the use of force so long as it was successful. But the situation was not that simple, though the idea of success did play a role in forming opinion.

Most of the children had values which worked against their using force against others, especially against smaller children, though they did so anyway at times, though no one else was as aggressive as Shawn. In addition to the general rule that children were not supposed to fight in school, a rule sometimes articulated by children, including Shawn, there were other values which expressly had to do with not hurting other people, giving other people "chances," and being "nice." It was not uncommon for

children to apologize to one another when they accidentally hurt others, nor was it unusual to hear and see children engage in other forms of behavior which allowed social interaction to proceed smoothly and even with affection. Indeed, Shawn also had such rules for living in the social world.

Children knew that it was wrong to be "mean" and it was good to be "nice" and to not hurt others. At one level those children who liked Shawn were also likely to recognize his behavior as "mean" and they experienced some ambivalence about his aggressiveness. Consider:

Day 57. Pierre has brought a library book about dinosaurs for me to read to him. Atypically, I agree, and soon several other children have joined me and Pierre.

The book tells of Brontosaurus, a vegetarian, who is pictured eating some leaves from a tree. Then it describes Tyrannosaurus, a carnivore, who is pictured on another page attacking the peaceful and helpless Brontosaurus with his large, toothy mouth.

After reading about the two, I ask the children, "Whom do you like the best? Brontosaurus or Tyrannosaurus?"

All immediately answer that they like Brontosaurus.

Then I ask them, "Who do you think is the person in the class who is the most like Tyrannosaurus Rex?" At least three of them, including Pierre, immediately answer, "Shawn!" The others nod their heads in agreement, and no one suggests anyone else.

Everyone preferred Brontosaurus and by nonverbal means clearly expressed antipathy for the aggressive Tyrannosaurus.

Their feelings about Shawn the boy were more ambivalent than their feelings about Shawn as symbolized by Tyrannosaurus, however.

And their feelings about boys in the class who were basically gentle but sometimes victimized were much more negative than their feelings about the gentle, victimized Brontosaurus. Though such boys were sometimes liked by some, they were certainly not admired or held in esteem.

What boys knew about boyiness and its relationship to power seemed to mediate other knowledge they had about what was generally considered to be desirable or appropriate behavior. Boys sometimes expressed different norms for the society of boys than they did for the general society. Pierre, who said that he liked Brontosaurus better than Tyrannosaurus, also named Shawn as the boy he liked best and wanted to be his friend because "Shawn's the best fighter of the boys." Shawn's behavior, then, was clearly not just Shawn acting alone, but Shawn acting with other boys using the same values and same frames of reference as they used. Because of the positive responses they gave to Shawn, other children sometimes participated in their own pain, though at the moment of their own personal experience with him certainly did not view it in that light.

In addition to whatever other reasons boys liked one another, boys liked Shawn *because* of his successful aggressive behavior and the meanings they and he attached to his behavior. The cognitive and normative knowledge that 'boys are supposed to be strong' explicitly demonstrated and actualized by Shawn in his successful attempt to be recognized as the "strongest" and, temperamentally, the "toughest" boy in the class, superseded the more general

values, common to boys and girls, which typified unprovoked aggression as bad and "mean."

For the boys it seemed to be a case of conflicting typifications which emphasized values of social cooperation on one hand and values of strength-as-power-over-others on the other.

For many boys the knowledge they had about strength had more to do with what they understood to be their core identities, their gendered identities, than the more general values. At one level a boy's social identity emerged from his interaction and in this social context fundamentally rested upon his being perceived as strong like a boy. His status as a boy depended on how he was typified by others along the dimensions of strength and weakness.

To some extent high status boys had the power to name or define other boys publicly and to define their place in the group. This factor seemed to play a role in why Shawn was liked by those boys who were so often the recipients of his unprovoked aggression.

High status boys helped to determine the position of others in a number of ways, first, by their physical response to boys. Low status boys were attacked more than boys with a higher status. The fact that one was often singled out for aggression by a highly ranked boy meant that one was easily beat up, it being a part of the common knowledge that one did not start fights with strong boys. In addition, if one was beat up often one's status was constantly lowered; if one was left alone the situation was more ambiguous.

More important was friendship. For most children friendship or association connoted similarity. Friends were thought to be like one another. Thus, associating with a high or low status child influenced one's standing in the social group.

Because Shawn was the highest ranked boy, association with him carried a special meaning. It meant that one was like Shawn, who was for the other boys prototypically like a boy. It meant that one was also like a boy was supposed to be. Consequently, several low ranked boys named Shawn as the person whom they liked best and their best friend during the interviews, though such boys had virtually no positive association with him. Indeed, they had had quite a bit of negative experience when he hurt them. Typically such answers were given without anxiety or a sense that the boys named Shawn in order to impress or fool me. They simply named him. Jimmy was an exception. Low-ranked Jimmy, who had named Shawn first, worried anxiously during the interview about whether or not Shawn had named Jimmy as a person whom he liked. "Did Shawn say he like me?" And, even more anxiously, "Shawn doesn't like me, does he?" Shawn had named Jimmy last among the boys. Some of the kindergarten boys, including Jimmy, tried to publicly ally themselves with Shawn, as if by association they would be identified as being like Shawn.

The following event illustrates how some boys expressed anxiety about their boyness and how this influenced their interaction with other boys and girls.

Day 42. Eldon, Shawn, Janie, Betty, Timmy, Brenda, and Karen are at the art table drawing with crayons supplied by the teacher. There is a disagreement about using the crayons, and Shawn begins to gather all of them to himself. Eldon and Timmy immediately identify themselves as allies of Shawn and join him in taking crayons from Janie, Betty, and Karen, who ineffectively resist.

The three finally get all the crayons. Eldon victoriously looks to Shawn and says, "Only for us, right, Shawn?" Shawn ignores Eldon and silently struggles with Janie for one last crayon. Taking it, he hands it to Eldon.

Bart joins the group at the table, and Eldon immediately includes him, saying, "Good, Bart. You're with *us*. Don't let them have the crayons." Bart understands immediately how the sides are divided and agrees to keep 'them' from having the use of the crayons.

The girls have not given up. Janie goes to tell the teacher, a strategy most know will be useless.

Eldon says to Shawn, "Only for us, right, Shawn?"

Again, Shawn ignores Eldon.

Eldon then says, "You like me better than them," nodding to the girls, "because I have some soldiers, right?" Then he adds, "You like us, right, Shawn? Except Ralph and Jackie and Henry and Jimmy. Do you like Jimmy?"

Shawn shrugs.

It was common for some boys to try to establish a relationship with a higher status boy by attempting to make an invidious comparison of themselves with lower status people, either with girls as a type or with low status boys. In this event we can observe clearly the two dimensions of the "we" and "them" divisions which Eldon suggested in his attempt to identify himself as a friend of Shawn's. On the other hand, the "us" referred to the

boys at the table who had alligned themselves against the others, the girls. Eldon tried to get Shawn to publicly acknowledge his connection to Eldon by invoking the division by gender. "Only for us, right Shawn?" When Shawn failed to respond to Eldon's appeal, he then evoked a symbol of masculine power and aggression, the soldiers, as if to remind Shawn that he was a boy like Shawn, and that boyness was the foundation for their camaraderie in their war against the girls. "You like me better than them," he says, nodding to the girls, "because I have some soldiers, right?"

When Shawn still did not affirm or respond to his meaning, Eldon became more anxious. Apparently, Eldon was reminded that not all boys were boys like Shawn and that the dichotomized constructs of strength and weakness which defined gender differences to boys were also used to separate boys from other boys. At that point Eldon tried to link himself to Shawn, and strong boys, by explicitly separating himself from the group of weak boys, the boys who were weak like the original others, the girls. He enlarged upon the meaning of "us" and "them" and now included those who were not present at the table, but who were relevant to his point. "You like us, right, Shawn?" Except Ralph and Henry and Jackie and Jimmy? Do you like Jimmy?" The "us" meant boys, excepting four boys who were known to be "weak" boys.

Shawn, who had the power of defining Eldon and his place in the group, continued to withhold approval and affirmation from Eldon, thus sustaining both Eldon's anxiety and the legitimacy, founded upon Eldon's anxiety, of Shawn's own right to define.

Shawn was understood to be the toughest boy and the boy who was most like a boy because of his toughness, for toughness as an aspect of strength, courage, and aggressiveness, was the essence of boyness. At times the constructs which boys used to apprehend and give meaning to Shawn's behavior reflected the images which they had or wanted to have of themselves. And they illustrate the way that boys tried to secure their own identities as boys within the demands of this social context. In the following event we may observe how Bart reinterpreted Shawn's actions in a way that simultaneously legitimized Shawn's aggression toward him and sustained his own image of himself.

Day 53. Eldon and Bart are wrestling in a "real fight" which has gone on for several minutes. The fight is intense. Though Eldon is slightly stronger than Bart, the boys are evenly matched for practical purposes.

Shawn joins the fight by grabbing Bart and jumping on top of him, hitting him hard with his fists. Eldon, meanwhile, simply holds on to Bart, continuing with his original battle. Bart begins to cry loudly.

Eldon and Shawn get off Bart, who is frustrated, furious, and sobbing. Shawn and Eldon leave the area, and as they leave Shawn boasts to Eldon, "We got him."

An hour later I ask Bart, who has been playfully wrestling with Henry, "Bart, is two against one fair?"

Bart answers, "Yes, because he's much stronger." I don't know what he means by this.

I ask, "Is it fair for Shawn to come in when you and Eldon are fighting, like today?"

Bart immediately answers, smiling, "Yes. Because I'm much stronger than Eldon, so Shawn has to help out."

After the immediacy of the fight Bart was not angry with Shawn for his brutal behavior, for jumping on top of him and hitting him with his fists while he was unable to fight back, occupied as he was with Eldon. Instead, Bart chose to interpret events in a way that allowed him to enlarge upon his own self-typification as a strong boy, no matter that it did not reflect Shawn's motivation, nor the objective reality of the relative strength of Eldon and Bart. Though his comments were self-serving, there was no indication that Bart was being anything but spontaneous and sincere when he made them.

The boys' gender constructs of strength and weakness were more relevant to boys' classroom reality than were the girls' constructs of "mean" and "nice." To boys, "mean" and "nice" were not particularly related to gender. If asked, boys seemed likely to say that girls were "meaner" and boys "nicer." But, unlike girls, they did not spontaneously offer those categories when talking about gender.

The following conversations illustrate the role that the ideal typical conception of boys as strong played in the way boys interpreted aggression.

Day 37. We are waiting by the gym door for the other class to leave so that we may enter. There has been a lot of fighting and aggression today, so I ask a group of children who are nearby, "Who's the meanest person in the class?", a category I had heard introduced previously.

Brad answers, "Shawn's the meanest."

George shakes his head in disagreement and says, "Wanda's the meanest. She scratches."

Brad replies, "No, Shawn's the meanest. He hits more people than Wanda."

Vincent adds, "Shawn hit Henry." Shawn has been hitting a crying Henry all during the day.

George insists, "No. Shawn's the *strongest!* Wanda's the meanest." (Emphasis George's.)

Day 52. Eldon, Kara, and Jackie are playing in the house-keeping area. Eldon remarks to Kara and Jackie, "Wanda's the meanest girl in the class."

Jackie responds enthusiastically and with humor, "Wanda's the meanest girl in the world!"

Kara watches as the two boys laugh. I wait for developments and when it seems they have finished I ask, "Who's the meanest boy in the class?"

Jackie answers, "Pierre and Shawn."

Eldon emphatically disagrees: "No! Shawn's strong, not mean." He pauses, apparently considering his answer carefully, and then says, "I say Pierre."

Jackie says, "I say Shawn."

Eldon sighs and says in an exasperated voice, as though he were trying to teach something to a dull pupil, "Nooooo. Shawn's strong, not mean."

If questioned about what constituted "mean" behavior all of the boys including Shawn would have agreed on what was "mean." Meanness, like other elements of knowledge in the social stock of knowledge, was structured in typical terms. For instance, everyone typified hitting-in-the-back-while-the-other-is-not-looking as "mean." Many of Shawn's actions would be called mean, were meanness the most relevant category used for understanding and giving meaning to behavior.

But for boys, meanness was not the most relevant construct for determining what behavior meant. Boys were primarily motivated in this context by the typified elements of knowledge that they shared about being a boy, and meaning was constructed using those elements: "Boys are strong"; "Boys do things"; "Boys are not afraid." Consequently, Shawn's aggression was framed in terms of these constructs and was as likely to be interpreted as evidence of strength and, thus, of masculinity, as of meanness. But by any objective measure of the amount or intensity of aggression Shawn would undoubtedly be the most aggressive, and were the measurements translated in the subjective terms "mean" and "nice" he would be named the "meanest" person in the class. He was said to be the "meanest" by many of the girls and by several adult visitors, including parents, some of whom wanted to throttle him for his behavior.

This did not mean that boys were not able to apprehend successfully aggressive behavior as being both strong and mean. But such prestige was attached by boys to the idea of strength that it connoted an essentially positive meaning even when connected to the negative idea of meanness. Consequently, even those boys, but not necessarily girls, who labeled Shawn as mean also named him as one of the children whom they liked best during the interviews. They liked him, they said, because he was aggressive. "I like Shawn the best; he's the best fighter in the class."

The boys' interpretation of Shawn's aggression as an indication of his superiority was consistent with the way he typified his

own behavior, though he was not oblivious or immune to conflicting interpretations, especially from significant adults. From the observations of the total interaction, it was clear that Shawn chose to act as he did partly because his action resulted in his being accorded prestige from others. He was not insensitive to social meaning and often modified his behavior according to the demands of others. This became quite clear during certain events at the very end of the school year. At that time Bart, whose father had come to class to observe and who had privately criticized Shawn's excesses, began to mildly criticize Shawn for "playing too rough," for "messin' with Henry all the time and making him cry," and for "picking on people." Shawn responded to Bart's tentative criticism not by hitting him, as Bart expected, but by modifying his aggressiveness in those instances. There was some evidence that the teacher and Shawn's mother were also beginning to criticize Shawn in concert, which probably gave support to Bart's criticism.

In contrast to the varying ways boys' aggression was typified, girls' aggression was said to be "mean" by both girls and boys. Unlike boys, girls had no legitimizing gender role meanings by which to consider the meaning of such behavior, no meanings by which others might consider aggression to be positive rather than negative and socially unacceptable. Wanda, who was aggressive but not nearly so aggressive as Shawn, was ranked low by almost all of the children. Everyone, even those who played with her, agreed that Wanda was mean. Despite there being other factors to be taken

into account in determining the meaning of Wanda's low status, it is clear that even ostensibly objectively negative behaviors, like smashing someone in the head with a foot, were differentially evaluated according to gender.

