

KIDS AND SPACE IN THE PUERTO RICAN HIGHLANDS

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ABSTRACT. The spatial world of the child comprises two great realms, “in” and “out,” more or less corresponding to the great behavioral domains of “got to” and “doing nothing.” Within the “got-to” domain—and thus “in”—are home, school, and other loci of secure, stable authority. Included in “doing nothing”—and so “out”—are street and yard, field and stream, pool hall and movie theater, the spaces of games, things to do, and really doing nothing. This study looks at the shifting relationships of these realms across the life cycle of kids in the highlands of Puerto Rico in 1969–1970. *Keywords:* children, Puerto Rico, spatial world.

Despite the recent publication of important geographies of children by Stuart Aitken (2001) and Cindi Katz (2004), the spatial and temporal worlds of children remain essentially unmapped. My aspiration here is to help remediate this situation by putting on record some observations I made in the late 1960s about a group of children living in a *caserío* (public housing project) in Barranquitas, in central Puerto Rico. This is the third in a series of articles about these children. The first focused on the kites the kids made (Wood 1982); the second described four encompassing behavioral domains: “got to,” “something to do,” “doing nothing,” and “nothing to do,” a typology inspired by the great if underappreciated work of Robert Paul Smith, “*Where Did You Go?*” “*Out.*” “*What Did You Do?*” “*Nothing*” (Smith 1957; see also Wood 1985a, 1985b).

The “got to’s” are things kids have to do: They have to go in, they have to eat, they have to go to bed, they have to go to school. The “somethings” are more or less self-willed: organized sports, going with friends to a movie, dating. “Doing nothing” is almost unwilling and includes wandering around, fooling about, and hanging out. “Nothing to do” refers to a sense of emptiness, a kind of lassitude, a sinking down exhaustion of the spirits.

In this article I explore where these behaviors took place. In general the “got to’s” took place “in” (and usually inside), the “somethings” took place “someplace,” and “doing nothing” took place “out” (if not always outside). “Nothing to do” could overwhelm one anywhere, but invariably it implied there was “nowhere to go.” I begin with a brief description of the setting and then distinguish “in” from “out” along phenomenological, spatial, and temporal dimensions. “In” has received limited attention in geographical studies of children’s behavior, even though most of a child’s life unfolds in it. I document this fact first by glancing at studies of children’s time budgets amassed in a number of settings over the past thirty years by anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists and then by demonstrating how closely the behaviors of the Barranquitas kids conform to these stable and cross-cultural, if far from universal, norms. I then look at “doing nothing” / “out,” where I focus on the expansion of “out” with increasing age, especially for boys. Finally, I turn briefly

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to the “someplace’s” and the experience of “nowhere to go,” and I model the relationships among the four characteristic spaces.

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, AND HOW

In 1969–1970 I lived in Barranquitas with Ingrid Wood; she and I did this work together. We were both experienced field-workers, but we also hired neighbors, especially children, to help us with many tasks, although, because our project was entirely self-supported, we hired fewer than we wished. There were always plenty of volunteers. At the time Barranquitas was a small, classically Latin American town of 7,000 inhabitants, its white buildings spilling down the sides of green hills in the central highlands of Puerto Rico, its Catholic church towering over the plaza (Figure 1). The plaza had benches on which men sat to have their shoes shined, and teenagers hung out there after school. A good hour’s drive from the capital city, San Juan, Barranquitas was a minor commercial center for a disintegrating agricultural hinterland still based on a variety of minor crops, coffee, and tobacco.

The local economy had been under assault from international capital for years, and in the flight from their farms many rural residents ended up in Barranquitas. They made homes in the squatter settlements of Alemania, El Amparo, and La Perla on the edges of town or in the slums of Calle del Río and Calle Abajo along the R o Barranquitas a stone’s throw from the central plaza. In 1950 Robert Manners counted 190 shacks and houses here in an area 150 yards by 20–25 (1956, 102). In the ensuing years these slums became increasingly crowded, and in 1963–1964 some of the people living in them moved into a new caserío. Although officially named “La Villa Universitaria,” because it was the only public housing project in town it became known as the “*caserío*.” For numerous reasons the caserío had been constructed outside town, where the country still came up to the back door. It was physically isolated, invisible from town, and almost all traffic between it and the rest of Barranquitas—and all vehicular traffic—moved along a single road, Calle Villa Universitaria (Figure 2).

THE CASERÍO

The residents of the caserío were socially isolated as well, despite many family and other ties to Barranquitas and throughout the countryside. Never participants in the political life of Barranquitas as commercial center, in moving to the caserío the residents also severed the bonds that had connected them to the life of the squatter settlements and slums. There were distinctions. Whereas Calle del Río had only public pumps and public baths, in the caserío every apartment had hot and cold running water, two sinks, a shower, and a toilet. Whereas Calle Abajo had no electricity, the caserío residents had ranges, television sets, radios, stereos, and electric lights at night. The social pretension about living in the caserío was almost palpable, although despair was expressed for a life lost. “In the caserío,” residents would lament, “people are nasty: They gossip and fight and try to live better than they are.” Some people could not stand it and moved back to the slums. Others moved up to prefabricated



FIG. 1—An aerial view of Barranquitas, Puerto Rico in 1970, looking southward. The middle school with its ballfield is in the lower right-hand corner. To its left are the slums of Calle del Río and Río Abajo. Uphill from these, the Catholic church sits on the plaza. The road south out of town in the upper left is Calle Villa Universitaria. The eleven apartment buildings of the caserío are to its right. The then-new casitas wrap around the kite field. (Photograph by Jeremy H. Anderson; reproduced courtesy of Eric V. Anderson)

