

A Socio-Evolutionary Approach to Explaining Mob Behaviour: Symptomatic of Modernity or an Evolutionary Reic?

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ABSTRACT A potential explanation for historically and cross-culturally observed 'mob' behavior is presented. Collaborative data from the diverse disciplines of sociology, social anthropology and developmental psychology are united in the hope of increasing understanding of a human behavior frequently viewed as antisocial and detrimental to contemporary social functioning. It is contended that the social and psychological lives of the urban young may merely be following through an ethological heritage, a persistence of primordial patterns and innovative reactions to a way of life which in quasi-genetic terms is evolutionary, but in terms of contemporary social requirements is both abnormal and deviant. It is within these terms that a range of domains of mob culture within in urban and industrial social environments are examined, specifically competition, solidarity, protection, language and location.

1. THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

It is assumed that there is substance in the assumptions of ethology concerning the structures of human social relationships having some continuation from non-human primate behavior and further that these have been in functional existence for millions of years and countless generations.

This behavioral pattern of a quasi-genetic nature has two elements. Firstly the importance of the group, the mob in our sense of the term, for the individual and the individual for the group. Secondly parallel and interdependent with this is a mistrust, dislike, hatred, avoidance however named of other outside groups whether of their own species or of different ones socially defined for which there are a wide variety of functional reasons including territory, access to breeding stock, food supply and different appearance.

Modern urban-industrial society has two broad patterns of behavior of which one conforms to these quasi-genetic guidelines and one does not. There are still subsistence communities in which their members depend on each other for economic and social reasons such as the specialized immigrant localities in many cities. These have the same characteristics of valued and static group membership combined with a qualified mistrust and dislike of outsiders whether of family, lineage, clan, tribe, hamlet or village. No community or individual sees these outsiders in terms of parity and approval when relationships with them goes beyond the boundaries of useful reciprocity and it becomes one of assumed rather

than potential hostility. This mirrors and continues the pre-human primate experience and we may presuppose that of early bipedal humanoids.

In general terms these urban subsistence communities have been able to keep their social lives functionally viable within these two fundamental characteristics; the self interests of the group and individuals meshing together combined with the persistent guarded hostility to outsiders with whom reciprocal relationships cannot be consistently and usefully created and maintained in communities with a high population turn-over.

But then onto this social and environmental scene has come a new form of social life. The high density urban environment with an even higher population turn-over of unskilled workers having subsistence needs on an almost day to day basis. This has only existed for a few thousand years and for a minority of populations. For those involved there has been a radical change in the patterning of their lives running counter to all their quasi-genetic social learning.

In this latter type of urban environment individuals no longer belong to any group which has any social consistency for as long as a single generation and who participate in large numbers of temporary groups bound together by self-interest rather than reciprocity. Kinship has limited value since its demographic form is not linked to material advantages making membership worth maintaining. It takes up a small proportion of living time and migration independent of group commitments is commonplace. Fictional kinship is often created to provide individuals with some

sense of ideological commitment. Slum houses in Mombasa, Kenya were often filled with classificatory 'mother's brothers', a preferred type of relationship in patrilineal societies.

Not only have group consistencies radically changed but the invasive and potentially hostile outsider category has become dominant and more socially complicated. It is both near, outside the door and multifaceted individuals are surrounded by outsiders towards whom according to their quasi-genetic training there should be at the least calculated avoidance and more often some form of active hostility because of their social and geographical nearness, but whom they cannot avoid.

These overall relationships are now restrained by new moral precepts requiring people to tolerate their neighbors if not penalized for failing to do so by laws against racial and sexual discrimination. Competitive games at least channels this hostility but the stress on athletics allows for individual success which does not have any group sustaining element and only a very muted hostility to outsiders. The modern urban liver is surrounded by potentially hostile outsiders in their street, neighborhood, floor in high-rise housing, school, ethnicity, religious association and so on.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that societies develop forms of what is assessed as socially deviant behavior but which would appear to follow through the social and psychological quasi-genetic requirements of past millennia; the flare-ups leading to communal rioting in which hostilities can be played out. This is particularly so for the young who are caught up in the restricting necessities of adult living and for which outside western societies there is no social welfare back-up protection.

The creation in almost every urban environment of social groups which are negatively labeled gangs or mobs in contemporary terminology, rather than being classed as innovative social relationship groupings. These have the primary functions of self-sustaining intertwining reciprocities and persistent hostility to out-groups. These groups cannot be classed as either abnormal or deviant since they provide for the dominance of certain pre-breeding males and the protection of territory. In addition they provide social and psychological benefits of protection and status which are not provided for the younger members of those societies. A

football gang in Kampala, Uganda had twenty officials with specific jobs and only two unranked members.