However, unlike Shawn, Wanda did not "win" her fights so the meaning of her rejection has to remain ambiguous. Anne, the only girl who, given girls' present responses and attitudes, could have won was not aggressive. It would have been interesting to observe the situation and the meaning that children gave to them had there been a girl who was as aggressive *and* successful as Shawn. On the other hand, because of the constructs girls used of "niceness" and "meanness" to define girls, it is possible that no girls could have occupied a position of high status similar to Shawn's. Girls would have undoubtedly responded to a girls' aggression negatively, and such negative responses would have had some effect. Nevertheless, it would have been interesting.

The main point is that Shawn was, in socially essential ways, a reflection of what boys knew boys were supposed to be like. To a large extent he mirrored for himself and for others the boys' images of masculinity, an image of masculinity of a primal, essential type based as it was on size, strength, and the use of force for power. As the boys refined and enlarged their view of what it meant to be like a boy and began to give group support to more subtle definitions of power, as they occasionally did at the end of the year, Shawn modified some of his behavior.

The change was apparently developmental, part of a sequence of knowledge for boys. Some of the more mature and sophisticated boys who had played all along with the large group began to place more restrictions on the absolute use of force. On the other hand, most of those boys who had not been part of the group, the younger, less sophisticated boys, began to exhibit the attitudes and behaviors which some of the others now seemed to be questioning. They began an unquestioned adoration of Shawn, began to want to join the boys' outside play group regardless of the possibility of being hurt, began to more actively emphasize those objects, such as toy weapons, and ways-of-being, such as rough play, which symbolized masculine strength and toughness.

Boys changed some of their behavior but the foundation of boys' knowledge, the essential typifications of gender, were the same for boys of all ages and remained essentially the same throughout the school year. Though boys' knowledge became more subtle and complex, boys continued to typify boys as stronger, able to do things, unafraid, and more powerful than girls. Boys-like-men were supposed to be strong, to do things, to not be afraid and to be powerful. The foundation of what boys knew, the essential elements of knowledge, were the same for both groups and remained essentially the same for each individual person, though knowledge changed and became more subtle. The structure of the social relations depended upon what boys knew and structurally it, too, remained essentially the same throughout the school year, with minor changes. Had Shawn not been a class member and had Glenn

remained ascendant, the basic social structure would have remained the same, a social structure characterized by hierarchical social relations between boys determined partly by the use and/or symbolic meaning of strength. The structure and boys' perception of it was the same before Shawn defeated Glenn. Because Shawn was present and dominant the nature of classroom interaction took a particular flavor that it would not have taken had he not been present, but the essential form would have been the same. Whether the person who was seen to have the most power was a fair-minded type like Glenn, or a more authoritarian type who kicked others in the head when they weren't looking, like Shawn, made no essential difference in the structure, though it certainly made a difference in the quality of life for many of the children. Indeed, had neither Glenn nor Shawn been class members, the overall structure would have probably remained the same, for the others knew what those two knew. Only the particulars would have changed.

Summary

Boys labeled others in the class according to how strong and tough they were thought to be. Boys, especially, were named in a hierarchical order with each boy given a fairly precise place. The determination of a person's place in the hierarchy was largely dependent on whom he was perceived to be able to beat up and who could beat up him, because boys considered one's ability to win fights as the ultimate criteria for strength and toughness. Girls were placed by boys at the bottom of the hierarchy, initially

because of their being girls, a type known to be weak and afraid, and increasingly because of their responses to boys' aggression in the classroom. Girls usually submitted to boys' aggression when it was serious and did not like to play rough, which was evidence, to boys, of their weakness. As individuals girls could transcend their places as girls and assume a specific place in the hierarchy, either temporarily, when boys were faced with the reality of a girl's superiority in a specific fight, or in a more lasting one, as Anne did. As a group, however, girls were typified as being persons "everyone," meaning boys, could beat up, as being weak, and afraid and thus, as being on the bottom of the hierarchy of the strong.

Some of the categories boys used to talk about aspects of the dominance hierarchy were similar to those used to describe aspects of the rules for playing right, and the two systems functioned to similar ends. In addition to having a specific place in the hierarchy of fighting ability or dominance through force, boys were also generally typified by other boys as being in one of two groups, the "strong boys" or the "weak boys," as they were for the boys' outside games. The membership in these two groups coincided almost exactly with the respective division of boys into those who "played right" and those who did not, though the specific rankings of boys in the dominance and playing right systems were slightly different. A boy's status with other boys, and with some girls, depended upon his rank in the dominance hierarchy and his acceptance as a member of the large group play. And a boy's ability to

participate effectively in these two overlapping status systems depended in large part on his knowing and understanding what it meant to boys to be like a boy. Both the dominance hierarchy and the rules for playing right functioned to have boys and girls play with same gender persons, to create a hierarchy of power among boys, and to validate the knowledge boys had about the differences between what girls and boys were like.

Though each boy had his place in the hierarchy, most boys focused upon the two boys who were said to be the strongest and the toughest, Glenn and Shawn. These two boys were phenomenologically central and structurally central to boys', and, to a lesser extent, girls' social life in this classroom. By the use of force, legitimized by the shared meanings about boyness and manliness, Shawn became the person in the class who was most able to define the meaning of events and the power relationships of children in the classroom, boys and girls. At the beginning of the year Glenn, a relatively easygoing, nonaggressive boy, was named as the strongest and most important boy because he was the "biggest" boy. Size was typified by boys as being the essential source of masculine power and Glenn's size earned him the ranking of the number one boy. Shawn was an extremely aggressive boy who hit and hurt others who were smaller and weaker than he, and Shawn also understood the importance of physical force and dominance for boys, using his knowledge effectively to secure his status. On the 31st day of school Shawn effectively challenged Glenn and from that day until the end of the year he was recognized as the "toughest and

strongest boy in the classroom." He was held in esteem by other boys, and his aggressiveness was typified by some boys as being like a boy and evidence of his strength rather than meanness. Girls' aggressiveness, by contrast, was always said to be meanness.

Notes

1. No records were used to determine such things as height, weight, and so on, nor were measurements made. The statements are based on what I think are reliable estimates.
2. The embarrassment of boys about crying must be understood to be a strong tendency which was not, however, comparable to the stigma attached to older male humans about crying during fights. Having only recently left babyhood for childhood, crying was still familiar to these children. In this class, boys, partly because of the higher level of aggression they encountered, cried as often and as seriously as girls, perhaps more. Some children, boys and girls, were never observed to cry in class.
3. This says nothing about which type of person was more well liked however. Status based on physical-emotional dominance was important, but not everything, and boys who let other boys save face achieved value on nongender dimensions.
4. Boys also used the idiom "take care of" to mean dominate or defeat another in a fight or to hold one's own. For instance, Eldon told Pierre that he could "take care of Pierre and Jackie at the same time, just like Shawn can do" after jumping on top of them.

We may contrast this use of the phrase with the way it was most commonly used by girls, and boys in other contexts. For girls, "take care of" was a phrase associated with women as mothers, and sometimes men in relation to women and children, which meant to care for in a loving and responsible way. The differences in the usage suggest the fundamental difference in the way women are typified as contrasted to men.

Boys and girls understood both uses.

5. Girls were probably aware that Glenn was the tallest boy in the class, but they never commented on his size except as Nancy did, by way of identifying Glenn when asked about him. "Oh yes, you mean that blonde boy, the biggest one in the class." Size did not have the same significance to girls.
6. Glenn's father is not actually eighty but more like forty. Age, like size, was considered a sign of power, and eighty certainly sounded powerful to Glenn.
7. Girls rarely had machines in their games, not even common machines like cars. When a machine was present it was typically a domestic tool like a stove, was essentially peripheral to the meaning of the girls' games, and was not approached as anything mechanical but as a means to "take care of" the family. The machine existed, but for affective relationships rather than for power or anything having to do with activity itself.
8. On the last day of school Shawn was being particularly aggressive to a small child. I suspended the role of Social Scientist and took up the role of Critical Adult by telling him that "No one likes a bully, Shawn," a statement which, given what I had observed during the entire year, was patently false.

Shawn did not deny that the statement was true, it being after all an axiom of adult to child knowledge, nor did he deny that he was such a bully. His response was to feel misunderstood and frustrated. He told me by way of defense or explanation, "I can't help it. It's in my head."

Like his machines of destruction, Shawn felt himself to be "out of control" and that something in his head was in control. He had learned well what was taught about being a boy, and when criticized for it by significant adults, he experienced ambivalence. He knew, through experience, that "people do like bullies" but knew that they were not supposed to. What was in Shawn's head was one version of the social knowledge about masculinity.

9. There were many similar situations where adults, but not the regular teacher, intervened and acted upon incorrect information, assumptions, and conclusions.

From my experience from observing in this situation, I would tend to conclude that adult intervention is as likely to result in injustice as justice, if justice may be considered to be a situation where an aggressor is punished or scolded and a victim is not criticized, or at least not more than an aggressor.

There seemed to be two general reasons for the inadequate behavior of adults in these situations. First, the adults who were most likely to act seemed also to be the least reflective and least willing to think before acting and to act axiomatically rather than prudently. And, in most cases, adults simply did not have the option to follow through and get enough information so as to correctly assess a situation. There were too many other demands in the classroom. Thus, it might be fairer if they intervened without assessing blame, as the teacher usually did those few times she intervened.

10. If the child lied the other child only had the option of telling the truth and denying the lie. Since children were sometimes unreliable witnesses even when they did not intend to be, e.g., when they had only seen part of an interaction, the truth of any given situation might be difficult to determine. It was simply the word and reputation of one child against the word and reputation of another.
11. Sometimes children explicitly invited blows ("Here, hit me. . .") from others, or accepted blows even when the physical contact was genuinely accidental and even when there was no possibility of adult intervention. It seemed to be a way of re-establishing harmony and also showing that one did not intend to hurt.
12. Many boys used the phrase "number one" throughout the school year. The phrase connotes the existence of a competitive, hierarchical relationship and a superlative position.

In the adult culture, the phrase is most commonly used in the context of competitive sport, but is also adopted for other contexts, for example, in political contexts. Journalists and politicians both favor the use of sports metaphors to discuss political or economic situations.

13. The way in which some girls apprehended Shawn, according to their own relevance systems, was discussed in Chapter VII.

CHAPTER XI
"BOYS ARE BETTER THAN GIRLS"

He who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definitions of reality. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 109)

In the classroom there was significant interaction between each child and every other child. Everyone associated with everyone else. One could find girls with boys, girls with girls, boys with boys, in all possible individual combinations. As might be expected in a social setting where 30 children were occupying a relatively small space several hours a day and where each was relatively free to move about and do what she/he wanted, there was continuous, largely unavoidable interaction between children and continuous communication, some of it direct, some covert, and much of it tremendously subtle. Each of the children was in a fluid, changing, emotional and physical relationship to each of the others. There were no rigid social boundaries or groups, no rigid rules of association.

Amid all of this seemingly unpatterned association there were, however, some clearly patterned choices about association made by children which were related to gender and which, after a short time, became fairly predictable.

Patterns of differential association by gender were present on the first day of school and became increasingly pronounced until

about the third week of school when they stabilized. From the third week to the end of the year there were some changes made by individuals which were significant and had to do with gender, but the essential pattern remained the same. In short, children tended to play with children of the same gender. Some children, especially boys, liked to say, "Boys play with boys and girls play with girls" or "Boys like to play with boys and girls like to play with girls" by way of typifying or describing these patterns of association. With the exception of Kara and Jackie, all the children played with children of the same gender more than children of the other.

Same gender association began to emerge partly from the knowledge that children had prior to entering school about what men and women were like and what was relevant to men and women. As we have seen, fantasy played a large part in children's games, and the main form fantasy took was for a child to pretend to be an adult of the same gender.

Girls liked to make up games where women's roles and what they understood to be women's meanings were paramount and essential to the structure and spirit of a game. Games like house and Barbie where girls pretended to be grown women who were mothers, their little girls or babies, and teenage young women in the roles of wives and girlfriends were favorites of girls. The main themes of these games had to do with intimate, personal, and particular human relationships. The emphasis was on feelings within personal relationships. Activity which did not directly involve relating to

other humans, such as cooking or cleaning the house, was an indirect form of relatedness and was typified by the girls as "taking care of" others. Similarly, the activities that were central in the game of Barbie, changing clothes, putting on makeup and otherwise focusing on appearances, were oriented to romantic relationships with men or "boyfriends" and were perceived at another level as evidence of a girl's beautiful appearance.

Most boys, as we have seen, did not often try to join girls in girls' games. Even when they played, the roles of men that they created from what they knew about men in such contexts were so limited that boys did not usually find the games sufficiently complex or satisfying to sustain participation. In Barbie, the second most important game played by girls pretending to be women, the activity and the meaning of the game were so foreign to boys that no boy was ever observed to play or even to attempt to play.

The situation was different in the games in which boys pretended to be men and during which they created themes of adventure, conflict, and competition between groups. Girls wanted to play with the boys in these games and were quite willing to assume roles, but not necessarily the behavior that boys typified as belonging to a role, which were implicitly or even explicitly masculine. Girls especially liked the running, climbing, and chasing aspects of such games.

However, because the meanings of the boys' games were based on the man-type idea of conflict and strength and these meanings were reflected in the rules or norms for play, all of the girls

except Anne found that playing the games as the boys played them was "too rough." Girls began to drop out of the games primarily for that reason. Some girls also stopped playing because of the roughness and aggressiveness which girls considered to be "meanness," most evident in the struggle for dominance ranking among boys.

Most girls who continued to play were criticized by many boys, who found the participation of the girls inadequate to sustain the meaning that the boys wanted to give to the games. Boys would sometimes say that girls did not know how to "play right" and that they made the games "not fun" for boys. Some of the less socially mature boys were also criticized and excluded for failure to follow the rules, though without any reference to their gender.

It is clear that at least part of the boys' dissatisfaction with girls was not because of the girls' gender per se, for some boys welcomed girls when they "played right." But the different styles, rules, and meanings had to do with gender-related meanings. Therefore, though girls were not initially primarily excluded simply because they were girls, their being girls was the foundation for their exclusion and inability or unwillingness to play by the boys' rules. Boys increasingly became aware of the gender connection.

