



Advertising and children: what do the kids think?

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children

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Abstract

Purpose – To question the models of childhood implied within contemporary UK debate about advertising to children. The paper identifies a role for qualitative market research in establishing a more fully-articulated account of childhood, with implications for both policy makers and marketers.

Design/methodology/approach – A brief literature review of contemporary sociological perspectives on childhood informs an account of controversy in the UK about the legitimacy of advertising to children. Adult versions of childhood from this debate are contrasted with children's own accounts of their experience of advertising, drawing on a pilot study using informal qualitative methods.

Findings – Illuminates the assumptions about childhood which divide industry advocates from their critics, and suggests that qualitative understanding of children's experience of advertising should have a greater role in complementing the predominantly positivist research on which the debate draws.

Research limitations/implications – Limited to recent UK discourse on children and advertising (which may restrict its extendability to non-European cultures), and draws on a very small pilot study. This does, however, point the way to future research using informal methods.

Practical implications – Intended to enrich understanding of debate and policy on advertising and children, and to encourage the informed use of qualitative research in this area.

Originality/value – This paper fills a gap in the predominantly empirical or polemical literature in this area by setting competing arguments in an ontological framework.

Keywords Children (age groups), Advertising, Market research, United Kingdom

Paper type Conceptual paper

Advertising and children: what do the kids think?

Recent academic sociology has replaced the established understanding of children as adults-in-waiting with perspectives acknowledging them as agents in their own right (James and Prout, 1997; James *et al.*, 1998). At the same time, children have been enjoying an unprecedented level of attention from marketers and marketing researchers (Goodman and Dretzin, 2001; Schneider, 1987, cited in Kline, 1993, p. 18). Lifelong preferences form in childhood – making the early teens a crucial battleground for brand loyalty (Lowden, 1999). Furthermore, a number of exclusively child-oriented industries depend on a very brief window of opportunity.

Advertising to children arouses heated debate. Far from erecting a Potemkin Village to conceal their targeting of children, or enacting a sea change which might involve abandoning this controversial market, advertisers stoutly defend their right to “commercial free speech” (Earnshaw, 2001). They stress the benefits of consumer socialisation to render children “more comfortable in this commercial world” (Jackson, quoted in Swain, 2002). Against them stand industry critics, anxious to protect a vulnerable audience from a marketing machine which risks their well-being in its pursuit of profit (Dibb, 1993; Dalmeny *et al.*, 2003). The brevity of opportunity for



products and services aimed at children amplifies the intensity of attempts to reach them, particularly through TV advertising in children's programming.

However, children's programming represents less than 30 per cent of most children's overall viewing (although an industry commonplace is that advertising to children funds their programmes) (Ofcom, 2004). Children watch a great deal more than programmes created specifically for their age groups. Their experience of advertising (and of consumption) extends far beyond products and services aimed explicitly at them. Yet television advertising has an iconic significance for both sides of the debate as a peculiarly visible component of promotion aimed at children. This includes other media, the internet, "word of mouth" crazes, and product placement. It also includes the content of much programming aimed at children whether advertiser-supported or not (either through characters merchandised beyond the programme itself, or as editorial on products and services aimed at children). Television advertising is distinguished from the mix by the relative ease with which it can be isolated, regulated, or even removed.

This is a source of anxiety to the industry, if only because of the financial stakes involved. British children's spending accelerated dramatically in the last three years of the twentieth century (Marketing Business, 2000). Confectionery self-purchases grew from £280-350 million. Music and CDs bought by 11-16 year olds rose to £510 million, while clothes, the largest single category for the shopper of 16 or younger, were worth £660 million. These statistics suggest that children as consumers are hard at work on the project of self – using their growing financial resources to express themselves through hedonic consumption from an early age (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Prosaic essentials such as groceries, heating, accommodation and transport remain an adult responsibility. Thus the "consumer socialisation" argument does not quite capture reality, in spite of its considerable academic heritage (John, 1999). In fact children's induction into consumption promises an extension of childlike pleasure, rather than an initiation into adult rational choice.

Industry critics seek to expose the irresponsibility underlying this process. Recent controversy in the UK has turned on the role of television advertising in socialising obesity. Fuelled by serious concerns about an international "epidemic", pressure to ban "junk food" advertising in children's television programming is gaining political ground (Leonard, 2004). However much rational research cautions against too simplistic a linkage between promotional activity and children's food choices (Young, 2004), "commonsense" insists on their inseparability.