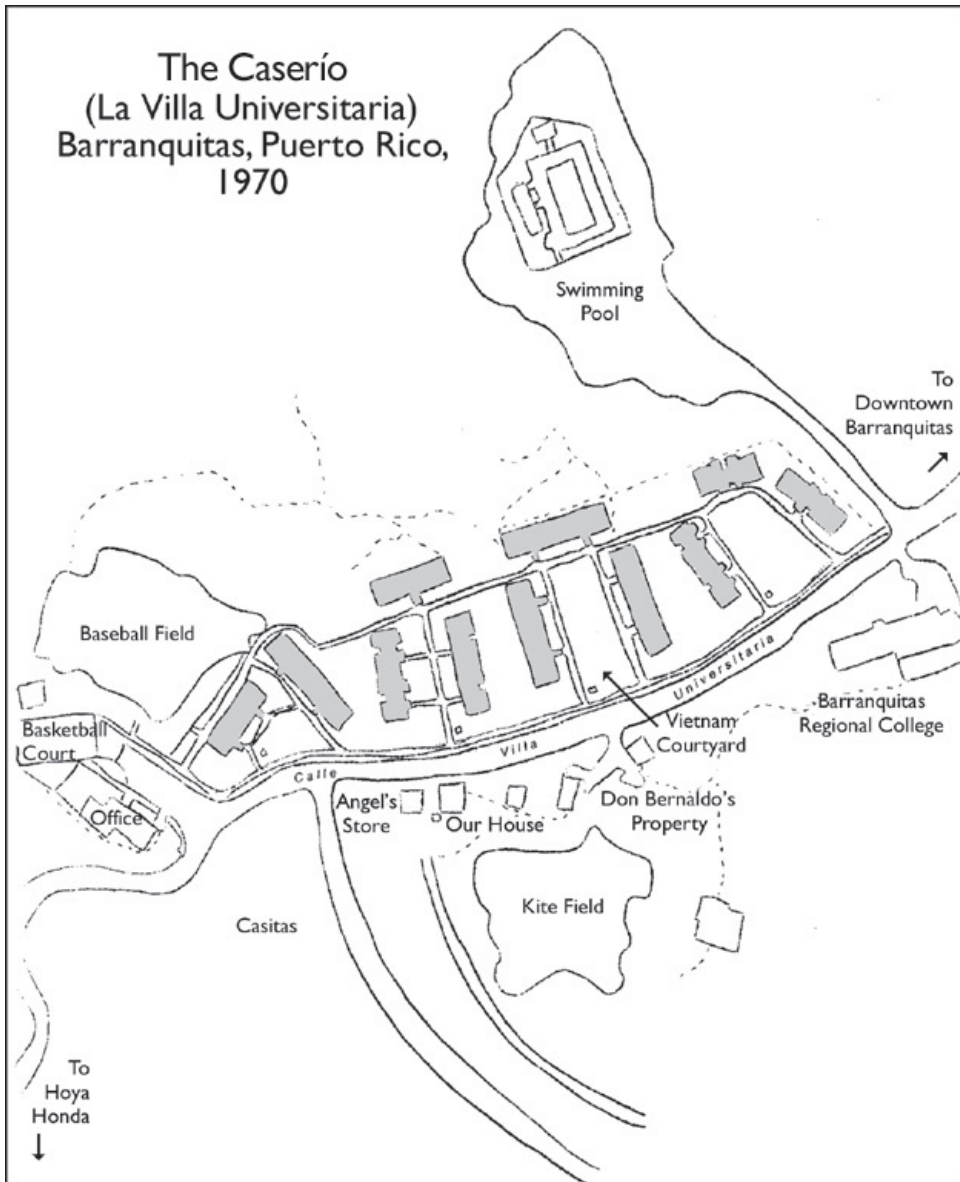


FIG. 2—Sketch map of the caserío in 1970, with its eleven apartment buildings shaded, in Barranquitas, Puerto Rico. Its face was to the street, Calle Villa Universitaria; its rear, to the burned lands, brush, and woods. (Cartography by the author)

housing in Bayamón, the island's second largest city, some 27 miles to the northeast, or on to the mainland United States with its impossible dream. Other people moved back and forth, in and out. A large number of families stayed, and they formed the stable heart of this crazy place to which those who moved, no matter where or why they went, often came back, if only to visit (Amaral 1977, 318–319).

After the caserío opened, people began moving in directly from the countryside, bypassing the urban slums. By 1970 more than half of the caserío's residents had never lived in Barranquitas. Many of these retained a semblance of their previous lives. Some men, for instance, continued to work part-time on nearby farms or farmed small plots of public or marginal land nearby. Others took part-time jobs in Barranquitas or worked on the ephemeral construction crews that passed through the region. Few had full-time jobs, and most of these, like the peddling of lottery tickets, were tenuous ways to make a living. Most took whatever work they could wherever they could find it. Even the stable heart of this subculture was none too stable.

THE KIDS

At once least stable and most stable were the kids, least because they grew up and moved on, most because, having spent most of their lives here and having lived through what was at the time most of the life of the caserío, they most thoroughly embodied its growing traditions of where to do what and when and how, unconfused by memories of other places. If most of these traditions had come with their parents from the countryside, for the kids they were nevertheless caserío traditions. For most of them, this was the world (Opie and Opie 2001, 8).

In February 1970, 329 of the people living in the caserío were under the age of nineteen. A few of these were effectively adults, but most were kids. Their median age was eight, and many had spent all their lives in the caserío; 169 were boys and 160, girls. Most of the school-age kids went to school, and all of those between the ages of five and fifteen did. When they reached fifteen all sorts of things began to happen. Some of them dropped out of school and hung around; others went to live with grandparents or their married brothers or sisters elsewhere in Puerto Rico or on the mainland. When they were old enough, they joined the army or got married. A few stayed in school and lived at home. Only 7 percent of the caserío's kids were over the age of fifteen. There was little reason for older kids to stick around (see Katz 1991, 508).