As boys became aware of the connection between an inability or unwillingness to follow the rules and gender, their awareness reinforced another element of knowledge which boys had had and shared from the first day of school. "Boys are better than girls."

Consequently, some boys began to actively try to separate boys from girls and to exclude girls because they were girls. Because girls were considered to be somehow less than boys, and because a boy's association with girls signified at one level that he was less than he should or could be, some boys became anxious about playing with girls, especially in a girls' context.

What did it mean to boys that "boys were better than girls"? First it did not mean that some boys did not also know contradictory things,¹ for instance, that "boys and girls are both good," that "boys and girls are the same, all human beings you know," or even that girls were better than boys, though no boy was ever observed to articulate the latter sentiment. Consider Michael's answer to a question he was asked early during the school year:

Day 4. Observer: What are some ways boys and girls are the same or different?

Michael: They're both human beings, both like to play. (He hesitates as he considers the question and then continues.) I guess boys are a little stronger, and girls are a little softer, a little more gentle.

Observer: Which do you think is better, stronger or softer?

Michael: They're both good.

Observer: Which would you like to be?

Michael: (Michael pauses a long time before answering) Some of both.

Clearly, Michael, like some of the other boys, valued girls and women and the ways-of-being attributed to the type. For any

individual boy such knowledge might be more determining and carry more weight, and perhaps be more enduring, than knowledge about the superiority of boys. What we are talking about here, however, is socially shared knowledge which was considered by boys to be essential to the idea of boyness itself, and the important point to remember is that every boy knew, and knew that other boys knew, that being like a boy was better than being like a girl, and that being a girl was less than being a boy.

In their group relations with one another boys almost always framed the constructs of boyness and girlness in terms of the mutually exclusive terms of strength and weakness and not, as Michael did when talking with an adult, in terms of strength and softness or gentleness, terms which were not mutually exclusive. Their dichotomized frame of reference was supported by the major images of boys' games and by the demands and pressures boys made upon one another within their competitive relationships, especially the struggle for being the toughest and the strongest. As Shawn demonstrated, in a struggle for dominance, other things being equal, pure strength unmodified by gentleness or softness resulted in more power, at least in this particular situation. As the boys saw, the more like a boy a boy was, the more power he had and the more prestige he had.

Unlike the constructs of gentleness and strength, the constructs of strength and weakness demand their framing in a context of superiority and inferiority. And in terms of the group relationships and structures boys created in interaction with one another,

these elements of knowledge took precedence over other knowledge. Once strength was defined as the ultimate value, and reinforced through social interaction of a forceful sort, peer pressure among boys began to sustain the knowledge of the superiority of boys. Consider the following conversation:

This conversation took place when I was interviewing Michael, and Shawn, his best friend, was present and participating.

Observer: Michael, which do you think is better, boys or girls?²

Shawn: Boys.

Michael: Both are the same.

Shawn looks surprised and turns to Michael.

Shawn: No, boys are better than girls. You know *that*.

Michael feels defensive and frowns.

Michael: They're the same, in God's way.

Shawn (nodding): Oh yeah. But not really.

Michael (frowning): No, not really.

When Shawn understood that Michael was talking about "God's way" rather than about what was "really" true he relaxed and understood that his and Michael's reality and meanings were the same. As for Michael, the pressure applied by Shawn caused him to modify his response in relation to what was known to be common knowledge among boys. But Michael did feel uncomfortable with his compromise, however necessary he felt it to be.

The boys fundamentally agreed upon those essential elements of knowledge that were most relevant to their social situation as boys; their knowledge of their boyness provided the social glue which held them together and they basically viewed themselves to be alike. At one level each believed the others to hold the same views as he. Shawn was shocked that Michael thought girls and boys to have the same value. "No, boys are better than girls. You know *that*." The idea that girls and boys were the same had never been explicitly proposed before.

One important reason boys tended to apprehend other boys as knowing precisely, rather than generally, the same things they knew was that descriptive statements made about objective reality might be understood to be evaluative and normative. Thus, when boys said things like "boys play rough," "boys play outside," "girls play inside," and "boys are more active" they might have intended to only describe reality or might have intended to comment and make a judgement about it. Because the phrases and words were identical whatever the intended meaning of the speaker or the listener, sometimes there was ambiguity about what was meant when such phrases were used. For example, a boy like Shawn or Brad might make a statement intending to devalue girls to a boy like Michael, who less frequently considered girls in those negative, evaluative terms, without either Shawn and Brad or Michael knowing that the other understood the world differently. The normative dimension of typifications in the stock of knowledge tended to cloud the precise meaning of statements, though boys did not

usually experience any confusion. Each tended to believe that others shared his perception of reality, not just in kind but in degree.

So far as boys' negative evaluations of girls, boys' differences were primarily a matter of degree or intensity, but for purposes of their interaction in this situation, not essential or defining. For some boys most of the time, and for all boys some of the time, descriptive statements about gender were also meant to be subjectively meaningful as statements about the relative value of boys and girls.

By way of contrast, when a girl made a statement describing boys' patterns of behavior such as "boys play Monster" the statement was far less likely to be intended as a statement of value, and when it was it was typically much milder. Girls were less likely to make distinctions which rigidly separated boys' and girls' objects and ways-of-being and were more likely to recognize individual variation. Since girls did not share boys' sense of the relative value of the sexes and did not believe that girls were superior to boys in a similar fashion, they were far less motivated to apprehend, and give voice to, reality divided into gender-related categories.

The following discussion will describe how the boys' socially shared knowledge about their superiority was constituted, how it was manifested, and how it was sustained.

Boys came to school knowing that "boys are better than girls." Over the period of the school year the expression and intensity of

of this knowledge changed and increased, supported as it was by the interaction of objective behavioral patterns and the subjective meaning children attributed to them.

Examples of boys' devaluation of girls can be presented from the first day of school to the last. Sometimes they were direct, as when Timmy, without any apparent stimulation, told Shawn, "Girls are blaggh." Making a face of disgust and sticking out his tongue he adds, "They make me sick. They can't play anything." More rarely, boys made remarks which were less direct and subtle. For example:

Day 42. Brad is looking at a book, and Glenn is sitting beside him. Brad points to a picture of a girl in the book and says, "This is Billy." Then he points to a picture of a boy and says, "This is Gary. I like Gary better than Billy."³

Brad's intention when identifying Billy as the girl in the book was clear. He wanted to say something about his preference for Gary and wanted to say something negative about Billy. For boys, identifying a boy as a girl was a negative statement, clear to all.

What was the foundation of the boys' knowledge of their own superiority as boys and the inferiority of girls? At one level, the idea that "boys are better than girls" existed for boys as an element of knowledge that was separate and distinguishable from any explanatory schemes boys had to account for it. "Everyone knew" that "boys are better" and thus, the type girl, and everything that could be taken as a symbol of girls, carried a diminished veneer, a sense of being less than everything that was not girl-like.

Boys did, however, have and provide some explanations as to why girls were less than boys. Some explanations seemed nonrational, for instance, when Pierre asserted that boys were better because "girls have that yuky long hair." Pierre, a kindergarten boy, saw that long hair and short hair were differences between girls and boys, so he attributed what he knew to be the difference in value to the apparent difference in hair length.

When one understands that for boys long hair was simply an apparent difference which was real, and in their perception, inevitable to some degree, one may see that long hair was a symbol for the type girl. One then must consider what typifications boys possessed about gender were essential and central to them for distinguishing girls from boys to understand what the symbol represented. And we come once again to the boys' polarized constructs of strength and weakness, smallness and largeness, activity, "doing things," and less activity, "doing nothing," and power and powerlessness. Anything that was labeled as belonging to boys was typified by boys, though assuredly by some more than others, as having to do with strength and power. For instance, when asked how he could tell the girls' names from the boys', Eldon answered, "because the boys have the *rougher* names." Similarly, those things boys typified as having to do with strength or power were also perceived as having to do with masculinity, as being boy or man-like.

It is apparent that it might have been possible for boys to perceive men as being physically stronger without perceiving them

to consequently be superior in every way or overall as a type contrasted to girls. But boys carried the knowledge of men/boys being stronger and bigger at the same time they possessed the typification that boys/men were better so that the elements of knowledge were interactive. Boys shared the general societal belief that strong and big were better and ultimately that strength and superior size were superior.⁴ Strength was defined as the prime value, and for boys physical strength was virtually synonymous with power. Because of these multiple considerations, those things attached to girls tended to be objects of ridicule and objects to be avoided because as symbols of girlness they were symbols of weakness and thus inferiority in a most essential and defining sense.

The knowledge that boys had that boys were better than girls and that strength and power were the prime values, better than any other quality--especially weakness or what might be perceived as weakness--had a number of consequences and was articulated in a number of ways.

First, boys constructed and interpreted reality in terms of the dichotomized gender-related categories far more often and with more passion than girls did. Boys used the categories of gender and what they perceived to be the essential factors having to do with gender to understand and construct their world and to simultaneously pass judgement on that world. Consider:

Day 14. Glenn, Eldon, and Brad are having a conversation about dolls.

Glenn says, "I wouldn't play with dolls for anything. *Girls* play with dolls."

Brad adds, "Some dolls are okay, boys' dolls."

At this point Michael joins the group. He thinks that they are talking about dogs. He looks concerned and puzzled.

Michael asserts, "I like girl dogs. We have a girl dog, and I like her, puppies too."

Brad exclaims, "Not dogs, dolls! Girls' dolls."

Michael agrees, "Yes, boys' dolls like G.I. Joe and the Six Million Dollar Man."⁵

Shawn had joined and adds, "Dolls! All the boys in the world hate dolls, girls' dolls. Except Henry likes Barbie. Henry stinks!"

Boys accepted dolls only if they were male dolls⁶ and if they symbolized physical power in some form, a soldier outfitted for battle, or a super hero who could perform super human feats. In contrast, girls would play with either female or male dolls without anxiety or ambivalence. When girls played with male dolls, even those designed to symbolize power, they applied their own typically female meanings. For instance, Shelley wanted the G.I. Joe doll to marry her doll when playing Barbie with other girls.

Not only did many boys polarize and evaluate factors which were commonly associated with gender such as names and the length of one's hair and the games and toys one had, but boys were also far more likely than girls to dichotomize seemingly neutral factors into male and female categories. This tendency reflected their preoccupation with gender and with its normative considerations as well as the social meaning involved.

Day 36. The children have been assigned the task of drawing their houses. Betty, Brad, Glenn, and Rayette are seated at a table and are preparing to draw. They are choosing crayons from a large box on the table.

Brad points to his picture and says to Glenn, "This is the boys' side, and this is the *girls*!" He wrinkles his nose and mouth when he says the word girl. Glenn laughs.

A moment later Glenn says to Brad, "I have a *strong* color--grey."

Brad is using the black crayon and answers, "Black's a boy's color."

Glenn says, "Blue's a girl's color, ugh!" Laughing, Glenn pushes the blue crayon off the table onto the floor where it breaks. Glenn then points to the orange crayon being used by Betty and says, "That's a girl's color, a *weak* color, Purple, burple, that sounds like a girl's color."⁷

Glenn and Brad laugh. Rayette and Betty say nothing, though they can hear the boys, and continue to draw, using all of the crayons. (Emphasis theirs.)

As boys looked out upon the world they often perceived and interpreted it in terms relevant to them as boys. Objects and activities suggested strength or weakness, maleness or femaleness. This tendency to polarize meaning was a pervasive, characteristic manner of the thinking or cognitive style of some boys. Seemingly, any activity, object or way-of-being was classifiable by boys as being either like a boy or like a girl, and if like-a-girl was very likely to be evaluated negatively and rejected. In this event, for instance, neither Brad nor Glenn chose to use those crayons that they identified as "girls' colors." Fortunately for boys, they knew that the whole world beyond the home was the man's

world, and some boys identified an active, curious existence as a man's type of existence. Consequently, though boys, some more than others, polarized the world into male and female contingencies, they also viewed a wide area of the world as belonging to males. Perhaps this view of an expansive male world, coupled with most girls' interest in things personal and their interpretation of the world as a personal world, accounted for what seemed to be a wider range of interest of most boys compared to most girls. For instance, five kindergarten and first-grade boys had a conversation in which they used the concept of *infinity* with some precision, a conversation that, from the observations, I could not have imagined the girls having, though they were as intellectually capable of understanding and using the concept as the boys. However, in contrast to the idea of an expanded male world, the boys' tendency to dichotomize and then reject certain elements because of gender seemed to be more intellectually and socially restricting of boys, than liberating. Brad and Glenn did limit themselves to using the "boys' colors," the "strong colors."

A more apparent consequence of the knowledge boys shared about the superiority of boys was that general forms of behavior that were based upon personal preference or the children's knowledge of what was relevant and appropriate to same-gender adults, increasingly became proscriptions or quite rigid rules of behavior and association for boys, but not for girls. What boys typified as being like a boy and objectified in their social relations became normative typifications used to assess how much like a boy

another boy was, a determination which was perhaps the most significant criterion for determining status. "Boys play outside" evolved to "boys should play outside," "boys play rough" became "boys should play rough," and "girls play house" increasingly meant "boys should not play house." Descriptive typifications of patterns of association related to gender, "boys play with boys, girls play with girls," became more rule-like, so for a boy to play with a girl in a "girls' game" or context made him vulnerable to a highly negative assessment by some boys. Significantly, high status boys such as Glenn, Michael, Shawn, and Brad could play with girls without other boys being present and not be subject to the same type of negative assessment. However, since their status was at least partly derived from their association with boys, which they preferred by virtue of common interests and styles of play, they seldom played with girls in a girls' context. Being seen to be a leader by boys had a lot to do with leading in the same direction other boys were going as boys. From the observations it seemed one could only temporarily lead in an opposite direction and be followed.

Part of the shared meaning of being a boy increasingly meant to associate with other boys and not girls. Playing with girls meant that a boy was in some ways like a girl, and for some boys association with girls was perceived to have a contaminating effect. Vincent was named by a boy as most like a girl during the interviews because "he plays inside," and Henry was named "because he plays house." The boy who named Vincent later clarified the

matter when he added that Vincent "liked to play inside where the girls are, with the girls, yuk."