Thus we see much of the social and psychological lives of urban young as following an ethological heritage, a persistence of primordial patterns and innovative reactions to a way of life which in quasi-genetic terms is neither abnormal and deviant. A consistency rather than quasi-criminal deviancy and it is within these terms that we look at the mob culture of urban and industrial social environments.

2. THE MANIPULATIVE UNDERSTANDINGS OF JUVENILE BEHAVIOR

Much of the explanations provided by social science analyses rests on two foundation aspects. Firstly that there are immediate and remedial rather than distant causes for all inappropriate juvenile behavior, even if the relationships of one to the other is always made difficult by the absence of any convincing scientific data.

Then subtended to this is the belief that once reasons for behavior have been identified then it is possible to modify that behavior within a short-term framework. It has been concluded that by these means societies have been able to permanently alter these behaviors so that it serves what has been decreed as the approved needs of those societies. However it seems more likely that behavioral changes have occurred because they have slotted into accidental new conditions which have allowed this to occur; the behavioral core has not changed.

Secondly and perhaps more importantly the possibility within an ethological framework of thinking, that there may be broad frameworks of behavior, the importance of in-groups and hostility to out-groups which are related in some way to behavioral genetics and thus beyond human capabilities to change.

The main objectives to any quasi-genetic understandings of this nature reduces the possibilities for the existing dogma of manipulated social and psychological behavioral betterment which has the characteristics of a religious and socio-political dogma. The acceptance of any such inevitability in human behavior such as the hostility to all but a very few outsiders reduces human and particularly professional endeavors to a fringe role of aiding conformity to such

ethological patterns. Although it was expressed with the Buddhist ideal of karma in mind, Glen Hoddle was sacked as the football coach for the England soccer team for expressing this view although it was disguised in a religious context (Lyon 2000: 73-74).

3. DATA DRIVEN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH INTO JUVENILE BEHAVIOUR

No work towards the understandings of children's behavior can be undertaken without a method but when the approach elides into the scientific categories of methodology, problems arise. Novelists depicting childhood such as L.P.Hartley's 'The Go-Between' and Golding's 'The Lord of the Flies', have methods as there is a sequence of presentation imposed on the material provided by their imaginations and memories which links writers and readers into some sort of acceptable reality.

Once methodology comes into play because those studying childhood want to be as scientific as possible, problems arise from this professionalism. We know from Kuhn's Structure of Scientific revolutions that science is subject to fashions and expediency and in addition there are possible biological and psychological factors making the 'hard' scientist look into this rather than that.

When the social scientist looks at a child's behavior, the methodology involved, if it does not actually govern the results obtained, it at least predisposes the data to take on a particular form between two extremes. The narrow with defined objectives and samples and the broad approach which could be seen more as a fishing trip into the partially unknown.

The latter is perhaps more realistic in assuming that there are so many factors involved in the behavior of any child that to exclude most of them because the researcher either considers them unimportant or such a vast number of factors cannot be coped with methodologically, is unwise. An attempt has been made to get round this with Parallel Distributive Processing but even that has confined itself to narrow aspects of biological functioning and ends up in mathematical complexities.

Overall studies of children which are professionally acceptable are based on narrow methodologies providing narrow results. Small groups of children being sampled in a restricted

environment in order to be competently observed for a narrow range of anticipated behaviors. The result of this approach is that there can be only a tenuous connection between such results and what may have occurred before or may occur after as well as in children who may be socially distant from those covered in any study. It is to some extent an act of hope that there should be parallel exactnesses in the behaviour of children of Birmingham, Baghdad, Benin and Banaras.

The situation is generally made worse by the data being expressed numerically almost invariably with that statement of inaccuracy-the decimal point. It is not that the data being expressed is inaccurate for being expressed statistically but that it represents a restricted range of information. It suggests a form of accuracy for human behavior which is unlikely to occur in anything more than some simple binary choices and possibly not even in that.

It may be that too much social and psychological work on child behavior is data driven as part of a need for professional recognition requiring 'hard' data, combined with a personal need for having such 'hard' facts as the basis for further work. Thus this approach is based on a broad assessment of observed trends and behavioral patterns which are not intended to provide 'hard' data of dubious value and which in their ambiguities allow for the development of more stimulating and longer lasting validities.