Younger kids were everywhere, vibrant, alive, loved, loving, active. Kids were important in the caserío. One young father, explaining why he didn't want his wife to have a hysterectomy, put it this way: "That wouldn't be any life—with no babies!" He wanted to have young kids in his home when he was an old man. He liked their noise and their questions. He liked holding them and laughing with and at them. Robert Manners might have been describing life for the young child in the caserío when he wrote of the rural child outside Barranquitas that: "There are few toys for the baby, and his principal play contacts are the older children and adults who spend hours holding him, fondling him, laughing at his first efforts at walking and talking" (1956, 145).

At any age kids in the caserío have less work to do than do their peers in the countryside, but still "all children are expected to keep themselves available for work if needed" (Manners 1956, 145). No one ever grumbled when sent on an errand or

demurred even when requested to help in so serious and prolonged a task as bagging coffee-berry hulls. Physical skills, appropriate social behavior, personal cleanliness, and honesty were more important than school skills. Most early play was imitative of adult behavior, often with adult tools. It was still the case, as Manners wrote, that “a three-year-old can peel a mango with a carving knife. A six-year-old can handle a hoe adequately enough to have his labor valued, and usually knows how to use a machete. Breakable objects like eggs and spillable ones like open bottles of kerosene are entrusted to four- or five-year-olds to be carried” (p. 145). Most parents wanted to see only good report cards, yet few had any way of imagining how to make sure that happened (Bourne and Bourne 1966).

Unencumbered by farm chores or pressures to do homework, the caserío's kids had lots of time to do nothing at all. Nor did this diminish significantly with age. Except for preschoolers, kids of all ages had equal portions of the day at their discretion. Girls, for whom there were many chores boys were not expected to perform, had less discretionary time and energy, but even they had plenty. Of course there was the work a kid did to make money, shining shoes down at the plaza, crating live chickens for local farmers, doing minor chores for local shopkeepers, washing cars for neighbors, and running errands; and beyond this was the endlessness of sports and games. Baseball and basketball were extremely popular. So was running. But lots of time remained for doing nothing: hanging around with each other, hanging around adults figuring out what to do next, exploring, gathering fruit, playing house, fishing, building huts, collecting herbs, making soapbox racers, playing Store, cooking out, reading comic books, swimming, playing in the dirt, singing, dancing, playing the guitar, fighting with wooden swords, spinning tops, and generally messing around—on the street; in another boy's apartment; up at Barranquitas Regional College; down by the creek; wherever; and everywhere.

“IN” AND “OUT”

“Everywhere,” yes, but not everywhere all at once. Sometimes with all the kids it's easy to forget this, like Sunday morning, when they're all out at once and the place is crawling with them: young kids fetching and carting from Junior's; older ones, Johnny maybe and Guaro, hanging around on Junior's stoop joking and gossiping with people coming in and out; Ricky and Rosey and Rocky and Rita in the courtyard across the street, hands joined in a circle, singing; Carmen and Josefina jumping rope on the sidewalk; Popolo in the street, his head under the hood of his car; Victor and Aníbal sling-shooting their way into the woods beyond the field; Stella, arms crossed on the railing of her porch, looking on; the chatter, the high voices, the gesturing, the calls for attention, the seamless animation. Then “everywhere” seems right. There is no place you can look and not see a kid.

But Sunday night, pushing Monday morning hard, there's no place you can look and see a kid, unless it's yours and it's gotten you up or you share a bedroom with it. In the middle of the night you can walk through the caserío and, except for the broken swing set and the hopscotch squares chalked on the walk and the tricycle

left near the stairwell, imagine no kids lived there at all. They're all . . . in; they're all . . . in bed. And the next day they're off to school, most of them anyway. Some of the youngest walked downtown to La Urbana elementary school; others were bused to the other elementary school, El Portón. The older kids walked to La Intermedia at the south edge of town or Superior on the road to Narajito.

And then they come home and pretty soon they're all over the place again, and after the lazy quiet of the early afternoon "everywhere" seems right again: They're in your hair, and sometimes the noise is enough to drive you crazy. The maps in Figure 3 try to capture some of this, the sense of breathing, every morning the caserío exhaling its children, every afternoon sucking them in again (and holding its breath on the weekends). Where kids are depends on when you look for them, and the when is as important as the where.

It also depends on your point of view. "Out" to a child is not the same thing as "outside" to an adult; and when a child says "in" she doesn't necessarily mean under a roof. "Outside" and "inside" as in, "You've been inside all morning, little dream of my heart. Don't you want to go outside and play?" are adult divisions of the world, at once too abstract and too general to have much use for kids, whose world is both more concrete and much more particular. Besides, even parents don't care that you've been inside a friend's house when you've been out past the time to come in.

"OUT" ISN'T HOME, "IN" IS

And that's it precisely. It's not outside—that is, outdoors, salubrious, running around getting color in your cheeks—it's "out," or "not in." "Out" can mean "in Guaro's living room watching Saturday morning cartoons," "hanging around the auto-body shop watching Cano weld a frame back together," or "under the porch with Stella and Edna" just as surely as it can mean "picking raspberries in Hoya Honda," "playing baseball down at the field," or "just playing." Unlike "outside," which means to be "not under cover" wherever in the world (which is universal, which is tied to no frame), "out" is defined on a unique and unitary center: home. In a way, at least to begin with, "in" is home, and "out" isn't.