The differences in the attitudes of girls and boys about the value of being a person of their same gender were apparent in the behavior of children when they answered the interview questions about who was most like a girl or boy. Boys became upset when they heard another name them as being "the boy most like a girl." When Jimmy noticed Eldon standing nearby listening to the interview he, with a sly, devilish grin, named Eldon as most like a girl to tease him. Eldon's response was to threaten Jimmy with force, "Don't name me! I'm not like a girl!" When Ben noticed Eldon watching, he named Eldon as "most like a boy," apparently because Eldon happened to come into his field of vision at that moment and looked eager. Eldon crowed about this, "See! Everyone thinks that I'm most like a boy . . . strongest, toughest." By way of emphasis he flexed his biceps like a body builder.

It was understandable for children to dislike being named as like a person of the other gender because the label conflicted with their social and personal identities. However, the differential evaluations attached to being a boy and girl by boys were evident in the difference in the ways that boys, as contrasted to any of the girls, both gave and responded to answers given by others or themselves. The behavior of the girls was mild indeed when compared to the highly interested and anxious behavior of many of the boys. In terms of the content of the responses, the most significant difference seemed to be that some boys considered it a

compliment to name a girl as being most like a boy, and not one boy thought of it as an insult. This was counter to the general pattern where children seemed to feel that one should be like one's own gender.

As the younger boys began to fully understand the valuation attached to being a girl and a boy and its connection to patterns of play and association, they increasingly tried to observe the rules for boys' games, even when they conflicted with the boys' personal styles. They wanted to be accepted as full participants in the boys' group and be identified with boys. In addition, some of the boys also tried to associate themselves with those boys, especially Shawn, whom they learned had high status or because they were like boys. For some boys, an increased, more subtle understanding of what being a boy like a boy meant led them to publicly reject their former playmates who were girls and to participate in more anti-girl rituals.

In contrast, girls supported no implicit or explicit rules that encouraged them not to play with boys because they were boys. Nor did girls have prohibitions against girls playing in boys' games. The element of knowledge "boys play with boys, girls with girls" remained essentially descriptive for girls, though some understood the different meaning it had for boys. Girls seemed to be free to choose their activity and their companions without pressure from other girls or boys. Some girls did, however, occasionally apply the boys' meanings for association and

participation to boys and attributed diminished status to boys who played with girls or played girls' games.

Every boy had some feelings of anxiety at times about his being like he knew boys were supposed to be, particularly as this knowledge was so often structured in hierarchical, competitive terms. Consequently, for most boys the separation of the entire group into girls and boys by teachers or other adults was welcomed as a good time and gave a boy a chance to publicly affirm his identity as a boy and his connection with the essential meaning of boyness. When groups were divided by gender boys often challenged girls and characterized the girls' side as incompetent. "Girls can't do anything because the boys are so strong." This characterization publicly brought the boys' unity and the meaning of boyness into relief.

For a boy who feared that he was less than a boy was supposed to be and who was not accepted in the boys' play group, the division of the group by gender achieved additional significance, a chance for the anxious, insecure boy to cast himself publicly as a boy-who-was-like-boys-who-were-better-than-girls. Of the boys in the class Jimmy was the most anxious about his performance and adequacy as a boy and was the most enthusiastic about gender-group competition. An example:

Day 71. Jimmy is excited when the physical education teacher announces that the relay race is going to be "the boys against the girls."

Jimmy nervously but eagerly challenges the girls, "The boys are gonna win. We're gonna beat you girls, we're faster!"

Wanda looks at Jimmy with disgust and retorts, "You dumb! *You ain't gonna beat nobody!*"

Jimmy is somewhat uncomfortable at Wanda's remark, but responds to it saying, "Boys are gonna win," as he quickly walks away from Wanda, who is now intentionally menacing him with threatening looks and gestures.

The boys finish the relay race first and quickly and loudly declare themselves winners. Jimmy, whose individual performance was a far less than average contribution to the victory, immediately begins to crow, "Boys won, boys won!"

Wanda, who is standing close by, raises her hand to hit Jimmy, but he is prepared and quickly dodges out of her way; then he retreats. He resumes his boasting when he is beyond her area of attention, "Boys won; boys are better!" (Emphasis theirs.)

In physical education class more than other times boys perceived what was happening in competitive terms, not just as individuals against each other but as boys as a group against the girls. Even when children were performing as individuals boys tended to perceive things in group terms. For instance, one day the children were doing acrobatics under the phys. ed. teacher's supervision and when everyone had completed a turn in what was essentially a noncompetitive exercise Michael asked Brad, "Who won? The girls or the boys?" In contrast, girls never were observed to initiate competition as "the girls against the boys."

The casting of "boys against the girls" was sometimes encouraged by the physical education teachers,⁸ who would make remarks such as "Okay, girls, let's see if we can do something tricky,

something trickier than what the boys did." More than girls, boys would excitedly respond to such remarks.

At times, practicum students,⁹ unlike the regular physical education teachers, would deliberately try to stimulate boys to a higher level of performance by encouraging cross-gender competition and by implicitly or explicitly typifying boys as people who were naturally expected to do better than girls at those things requiring physical agility, strength, or perseverance. This fit with what boys knew about being boys, and they were responsive to this type of stimulation. Consider the following example:

Day 52. A male practicing teacher from the university has given the children the task of doing five pull-ups on a bar. The task is difficult for every child, and each who completes it has to push herself/himself to the limits. As Glenn completes the five, the teacher says, "Look at that big boy. He's the best yet."

Betty, the only girl who seems the least interested in the task, completes the five pull-ups, and the teacher says, "See. A girl did it. That's the best girl so far."

I could perceive no difference in the amount of effort or performance of Glenn and Betty, both of whom are athletic.

Then, turning to those boys who had not successfully completed all five and to those boys who have yet to try, the teacher says, "Are you boys going to let a *girl* do better than you?"

Betty looks pleased, and the boys, chagrined.

Now all the boys, except Henry, try very hard, grunting, turning red in the face. As Eldon completes the five on his second try, he turns to the next boy, "Are you going to let a *girl* beat you?!"

Boys did not wait for adults to elaborate what boys perceived as the superiority of boys. In a number of ways and for a range of motivations boys often used the symbols of masculinity and of superior power and strength to emphasize and elaborate the differentness of boys and girls and to create social situations which affirmed the differences by separating boys from girls.

Sometimes the nature of the separation was relatively subtle and indirect, and the assertion of power less apparent and more implicit. Consider the following event which occurred on the second day of school when the children, not yet fully aware of the non-interventionist nature of the teacher, were more cautious about using physical force to get their way.

Day 2. Janie and Shawn are in the small playground. There is a piece of cord tied from a pole to a wall. Janie begins to swing on it by standing on the built-in table, hanging onto the cord, and swinging outward. Shawn sees Janie and also begins to swing. Timmy joins the two. Timmy is much more cautious than Janie or Shawn, but he finally begins to swing. By way of explaining his hesitation Timmy says to Shawn, "I'm heavier than you." Timmy is not heavier.

Shawn does not understand Timmy's meaning, but thinks that he is only being generally competitive and counters with, "I'm taller than you."

In the course of swinging on the line Shawn burns his side on the rope. Then Timmy hurts his neck on the rope and begins to rub it. Janie continues to swing. She doesn't try to include herself into the boys' conversation, nor do they attempt to include her. Just as she is about to take another turn Shawn tells Janie to get off so he can swing. She yields to Shawn without comment. After he swings she takes another turn before Timmy takes his. Again, when it is Janie's turn, Shawn says impatiently, "Let me get on it," girl, please." She yields again.

When it is her turn again, she takes a more daring but still quite safe swing. Her swings, like Shawn's but unlike Timmy's, have become progressively more daring. After Janie swings Shawn says, "You're gonna break your neck, girl. Move and let me swing." He takes the rope. Janie, after observing a moment, leaves to play on the jungle gym.

Meanwhile, Marian has joined the swinging boys and takes a turn after Timmy. She makes the same type of swing as Shawn and Timmy. After she swings Timmy says, "Girl, you'll break your neck if you do that." Marian gives Timmy an impatient look and gets back in line for her next swing.

When it is Marian's turn to swing again, Shawn says, "Girl! Let go, please." At this point, Marian leaves and joins Janie, who is hanging by her legs off the jungle gym.

Shawn and Timmy were motivated in this event by concern with their physical performance and with issues of strength, courage and competence, with experiencing themselves to be like boys. Shawn, and then Timmy, were also interested in increasing their power by making the swinging more exclusive and by the concrete fact of having more turns on the rope and not having to wait. By using the terms of gender to separate themselves and the activity from the two girls, Shawn accomplished both ends. He validated the idea that risk-taking activity belonged to boys and he achieved more power and privilege in the form of more turns. In addition Shawn taught the more backward Timmy how to use the appearance of solicitude for girls' welfare as a means to personal advantage. In a similar event two days later Shawn told a girl from the next-door class, "Give me that saw, girl, or you'll cut yourself." When he was through with the saw he promptly tossed it back over the fence,

almost hitting the girl in the process. Later in the year Shawn would get his way by more direct means and threats of force, though he could always be subtle when necessary.

Was Shawn actually concerned with the welfare of the girls and did he really believe that Janie, Marian, and the girl from the class next door were going to hurt themselves? Or were his statements a deliberate, calculated manipulation designed to gain advantage for himself?

The answers are complex because we are dealing with personal motivation on the one hand and social meaning on the other. It would be quite easy and probably correct at one level to state that he had no sincere concern with the welfare of the girls. Shawn had hit and hurt too many girls to believe that authentic concern played any part in his behavior. In terms of personal motivation, one may feel confident that he said what he did for his own welfare.

On the other hand, Shawn knew from his personal experience that swinging entailed some risk and was scary and he had hurt himself prior to making the remark to Janie. Shawn also knew and believed what everybody knew: That girls were not as physically competent as boys because "girls," as one boy said, "can't do things that boys can do."; that girls get hurt easily and that they "cry when they get hurt"; and that girls are "afraid to do dangerous things like boys because they'll get hurt."

Despite the obvious competence of the two girls and the less competent behavior of Timmy, Shawn applied what he and others knew from the common stock of knowledge about the types girl and boy to

define the situation and to achieve more power. He disregarded what was actual and applied what was typical, thus affirming his notion that girls were less than boys and boys better than girls. When Janie and Marian stopped swinging, and when the other girl gave Shawn the saw, they confirmed Shawn's version and perception of reality. He saw that girls were weaker, more afraid, and less powerful, being easily manipulated by boys like Shawn.

It seemed that one source of Shawn's power, and to a lesser extent that of *some* of the other boys, was that he combined a belief in the validity of social knowledge about gender types with a shrewd detachment which he could mobilize to manipulate the symbols of masculinity, which were the symbols of power, to gain power and prestige for himself.

Shawn's images of separating boys from girls were not always so self-conscious nor as subtle as by the uses of chivalry. In the following two conversations we may observe how his desire to separate the sexes took a more extreme form in his imagination but in ways nevertheless consistent with the basic elements of knowledge shared by everyone.

Day 82. It is Work Time, and Shawn and Michael are seated at a table working quietly in their math books. As the boys work they talk. Shawn says to Michael, "Frankenstein is really neat! He choked girls and ripped their heads off. He was in love with one, so he ripped her head off."

Michael looks at Shawn, slightly puzzled. "Why'd he do that?"

Shawn answers, "Because she was beautiful, and he hated her." Mike says nothing, but continues working.

Day 84. Shawn and Michael are at a table working. Shawn says, "I wish I were a Boy Scout, don't you, Michael?"

Michael agrees and then says, "Why?"

Shawn answers enthusiastically, "Because then there wouldn't be any girls around. They make me sick, I'd like to kill them, a little bit." Michael just shrugs his shoulders and continues working.

Shawn continues, "Tarzan was on the t.v. Saturday and he broke free of the bonds by expanding his muscles." He smiles at the memory of Tarzan and then frowns and continues, "Jane would go 'uhhhhhh uhhhhh' and call for Tarzan." Shawn makes a sour face and sticks out his tongue.

Michael asks, "Why?"

Shawn answers, "Queens aren't strong, they're weak," and he makes another sour face. Michael makes no reply.

Death is the ultimate separator, and Shawn, who talked about violence towards boys as individuals, talked of violence towards girls as a class, as a way of separating and distinguishing himself from the girls. "I wish I were a Boy Scout. . . ." because ". . . there wouldn't be any girls around . . . I'd like to kill them, a little bit."

He had contempt for Jane because as a queen-woman she was weak and powerless, dependent upon the strong Tarzan to protect her. He had contempt for women as people who were supposed to be beautiful, a beauty seen as powerlessness and passivity,¹⁰ and admired Frankenstein's monster, who ripped women's heads off. Shawn's images reflected the dichotomized view of masculinity

and femininity, strength and weakness, power and helplessness, and violence and passivity.

At one level Shawn's images of violence toward girls and women and his particular interpretation of the socially shared constructs of masculine strength and feminine weakness may properly be considered to be an individual deviation, an individual aberration. Certainly, most of the other boys were never observed to express such extreme sentiments.¹¹

However, Shawn's images achieve more than individual significance for understanding boys not only because his primary assumptions reflected the shared knowledge about gender and the relative value of girls and boys, but also because of his position and status in the social structure created by boys. They did not consider him deviant or out of the ordinary,¹² a strange kind of person to be avoided. On the contrary, Shawn was considered mainstream boy, a boy like a boy, the "best boy" according to some, because of his roughness, violence, and emphasis on masculine power. He was a model, according to some boys, for what boys were supposed to be like. Shawn functioned to maintain the validity of the essential elements of knowledge about what boys were like. His behavior and his images never functioned to support social relations boys considered deviant.

Shawn's ambivalence about girls/women as beautiful, sexual people who were both attractive and repulsive was expressed by other boys in a relatively benign, playful form in the game of Kissy Girl, the game where girls tried to catch boys in order to

kiss them. To some extent boys seemed to be sexually stimulated by the kissing aspect of the game; it excited them and they liked to tease each other about it. More exciting, however, was the combination of the group solidarity of the boys and their resistance as a group to girls, who wanted to catch them and kiss them. Kissing was understood by some boys, sometimes by some girls, to be an act of power of girls against boys.¹³ As Jackie said, "Girls are always wanting to kiss boys and marry them, and boys don't like that." However much they disliked it, boys would play the game eagerly and boast that girls were always trying to kiss them. "The Kissy Girl," said Eldon happily, "is always after me!"