The framework of thought and the methodologies of the social sciences inherited from the European Enlightenment are based on the proofs and probabilities of organic chemistry and the isolatable nature of particular properties. There is a certain one to oneness of such conclusions and the restrictions this imposes on methodology. It was this methodology developed by Comte that presupposes that such methods could be used successfully to predict social behavior. Once the data is organic, relevant multiples and the methodologies now involved have to cope with innumerable and changing probabilities providing correlations rather than proofs.

There is also the fact that the higher up the evolutionary ladder are the objects of research there are larger numbers of actual, probable and possible factors that might be relevant. These increase progressively until it may well approach infinity in their different inter-relationships. A protein and a child of a Pakistani family in East

London or in Islamabad are at the opposite ends of such a scale of complexity.

Closed questions about any social situation cut out much variation and even if these answers are related to demographic factors, these are not as accurate as their titles suggest; there may be little variation between children of proximate ages but they are put into different categories if aged 5 years and eleven months and 6 years. The categorization of answers or observations must be artificial and indeed this way of dealing with the answers to open ended questions must be even more artificial. Combining social and psychological environments and the conscious and unconscious perspectives of the categorizers. They have no means of knowing how much and what has been left in darkness and what has been artificially clarified.

It is not so much the inevitable inaccuracy of any conclusions that may or may not have been drawn from the data but the number of possible factors which could and perhaps should have been considered. Further the need to accept the impossibility of scientific accuracy in the research of human behaviour, even before they move or open their mouths.

Research in the social sciences is often if not always based and indeed limited to certain factors that are assumed to be definable and therefore more reliable. This is surely an illusion as whatever boxes are used for the data, there is always the question of the box boundaries. This must also mean that human activities are rarely worked out in terms of long lasting definable factors. The use of the decimal point in describing any human activity must be a symbolic indication of inevitable inaccuracy. It seems that data is fitted into the methodology rather than the methodology to the data.

It would appear to analyze human behavior in statistical terms as there are so many known and presumably unknown variables. Perhaps only 'past the post' activities such as entering a school or examinations passed can be treated in this way. A statement that a certain percentage of the children sampled behave in a certain way or make a particular statement is only reliable to the extent that we accept that the researchers saw or heard these events. So there is always the factor of the researchers perceptions which are likely to be both personal and situational to what is seen and heard. No two researchers experience the same event in the same ways.

4. THE PACIFIC NATURE OF ACCEPTABLE AND ACCEPTED YOUTH GROUPINGS

While official youth groupings have no role for violence except for some competitive sport and would define even the use of the word as inappropriate, it may nevertheless have positive functions. It is necessary to distinguish between actual violence and threatening behavior which from ethological studies is very much a part of primate and other animal behavior. If primate violence does occur it is minimal and a far larger part is taken up by the interpersonal evaluation of threats.

It seems likely that overt violence in juvenile behavior is recorded if only because it is seen as alien to public morality and against law and order. Covert violence in which threats are a major component are likely to be common and unrecorded and is likely to be a feature of girls behavior though not as frequently as boys (Campbell 1986).

It would seem that in youth clubs and organizations greater consideration should be given for opportunities to threaten violence, the symbolisms of antagonism such as the Maori war 'haka' sung by New Zealand rugby teams before kick-off. Such symbols of identity might well be included in defensive roles for the protection of their communities as occurs in many subsistence societies and in all primate ones. National anthems are often criticized because of their verbal incitements to violence but this again would fit into ethological patterns.

5. SCHOOLING AND THE DYSFUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN

If we look at the reasoning behind the attributions of controlling factors for student violence (American Teacher 1993), there are difficulties. In a subsistence society communal rather than isolatable parental supervision is a functionally valuable contribution to whatever primary groups the children are involved in. Rather than being a drain on the resources of the family, however defined, they have reciprocal value.

In modern societies it is not that the parents do not supervise but it has little reciprocal value for them in material or functional terms if they try to do so. Secondly for most of their waking lives they are absent from their children's lives and

thirdly for most of their waking lives the children are away from the possibilities of parental control. The school predominates in its paralleling to the factory and the people with whom children associate may not be their neighbors. Much of their activity outside their own front doors is out of sight and sound of parents.

The lack of family involvement in the school is thought to be another factor although clearly they can have no direct role at all even in day schools. For parents to be involved in the schools of their children is expensive in time and motion sense and the social distance between parents and teachers inhibits any such contacts except between professional of similar status. If the father is working, these contacts resolve onto the mother who again in ethological terms has no primary dominance.