Except for the handful of named places—church, the swimming pool, the theater—that's it. This sounds simple, but it's not. For one thing, it's not all that easy to say what "home" is: "I thought I told you to stick around the house!" "Ay, Mamá! I was only over Tomasito's!" But when I say it's not all that easy, I don't really mean as a function of the ambiguity surrounding the extent of "home." Although "in" and "out" meet—merge?—at the outer edge of "home" and are relatively codefined there, the outer edge of "out" is another story, feathering out into...into what? Into the unexperienced world, into the "out" beyond out.

For another thing, it's not just spatial, and by this I don't mean that it's temporal in the trivial sense that different things happen at different times; kids are in at night. I mean that at different times of the day, week, and year, and at different stages in life, "in" and "out" mean different things. "In by 8:00" means "inside the

house" for a five-year-old, "around" for a ten-year-old, and, unless he's being punished, probably nothing at all for a fifteen-year-old. In the middle of a Saturday morning, "out" can mean just about anywhere, but in the evening before a school day it means around the house. In general, the older the kid, the farther out the outer edge of "out" and the later at night "in" gets (though this is different for girls and boys and depends on where the home is). But there are always so many local peculiarities that moving around for a child inevitably involves the navigation of a complex and dynamic field whose size is continually changing but whose energy is derived from the home (Lewin 1951, 136–138). Or, more precisely, whose energy is derived from the eating, cleansing, sleeping, and rest of the things home is most about.

Without accepting that the field is grounded in the home, there can be no comprehension of the time and space of the child, for just as the obligatory has been shown to give shape to behavior, so the obligatory must be understood as the prime mover animating and sculpting the field in which this behavior unfolds (Wood 1985a; Wood and Beck 1990, 1994; Beck and Wood 1993). The edges of "in" and "out" may be defined by parents and kids in a bewildering variety of compromises, pleas, threats, bargains, promises, and more or less intentional misunderstandings, but by and large they are worked out with respect to the "got to's," all of them, the helping around the house and the chores and the going to school, but centrally, day after day, year after year, the eating, the bathing, the changing of clothes, the coming inside to go to bed (Roberts and Stefani 1949, 89; Manners 1956, 145).

Nor is it mainly the routine of it. It's the energy that flows from the "got to's." It's like one of those paddles with a ball attached to it by a rubber band: The kid eats breakfast—whack!—and like the ball out he goes to do nothing to whatever limit has been set; and then in for lunch—whack!—and then out to do nothing some more; and then in for a shower—whack!—and then out again; and in—whack!—and out, and in—whack!—parents and children paddling the ball, sending it out as far as it's possible to go without breaking the elastic—launched that far by the parent-house-energy-metronome, tugged that far by the child-roaming-energy-consuming-nothing-doer—out, outt, outttttt, then in, in, in—whack!—the energy and the rhythm no more than different faces of a single metabolic nature, rooted in eating and resting and love, branching out into everything the child does, the beans bubbling on the stove at home, the stomach growling in the body, "Gotta go, guys," tossing in the ball, handing someone else his glove, heading in, inn, innnnn, ladling the beans into the bowl, eating, chatting, watching a little television, and then—whack!—out again. And then back in.

HOME ENERGIZES THE FIELD

It's as though the home were a great gravitational mass, warping the surface of the child's world as a star warps the space-time surface a planet moves on, the star pulling the planet in just as the elastic on the paddle-ball does. Any movement on the field of "out" is constrained by the attractive power of home to pull the child in,