In the game of Kissy Girl the boys could have it all. They had the pleasure of group solidarity and camaraderie, "Help me boys, help me! She's gonna kiss me!", the sexual stimulation and adventure of girls kissing them, and the pleasure of resisting girls and rejecting girls as a class, "Let's get away from the girls; they're gonna get us." A favorite version of the game was for boys to pretend that the girls' kisses had killed them, that a dead boy could return to life only when another boy risked his own life to save him by touching him as he lay on the ground, thus freeing him "from the poison of the girl's kiss of death." The girls' power was negated by boys' camaraderie and heroism, by their membership in the boys' group.

At times, boys simply did not want to play with girls and their refrain "girls can't play" was a familiar one. In the following event boys used socially shared knowledge about the social

distribution of power, knowledge, and labor to effectively exclude girls from their play group, having failed to keep girls from playing outright.

Day 44. Eldon and Ralph have constructed a spaceship from blocks. Eldon names himself Captain and tells Ralph that he can be the Second Captain, the "Fire Bomb Captain." Ralph identifies himself as the lieutenant. Marian approaches and begins to climb on the blocks, asking what the structure is. Ralph heatedly tells Marian, "You can't play, Marian!"

Marian says, "Uh huh," and continues to climb.

Ralph turns to Eldon, "Eldon, can Marian play?"

Eldon does not realize that Ralph does not want Marian to play so he readily agrees, "Yes, she can play."

Ralph exclaims, "Do you want *girls* to play!"

Eldon, sensing Ralph's displeasure and meaning and seeing Marian perched firmly on the structure, answers, "*Some* girls can be on the ship. Girls can cook. Don't you remember that?"

Ralph continues to resist and unhappily answers, "Mans can cook, too."

Eldon replies, "Yeah, but we have to drive the whole thing, be the captains."

With this Ralph acquiesces, but when Brenda joins and begins to climb he loudly insists, "NO!" Only one lady and Marian's it!"

Marian looks up at me and explains, "They won't let her play. They only need one girl, a cook."

Brenda continues to climb around, so Eldon says to her, "You can be the baby, okay?"

Brenda objects, "No! I want to be the little girl."

Eldon says, "Okay, you two be the little girls. Girls Room in the back." Marian and Brenda move to the back of the spaceship.

Henry joins the boys, and Ralph says, "Only three boys and two girls."

Bart walks up at that moment and says, "Four boys." Rayette approaches and wants to be the Mother. Eldon tells her she can't play. She leaves.

Marian and Brenda are playing with each other at one end of the structure, the boys are at the other "flying the ship." Neither group talks with the other.

Marian asserts to Brenda, "Girls can do anything that boys can do." In a few minutes the two girls leave and go to the art table to color. The four boys continue to play spaceship until the teacher asks them to clean up.

To fully understand what meaning this attempt to exclude girls had for the boys it is useful to examine the sequence of the interaction. First the boys built a structure and called it a spaceship. Then they assumed roles which were hierarchical positions of power and authority and, like the spaceship itself, symbols of power. The game, then, was a typical boys' game, a game about strong men in an adventure, in conflict, and, as Ralph would have had it, away from women and children.

But contrary to Ralph's image of what the game was going to be about, Marian wanted to play. Ralph liked Marian and played with her at other times, but this time he rejected her and told her that she could not play. When Eldon said she could, Ralph made it clear why he did not want her to play: because she was a girl. Eldon, who was more subtle than the forthright Ralph, knew that trying to eject her would probably be futile and would disrupt the game if an adult intervened, though in outside games away from adults Eldon occasionally tried to reject girls because they were girls. Eldon

then tried to reassure Ralph and facilitate play by assigning Marian a female role and function, that of a cook. The role of a cook did not symbolize power or authority, as the roles of Captain and Lieutenant did, but represented the roles boys most often attached to women.

By assigning Marian the role of cook Eldon maintained the social and hierarchical distribution of power previously established. By distributing power by gender he maintained the essential meaning of the game, the game of masculine power.

Ralph was not satisfied. He objected to including a girl even as a cook for "mans can cook too"and they did not need a girl to be the cook and play. To facilitate play Eldon then made the matter more explicit when he said, "Yeah. But we have to drive the whole thing, be the captains." With this statement Eldon contrasted the role of cook with the role of captain, cooking with driving the whole thing, the power of cooks with the power of captains, the power of boys/men with the power of girls/women. Ralph finally understood what Eldon meant to say: That girls could play if they played female roles, roles which were without power and importance and thus did not disturb and spoil the meaning of the game for the boys.

Ralph reluctantly accepted Eldon's compromise, but when another girl tried to join the play he objected again, and Eldon had to intercede again. Once more, he assigned a powerless role related to female functions to Brenda, the role of a baby. Brenda rejected Eldon's role assignment, but on her own chose another which served

his purposes equally well, the role of little girl. Eldon readily agreed and then assigned the two girls to a place which was separate from the boys' place, and which itself symbolized a lack of power and prestige, a place in the *back* of the ship, a "Girls Room."

Even the pragmatic Eldon could not accept a third girl. When Rayette tried to join in yet another female role, but one which had some symbolic value in terms of power, the role of Mother, he rejected her outright. All the boys who wanted to play were accepted and joined the other boys in the front of the spaceship.

Part of the social stock of knowledge of children was knowledge about how knowledge, labor, and roles were socially distributed among adults by gender. Boys used such knowledge to exclude girls from their games either outright ("Girls can't be firemans") or, as in this case, effectively ("Girls Room in the back"). That the exclusion of girls in such cases was also motivated by a desire to reject girls as girls is demonstrated in the present example by the constant reference to gender and Eldon's rejection of Rayette and acceptance of all the boys, and, ironically, in other events by the acceptance of a girl in a boy's role whom the boys considered to be an exceptional player, usually Anne. In any event it was clear that the boys considered the roles and functions of girls to be less than those of boys. As Eldon explained to Ralph, men can cook, but they have more important projects to pursue.

All of the attempts of boys to exclude girls or to separate themselves from girls were important whatever the immediate

intentions or motivations of boys. All emphasized in one way or another the differences boys knew existed between girls and boys, and for the boys the differences, because of the value they placed upon strength and size, emphasized their superiority. For boys an important part of the meaning of being a boy meant to not be like a girl, and the exclusion and denigration of girls provided a great deal of the motivation of boys' masculine camaraderie. Some examples have been provided which illustrate this type of symbolic association and disassociation. The most enduring, ritualized attempts of boys to publicly disassociate themselves from girls and to publicly affirm their similarity as boys took place during the lunch period.

The first and most important of the three lunchroom rituals to develop was the "Boys' Table" ritual. Initially most of the children were unconcerned about where and with whom they sat at lunch. Though friends did tend to sit together, no serious objections were made when this was not possible. After a while, however, the tendency of children to sit with those with whom they played at other times, and the fact that a number of boys played together regularly in a large group, resulted in several boys habitually sitting together, usually at the first table of the six as one came from the lunch line. By random choice girls continued to sit at the first table too.

However, the pattern of seating which had emerged from play patterns was soon given additional meaning by some boys, meaning quickly adopted by others. Boys began to use their descriptive

term "boys' table" as a formal name signifying ownership. Two boys, Bart and Eldon, tried to formalize and authorize the seating arrangements by asking a practicum teacher to "tell the whole class that the first table is the Boys' Table." She said that she thought it a good idea, but never made the announcement.

Boys began to try to stop girls from sitting at the table. "You can't sit here, this is the Boys' Table." Usually girls would leave without objection. Occasionally a girl would ignore the boys or refuse to leave and the issue would be forgotten. After a while, however, as the table became more institutionalized, boys would be more persistent. When a girl sat at the table before any boy had arrived or when a girl refused to leave or not sit down, usually with the refrain, "No saving seats," all the participating boys would move to another empty table and designate it as the Boys' Table. For the most part girls yielded to the demands of the boys. But after they became aware that boys were excluding them as girls, and of the enthusiasm of the boys for the ritual, some girls, especially Katie and Janie, would occasionally sit at the table by way of teasing and defying the boys. "Nope," insisted Katie with Janie as support, "this is the Girls' Table. All girls are going to sit here today, no boys allowed." No boys wanted to sit at a table called the "Girls' Table."

The pattern of seating which had originated from boys' play patterns soon transcended its origins. Boys would even encourage boys who they did not like and would not play with to sit at the table ". . . so no girls can sit here." Even Jimmy and Henry were

sometimes encouraged to sit in order to exclude girls, something that delighted Jimmy, but did not interest the willful, self-directed Henry.

Boys began to compete for positions at the table. However, as with most of the child-initiated rituals in this class, and because there were only six seats at the table and more than six boys with relatively high status, the institutionalization of the table was loosely maintained and not sitting there never carried any social stigma.

At the Boys' Table boys would often participate in the second ritual of exclusion and separation from girls. One boy would begin by saying, "Raise your hand if you like _____," naming a boy, and all the other boys would enthusiastically raise their hands. When girls' names were called the boys would exaggeratedly lower their hands or put their hands under the table, a dramatization occasionally accompanied by boos! or yuks! Several names would be called anytime the game was played. Some of the boys would be less than enthusiastic for those boys whom they did not like, and occasionally a boy, such as Michael, would refuse to raise his hand for boys he clearly disliked, despite encouragement to do so. At such times those boys would remain essentially neutral, while others who better appreciated and approved the main purpose of the game, to affirm a preference for boys and a rejection of girls, provided the necessary enthusiasm, though they might not like the boys as individuals either.

The ritual had developed from a version of the game where boys had called out the names of both girls and boy and had rejected or applauded individuals on the basis of perceived merit. They had typically rejected all the girls, with the inevitable exception of Anne (whose name, consequently, was not called out as the ritual became more gender oriented), and rejected or accepted boys depending on their participation in the large group play. But as low status boys were invited to sit at the Boys' Table, in order to keep an approaching girl from getting a seat, their common identity with boys as boys caused the game to develop almost exclusively as an anti-girl ritual. Not primarily, however, because boys would not reject a boy who was sitting at their elbows, because they would and did, but because it was more fun and more meaningful to reject girls even when one had to accept all boys. The acceptance of low status boys emphasized the importance of boys' unity against girls.

This ritual of calling out names was more complicated than the ritual of the "Boys' Table" or the third ritual to develop, that of the "Boys' Door," for two reasons. First no name or title was attached to it, and therefore the meaning of the game was less explicit and clear. Language, as phenomenologists point out, is the paramount vehicle for sustaining knowledge and specific forms of behavior. Second, because the game was such an explicit statement of personal dislike and required that individual girls be rejected, and not just girls as a type or group, certain boys who liked girls clearly felt uncomfortable playing, despite enjoying

the other two rituals of group affirmation, and were unenthusiastic about participating, though they did. I never observed a boy who felt uncomfortable about playing to abstain from playing. Seemingly, the desire to be part of the boys' group was stronger than discomfort about publicly rejecting individual girls. In any event, discomfort was uncommon.

As the children left the lunchroom the third ritual boys developed would sometimes take place. Boys would hold one of the two cafeteria doors open and loudly call, "Boys' Door, Boys' Door. Boys only." If a girl started out the wrong door she was warned that if she did not go out the other door, which girls promptly identified as the Girls' Door, she would "turn into a boy." Boys knew that girls did not want to turn into boys, despite boys' knowing that being a boy was better.

The ritual of the Doors was the most fun for the children, boys and girls, of all three of the rituals. There was always a good deal of laughing and playful teasing when children accidentally or purposely went out the wrong door. When told what he/she had done a child would often jump back, sometimes backwards, through the door and then go out the proper door.

Like the other rituals, the Boys' Door game gave boys a chance to publicly affirm their relationship with other boys. But unlike the other two, the Boys' Door ritual expressed little anti-girl sentiment, was more equalitarian as the girls had their own, equal door, and was almost always initiated by lower status boys like Henry, Jackie, or Ralph, with his ambiguous status. The high

prestige first-grade boys who often initiated the other two games, especially Bradson and Shawn, never initiated the Boys' Door game and were likely to pedantically respond to the younger boys' fantasy in exact, practical, reality-bound terms. "If a boy goes through that door he won't turn into a girl." Nonetheless, such boys were quite careful to leave through the Boys' Door.

All three of the boys' rituals served to remind boys that boys were different from girls and better than girls by grounding that knowledge in specific concrete processes. Specifically, sitting together at the same table and verbally rejecting girls, raising one's hand at the proper time to confirm one's similarity and commonality with boys and to confirm with one's group the negation of the other group, and walking through a door identified as belonging to one's special group, not walking through another door which may magically transform one into a type of human considered to be opposite and less than one is now. Through the participation of most of the boys, the rituals helped to confirm the knowledge held in common and helped to reduce the importance of the sometimes contradictory knowledge of individuals. Thus, though Michael would at another time assert, "We're all people though. It doesn't matter what you call us," in response to a boy's rejection of Katie as a player because she was a girl, his participation in the rituals served to diminish the common humanity of girls and boys and to emphasize, to himself and to other boys, the knowledge that "boys and girls are different," an element of knowledge underlying everything else children knew about gender. The rituals served

as a method of social control, a method of insuring that gender differences were sustained and emphasized.

To understand the social significance and meaning and the quality of expression of boys' knowledge that boys were better than girls it might be useful to contrast such expression with the way children gave voice to what they knew about white racial superiority and preference for whites.¹⁴ First, simply in terms of the quantity of negative expressions, boys made infinitely more anti-girl statements than children made anti-black statements, whether verbally or in other more subtle ways. And those children who did express racial prejudice were likely to do it covertly, for instance, by whispering to each other if a black child was present. They were also likely to be quite embarrassed and apologetic if questioned by an adult about what they meant by such remarks. Part of what children knew about race was that it "wasn't nice," at least in certain contexts, to make racist remarks.

In contrast, when boys expressed negative knowledge about girls and the way girls were as girls, they did so with no indication that such expressions were socially suspect or unacceptable, no sense that they were doing or saying things which might result in their being criticized or negatively typified in any way, either by adults or other children. On the contrary, boys were likely to act as though making such statements was prestige conferring, as they sometimes were when made to other boys, or even to some girls.

The point is not that blacks had it better than girls, or that some of these children did not typify blacks in negative ways.

The point is that it was not thought permissible to publicly state that whites were better than blacks but it was permissible to say, and affirm with all manner of behavior, that boys were better than girls.

Girls and the Idea that Boys Were Better than Girls

How did girls understand and respond to the ubiquitous attempts of many boys to exclude them from their games. What meaning did they give to the direct and indirect devaluations boys made about girls and the activities and objects obviously associated with girls? There are some general observations which must be made in considering those questions.