Convictions rather than evidence dominate this controversy. Fundamental to the position of either side are very different views not only of advertising, but of childhood itself. The objective of this article is to identify and analyse some of these views in the light of recent theoretical perspectives, and to argue that qualitative marketing research has an important role to play in establishing a more fully-articulated picture of childhood than has been acknowledged heretofore. This is particularly the case for research with children themselves, potentially giving them a voice which – to date – has been relatively under-represented in the debate.

Aries (1962) revealed childhood as an invention of mid-eighteenth century Europe. Qualified by later scholarship, his analysis of childhood as historically-situated has had a profound effect. Yet there is little sense that childhood is constructed or culturally-relative in recent UK controversy about advertising to children.

Table I charts some influential ways of imagining childhood, catalogued by James *et al.* (1998). They divide their categories into “Pre-Sociological” and “Sociological” reflecting the difference between the essentialist approaches of the first categories (which continue to inform conventional wisdom about children), and the acknowledgement by the second (more recent) set that childhood can only be properly examined through the lens of social theory.

The perspectives on childhood most apparent in current discourse on advertising and children derive exclusively from the pre-sociological formulations. The arguments and evidence mustered by the advertising industry and its critics depend on two broad understandings of childhood: grouped respectively around the naturally developing child and the innocent child. These are not the only formulations recognisable in the debate. For example, proponents of a particular cause, such as healthy eating, position children as a “Minority Group” oppressed by the marketing industry. But these two positions offer a useful starting point in looking behind the rhetoric to the versions of childhood being appropriated.

Innocent child

The innocent child motivates deeply-felt resistance to the commercialisation of children. Sleaford (2000) cites Monbiot (1998) in support of this view: “children’s advertising is the marketing of insecurity, a mission to generate self-consciousness among the only group of people who have, hitherto, been free from it.” Sleaford also cites Warner (1994) referring in even stronger terms to “the ultimate nightmare – not just the child as commodity, but the child as consumer...”. Warner’s hyperbole is telling. In a world of moral relativism, the innocence of children represents an ultimate, an ethical *ne plus ultra*.

The political incarnation of the innocent child is evident in the current Swedish ban on TV advertising to the under-12s, maintaining children as a “commercial-free zone”. The Swedish Minister for Education and Culture touches on the “Minority Group” view

Pre-Sociological child	Sociological child
<i>Evil child</i> : prone to evil as the sparks fly upwards – in need of correction and discipline	<i>Socially constructed child</i> : (a reaction to the absolute decrees of positivist sociologists) denies essential forms or constraints on childhood, but runs the risk of abandoning “real” children
<i>Innocent child</i> : naturally good because young and unspoilt by life’s compromises	<i>Tribal child</i> : treats children on their own terms, and their worlds as real locations
<i>Immanent child</i> : neither good nor bad, but shaped entirely by experience	<i>Minority group child</i> : a sociology for rather than of children, recognising the disservice done to them by social convention
<i>Naturally developing child</i> : the stuff of developmental psychology (which assumes that children are a “natural” – rather than social – phenomenon and that “development” is part of their natural characteristics)	<i>Social structural child</i> : defines childhood by what the common “space” children occupy in the structures of societies in general
<i>The unconscious child</i> : in the context of psychoanalysis, the root of adult psychic disorder	

Source: James *et al.* (1998)

Table I.

of childhood, drawing on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as she defines children as an “exposed group in society in need of special care and protection” (Ulvskog, 2001). Viewed as less experienced and more impressionable than adults, children need protection against harmful media content of all sorts. To the perplexity of the marketing industry, the seminar convened by the Swedish government in 2001 to address the issue of children and new media bracketed the harmful effects on children of advertising with those of media violence and pornography.

In any defence of the innocent child, its shadow the evil child is never far away. Prone to wickedness, the evil child needs shielding from the urgings of advertising. Buckingham (1997) develops the idea of the child as “other”, categorised (in a way familiar to students of media effects literature) alongside the insane, the criminal and the socially-inadequate as particularly susceptible to depictions of violence in the media. Buckingham’s analysis, prompted by the moral panic following the 1993 James Bulger tragedy, does not mention advertising. But his account of childhood vulnerability as an example of dominant ideology is highly relevant to the advertising and children controversy:

Children are largely defined here in terms of what they *lack* – that is, in terms of their inability (or unwillingness) to conform to adult norms. While this lack can be perceived in “positive” terms – as a form of innocence, an absence of guile or artifice, a child-like charm – such formulations are often merely patronising. Relative to adults, children are seen to lack the knowledge, the experience and the intellectual capacities that would entitle them to social power. (Buckingham, 1997, p. 33).