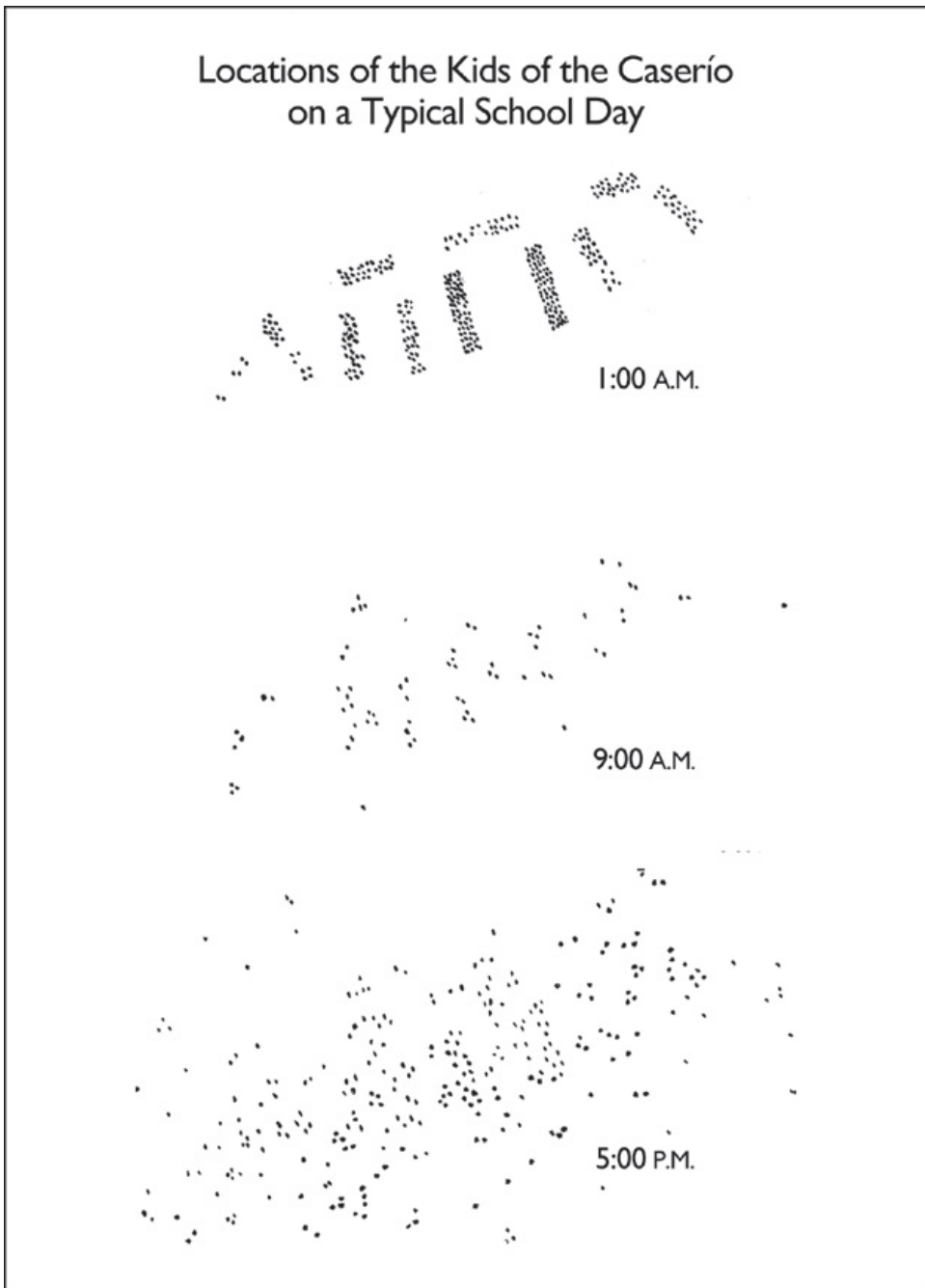


FIG. 3—Where the kids were in the caserío at different times on a typical school day in the spring of 1970. At 1:00 A.M. (*top*) they were all in bed in the apartment complex. By 9:00 A.M. (*middle*) most of the school-age kids had gone to school. At 5:00 P.M. (*bottom*) most of the kids were “around” the caserío, many of them in their apartment and perhaps one-tenth in Hoya Honda or downtown Barranquitas. (Cartography by the author)

but only to reenergize it so it can move back out again. The key is to understand the home as less a place than a source of energy. Homes, after all, move around, they divide, they replicate themselves. Home moves when the family does, from Calle del Río or Quebrada Grande, for instance, to the caserío, and then again off somewhere else. Home can fragment, as when a father moves one place for work, and the mother and the kids move someplace else, to the mainland, maybe to Brooklyn, where her brother lives, and then each fragment is home whenever the kid is living there. Home can replicate itself, as when a kid goes off to spend a few days with her grandmother in another town—and then, there, that's the center, that's "in." Danny Amaral likened the Puerto Rican extended family to a fluid organism, a supple, unicellular being that somehow articulates into various subentities without ceasing to be a whole (Amaral 1977, 318–319; Bailey and Ellis 1993). Wherever any subentity is, that's home for as long as it needs to be.

So it's not so simple because home is not so simple. It's not a house on a hill with two apple trees out front and a pond for winter skating or summer swimming but a locus of a certain kind of energy that can be divided and moved and replicated. Over the life of a child this alone can become complicated, perhaps especially in the case of these Puerto Ricans so often on the move, from *la perla del Caribe* to the mainland and back; from the country to the city and back; from the squatter settlements to the caseríos and back. But complicating it further is the way "in" and "out" vary with the move. "Out" is more expansive in the countryside. It's more restrictive in the Bronx, where the "in's" are also earlier. The relationship between "in" and "out" changes, too: In the high-rise apartment buildings of the Bronx, "in" and "out" meet on the opposite sides of apartment doors; on the farms of Barrancas, in the countryside outside Barranquitas, they overlap for acres.

Of course the caserío is neither the Bronx nor Barrancas, but the edge between "in" and "out" is as much determined by where you've lived as where you're living; and if the caserío feels like Barrancas to those who have just returned from the Bronx, it seems no less like the Bronx to those fresh from the fields of Barrancas. "In" and "out" are not lines marked on the ground but unfolding spaces that chart the shifting priorities and circumstances of those who live them. Continually renegotiated, the ever-shifting edges of "in" and "out" do respond to the caserío's site and its own ever-changing circumstances—it's not in the city, but also it was different before the casitas were built—but these edges are also sensitive to the natures of those who live them and their collective experience of other places.

Nevertheless, it's only the edges that move and the space around them that becomes blurred. The distinction between "in" and "out" remains the embodiment in space of the edge between "got to" and "doing nothing." The trick is to know the boundary from within. There, within, when it's late and the light is fading or the game's worn out, it's time to go in. "I gotta go in, guys," says one or another: Gotta go in. Have to. Couch or bath or bed is calling. The group breaks up, the kids peel off for home. Everyone goes in. "Where you been?" a parent asks. "Out." "What've you been doing?" "Nothing."

THE DEPTH OF "IN"

The beginning of "in" is inside, where most kids, even in a tropical paradise like Barranquitas, spend most of their time. No matter how much we might like to pretend it's not so, kids live mostly indoors. Of course, almost everybody lives indoors. Summarizing the Multinational Comparative Time Budget Research Project, with its data on 25,000 people from twelve countries from the late 1960s and early 1970s—when we were working in Barranquitas—Wayne Ott concluded that, "In modern society total time outdoors is the most insignificant part of the day, often so small that it barely shows up in the total" (Ott 1989, 1). Working Americans spent 92 percent of the time indoors, 6 percent in transit, and 2 percent outdoors. Statistics from the other countries, which included Peru, were comparable; and subsequent work has established that the time Americans spend indoors has been constant for decades and invariant across regions (see also Leech and others 1999). A 1992–1994 sample of 9,196 Americans, which included children, concluded that, in general, Americans spend 87 percent of their time indoors, 6 percent of their time in a vehicle, and 7 percent of their time outdoors (Tsang and Klepeis 1996). Ott's conclusion that "we are basically an indoor species" would seem, given all the evidence, difficult to dispute.