First, because boys tended to play with boys and girls with girls, girls were not present to hear or see many of the disparaging remarks or acts. Consequently, girls were neither aware of the extent of the devaluations, nor the extent to which a boy's sense of himself as a boy was related to a sense of male superiority and female inferiority. And because girls did not participate fully in many boys' events, but participated only in a fragmented way, they might not have recognized the meaning of the more subtle, indirect acts of rejection, such as a turned back when one spoke, walking away from a girl, or ignoring her statements when she talked. They might have considered such behavior the result of other factors such as general social status, race, personal attributes or preferences, perhaps as an act directed toward the girl as an individual rather than as a member of her gender group. Or girls might

not have been aware of the subtle acts at all, though for most of the girls that seemed unlikely. Among the children, only Henry maintained a high level of unawareness.

Another important point was that there was constant cross-gender interaction which was friendly and cooperative. The children in this class were fundamentally friendly and good natured toward each other, so girls weren't constantly confronted with boys' hostility toward them as individuals. Some boys liked some girls, as some girls liked some boys.

A third factor was that almost all of the girls shared a preference for girls and a belief that being a girl was better than being a boy, a belief primarily based on the knowledge, validated for girls by objective patterns of behavior, that girls were "nicer" than boys who were "mean." Consequently, there was a sense of reciprocity, and children of both genders occasionally said, "Girls don't like boys, boys don't like girls."¹⁵

In addition, there were shared typifications in the social stock of knowledge which provided explanations for some of the rejecting behavior of boys, so that girls did not need to recognize additional meaning which had to do with boys knowing that they were better. For instance, girls and boys had a sense that some games properly belonged to girls or boys or were connected to girls or boys. Thus, when boys refused to play in the "girls' game" of house, the element of knowledge "girls play house" provided all the explanation necessary. When asked why boys did not to play house, as I asked Sarah, the answer, "Because house is a

girls' game," was sufficient, and Sarah did not inquire as to why boys did not play house or what this might mean. And Sarah got to play the game of her choice.

It was one thing when boys chose not to play with girls in their games, but when girls tried to join large group play and were rejected the situation was more complex. At such times girls, especially the more sensitive and those who liked to play, felt hurt and excluded, as Katie did when she tried to play football and was told that she could not because "only boys play football." Katie knew what the boys knew about football being a boys' game, but she also knew that she could play as well as at least one of the boys who was playing. Katie was dissatisfied, hurt, and angry, but yielded to the boys' rejection in the form of their typification that football belonged to boys. Katie, like "everybody," knew that "football is a boys' game."

Because boys were almost always welcomed by girls, but not girls by boys, the explanation of ownership by gender was applied in a lopsided way. Some girls were aware that the exclusion of girls from boys' groups meant more than "boys and girls were different" and "played different things," but also meant that boys thought girls were less than boys, that "boys were better than girls."

For many acts of exclusion explanations were given that fit what girls knew about what was properly the realm of men or women. For instance, when two girls wanted to play "firetruck" with some boys and were told that they could not because "girls can't be

firemen" the girls knew that the boys were right; they knew that men, not women, were firemen. For an example with a more ambiguous conclusion, recall the Spaceship Girls' Room-at-the-Back episode described previously. Marian and Brenda accepted the assignment of the Girls' Room at the back of the spaceship, and the boys' assignment of typical female roles to the girls went unquestioned by them, reflecting as it did the knowledge that they had of the proper social distribution of roles and labor by gender. It seemed not to occur to either girl that the distribution of social roles by gender (women-as-cooks, men-as-captains) might be challenged by them. Nor did they indicate a desire to do so, for they were pleased rather than dissatisfied with the roles of cook and baby which they had assumed. Marian even seemed to think that the social distribution of roles by gender was a legitimate and reasonable basis for excluding girls from the game. Recall her statement to me, "They won't let her [Brenda] play. They only need one girl, a cook." In addition, and this is perhaps the most important point, neither girl was aware that they had been effectively excluded from the game by the boys, isolated as they were in the back of the spaceship in the Girls' Room. The girls did not realize that the boys did not consider them players and had even forgotten about their presence. Part of the reason for this, of course, was that the girls, involved as they were in their female roles and with each other, were not relating to the boys either. But Marian and Brenda felt themselves to be part of the game and to have been included because they were playing

at that point, just as they had wanted. They were on the spaceship.

Despite girls not being present for all the devaluations, despite the subtlety of many of the acts of rejection, the friendly interaction of boys and girls with each other, the preference girls had for girls, and the alternative explanations which defined separation at one level as just representing proper differences between girls and boys, many girls knew that boys thought they were better than girls in a more profound sense than girls knew themselves to be better than boys.

There were essential differences. First the amount and intensity of the negative attitudes expressed by girls was not comparable to the amount or quality of the expressions by boys. And whereas the social system of the boys was to a large extent based upon the patterned behavior and collectively held and enforced ideology of superiority, exclusion, and separation from girls the same was not true for the social relations of the girls. No stigma was attached to girls who played with boys or with boys' things. In general the stigma was connected only to being "mean," was connected more to the actual behavior of boys than to the overall idea of boys. Boys as a type were not perceived in a comparably fundamentally negative manner. Instances of gender hostility by girls were largely individual, and were far less likely to be supported and encouraged by other girls. Girls lacked the rituals boys developed to affirm their group unity. Girls' attempts at group exclusiveness and separation from boys and their negative

comments about boys as a class were almost always reactive, that is, they were likely to be a direct response to boy initiated acts of rejecting girls. For instance, when boys called out "Boys' Table" girls respond with "Girls' Table." Most girls seemed aware of many of these differences, if only at an intuitive level, and a few were explicitly aware that boys thought boys were better than girls.

The girls disliked the idea that boys thought that they were better than girls. When faced with a concrete situation where such attitudes were expressed, some girls sometimes tried to deny the validity of the boys' valuations of girls. Consider:

Day 20. The teacher is reading a story about the experiences of two children in the country during their summer vacation. The two characters are pictured in the book, and both are dressed in striped tee shirts, long pants, and have about the same length hair. Both are doing the same type of active things. There are, however, slight and subtle differences in their appearance which suggests that one of the children is a girl, and the other a boy. I did not record what these differences were.

As the teacher reads about the children's activities, Shawn says, "Both are boys."

Hearing this, Julia asks the teacher, who, typically, does not seem to hear the question, "Is one a boy and one a girl?"

Anne answers Julia, "One is a boy, and one's a girl."

Mrs. Cowan reads, "See how many butterflies we caught."

At this Shawn says, "See, the boy caught the most!"

Julia, Anne, and Shelley immediately begin to try to distinguish the characters by gender. At about the same time the book clarifies the point by the use of gender pronouns, and Julia exclaims, "See! One's a boy, and one's a girl."

In a satisfied tone Shelley says, "See, good, that's the girl catching the fish."

Julia turns to Shawn, "It's the girl."

Shawn curtly replies, "I know, that's what I said."

Shelley and Julia are enthusiastic about making distinctions and claiming activities for the girl. Shelley says, "Look at that girl, jumping up!" That's the girl with the firefly."

Ben quietly correctly observes, "That's the boy."

Shelley insists, but in a rather subdued fashion, "Uh, uh, it's the girl."

This was one of the rare stories read by the teacher which showed girls and boys doing the same type of things, in this case, active outdoor things. Shawn's response to this atypical construction of social reality was to deny it by denying that one of the characters was a girl. "Both are boys." When Julia and Anne resisted that fact, Shawn then made claims for the superiority of the boy: "See, the boy caught the most." Shelley, Anne, and Julia rejoined by asserting claims for the girl character's superiority.

The three girls were excited and enthusiastic about the girl character doing exciting, outdoor things. They clearly liked the idea that the girl was catching fish, jumping, and catching insects, activities that were more or less claimed to be boys' activities by the boys in the class. Boys knew it was boys, not girls, who were outside, doing things, unafraid. Even beyond the notion of competition with Shawn, one could see that the girls were motivated and interested in the story at another level. Perhaps they were feeling a sense of pride at the achievement of the

girl, a sense of adventure in what she was doing, and a sense of reassurance that they, as girls like that girl, could do such things, too.

But competition certainly did play a role, and part of their enthusiasm was that they could deny Shawn his claims of superiority as a boy. Though the girl character was not "winning" and the story was not cast in competitive but cooperative terms, she was equal to the boy and could do what he did. Julia, Anne, and Shelley, and perhaps other girls, were pleased by her equality. They showed more enthusiasm for this simple story than they had for any other read by the teacher, though all three were good readers and listeners who liked books and more complex stories.

The girl character's physical competence within the outside world of nature contradicted the typified, actual, and perceived competence of the girls in the class. Most girls, as boys enthusiastically pointed out, did tend to be more afraid of insects. And they were seen, and perceived themselves at times, to be less competent than boys in performing physical feats. When boys asserted their superiority as boys by claiming "The boys can beat the girls, girls can't do nothing," when the group was divided by gender during physical education, most girls usually responded to their claims weakly and defensively. Apparently feeling that they did not have much of a chance, some girls did not even try to perform as competently as they could. Others sometimes seemed uninterested, though it was clear that they did not like to be "beat by the boys," nor did they like to hear their claims of

superiority. Though many girls were more competent than some boys, and some girls, notably Anne and Betty, were as physically competent as any boys, when the issue was group competition, girls invariably lost to boys.

"Girls Can Do Anything Boys Can Do"

Some girls occasionally used the phrase "Girls can do anything boys can do" to deny boys' assertions of superiority. For instance, Marian, feeling victorious because she and Brenda had taken a place on the spaceship, albeit in the Girls' Room in the back, asserted to her companion Brenda, "Girls can do anything that boys can do." Marian seemed satisfied as she made the remark. It seemed as though she wanted to share with Brenda her sense of having overcome the boys' attempts at exclusion and, thus, of having denied what the attempted exclusion meant to the boys: That boys did not want to play with girls because girls were not able to do the things that boys did, that boys' things were considered the best things by boys, and that girls were less than boys.

When girls used the phrase it was usually in the context of interaction in response to boys' attempts to denigrate or exclude them, as in "Girls can too play. Girls can do anything boys can do!" The only time I heard a boy use the phrase was during an interview. Bradson, who was something of a leader in anti-girl behavior in his daily posture, answered the question "What can girls do?" with a complacent, "Girls can do anything boys can do."

When used, the phrase sometimes seemed to have the quality of something solid, an object that children had been handed, presumably by adults, which they in turn handed to someone else. As they presented the phrase one could imagine a well-meaning adult presenting it to them. Like other solid things it was something in which one could believe, something that seemed real.

Consequently, the phrase supported girls' self-esteem and their prestige with boys. Whether the phrase was presented defensively by a rejected girl, or repeated parrot-like by a boy like Bradson, it served to say that girls had value, representing as it did an item of knowledge among adults. "Girls can do anything boys can do" explicitly denied what boys knew about boys and men being better.

On the other hand, it did not. When girls asserted their claims to equality with boys they were always counter-claims. And girls always responded in terms of the values and issues defined by boys, values which had to do with strength and physical achievement. When the boys yelled, "We're gonna beat you girls; boys can run faster than girls. Girls can't run fast!" girls yelled back, "Girls can run faster; girls can do what boys can do; girls will win!" And then the girls would lose, even as they knew that they would. As a group they inevitably lost to boys. Their demeanor as they made their counter-claims gave them away. Many girls were defensive those times when they said that girls could do what the boys could.

At one level, then, the claims of equality made by girls seemed to highlight the validity of the boys' claims of superiority rather than to effectively deny them. The boys always defined the arena of competition, usually the physical education field, and the girls accepted the boys' terms. Because of these circumstances the use of such phrases as "girls can do anything that boys can do" had something of the quality of a socially acceptable lie. Whether girls could or not, they did not do all the things that boys did, as a group at any rate, and girls experienced the contradiction between their words and their results.

Perhaps the phrase, accepting as it did the male-defined conditions for competition and value, functioned to reinforce such values as superior physical strength being of prime importance. At the same time, however, girls got some sustenance from it to support themselves as girls.

When girls were directly confronted by boys' assertions of their superiority they often denied them. However, if the assertions were indirect, more subtle, or not in the form of challenges to the entire group, girls were likely to ignore them, to not respond to them at all. Recall, for instance, how Rayette and Brenda responded when Brad and Glenn talked about how "boys' colors" were "strong" and girls' colors were "weak and "yuk." Both girls heard the boys' conversation, but neither showed a discernible response.

Girls did not understand boys' intentions or meanings some of the time, but even taking that into account girls failed to

respond to much of what boys said about them. There were two factors which probably encouraged this lack of response. First, the terms of disparagement were often elements of knowledge that "everybody knew." For instance, consider the assertion that boys were stronger in Brad and Glenn's remarks about boys' colors being strong and girls' colors being weak. Girls might not know how to respond to this presumably self-evident piece of knowledge that boys were stronger than girls in any terms other than those suggested by the boys. A second factor was power, understood either as status or physical force. Girls were more likely to respond when remarks were made by low status boys than high status or tough boys. Some girls might have been afraid to deny the boys' assertions.

But girls' lack of response was more than ignorance of meaning, yielding to specific elements of knowledge, or relations of power and status. Though girls sometimes showed that they did not like it when boys made implicit or explicit claims of superiority for themselves, at other times girls seemed indifferent, as though they weren't taking the remarks personally, as though the disparaging terms had little to do with them.

"That's Just the Way Boys Are"

At least some of the girls seemed to believe that boys' dislike and disparagement of girls and their symbols was part of the natural, inevitable order of social relations between girls and boys, the way things were and perhaps had to be. After Julia

and Shelley had sat silently while some boys made disparaging remarks about girls, I asked them, "Why do you think the boys said what they said?" Shelley answered, "That's just the way boys are," and Julia added, "You know, boys don't like girls." When I asked the two normally articulate girls, "Why don't boys like girls?" both shrugged their shoulders, perhaps thinking that the statement, "That's just the way boys are," was sufficient answer to my question, or the only answer they had.

I'm not entirely sure what the phrases "that's just the way boys are" and "you know, boys don't like girls" meant. While the girls could have been referring to the sense of reciprocity mentioned earlier, "girls don't like boys, boys don't like girls," the matter seemed to be more complex than that. Girls seemed to assume that it was quite unremarkable that boys would reject girls' names, reject girls' toys and other objects, and would not want to play with girls. They were relatively tolerant about the idea. Interestingly, some girls even unintentionally promoted the idea that they and their symbols and objects were a source of ridicule, something to be rejected by boys. To illustrate, at lunch one day Karen teased Glenn about carrying Anne's rabbit fur purse because ". . . it's a girl's purse, Glenn!" She expected him to be embarrassed, but he was not. Karen would have never thought to tease a girl about carrying a boy's hat, sweater, toy gun, baseball mitt, or anything else that was connected to boys. It seemed as though girls believed the idea that strength, large size, and power were the prime and defining values and that boys

and the way they were was better at the same time they continued to know that for girls girls' things were better.