Once a group or society develops a pattern of living which does not relate to biological survival to which juveniles contribute, they are left without any sense of being needed. Boredom becomes a factor since they are legally prevented from working and compelled to be in school and the state accepts a legal obligation to see that they do not starve. In African and Asian slums girls are more employable than boys who no longer have any functions with an ethological background.

It may well be that the day school is more emotionally disruptive and disturbing for the growing child when they have to constantly zigzag between two totally different social and psychological environments and the double-shift schooling in some developing countries even more so. There may well be little correlation between known levels of deviant behavior and boarding schools where there is no daily zigzag and only for holidays distinct in time and space.

Finally the influence of the mass media in which the correlation with juvenile violence is assumed almost as an item of belief when in most cases it fits to some degree into the ethological perspective of hostility to the out-group. One might surmise that violence within the family and aggressive male dominance may well be a more potent source of anxiety than television. Sarcasm can be as damaging as physical violence apart from the commonplaceness of violent language in those using restricted rather than elaborated linguistic codes (Bernstein 1975) in which the inability to talk out emotions correlates to domestic violence.

6. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF JUVENILE GANGS

Juvenile self-created groupings seem to have the characteristics which mirror Weber's definitions of bureaucracy. There is usually a clear cut hierarchy of authority achieved by a combination of personal competence in the use of available power and charisma. While there are no written rules, there are certainly undefined but potentially definable ones which lay down the qualifications for membership, initiation rites and what must be done to retain membership. Whereas in formal bureaucracies, the higher the rank the greater the flexibility, in juvenile gangs there is considerable overall flexibility which since it does not relate to any standards of literacy, must account in part for their popularity.

In a formal bureaucracy everyone has a rank linked to a job specification which reflects status. Many juvenile groups often have more senior ranks than mere members and the search for status is an important factor in seeking membership. It should always be remembered that social life from non-human primates upwards is almost always oligarchic. Anticipations of attaining any legally defined equality is never a reality.

If the hypothesis is correct that contemporary urban juvenile groupings are in part a functional follow through from pre-industrial and rural conditions then they will share the satisfactions of in-group membership which has greater utility and permanence than the family and will always have a basic hostility to out-groups. They can be seen as self-help groups and are in the same genre as self-help groups for health (Robinson 1980).

Gangs are made up of juveniles who have similar experiences and who come together to assist one another in pursuing shared interests in coping with common problems. These groups have fluctuating memberships and age differences in social needs which change more quickly with children than with adults. The constant zig-zagging between social environments, stressful changes in forms, schools, the location of housing as well as variable family situations.

7. THE PRACTICAL ARTIFICIALITY OF MODELS FOR CHILD BEHAVIOR

Leaving aside possible ethological programming to account for the background to the

behavior of children, nurture as opposed to nature comes in many different cultural forms for which there are several different theoretical models.

The unfolding model in which the caretakers of children provide a suitable environment permitting their 'natural' development to occur. In this model there seems to be an assumption that stable environments can exist in which there is a steady state of development. While obviously there is a linear progression for any child in which one state follows another, it seems more likely that these developments are either reversible under strain or that children develop on several social fronts at the same time according to the social distance involved in primary, secondary and tertiary interrelationships. This has been graphically depicted in the 'Lord of the Flies' novel (Golding 1954), but must be common enough in the migration of children from rural to urban environments, the experience of boarding schools or their sudden involvements in civil wars, famines and personal familial disasters.

The clay moulding model in which the child is shaped by society into the proper mould. In this model there is the assumption that society is an entity which does in fact provide what it considers a proper framework for behavior. In practice a modern economically developed society and one suspects underdeveloped ones as well, have moulds for behavior and not a single one, provided by the requirements of the law, social welfare, education, neighborhood and family apart from situational factors. This model seems to bypass the differences between what a society states that it requires individuals to do, what individuals say that they do and what they actually do which always illustrates the constant differences between the theoretical structures of a society and its practices. What developing children learn is the complex process of which they are the center in which the various systems of meaning and expression are brought into alignment so that they can experience reasonable lives (Cook-Gomperz 1986), which has been graphically described as 'a melange of ambivalence, deceit and guilt that continually troubles the individual mind (Wilson 1978, 159). In this there would be wide cultural variations in accepted and deviant forms of families according to religious and social backgrounds.