Kids are not adults, but they live indoors, too. They sleep there, after all, eight, nine, ten hours a day, the youngest even more. They wash there, shower, dress, shine their shoes. They eat there, not everything maybe, but this is where they stoke up. They sit around inside, play games, do homework, talk, watch television, do nothing, mope around with nothing to do. We're talking about what, half the day? twelve hours? ten hours? More for the girls who work in the house, who play there more often.

When they're not in the house, they're in school, another five, six hours a day, more for the kids bused to El Portón, who don't walk home for lunch; but at the very least, considering recess and not counting the trip there and back—the great daily migration, the caserío inhaling and exhaling its children—another quarter of the day inside. Some kids, especially girls but also boys serious about their schoolwork, can spend most of the day inside.

Now and then they crowd into a movie theater. Occasionally they go to church. Inside. Inside. Inside. A couple of bedrooms. A bathroom. A kitchen. A living-dining room. A stairwell. A porch. A sequence of classrooms. A theater lobby. A theater. A nave. The interiors of a handful of shops. And all the rest is connective tissue, by the way, what you have to get through to make it from one inside to another (Figures 4 and 5).

KIDS LIVE A THIRD OF THEIR LIVES IN BED

Kids live a third of their lives in bed, getting into it, and lying there, watching the lights on the bedroom wall, listening to the sounds from the other rooms, to the night sounds, to the sounds of the insects, falling asleep, sleeping, tossing and waking up and falling asleep again, waking up, getting up, getting dressed: a third of



FIGS. 4 (*above*) and 5 (*below*)—Images of “in” for children in Barranquitas, Puerto Rico. A living room in birthday-party mode and a back porch. (Photographs by the author, spring 1970)



their lives. “Puerto Ricans,” Albert Scheflen remarks, “tend to use their bedrooms only to sleep in at night” (1971, 438)—whatever that means, “only to sleep”—and that’s that, that third of their lives dismissed as though it didn’t matter. “Only to sleep.” What’s being hidden?

Roger Hart writes, “Growing up, all of my interest and attention was centered on the family room downstairs. The bedroom I shared with my brother was merely a place to sleep and to keep tidy only as my parents demanded—no part of it carried any special significance to me” (1979, 489). No special significance? Really? Then what is this we read but a page later?

The only place in the house and surrounding areas that I did not feel comfortable in was my bedroom at night as I waited for my brother to come to bed. My mind concocted all sorts of frightening creatures, residing beneath my bed in particular. These I could fight away only by deciding upon and carrying out a related number of rituals. That is, they could not hurt me if I had jumped into bed before the count of ten, having placed my slippers perfectly together and in line, etc., etc. Fear of going to bed was my equivalent of fear of attic and/or cellar—those archetypically scary places. (p. 490)

And yet these compulsive rituals were enacted in a room that was merely to sleep in. A room of no special significance. What can we make of this ambivalence that forgets and recalls equally within a page?

Yet this ambivalence is at least a form of recognition. Elliott Medrich and his crew at the Children’s Time Study didn’t even rise to that. They constructed what they regarded as two equally plausible if hypothetical summaries of the same youth’s, John’s, day: six hours in school, one and one-half hours socializing at the park after school, half an hour eating, and five hours relaxing, watching television, and talking on the telephone; or “John said that getting high with his friends was the only important activity of the day” (Medrich and others 1982, 23). Who could quibble with the student? But it is difficult to know what to make of Medrich and colleagues with their thirteen-hour day, with their vision of a day without sleep, without that bed that Guy de Maupassant called “our whole life. It is there that we are born, it is there that we love, it is there that we die,” there, in that bed, in that bedroom, inside (quoted in Eden and Carrington 1961, 17). Yet the greater part of even Medrich and company’s mutilated day takes place . . . inside.

THERE ARE MANY REASONS FOR BEING INSIDE

The extent to which our lives are lived inside can be unnerving (Harris 1949). When Susan Kent reports of the rural Oklahoma “upper-lower-class Smith household . . . [that] beyond tending to the animals, the Smiths spent very little time outside their home . . . because, although the September days were pleasantly warm, television kept the family indoors,” you want to dismiss these conclusions as unfairly biased or distorted by Kent’s presence or, if not, then of an unrepresentative family, or of a chance phase in their history as a family, or of the wrong time of year (Kent 1984, 102–107). But the precision of Kent’s observation is as disarming as her piling up of

instances; and by the time you get around to her comment about the children of the upper-middle-class, urban Colorado household that they “rarely played outside during my stay, even though the weather was sunny although a little cool. Instead, they spent most of their time either playing in front of or watching the television. The television was turned on around 7:00 A.M. by the children and off about 10:00 or 10:30” (pp. 107–117), you are in no position to cavil, unless to shrug and say, “What can one expect of Anglos?” Unfortunately, although Kent can say of the Spanish Americans she lived with that their “children spent more time outside than did the Euroamericans, but less than the Navajos” (p. 127), what she says about Spanish Americans, Euro-Americans, and Navajos in both rural and urban settings is that they and their children all spend an overwhelming amount of time inside (pp. 132–135). This is almost as true of the kids Cindi Katz studied in the substantially more agricultural community of Howa in rural Sudan, despite substantially lower rates of school enrollment (Katz 2004, 3–22, 59–108).