Among the girls only Anne articulated, in a way that a boy might have, why boys did not like girls and tried to exclude them. She said, "It's because boys think they're so strong, and that girls are weak and can't do anything. So boys don't want to [play with girls]. Boys think they're better than girls, most girls."

By the end of the year Anne was also expressing doubts about the value of girls. Though her favorite companions remained her two "best friends" Victoria and Karen, she began to play more often with boys, who welcomed her into their games. She was always careful to include Victoria and Karen. Michael and Glenn, two high status boys, encouraged Anne to sit with them and play with them. During the interview when I noted that she seemed to be partial to the boys in her choices,¹⁶ she agreed and said that she liked them more than the girls. "Girls like to play house. Yuk, I hate house." I asked, "Do you like Barbie?" She said, "No, I don't like Barbie doll that much. I like cowboys and Indians." Apparently Anne had grown tired of the girls' games, and though she had previously enjoyed them she now seemed to find the excitement and physical activity of the boys' games more appealing. And, like several other first-grade girls, she was attracted to some boys, notably Glenn and Michael, as "boyfriends." She was not, however, competitive with other girls about the boys, and her behavior was subtle.

Though Anne essentially and firmly identified herself as a girl, it seemed as though she had begun to share the boys' idea that boys were better than girls. Because she liked the excitement and high level of activity, though not the violence, of large group play and because she, like everyone else, tended to identify this type of play as being like a boy, and house and Barbie as the way girls were, despite the tremendous variation and range in individual girls' and boys' behavior and preferences, she increasingly came to believe that the way boys were was better, and thus, that boys were better.

Anne, for the most part, seemed an exception. The other girls were intimidated by the aggressiveness of some boys and continued to typify this behavior as being like a boy. Thus, they continued to believe, though not without contradictory beliefs, that being a girl was a better way to be than like a boy.

Anne versus Shawn

Berger and Luckmann (1967) write of the dialectic relationship between ideation, activity, and social structure and the necessary congruence of each for maintaining socially constructed worlds, the complex worlds of human beings.

Worlds are socially constructed and socially maintained. Their continuing reality, both objective (as common, taken-for-granted facticity) and subjective (as facticity imposing itself on individual consciousness), depends upon *specific* social processes, namely those processes that ongoingly reconstruct and maintain the particular worlds in question. Conversely, the interruption of those social processes threatens the (objective and subjective) reality of the worlds in

question. Thus each world requires a social "base" for its continuing existence as a world that is real to actual human beings. (p. 45)

The boys' phenomenological world was partly sustained by the dialectical interaction of three elements: (1) the knowledge that boys shared about what it meant to be a boy, that is, that boys were stronger, more powerful, and better than girls; (2) the activity of boys which was characterized at one level by roughness and by fighting, threatening, and aggressive behavior; (3) the social structure and patterned social relations which they apprehended as a hierarchy based upon physical dominance with the strong at the top and the weak at the bottom, with the girls *as a group* defined as being on the bottom.

The objective and subjective reality of the world of the boys was potentially threatened by an event which occurred upon the 169th day of school, two weeks before the end of the school term. Consider:

Day 169. Anne, Bart, Shawn, Michael, Eldon, Glenn, and Karen are playing Monster. Vincent and Victoria are marginally involved in the game. Ben is watching.

Eldon is the Monster. He captures Anne and playfully wrestles her to the ground. Both are laughing. Shawn walks up to the pair on the ground and kicks Anne hard on her shin. Anne immediately stands up saying, "Shawn!"

She grabs Shawn around the neck with both hands and proceeds to choke him. She is very angry and shows no sign of letting go as he grabs her by her arms and unsuccessfully tries to disengage her hands. With one last squeeze she throws him to the ground and stands over him in a threatening posture, "You'd better *never* kick me again."

Shawn rubs his throat and says, "I didn't mean to."

Anne stands, hands clenched into fists, silent, above Shawn for a few moments, seemingly undecided about whether she is finished with him. Shawn then says, "I'm sorry."

Anne and the other children, who had been watching intently, silently, leave to play Monster. They leave Shawn on the ground.

When they are gone he immediately gets up and tells me, "That didn't hurt you know." I say nothing.

The "world-taken-for-granted" by the boys, a world in which everyone knew that boys were strong and girls weak, had been firmly established and constantly reconstructed over the period of the school year through the activity of some boys fighting and most girls submitting. The social relations which provided the base for this world, even when there was no fighting, was the boys' understanding of the dominance hierarchy.

Shawn had been the prime example of the knowledge of male superiority, the acknowledged "best fighter" in the class, the embodiment of several boys' aspirations to be the "toughest, strongest boy in the class," to be Number One at the top of the social system. Anne, a girl, had soundly beaten Shawn up. What meaning did the children give to this event which might have disrupted the reality of the boys' phenomenological world, based as it was on the knowledge of men and boys' physical superiority and made real by the use of force?

How did the boys who were participants in the event respond to Shawn's defeat by a girl, Anne? First, it is instructive to

know what they did not do. They did not laugh at Shawn, discuss the event among themselves as to its implications, pick fights with Shawn to challenge him, or emphasize that a girl had beaten up the strongest boy in the class. They did acknowledge that the event was important. In subsequent interviews several children mentioned it when asked who was the toughest and the strongest. Brad, Michael, and Vincent all named Anne because "she beat up Shawn." When I asked Shawn who was the toughest he unhesitatingly answered, "Anne, she choked me," quickly adding, "But I'm second."¹⁷

The event was important, but it did not challenge the reality of the boys' world nor the knowledge upon which that world was based. The boys fit the problematic event into what they already knew and provided an explanation which served to reaffirm the reality of their world of male superiority: Anne was perceived to be a girl who was like a boy, as an exception among girls as she objectively was. But she was also exceptional among boys. She had been perceived to be like a boy by boys for much of the observation period both because of her responses to physical aggression and because of her willingness and ability to "play right." Three boys named her as the "girl most like a boy" when asked that interview question.¹⁸ And once during a game when Eldon had objected to Anne being allowed to be the Monster because "a girl can't be the Monster," a tradition of boys, another boy answered that she could because she was "like a boy."

Boys understood boys as courageous, active, able to play right, and strong. They saw Anne as courageous, active, able to

play right, and strong, the way they knew boys were. Anne's defeat of Shawn provided more evidence for this view. Boys did not fundamentally change their ideas of what girls were like on the basis of the performance of one girl but instead created an element of knowledge which fit with knowledge they already had. Some girls were like boys just as some boys, for instance Henry according to a few boys, were sometimes like girls.

Anne, however, was perceived to be like a girl by other girls and by herself. And she gave meaning to her defeat of Shawn as a girl might give it meaning and not as a boy would. When asked who the "strongest and toughest" in the class was she replied, "Shawn *thinks* he is but he's not. I choked him." When I then asked, "Well, who is then?" she shrugged her shoulder and answered, "I don't know." Anne was aware that boys ranked one another, but did not basically consider herself as one to be ranked, though she was aware of her ability to fight and win. For her, choking Shawn was a primarily personal act related to a specific situation and not a political act motivated by a desire to be seen as powerful and dominant or the toughest. Achieving power through physical dominance did not have to do with what it meant to Anne to be who she essentially felt she was, a girl. By contrast, any of the boys, including the most gentle and kind, would have understood the event in terms of the increase in his personal power and status, though it might have made some nervous, because those were the terms every boy had to live by as a boy in this social situation. Anne understood that Shawn had lost power, but did not

claim his power and position for herself, though others claimed it for her. Had she bragged and claimed the position of number one the impact on the social system and the knowledge might have been different though not, I think, decisively or significantly.

Perhaps because of Anne's failure to claim the top position in the hierarchy after a week, Glenn claimed it for himself and was, in fact, recognized by some of the other boys as the "strongest boy" again though others stuck to Shawn.

Summary

Despite some boys having contradictory typifications about the relative value of girls and boys an essential typification boys shared about gender was that "boys are better than girls." Boys knew that other boys thought that being a girl or like a girl was less than being a boy or like a boy. Those boys who knew themselves to be less than some girls nonetheless knew that boys as a type were better. The most common reason boys gave for boys' superiority was that boys were bigger and stronger than girls. Almost all the children, girls as well as boys, knew that the larger and stronger something was, the better it was. This belief in size and strength as being of prime value interacted with boys' typifications about boys' and men's superiority, each supporting the other.

Boys showed that they thought boys were better than girls by what they said, by excluding girls from play, both spontaneously

and ritually, and by disparaging girls and objects and activities associated with girls.

Primarily because of the differential evaluation of the genders, boys were more anxious than girls about gender and this affected the structure of social relations within the class as well as affecting boys individually. Because of boys' desire to present themselves publicly as boys, boys polarized nominally gendered and ungendered phenomena more rigidly than girls. The typification "boys are better" functioned as a means of social control, encouraging and sometimes pressuring boys to be like boys were typified as being. It encouraged and contributed to their playing rough, accepting extremely aggressive behavior, and being competitive, especially in outdoor, physical activities. The differential evaluation contributed to boys playing with boys and not girls, playing "boys' games" and not "girls' games," and playing outside and not inside. Boys who did not observe these ways boys were known to be were sometimes ridiculed, rejected, or held in low esteem by some of the boys and a few of the girls. They were seen as being like girls. As boys learned what it meant to be like a boy and learned the relative valuation of the genders they increasingly tried to identify themselves with other boys, especially those boys who were thought to be the most like boys. The differential evaluation of the genders by boys consequently increased the importance of the boys' large group play and the importance and prestige of the boys at the top of the power hierarchy based on the use of force.

In contrast, girls had no similar typifications of girls' superiority. To the extent that girls were aware of boys' assertions of superiority they ignored them, tried to deny them, typified them as just being symptomatic of the taken-for-granted way boys felt about girls, or associated that girls were as good as boys and "could do anything that boys could do." Girls always made their claims for equality within the boys' frames of reference, that is, in reference to physical superiority and an ability to act effectively in a world requiring physical strength and a high level of activity. Boys asserted that physical strength and certain types of activity were indicative of superiority, they constructed tests to measure such superiority, and then challenged girls to defeat them, and girls invariably lost the boys' tests for value.

Notes

1. As Schutz and Luckmann (1973) demonstrated, the stock of knowledge, whether individual or social, is not characterized by a lack of contradiction between its elements. Different typical elements of knowledge are relevant for different situations and social contexts. In this context the element of knowledge that "boys are better than girls" was more relevant.
2. I did not typically ask children this question. However, I asked Michael directly because he seemed to be the most actively equalitarian of the boys and because I had asked him before and wanted to see if his answer had changed. I did ask some of the other boys, and their answers were typically answers such as "Boys, of course!"
3. Billy and Gary were eighth grade boys who, for a specific period of time, regularly came to the class to be helpers to the teachers. In general, Billy was friendlier and more nurturing, but the characteristic difference between the two boys was that Billy gave his attention to the girls and tried to include them in the games, whereas Gary was indifferent to

the girls. Both boys attended to the boys. This might have been a factor in Brad's preference for Gary, though that is speculative.

4. I feel compelled to remind the reader once more that boys knew other things as well, and that for some boys other knowledge substantially mitigated the value which they placed on strength, power, man-likeness as contrasted to ways-of-being typified as belonging to women or girls. But as previously noted, the knowledge about male superiority seemed to have more impact on the development of social relations in this context.
5. G.I. Joe is a doll about three inches tall. He is dressed like a soldier, is equipped with weapons and a canteen, and his unsmiling face is scarred. The Six Million Dollar Man doll is about the same size and is modeled after a popular science fiction adventure t.v. show of the same name. The doll has a hole in its head where one could look and see things magnified. According to the t.v. show, the Six Million Dollar Man has extraordinary powers because he is bionic.
6. A friend who has a son, who is slightly older than these boys, recounted a recent experience about her son's ambivalence about buying a super-hero doll that was female. Atypically, he asked his mother to take the money to the cashier to pay for the doll. Then when the time came to take the doll to school, as he did his other super-hero dolls, first he said that he was sick and couldn't go to school, as they sat in the car outside the school. When she suggested to him that he didn't want to go to school because of the female doll, he agreed and agreed to her suggestion to leave the doll in the car.

During the ride home, a male friend of the boy looked at the boy, who had finally picked up the doll and had begun to play with it, and demanded, wide-eyed, "What's *that*?!" after a long period of staring. Then the normally loquacious friend moved over to the far side of the car, away from the boy, and sat silent for the remainder of the trip.

My friend said that she was also nervous about her son buying a female doll, wondering if it meant there was something wrong with the boy, but ultimately was proud that he had such courage in the face of the social meaning attached to having a female doll, even a super-hero female doll.

7. Kessler and McKenna (1978) cite a study by one of their students, Diane Gertz, which demonstrates that adults as well as children attribute gender to such things as colors and numbers. For instance, all of the 30 adults questioned gave a gender label to "25" and many suggested their attribution of gender with "good" reasons.

8. The two teachers were, however, *far less* encouraging of competitive behavior and less likely to publicly compare the performances of individuals than is typical of physical education teachers I have observed.
9. Practicing teachers, interns, and other college students who were trying to get practical experience at the laboratory school.
10. Recall how some of the girls in the class typified female weakness as beauty and dualized the constructs of beauty and strength in terms of gender. When girls pretended to be beautiful they often pretended to be helpless and dependent upon men to "take care of them and protect them," much as Jane was dependent upon Tarzan. See Chapter VI for a fuller discussion of the relationship of strength and beauty.
11. Timmy was the only other boy who shared Shawn's extreme feelings about women and girls, though he expressed his feelings nonverbally, for instance, by showing pleasure when a girl was hit and hurt. But he was much less ambivalent than Shawn, who liked some individual girls sometimes.
12. Nor did I consider Shawn deviant or a person who exhibited symptoms of social or personal pathology. He was too responsive to his environment and the reactions and expectations of others to be thought to be deviant. I also did not imagine him to be headed for trouble. My personal fantasy was that he would grow up to become a lawyer or a lawyer-politician.