Protecting the innocent child from advertising thus conceals an impulse to protect ourselves as adults against the pester power of the evil child, obese with junk food, wild-eyed with video-game violence, rabid for the latest playground craze.

Elsewhere, Buckingham (2000, p. 11) cites an analysis of moral panics in late twentieth century Britain (Jenkins, 1992) showing how a variety of campaigners have exercised a “politics of substitution” by re-profiling their causes around the figure of the threatened child (or “Minority Group Child” in James *et al.*’s typology). Thus concerns about deviant sexuality become redefined as concerns about paedophilia, or concerns about pornography are transferred to child-pornography. As Buckingham points out, whatever the merits of the arguments concerned, this political appropriation of children at risk makes it difficult to oppose the causes involved without appearing to be hostile to children.

Thus, objecting to advertising to children can be read as a form of political substitution for objecting to advertising in general. Winston Fletcher, a robust defender of advertising, dismisses such protesters as “balaclava bolshies” whose agenda is resolutely anti-business (Earnshaw, 2002). Indeed, anti-capitalists as depicted by Klein (2000) might well identify with this faintly childlike image. Their playful strategies of culture-jamming and ironic consumption subvert advertising’s interpellation of consumers as children rather than as rational adults. Adult unease at this derives to some extent from the figure of the “Unconscious Child” – the unruly and potentially destructive “id” whose desires, fanned by the marketing and advertising industry, threaten the autonomy and self-determination on which adulthood rests. In this sense, protecting children from advertising protects adults in two largely

unacknowledged ways: from the pesterings of the external “Evil child”, and from the more insidious demands of the “Unconscious child” within.

Naturally developing child

The second broad understanding of childhood discernable in the debate is the naturally developing child. The Swedish ban on television advertising to children was inspired by the findings of a 1995 literature review which concluded that only by the age of 12 could children be guaranteed to have developed an understanding of the persuasive purposes of advertising (Edling, 1999). In spite of the UK television regulator’s definition of children as “people of 15 and under” (Ofcom, 2003), the lower figure recurs in defences of advertising to children as the age of reason (Brown, 2004). The review’s author, Dr Erling Bjurström, has since claimed to have been misinterpreted (Brabbs, 2000) but age-related cognitive development in younger children is still seen as crucial by industry defenders. The naturally developing child is thus pitted against the innocent child by the pro-advertising lobby. Children’s understanding of advertising, runs their argument, is part of their natural development. Sacrificing it to an unrealistic ideal of innocence by removing advertising may, in these terms, be prejudicial to child welfare by removing an important source of consumer socialisation.

In the 1930s, Jean Piaget developed the classic formulation of the naturally developing child from work with his own children. He discerned four stages in their cognitive development:

- (1) sensori-motor (first 2 years);
- (2) pre-operational (from 2 to 7)
- (3) concrete operational (from 7 to 10).
- (4) formal operational (10 onwards)(Meadows, 1987).

The crucial stages for the advertising debate are the pre-operational and concrete operational. Cognitive development theory has it that pre-operational children are unaware of perspectives on the world other than their own. At the mercy of their immediate perceptions, they accept things at face value, seeing an advertisement as a kind of public information broadcast. By the concrete operational stage, however, their thinking becomes more structured and they become capable of understanding that the world is not always as it appears. This allows them to become aware of the persuasive intent of advertising.

Early studies of television advertising and children revealed a fit with this model, and were used by American psychologists to lobby the Federal Trade Commission for restrictions on toy advertising in the 1970s (Cohen, 1999). The initiative is chronicled in detail by Liebert and Sprafkin (1988), who reflect darkly on its defeat by a powerful advertising industry under the guise of self-regulation. In spite of the fact that UK references to it are rare, the American case offers many parallels: the entrenched positions (and mutual distrust) of the participants, the variety of research findings available to support different views, and the focus on cognitive development as a paradigm.

Cognitive psychology is a particularly sympathetic approach for advertisers keen to justify their activities, because it represents the most ethically-respectable version of how advertising works. According to the cognitive model, we think about our decisions

before we make them. Thus advertising offers us ideas and information, which we process and evaluate in order to make rational choices. Brown (2004) defends advertising to children on just such cognitive grounds: "Children are young consumers, interested in making choices and needing information about them".