But this is nothing. Scheflen mentioned a Puerto Rican woman with ten years of residence in the Bronx behind her who, in eight weeks of continuous around-the-clock observation, did not once leave her apartment. She may have been extreme, but

if you are a mainstream Puerto Rican parent, you probably enjoy being with your spouse and your kids—at least you say you do. We asked every Puerto Rican wife in our sample what she did when she wanted to be alone. Half did not comprehend the implication of the question in American, middle-class terms. They said they never wanted to be alone and were surprised by the question. The other half said they went home to the family. They thought we were asking about wanting to be away from neighbors and people on the street. (Scheflen 1971, 437–438)

People in the caserío often went inside to get away. Whenever things would get dicey around the domino table that was set up outside in the courtyard, it was always time “to take coffee.” Then each player would go to his apartments, where his wife would bring him a cup of coffee and listen to him complain about Andrés or Dominique or Francisco. Or, for women, whenever things got tense in one of the courtyards, it was time “to make coffee.” Then each woman would go home to make coffee for her husband, complaining all the while about Maquí or Olga or Teresa. The big central courtyard wasn’t called “Vietnam” for no reason, and inside wasn’t just dry and clean and where the toilets, stoves, and beds were. It was a kind of demilitarized zone.

KIDS EVEN PLAY AT BEING INSIDE

Yet even in the countryside, even in that prelapsarian Jíbaro heaven, out in the yard beneath the flowering trees, even where there were no courtyards filled with bad faith, life was largely an interior affair, sleeping and eating, sleeping again, eating and cooking, cooking and cleaning house, and it had been for a very long time (Roberts and Stefani 1949, 71–104). Whatever the experience of growing up on the coffee plantations or among the fields of tobacco, most of it was experienced inside.

To miss this is to miss the essence of domestic man (Wood and Beck 1994). Kids don't miss this. Kids know this. Or they act as though they do. Nor is it just the way they like to get under the beds or the tables, indoors, to play at being indoors; the way they fuss with the pots and the pans, fiddle with the knives and the spoons, lounge on the couch, and go to bed with luxuriously mingled relief and reluctance; it's the fact that they replicate these things in their play.

Take the projective doll play David Landy used to study Puerto Rican socialization during the 1950s in the fictional town of Valle Caña: "The most important single category of routine activity in doll play was that concerned with sleeping and resting," a whopping 42 percent for boys and 33 percent for girls. "The second most frequent type of routine activity was concerned with eating and cooking, with the girls having more (21.0 compared with 7.5 percent for boys)" (1959, 169–170). Landy adduced all sorts of "causes" to "explain" what to him clearly needed explaining. (In common with many play researchers, Landy finds the interest in sleep perverse. He even feels compelled to attribute the focus on eating and cooking to a lack of food.) Yet if, as Iona and Peter Opie insist, children's "pretending games turn out to be little more than reflections (often distorted reflections) of how they themselves live" (Opie and Opie 1969, 330), can there be any surprise in the kids' mimicry of these activities most central to their lives? The most popular games in the caserío were House, School, Doctor, and Store—and Lord knows they were every bit as "projective" as Landy's doll play—with House and Doctor both revolving around "bed," "couch," "sleep," "lying down," "getting dressed," and other things associated with "sleeping and resting." No matter how commonplace these activities are, they are also, whether liked, loved, cherished, or overlooked—as unseen as the cleanest air or as tasteless as the purest water—nevertheless central, fundamental, basic (Estvan and Estvan 1959, 149–160).

To help us to understand this, we commissioned a series of diaries from parents of young children and from older children themselves. These diaries varied in detail. Many amounted to minute-by-minute records of what, where, and when, but even the most general were indicative. One diary was kept by Pablo Cantres about his four-year-old stepson, Rafael (Figure 6). Extracts from a perfectly ordinary week-day give the flavor of Rafael's life:

Rafael woke up around 7:00 A.M. and started crying because he was afraid and then he came to our bed and lay down. After about three minutes in bed without going back to sleep, he started to play with his mother until 7:15. He was quiet for about five minutes but after jumping on the bed he fell to the floor and seemed to hit hard because for four or five minutes he cried, but his mother gave him some milk and he stopped crying and drank his drink. When he finished his milk, he began playing with *la nena* [his not-yet-two-year-old sister], climbing into her crib, where he stayed about three minutes; then he climbed down, looked for his shoes, put them on, and returned to our room. There he took one of his mother's hair ribbons and put it over his eyes and said many things. At 7:45 he went to the bathroom and started to look for the bathtub chain but when his mother gave it to him, he went to his room to play with a car.

8:00 A.M. His mother looked for him to take him to town, and when they went to wash up, he broke loose, running and shouting. He wanted to drive his little sister's little truck, and this held things up for about six minutes and then we left with him for town. As soon as he got out of the house he saw the garbage truck and ran over to it. On the way to town he wanted to carry la nena but he was not permitted to and he stood under a tree and cried. Then he ran to his aunt's apartment [across the courtyard in the caserío], but he didn't go in, he just climbed the stairs and came down again, and then played some with la nena's little car, until we headed straight for town. He was stuck to the little car until we got to town. We reached his other aunt's house [in Calle Abajo] and went in. He sat a while on the sofa. He was given coffee with bread and sat on the floor and ate it until la nena came in, when he took his coffee and bread to the table. When he was done drinking his coffee, he stood at the door and began opening and closing it. Then he stepped outside and found a stick which he tried to break on the sidewalk. After nearly ten minutes he threw the stick beneath [a neighbor's] house. Then he began to play in the dirt. He found an old Clorox bottle which he threw on the sidewalk and then he hid himself.

Eleven hours later, he's back in bed. In the mainland United States, three-to-five-year-olds spend more of their time outside than any other age group: two and one-half hours on weekdays; almost three and one-third hours on weekends (Wiley and others 1991; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2002, 9–16). Rafael spends almost twice this amount of time outside; yet even so, on a beautiful day in a small town in the highlands of Puerto Rico, when he is out and about, both with and without his parents, Rafael will spend 80 percent of his time indoors.