At another level intended to be less sociological and more psychological I invited a clinical psychologist to observe the children for his opinions. When asked about Shawn he dismissed the idea that Shawn was, from a clinical perspective, a boy in psychological trouble. His nonprofessional opinion was, "I like him." Seeing Henry playing house, however, he asked me, half-seriously, "Do you think Henry is homosexual?" See Kessler and McKenna (1978) for a discussion of the social construction of gender among scientists and other professionals.

13. Ortner (1974) writes about the ambivalence of men in other cultures to women and their sexuality which is understood to be source of power over men, though men are nonetheless considered superior to women. She suggests three types of data which would suffice to constitute evidence that a particular culture considers women inferior.

(1) elements of cultural ideology and informant's statements that *explicitly* devalue women, according them, their roles, their tasks, their products, and their social milieux less prestige than are accorded men and the male correlates; (2) symbolic devices,

such as the attribution of defilement, which may be interpreted as *implicitly* making a statement of inferior evaluation; and (3) social structural arrangements that exclude women from participation in or contact with some realm in which the highest powers of society are felt to reside. These three types of data may all, of course, be interrelated in any particular system, though they need not necessarily be. Further, any one of them will usually be sufficient to make the point of female inferiority in a given culture. (pp. 59-70)

The argument could easily be made that the social structure of these children contained all three types of evidence. Though there were no formal structures "in which the highest powers of the society are felt to reside" boys tended to believe that the boys' groups constituted such structures and they sometimes prevented girls from joining in certain roles.

The question of defilement is interesting and relevant to the point of kissing as a form of power. Ortner writes of purification rituals which cleansed men from the polluting effects, the defilement, which comes because of certain types of contact with women, often some type of sexual connection, e.g., menstruation. The purifying agent is not polluted because of the *ritual* manner of purification. ". . . Purification is effected in a ritual context; purification ritual, as a purposeful activity that pits self-conscious (symbolic) action against natural energies, is more powerful than those energies" (p. 72). Consider the following event in those terms:

Day 73. Julia and Shelley are throwing kisses at Shawn, Michael, and Brad as the five of them sit at a table at Work Time. Michael and Shawn duck and scream, and Mike playfully threatens to "beat your tail," but he seems to be enjoying the whole thing. Shawn, however, is getting upset and very angry. He makes threatening gestures to the girls, but is not inclined to follow through as a student teacher is nearby.

Shawn kisses Michael on the cheek and says, "Michael, you have to kiss me back and then we're protected." Michael throws a hand kiss to Shawn, who then gets up to kiss Brad, saying, "This will protect you, Brad." Shawn then sits down and begins his work, ignoring the kiss-throwing girls.

14. The nature of racial prejudice and preference in the class was a complex one. First, few children expressed such sentiments. Second, such sentiments might not have reflected patterns of association. Karen, who made the most slanderous remarks, for instance, enraged with Wanda, called her a "nigger," was on

especially intimate terms with other blacks. Karen was a constant companion of Anne and Victoria.

Some statements which revealed typical knowledge about blacks which was negative revealed deep-seated prejudice rather than conscious opinions of racial prejudice. For instance, when talking about dogs, George, a child of progressive counter-culture type parents, mentioned that they had a big dog who would bark "when a black man comes into the neighborhood to steal things."

In addition, some black children had a very high status. Marian was the most popular girl of the kindergarten girls. Anne was the girl of choice among the white high status boys.

The matter of race was as interesting as that of gender, and the two systems interacted at every juncture. However, for white children the matter of gender was far more significant and determining than that of race. For black children, with the possible exceptions of Wanda and Pierre, matters of gender *seemed* to be more important. For all black children matters of gender were at least as significant to them as questions of race.

15. Betty, Wanda and Maja, like several boys about girls, named all or almost all of the girls in the picture selection task before naming any boys, despite the fact that they played with certain boys more than some girls. Unlike the boys, however, the girls did not accompany their selections with remarks such as "Yuk!" "Only girls left!" "I hate all the girls," and "I'm just pickin' out all the boys . . . they're better than the girls." All of these remarks were made by boys about girls.
16. She chose Glenn, Victoria, Karen, Bradson, Michael, Bart, Ben, Eldon, Shawn, Julia, George, Marian, Betty, Nancy, and Henry and then said, "I don't like the rest."
17. A few moments after this statement Shawn decided that, after all, he was the strongest. He said, "Anne's not really that strong. I could beat her up if I wanted to." He did not, however, challenge Anne or threaten her during the remainder of the year.
18. Anne was embarrassed about being named "most like a boy" during the interview. Having heard Glenn name her as most like a boy when the question was asked of Brad and he too named her she mildly objected, "Don't name me."

CHAPTER XII CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

However much the original sense of inevitability may be weakened in subsequent disenchantments, the recollection of a never-to-be-repeated certainty--the certainty of the first dawn of reality--still adheres to the first world of childhood. Primary socialization thus accomplishes what (in hindsight, of course) may be seen as the most important confidence trick that society plays on the individual--to make appear as necessity what is in fact a bundle of contingencies, and thus to make meaningful the accident of his birth. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 135)

Conclusions

The findings of this study show that whatever the biological status of the phenomenon of gender, gender is not an unmediated product of physiology, but perpetuates itself through children's understanding of the meaning of gender as it is structured in their consciousness through language typifications, through children's actions in the world as they act upon what they knew about gender, and through the social structures and relations they create which, in turn, come back to them as reality and a confirmation of their knowledge about gender.

This study explicated some of the children's essential typifications about gender, without which the phenomenon of gender would have ceased to exist in its current form. Girls knew that girls and women are oriented toward personal human relationships, ideally characterized by intimacy and love. This knowledge of girls

was articulated in what, to girls, were three attractive elements of knowledge: Girls are like women/mothers, and being a mother meant having a child; girls are pretty, and being pretty meant having a boyfriend; and girls are nice, and being nice meant having friends. Girls' social relationships reflected their concern with personal relationships. They played games with personal themes, they played in small groups which were conducive to intimacy, and they were relatively unaggressive.

Boys knew that boys and men were oriented toward power, ideally characterized by large size, physical competence, and competent constructive activity, only somewhat less ideally, by the systematic and effective use of brute force for dominance. Boys knew that boys and men were oriented toward power both in their human relationships, personal and impersonal, and in their relationships to other animals and objects in their world. Individual boys questioned their own desire and aptitude for power, but no boys questioned the idea that boys and men as types were powerful. Just as intimacy was an organizing orientation for girls, power was an organizing orientation for boys. Sometimes boys constituted the roles of power in their games as authority, sometimes power was simply based on dominance. Boys objectified what they knew about masculine power in their games, their social relations, and by the way they articulated meaning to others.

Girls and boys had typifications about the other gender which, though not identical in meaning, were structurally similar enough so that they fit together, allowing the children to live in an

intersubjectively meaningful and coherent social world. Underlying all of the children's typifications about what constituted gender was the idea that girls and boys were different types rather than substantially similar types. The knowledge children had functioned to separate girls and boys socially, thus emphasizing their differentness.

Together, acting upon their knowledge about gender, boys and girls created the concrete reality of gender, including the essential social structures and relationships which they typified as being characteristic of gendered adults. Social location and girls' and boys' places were distributed by gender, with girls assigned to the inside and boys to the outside, symbolizing the woman's place at home and the man's place in the world. Labor and knowledge were distributed by gender and actualized in the games children played and the roles they assumed in their play. Power was also distributed by gender, with boys having more power to define social reality as they acted upon what they knew about being like boys, and girls acted like girls. Girls' knowledge predisposed them to powerlessness in relation to boys because, in this situation, the use of physical force was a primary way of achieving power, and everything girls knew about being girls oriented them away from the use of physical force and the establishment of hierarchical relationships. Having created an imperfect microcosm of the adult world they knew existed, the children were then able to apprehend that world and confirm that they were indeed like men and women, and that their knowledge about gender differences was

the way things really were. They practiced the subjectively based social relations they expected to assume as adults and created the objective social structures which would insure that they would fit into the adult world as it is currently constituted.

The study showed that the gender system existed on two levels: the cognitive level and the social-structural level. Both levels were produced in the classroom and functioned in an interrelated, interdependent, and extremely complicated fashion. What appeared to be simple phenomena, for instance, girls playing with their Barbie dolls *inside* the classroom, while boys played Monster *outside*, were in reality complex and related phenomena that worked in a dialectical fashion to create the social reality of gender, subjectively and objectively.

Implications

This dissertation examined the taken-for-granted knowledge children had about gender and the social structure and relations which they created using this knowledge. Because of the special circumstances and the amount of freedom from adult constraints, it is apparent that the school had little to do with creating a gendered social reality and that the children entered this setting fully able to recreate the gender system which existed in the larger society. Clearly, children inherited their knowledge from their own experience. The teacher in this class acted in ways that supported the children's knowledge, and had she been more active one might have assumed a causal relationship and come to

conclusions that would have overemphasized the school's role in sustaining the gender system. The teacher's main effect in recreating gender was to allow the children the freedom to act upon their own knowledge of the world. Though the schools can play a role in changing the gender system, it is certain that substantial change must be made in institutions more basic to socialization than schools, most notably, the family.

Whatever changes are desired must be simultaneously made on two levels for optimum effectiveness. Attempts must be made to change the structural arrangements, institutions, and social relations of society while at the same time changes must be made in the structure of social knowledge itself. An example of structural change might be for women to participate more fully in the public world where societal norms are articulated, and for men to participate more fully in the private, domestic world where personality is formed in children and where they learn their most enduring knowledge. Change must also be made in the structure of social knowledge, in the typifications all of us share about gender. An example of such a change, and one that as a feminist I consider to be fundamental, would be a restructuring of our valuation of large size and the ability to have one's way through the use of force or the implicit or explicit threat of force. The importance of size obviously transcends questions of gender, but at the same time it could be argued that the value and emphasis we put on size, whether we're referring to institutions or cars, may at least partly flow from our knowledge and commitment to the gender system.

Since men in the public world largely articulate public values, our valuation of largeness may reflect men's commitment to what is understood to be like men. A change in the emphasis on size and power would, I think, benefit us not just as gendered persons but as social beings who need to change to a more cooperative, conserving, and rational individual and collective behavior in order to survive this historical period without liberty and human dignity intact.

The findings of the study show the taken-for-grantedness of the children's knowledge about gender. Within the natural attitude, they did not reflect on questions of why things were as they were. As Berger & Luckmann (1967) said, reality about gender confronted the children's consciousnesses as objectively self-evident, as the way things really and inevitably were. They did not reflect on the nature of the social world as being potentially something other than the way it was typified in their language and lived in their present experiences. Clearly, unless the possibility of the socially constructed nature of reality is presented to them, in whatever appropriate fashion, children have little chance of perceiving another potential for themselves or for society.

Presenting alternative views to children and alternative methods for perceiving the world generally requires that those who live with children have an awareness of their own taken-for-granted assumptions about gender as well as an understanding of children's meanings. For instance, when this teacher, Mrs. Cowan, promoted girls' interest in appearance and boys' interest in being

strong, when she intervened in fights between girls much earlier than she did in fights between boys, when she told some girls who were playing house to "fix dinner for 'Daddy' [a boy who was watching the girls play] because he's home from work," she was promoting an entire complex of meaning based upon her own taken-for-granted assumptions about gender without considering the entire package of meaning she was validating for children. From talking with her, I know that she would not have wanted to promote some of the meanings which she encouraged by saying and doing such things. She had simply not reflected on her intentions or own subjective beliefs about gender. An essential starting place for teachers who want to encourage more democratic gender relations must be an increased awareness of the way they apprehend and construct the social world.

Qualitative studies of this type also inform the work of researchers. For one thing, they inform on substantive issues. For instance, when researchers find that girls do not do any better with questions referring to domestic machines like stoves than they do with questions using machines like cars as examples, it may mean that girls do not relate to machines of any kind *as machines* but as ways of promoting personal relationships. Stoves are what one cooks dinner for one's family on; they are not *machines*. Personal relatedness is central to girls' apprehension on their experience as girls, and while this does not prove that girls have as much potential mechanical ability as boys despite their lower performance on tests of mechanical ability, it does provide a

possible explanation for the difference that does not assume a biological cause.

More fundamentally, qualitative or phenomenological studies suggest a process of reflection on the assumptions that a researcher brings to the phenomena under examination. As Kessler and McKenna (1978) have ably shown, researchers are also members of the social reality they are examining and bring to their research some of the same assumptions that their subjects have about what reality is like. Left unexamined and unexplicated, the assumptions are given the status of an objective and inevitable social fact, a fact that will more than likely be confirmed by the researchers' interpretation of their data. Without detailing an example, I would suggest that some researchers' interpretation of girls' tendency to want to play in small groups and have "best friends" as being something essentially negative, having as its purpose the intention to exclude other girls rather than of achieving intimacy, is an example of evaluating girls as being less than boys. The same researchers interpret boys' large group play as being nonexclusive, ignoring boys' exclusion of those children who don't care to play rough and boys' exclusion of girls for being girls. Boys' exclusiveness tends not to be interpreted by its darker side, as girls' does, but by its more positive, wholesome aspects. Researchers emphasize boys' desire for unity and camaraderie with other boys, ignoring the fundamentally exclusive nature of their play groups. From my informal questioning, incidentally, it seems that teachers are also subject to

negatively assessing girls' small group play and positively assessing boys' large group play. The unexamined assumption in both cases seems to be that boys *are* better than girls.

The reflective stance of a qualitative researcher is a stance that would well be adopted by parents, professional teachers, and serious researchers who have a commitment to changing or understanding the phenomenon of gender. It is not that teachers, parents, and researchers can be expected to radically suspend their fundamental typifications about gender when acting in the every-day world, because typifications are enduring and tenacious. Nor, for that matter, do I believe that children as old as five and six can be taught to abandon their core constructs about gender, were this considered desirable. What adults and children can be taught is to be aware of the assumptions they bring to situations and to act consciously and knowingly rather than unconsciously. With additional knowledge and by being reflective we can learn to modify our typifications about gender and monitor our behavior.

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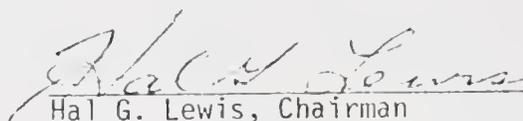
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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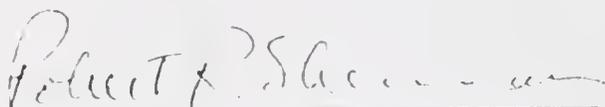
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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Foundations of Education in the College of Education and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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