The rival psychological school of behaviourism is less flattering to our intelligence. It holds that we react to stimuli rather than evaluating information or arguments. The resulting model of advertising is manipulation. By offering the appropriate cue, the advertiser can elicit the required reaction. Such a model has clear regulatory implications. Indeed – as suggested in the discussion of the unconscious child earlier – it effectively dissolves the difference between adults and children, making us all susceptible to unscrupulous string-pullers.

Research which founds itself on cognitive processes, therefore, has an intrinsic attraction for advertisers. If Bjurström (1995) is the reluctant champion of the anti-advertising camp, the UK industry liberals have found a match for him in Professor Brian Young of Exeter University. The author of a standard study of advertising to children (Young, 1990), his findings suggest that significant numbers of children below the age of 12 understand the commercial process and persuasive nature of advertising.

Research into cognitive development in children presents some interesting methodological problems. Younger children's lack of linguistic facility, for example, may lead researchers to underestimate their actual appreciation of the meaning and intention of advertisements. Donohue *et al.* (1980) recorded much increased levels of understanding of television commercials amongst younger children by using a non-verbal response mechanism. After viewing the commercials the children pointed to pictures of people buying the product rather than pictures of people watching TV. Professor Young's research, reported to the British Psychological Association in 1998, included re-editing a face cream commercial (Cohen, 1999). Two endings were shot – one showing how the cream made you more beautiful, the other demonstrating how it gave you impressive but unsightly spots. Most of the children (aged four to eight) realised that something was wrong with the second version, but only the older children pointed out that it would not sell much face cream. Young's conclusion was that children's understanding of the purpose of advertising grows as part of their cognitive development. Even though the younger children demonstrated an incomplete appreciation of this, the others were well aware of it at a much younger age than Swedish legislation acknowledges.

While it makes the Swedish ban look extreme, this research suggests that children (particularly younger ones) need some kind of protection from advertising. Otherwise their "inexperience or their natural credulity and sense of loyalty" (Ofcom, 2003) will be exploited. The result, it is implied, would be to make them want inappropriate or unnecessary things – creating feelings of inadequacy and frustration, and promoting aggression or antagonism towards parents or carers. But does an awareness of what advertising is trying to do necessarily promote the ability to resist it? A cognitive approach would say yes, but cognitive approaches emphasise advertising's rational, persuasive role in a way which is sometimes hard to square with our actual experience of it. It could be argued that cognitive skills are not the only defence against advertising. Achenreiner and John (2003) demonstrate that the "conceptual" impact of brand names on children actually increases with their cognitive development –

making them more susceptible to symbolic influence. Emotional competence is just as important as cognitive ability in dealing with advertising.

Nevertheless, the need to find “scientific” evidence to back up positions in the debate confirms the importance of the naturally developing child to both sides of the argument. Brown (2001) throws down an empirical challenge to advertising’s opponents: “Those who wish to impose prohibitions must provide evidence to justify their case – they can’t, which is why this debate too often is elevated to an emotional one of an intuitive view of ethics and the protection of vulnerable groups.” But the complexity of what children are, and the role which television advertising plays in their lives, risks being lost in the quest for positive, empirical, scientific proof to back up arguments being conducted by adults on their behalf. Qualitative research, with its capacity “to document the world from the point of view of the people studied” (Hammersley, 1992, p. 165) holds out the prospect of redressing this balance.

The tribal child

The concept of the “actual audience” (Ang, 1991), the audience as “ever-more multifaceted, fragmented and diversified repertoire of practices and experiences” surely finds one of its most vivid embodiments in children watching (or not) television commercials. This perspective on the audience is now taken for granted in media and cultural studies, and has reached marketing (Elliott, 1999) yet it is curiously absent from the debate about children and advertising – perhaps because it resists the search for unequivocal evidence by either side. The version of childhood that corresponds to this kind of resistant but realistic audience is the tribal child, for whom television watching in general is part of a culture which adults can only guess at, unless they want to start listening to children more seriously in their research. Davies *et al.* (2000, p. 21) explore the gulf between the kind of television which children like watching, and what the rest of the world considers they ought to like watching. Their focus is on programming rather than advertising. But they make a discovery highly applicable to how children view (and use) commercials: “children’s assertion of their own tastes necessarily entail a form of ‘identity work’ – a positioning of the self in terms of publicly available discourses and categories.”