Finally the interactive model of children wishing to gratify their own needs for

independence while society seeks to make them conform. This model possibly fails to cover the whole varying framework of child development in which children may well create their own areas of independence within the compulsions of ordinary social life. Apart from the fact that any child's ability and wish to be independent will vary with age, sex, personality and social circumstances, the reification of society as a single unit in all these models is intrinsically unsafe. The conformity required of a child comes in many forms and will vary between those required by father, mother, siblings and grandparents and then from the child's peers and the formal and informal requirements of the school again in various forms from pre-school to secondary. As soon as the child recognizes itself as a social being, its role behavior becomes as increasingly varied as that of their surrounding adults.

These three theoretical models (Jahoda and Lewis 1987) are no more than fronts for ideal conceptions of how society should function and to which the growing children should interrelate in harmony. This has a 'happy ever after' tone with the absence of personally experienced distress and the glossing over or vague inclusions of the minor stresses which are part of every society's way of coping with the developmental anxieties of the growing child.

It would seem that these three models are based at least in part on a morally benign assumption of society's role in child development. This theoretical assumption that a society is functioning for the betterment of its members, particularly the growing child to be far from reality.

It is also suggested that these models seem to require that child development should be seen as a process in which similar developments are to be expected in children according to the typologies involved in the assessments; a search for overall similarities overriding the individualities of personalities and personal experience as they affect growing children.

Any Western society may have a formal structure usually secular in effect whatever may be its religious foundations, which lays down what is expected from its citizens and what they expect in return. This clearly fails to provide a cohesive model for what is actually happening; the competitive nature of all social life within and without all social groupings, the experience of social and psychological deprivation and the repetitive breakdown in stability affecting

children which occurs within primary groups and neighborhoods. African and Asian states are similarly secular except for those and their sub-units which are constitutionally and legally following the Islamic 'sharia' for family affairs.

It would seem that the theoretical 'innocence' or blank slate approach to the development of children is on the extreme edge of possible realities since they are always born into and experience a particular social set up and it is for this reason that the experiential model seems more useful.

8. THE EXPERIENTIAL MODEL OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

It is felt that in practice the development of each child has to be seen as an individual experience and that the groupings of their experiences should be recognized far more readily as a typological device which cannot cope experimentally with the diversity of these experiences both within the child and what is happening externally to them and which is assumed to influence their development.

It is therefore suggested that an experiential model may be better able to present the development of children in which their individuality is a prime component. The background to the perceptions of children is divided between a quasi-stable achieved primary group largely composed of their peers and the ascribed family whose permanency may well be something of an illusion because of migration, divorce, parental disharmony, unemployment and ill-health and a surrounding society whether it is pragmatically correct or not, is seen and experienced as actively hostile. If adults fear the outside world, then children certainly do so from the moment that they first leave their homes to go shopping with their mothers. Most if not all children are warned against strangers and since most social contacts outside village and narrow neighborhood environments are tertiary, this means that virtually all contacts are with people against *whom* the child has been warned; this is the ethological primate background repeating itself.

The experiential model would also be based in part on the realities of time and motion as to where and with whom they spend their time; the gradual change from the primacy of overwhelmingly maternal care in the child's

daytime life to the continual dominance of the peer group which exists formally in a school form and in out-of-form activities; the working out in the play ground and neighbourhood of social hierarchies as well as protective and promotional groupings of age cohorts.

There is another important aspect to the experiential model. A child's psyche cannot have the constant evenness of a machine. It is not only that consciousness of what is going on around them is not likely to be anything like continuous, but the input is likely to be graded according to the degree with which it varies from the expected and usual.

Finally although singular events are likely to be remembered, the repetition of any particular requirement or occurrence is likely to be imprinted and form part of a low-key repetitive background. The unusualness of the event in terms of the outside observer may well be experienced as not particularly unusual in the social context in which the children live. Verbal violence may be a constant and repetitive experience even if it is only sarcasm while only western societies appear to have a separate language code for talking to their children.

9. FAILURE OF MODERN SOCIETY TO DEVELOP SATISFYING JUVENILE GROUPINGS

It might be facile to conclude that the growth of juvenile 'misbehavior' is just the creation of replacement primary groups as the family has failed to provide long range consistently supportive functions with which it is traditionally associated.

What is perhaps significant is that in many traditional societies there are or were well established and institutionalized groupings of the young administered by they themselves which we can presuppose had consistently useful and universal functions channeling possible disruptions which are now classed as deviant or delinquent. The 'ghotal' of the Muria, the age-grades of the Maasai and the 'basumba batale' of the Sukuma are only a few of numerous examples.

Urban industrial or industrializing societies do not seem to have created any parallels to this beyond military conscription and in non-democratic countries political youth organizations. These do not seem to have the stability and neighborhood cohesiveness of those that

are worked by the young themselves within traditional guide-lines particularly as they are organized by adults.

There are limits to any paralleling of gang membership and what is provided by or acceptable to modern societies with these traditional patterns of behaviour; gangs do not have any functions contributing directly to families or to their communities and it is not an ancillary integrated activity. In some subsistence societies gangs or groups of the young are part of the community's protection system. In Usukuma, Tanzania a general pervasive and increasing wave of criminality in a tribal society of some five million led to the reconstruction of the traditional 'Basumba Batale' groupings to perform this role again since the new political system with its centralized rather than decentralized police had conspicuously failed to provide local security. The Tanzanian government initially reacted strongly against what they saw as illegal vigilantes until they saw their success in controlling crime led to their official recognition as quasi-official auxiliary police

10. THE MASS MEDIA AS GATE-KEEPERS OF THE PUBLIC MIND

Leaving aside any question of originality, what the mind of the child gathers in and acts upon is provided by the surrounding culture. Inputs come from relatives, neighbors, friends, the mass media and the syllabi of education and what goes on around them. Few children and indeed adults see much of the world outside the orbits of their own social activities and those who travel as tourists with their parents are not likely to have any great increase in the range and depth of their understandings.

If the child lives in a part of society in which there is persistent covert and overt hostility based on ethnicity, religion, race, appearance or sexual proclivity, this will be reflected just as persistently in the mass media. Current constant enjoinders not to talk to strangers personalizes the fear of outsiders. In quasi-traditional environments children would not have to be told this as it would be part of their ascribed socialization. There is little to interest the newspaper buying public in orderly behavior but showing behavior correlated to these hostilities allows the media to moralize about law-breakers and prejudice while at the same time maintaining their sales and its subtended revenue from advertising.

Popular culture however created and maintained is reflected in the mass media which accentuates these trends for its own reasons of profit under the blanket coverage of what is called the public interest and constitutional freedoms. The public interest is probably not definable except in terms of current social, economic, political and religious dominances, but of what they have seen or experienced or in supporting its necessity. The social and psychological contexts of their own room, family rooms, school rooms, neighborhood or distant streets are very different.

11. THE WAYS IN WHICH CHILDREN SEE OR EXPERIENCE AND ITS MEANINGS

The viewing of violence on television or in newspaper pictures is a passive experience and it may have some cumulative effect in deadening its appeal, but there is the background of some degree of acceptance since they are watching or looking. However in most communities children inside the home or outside will have had some experience of violence in the form of physical or verbal bullying, avoiding certain places or groups which are experienced as likely to be dangerous and even being on the fringes of violence after a football match. Children as they grow will increasingly see what goes on around them through the filter of their own life experiences.

Children watching or experiencing violence which is assumed to have undesirable or traumatic effects may not see it as such since it can be seen as the acceptable face of communal feeling. Cricket or football mob violence as an expression of team or national spirit, inter-caste, inter-religious and inter-tribal violence as part of their own identities. It is a rare family indeed of any ethnic or religious composition which has not heard repeated remarks about the unpleasant behavior of members of groups which are not of their own community even when the family itself is multi-ethnic.

12. THE CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD

Children vary widely in their experience of the external world. Not all children are accompanied to school and fear may begin outside their own front-door or when they pass into the school where it may be amplified in the school

playground. Verbal or physical domestic violence is not confined to any particular class or community. The erosive effects of actual or comparative poverty accentuated by advertising may make stealing quite acceptable. The writer Alan Bennett in his autobiography alleges that by the age of ten he had seen it all and found the world unpleasant.

There can be little doubt that children and childhood in even the most theoretically homogeneous society must be seen as not so much automatically variable but permanently contextual. In this we can assume that the extremes of behavior beyond or near the fringes of social acceptability will have consequences for the children which go beyond the average.

13. THE PEER GROUP AS THE FOCUS FOR OUT-GROUP HOSTILITY

As the growing children start to leave the geographical protection of their families and the realization that now it can provide no protection at all, there is the need for replacement protection and they seek to be included in a group of their peers. They want to have a parallel inclusiveness in a small group of other children or adolescents which can never have the same substantive foundations as that of their families.