As a way of imagining childhood, the “Tribal Child” owes its genesis to qualitative research traditions such as the classic ethnography of Opie and Opie (1959) which established a picture of children on their own terms. Mayall (1994) calls this “children’s childhoods”. By emphasising children’s own roles in constructing their childhoods, it gives a more active account of childhood than the alternative of “Socially-Constructed Child”, and is more fully-dimensioned than the “Minority Group Child”. It shares with the “Social-Structural Child” (James *et al.*’s fourth variety of “Sociological Child”) an affirmation of the self-sufficiency of the world of childhood rather than its deficit compared to the adult world. But, deriving from “insider accounts” of childhood, the “Tribal Child” offers a more finely-grained perspective than the large-scale social-structural alternative.

Achieving a sense of how children engage with television advertising is difficult. Quite apart from getting them to talk about it, or observe them doing it, there is the ethical question of getting their consent and that of their parents or guardians,

and the practical question of getting access to them in a reasonably natural setting (Lewis and Lindsay, 2000). Much of the research into children and advertising discussed by Liebert and Sprafkin (1988) took place in an institutional context (e.g. summer camp or school). I wanted to use a domestic setting in order to explore attitudes more naturally and informally. The chance came with a sleepover involving my two smallest sons respective best friends. Research using family members (in spite of Piaget's example) is, of course, rife with ethical complications. The friends parents gave consent for me to interview them using a tape recorder, and I explained to the children themselves that I would be very grateful if they could help me by spending some time talking about television advertising. I divided them into friendship pairs – one of two 8 year olds, the other of two 9 year olds, and conducted two interviews – one after the other. After some general questions about advertising, I showed them a commercial break from airtime in a rolling format show linking cartoons appropriate to their age group (Appendix). I watched them and recorded their speech while they watched it, and asked them questions about the ads after they had seen the break. The interviews, about 15 minutes each, concluded with a few more questions and the final reward of some confectionery (at least one confirmed example of unhealthy eating as a consequence of exposure to television advertising). The idea of a reward for participation proved an important one – I was not prepared for how boring the children would find the process.

The advantage of this domestic approach was that it offered a reasonably natural environment, and allowed comparisons to be made between the older and younger viewers. In the event the methodology also had a number of weaknesses. Audio recording turned out to be difficult in itself because of the level of the children's voices, and observation was limited by the need for them to watch the material as unselfconsciously as possible. The lag between the recording of the commercials and the interviews meant that references to film tie-ins (an important part of advertising to children) were out of date. The decision to select an entire break was driven by the desire to see how advertisements were experienced in context rather than separately. But it neglected the programming environment which could, of course, affect the mood in which the material was received. These are useful pointers to future data gathering, e.g. more careful microphone placement, and mechanical observation of researchers and participants engaging with television (and each other) in real time over a considerably longer, and less structured, period of activity.

The children told me about their favourite ads to begin with, revealing that the level of their enjoyment had little to do with either their interest in the product or their understanding of the advertisement itself.

Interviewer: What adverts do you like?

Julio: [sings current Halifax building society ad jingle – TOM joins in. Both boys sing it happily with a sense of enjoyment and irony]

Julio: ...*Terms and Conditions Apply*. That's a good one.

Interviewer: What's it for?

Tom: I don't know... Halifax.

Julio: Yes Halifax.

Interviewer: Do you know what “terms and conditions apply” means?

Julio: No.

Interviewer: Why do you like that advert?

Julio: Because it’s a good tune. (eight-year-olds)

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On one level the children are appropriating such advertising for their own enjoyment – they are tangential to the marketing intent of the campaign in question. On another level they become a kind of social sounding board for it – adopting catchphrases or jingles into their playground culture in a way which promises the material (or part of it) a more general diffusion into culture at large. Television advertising – whatever its intended target – is also harnessed as a parlour game where you win by knowing (or being able to remember) what the advertisement is for:

Julio: You’ve got to guess, you’ve got to guess when they come on. (eight-year-old)

Arguably this is an illustration of cognitive processes at work, but not related to interpreting or evaluating the message – just playing with it as a tribal activity. On the other hand, there was also quite detailed recall of advertising directed at children as a segment. Interestingly (in view of the idea of an early initiation into the project of self) one of the most extended passages of recall concerned grooming products aimed at children:

Roy: Like this l’Oreal thing where they show these shampoos and styling gel for these children, em like, there, these shampoos that don’t hurt your eyes, children’s eyes. And they’ve got this children’s styling gel. (nine-year-old)

Playing the videotaped commercial break evoked active responses and discussion between the children as they watched it. The Kelloggs Variety commercial had both pairs singing along – with the same kind of ironic enjoyment displayed in the younger children’s spontaneous rendition of the Halifax jingle (... *terms and conditions apply*). The Barbie commercial was greeted with scornful disgust, which perhaps muted the boys response to the ATB Quad bike ad which followed it immediately. Talking about the Action Man advertisement after the break, revealed that in spite of adhering to the industry wisdom of “fast-paced, fast-action programmes” (Murray, cited in Cohen, 1999) the ad’s style had not succeeded in engaging the older boys’ attention:

Interviewer: How could they have made the advert more interesting? What happened in the advert again?

Roy: Well, what it does, is he starts off climbing a mountain. And then he ends up skating, then he chops these icicle things, and then he pushes X off a cliff. It would be better if he actually killed him.

Interviewer: How would he kill him?

Roy: By getting a shotgun and shooting a bullet in his head. (nine-year-old)

Roy’s Tribal ending is violent, powerful and extreme – rather like the games of cowboys and Indians, or cops and robbers, into which the Action Man brand has

ventured in product extensions. Possibly, Roy's Tribal response resists the attempt of the brand to colonise this traditional playground territory.

The children used advertising to situate themselves and others in their social hierarchy and as a source of gender solidarity. Discussions of the advertising aimed at girls was particularly dismissive. Age differences were important too – with a sense of the appropriateness of particular toys for particular ages:

Alan: Action Man is about, 7, or 6.

Roy: That Playmobil and car thing would be about 8-12. Maybe. (nine-year-olds)

The hostility displayed even by seven-year olds to television advertising is something which researchers have commented on (Griffiths, cited in Cohen, 1999) and the interview with the older pair bore this out. Commenting on the Playmobil ad, the nine-year olds were cynical:

Interviewer: What did you think of those two kids?

Roy: I don't like it how they always go "WOW!" and then, when you see it, one of these morphing things, and then quickly speeding it up and then when you actually get it then it takes ages to do it.

Interviewer: They're not that good then?

Roy: They're all right

Interviewer: What do you think those two kids were called in the advert?

Alan: Dumb and dumber. Sad and sadder. (nine-year-olds)

This was one of several instances in the interviews with both pairs where the children displayed amused contempt for the advertising – a telling piece of consumer socialisation itself.

The most recently-publicised Advertising Association figures claim an increase in public approval rates for advertising in the UK to over 75 per cent at the millennium (Advertising Association, 2000). This still leaves something like one in four adults as indifferent at best. In research carried out at almost the same time, the Chartered Institute of Marketing found that 17 per cent of adults agreed that advertising to children should be banned, and 75 per cent wanted more restrictive regulation (Marketing Business, 2000). More recently 73 per cent of respondents wanted a ban on advertising "junk food" and sweets to children (Kings Fund, 2004). To some extent this is a research effect from quantitative survey interviews. The more reflective technique of qualitative research yields more complex answers. Parents in a 1998 qualitative survey acknowledged that media (including advertising) was an influence for good as well as for bad in their children's lives, having responded far more negatively to an initial quantitative survey questionnaire (McCarraher, 1999).

In conclusion, to adopt a metaphor in keeping with the tribal child, advertisers are folk devils for both children and adults. On the one hand, they are the high priests of showy rituals of consumption, on the other they are objects of terror and blame for moral discomfort with aspects of consumer culture. Ironically, perhaps the greatest threat they present to children's welfare is as an adult distraction. Exorcising the folk

devils of the advertising industry may let policy makers off the hook of solving less emotive but more fundamental problems which disadvantage children.

Using qualitative methods to map the world of children, including their consumer behaviour, may yield more insight into questions about advertising and children than any amount of positivist empirical research. There is a need for fresh work in this area (Moore, 2004). Marketing researchers and academics have an opportunity to respond through choosing methodologies which aim to meet children on their own territory, as participants and even as co-researchers (Warren, 2000). Used unreflectively such techniques risk destroying the very world they explore through incursion and control. But used empathetically and cooperatively they have the potential not only to inform policy but also to help develop products, services and, indeed, advertising which reflect and respond to children's authentic needs and wants.

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Appendix

List of TV commercials on Videotape (recorded 16 December 2000, Yorkshire Television, during *Diggit*)

- Action Man (Ice Extreme)
- Kelloggs Variety
- McDonalds: 102 Dalmations offer

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- Playmobil Space Adventures
- Titan Tron Live
- Super Makeover Creation
- Princess Bride Barbie
- Majorette ATB Quad
- Tigertoys Interactive E.T.

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