It seems likely that in subsistence agricultural societies the groupings of young men rather than of young women, will be part of their organized social structure. Indeed their children may not need to join groups of their peers as part replacement for their families in which they remain useful functioning members. In addition they may be formed into age-cohorts so that there is no need for the creation of gangs or to seek such membership.

Modern urban industrial families are small and even in the extended families of children which have lived for generations in the same locality or in Asian immigrant families who live in close association for social support and economic betterment, the core with which children have a very personal relationship is unlikely to exceed ten individuals. It seems likely that even for adults the number of people with which any individual can have a close core personal relationship may well be less than ten.

The peer group to which children belong is similarly small in number and should they exceed the number which can have satisfying personal

interrelationships, they tend to segment. This means that in any school or neighborhood there are small groups of associates rather more than friends who see themselves as important social entities. Even in a small school, these cliques will each see themselves as better than other ones and overall there will be a child evaluated ranking of these cliques and rivalry between them. In mixed schools much of this clique formation will be separated by gender.

This would seem to be the initial stage of creating active feelings of social antagonism between these cliques within a school in which there are always rivalries and status differences between forms, subjects and administrative subdivisions. Children do not mix easily with the forms above and below them academically and demographically which is partially channeled into competitive sports but separated by gender; it is rare for girls to be in chess clubs. There is also the rivalry between schools again only partially channeled into competitive sports if the geographical ranges of their pupils overlap on a regular basis. It would seem therefore that hostility to out-groups is well established in the early years of compulsory education.

This structure of social hostility to out groups in schools is no more than a reflection of the communal experience of children. Children in their neighborhoods will already have absorbed the patterns of social thinking about the superiority or inferiority of other locations and their inhabitants and the lives of their children made more subjectively understandable by ethnic and costume distinctions in school uniforms.

Whereas in subsistence societies a neighborhood has an elastic social reality depending on what social functions are involved, modern urban industrial ones have no such elasticity. Although urban social interrelationships are likely to be with those living not too near but at no great distance away, formal boundaries required by the logic of administration add to the more social distinctions between 'us' and 'them'.

The growing child is thus tied into a whole series of distinctions between 'us' and 'them' which on the one hand give useful social and psychological support, but on the other hand prepare them to develop these distinctions into satisfying understandings in terms of the large society in which they live and its socially deviant activities.

This paradigm of distinctions between 'us'

and various forms of 'them' is nothing new. Societies of various sizes have always had external antagonisms as an important contributing factor to their own cohesiveness; the tribe next door as a focus for fear and their own social structures. This has changed over the years to religious divisiveness and nationalism. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this divisiveness which repeatedly has spilt over into current war and civil disturbances, it is a satisfying experience for many societies in which children must be included.

It would seem therefore that inter group hostility has been and remains a permanent feature of social life which suggests that human nature has a latent need for hostility to out-groups which strengthens the survival chances of the in-group. Modern western urban and industrial societies may not provide enough socially approved outlets for these antagonisms to be expressed.

14. ENVIRONMENTS OF PROLONGED HOSTILITY

We have established that hostility in some shape or form is a permanent feature of all societies and that children are directly or indirectly socialized to accept these antagonisms as a regular part of their social lives as something which is both understandable and satisfying.

Children in some localities are brought up in localities in which almost all social life is dichotomised into 'us' and 'them' and hostility to the out-group of different ethnicities or religion is so firmly a part of their lives as to become its main structure and the framework of their thinking because that is the way that all those around them with whom they have contact think and act on these lines. In the early 60s hostility to the South African apartheid regime went far beyond that country and the anti-apartheid demonstrations of political activists. The five year old child of a Tanzanian friend on being asked in Swahili what he was going to do when he grew up, replied that he was going to South Africa to fight whites.

Many children grow up in social systems which have been based for many generations on extremes of mutual hostility, violence and mistrust. The Pushtu-Puktu divide in Afghanistan and the religious divisions in Croatia, Kosovo and Macedonia have been going on for centuries and children would have grown up into it as the

frame work within which they think. Every Palestinian child whether they participate in stone throwing at Israeli soldiers or not, sees Israel as a permanent object of hate and mistrust.

A parallel situation exists in the segregated ghettos of Northern Ireland where working class hostility between Protestants and Roman Catholics created by a long period of Protestant domination, has created a succession of youthful activists who see the members of the opposite religion of any age or sex as a legitimate object of public and private hate.

Overall in both Europe and the United States where there are visible ethnic differences, the children of what they experience as membership of disadvantaged minorities grow up in a framework of cultural and linguistic ethnicity. At their everyday level of social living there is only nominal acceptance of equal opportunities and limited possibilities for social mobility in societies dominated by the majority. So the young take to the streets more likely than not on the provocations of rumor based on the 'factoids' of Norman Mailer and thus just as likely to be true as not, to stone the police, burn cars and loot shops.

Thus children in such social and political environments are growing up in the expectations of hostility from out-groups and even if wide ranging and acceptable political settlements could fade into folk-lore rather than memory that it was mob-culture that got change starting effectively.

15. KEY EVENTS PROMOTING HOSTILITY AMONG CHILDREN

Growing children may see hostility depicted repeatedly in the mass media and more importantly in their own environments where they may be involved in frightening events. Roman Catholic children in Belfast being taken to school by their parents under police guard through lines of jeering Protestants, while living in a religious ghetto and they will also have seen the leftovers of street rioting with its burnt out cars and buses, even if they have not seen bomb damaged houses, churches and shops. These images must surely remain in their minds throughout their lives. Most if not all Palestinian children will have been at least on the fringe of rioting and seen Israeli tanks and helicopters as well as knowing of the higher standards of living in the Israeli settlements nearby compared to their own neighborhoods.

The framework of latent hostility to out-groups latent in the minds of all people will have been brought to the front of these children's minds where it may well override any social restraining influences. We have to conclude that any prolonged and promoted hostility to an out-group located in a particular area, looking different, speaking a different language, worshipping differently, eating different foods and expecting different and protective treatment and repeatedly displayed in pictures and on television will provide the developing child with a supportive framework for hostility to such outsiders. The surrounding cultural scenario will provide them with repeated examples of this mob-culture even if they do not participate in it themselves.

16. THE INNOCENCE OF CHILDREN AND MOB-CULTURE

It is not so much that there has been a decline in public and private behavior but that what was once the common knowledge of neighborhoods has been promoted to much larger and potentially involved audiences by and through the mass media and its gate-keepers. The rise or perhaps the decline of certain types of violent crime which can usually be interpreted as related to out-groups, is as much a matter of statistical manipulation and very personal feelings than of hard facts since much crime is not reported or witnesses fail to provide evidence.

It is not only Islamic fundamentalists who see the mass media's concentration on deviant and criminal activities as contrary to what many in all communities think is appropriate and desirable behavior. Whatever the realities of social behavior and its origins and hostility to out-groups is surely a constant element, it is widely believed at all social levels that the constant presentation of violence in the mass media particularly that of mobs and of course its actual experience by children is damaging to the benign processes of child development.

Public repetitive misbehavior over political issues, the taking to the streets to express political dissent is scarcely uncommon. Illegal violence in and around sporting events is always a matter of public notice in what contestants and onlookers do which is either unlawful or illegal according to the rules of the game or clearly designed to promote or incite illegality.

While it may well be that the majority of people

in both public and private keep within the physical boundaries of acceptable social behavior and the formal requirements of legality, it is the obverse which receives attention. Bookings for bad behavior among professional footballers is commonplace and yet Sir Stanley Matthews the international footballer in some forty years of professional playing was never once booked for foul play.

The exposure of children to the influence of what we call mob culture rests on a number of interrelated factors. The editors of the mass media with their commercial obligations as gate-keepers of what is presented, the constant visual display on television and in newspapers of extreme behavior, the differences between fantasy presentations on television which children recognize as just that and those of events which are accepted as real from their own understandings of what goes on around them. The assumption by children that what is presented is true which it is in the sense that the camera records whatever it is pointed at and not the less newsworthy surroundings, and the presentation to the young in undigested forms from newspapers left lying around and the television always turned on is a parallel to being Marx's opium of the masses.

Perhaps more importantly the unattractiveness of the deliberate presentation of correct behavior since teaching is not normal behavior. The compulsory and wholesale teaching of the young by specially trained strangers is a new form of social behavior which has only become common in the last century, may well be experienced by children as a form of social and indeed stressful deviance.

The overall correlations to public as much as private verbal and physical violence may be that children learn to believe that aggressive attitudes and violent behavior are normal and acceptable in social environments where such activities are viewed as the way to get and maintain power and to solve problems. But above all this is the plain fact that all children are brought up in environments in which hostility to out-groups is basic to the understanding of behavior. Many traditional societies promote juvenile and adolescent groupings and competitiveness which in developed societies is confined to team sports. Modern societies do not channel this out-group hostility into approvable channels because it is part of political and religious dogma that

aggressive behavior can be eliminated by education and progress which is pragmatically an illusion.

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