To do this, however, Rafael has had to pass through a lot of doors, not even counting the ones in his apartment. By noon he has been inside his aunt's house in Calle Abajo, through a neighbor's home chasing a chicken, in the post office, a pharmacy, a bar, a furniture store, a second pharmacy, the cooperative, the telegraph office, a second furniture store, the cooperative a second time, and his aunt's a second time. Later that afternoon he's in and out of another aunt's apartment, Pablo's mother's apartment, and a friend's apartment. In his own home he's played with his sister, with Pablo, watched his mother cooking, ironing, and washing dishes, taken a bath, played under the dining-room table and on the balcony, both by himself and with a friend, entertained himself with a magazine, eaten, had a second bath, and fallen asleep on his mother's lap.

In his afternoon you can sense the-ball-attached-to-the-paddle-with-an-elastic quality of Rafael's relationship to his home: He goes down to the courtyard to play with a little girl whose mother scolds her, at which point he returns home—whack!—he goes to the kite field, from which he returns tired and hungry—whack!—he goes to his aunt's to watch television but is called home for his milk—whack!—he follows some kids to the swimming pool, visits relatives, gets dusted with flour, rolls a wheel around the courtyard, and gets called home for supper—whack!—he goes down to the courtyard to play with a toy jeep, but when the toy breaks he returns home—whack! The home is the center of gravity, although as the morning demonstrates, whenever the family is abroad, wherever the parents are is the center of gravity.

This is actually always the case, and parents are mostly indoors. When they're not indoors, they're in transit. The reason Rafael is outside almost twice as much as the average American three-to-four-year-old is because Rafael's parents are in transit on foot. Nearly two and one-half of the four and three-quarters hours Rafael was outside was in transit, most of it was with his family, walking downtown, walking



FIG. 6—Diarist Pablo Cantres and his wife Maquí with their children in the caserío. (Photograph by the author, spring 1970)

around downtown, and walking back to the caserío. Discounting this, Rafael actually spent less time outside than the average American.

On the other hand, Edna, a six-year-old girl, was outside even more than Rafael, and none of it was in transit. But Edna spent her entire Sunday within calling distance of her apartment; and despite the five and three-quarters hours she was outside, Edna still spent 76 percent of her day inside. The differences between her time

outside and Rafael's illuminate some of the differences between the worlds of the boys and girls of the caserío, but they also enrich our idea of the possibilities that "out" presents. Here is an extract from Edna's diary, also maintained by Pablo Cantres:

10:00 A.M. Her mother told her that if she left, she had to pick the toys up off the floor. She picked up her toys and went downstairs and then outside to the back of the building next to her mother's. There she found some of her little friends who are neighbors of her mother's. They were playing Mommy. Edna asked if she could play too and told them she also had toys. She put an umbrella on a clothes line with her dolls and then sat on a blanket which was placed on the grass. Then she got another doll and put it on her lap and proceeded to rock the doll for a little while. She stood up to put her flip-flops back on and sat down on a cracker tin. She then reached for the hair brush for her doll. She stood up and started rocking the doll back and forth. Then she laid the doll on the blanket and began to swaddle the doll. She stood up again and reached for the umbrella she had hung from the clothesline and put it on the grass. She then walked around the building with one of her friends. Leaving her doll lying on the ground, she walked back to her mother's house.

Edna's day was very different from Rafael's. In the first place, she had chores to do. She had to sweep the apartment, wash the dishes, and help her mother prepare dinner. Her mother sent her on errands to Angel's Store twice, one of which, to buy cigarettes, required two trips and the intercession of her sister. A neighbor had no hesitation asking Edna to go to the store for her, and Edna was prepared to leave the caserío to do another favor if her mother had permitted it. Whereas Rafael walked downtown, around downtown, and back, and later visited the pool, the kite field, and elsewhere, Edna walked to Angel's Store four times—the store isn't much more than a courtyard's length from her apartment—and ran around one of the caserío's buildings. The rest of the time outside she was immediately in front of or behind her apartment, always within hailing distance. More than half of this time she was playing Mommy with friends. Some of the differences are attributable to Edna's greater age—for example, her schoolwork—but most of it is attributable to the fact that she's a girl, has housekeeping chores, engages in hours of doll play, and is on a dramatically shorter leash (Figure 7). The only time Edna leaves the area right around the house is to run errands, and these don't take her far.

THE EXPANSIVENESS OF "OUT"

Contrast this with the freedom granted the younger and significantly less responsible Rafael. Some of this reflects different parenting styles, but most of it reflects different gender expectations. There's a stretch in the afternoon between 4:00 and 6:00 when Rafael just wanders around. True, Pablo shadows him to record what he does, but Rafael would have done exactly the same things had Pablo been about his usual business. Rafael would probably never have been out of sight of an adult, every one of whom would have felt comfortable about intervening should the need have arisen. So Rafael is "out," but not far out. Nevertheless, he's significantly far-



FIG. 7—Four girls “out”—but not very far “out”—playing between the backs of two buildings in the caserío. (Photograph by the author, spring 1970)

ther “out” than Edna ever is. Rafael leaves his apartment to watch professional wrestling at his aunt’s, sees some kids going to the swimming pool, follows them, hangs around the pool for a while, returns to his aunt’s to play with his cousins, goes to Pablo’s mother’s apartment, where he throws empty cigarette cartons from the balcony, goes to the courtyard, rides bicycles with some boys, heads toward the kite field, finds a stick with which he beats cars in the road, tosses flour around, follows a kid home, tries to take a bath with the kid, heads back to his cousins but en route finds a wheel, which he rolls around until he has to go in to eat. It’s a kind of free-form noodling of the ball out at the end of its elastic, in no way planned and open to every kind of temptation. What’s Rafael doing? “Nothing.” And where’s he doing it? “Out.” Of course, most of the time Edna was out she was “doing nothing” too. It’s just that the modalities have a different feel to them, the one more mobile, the other markedly sedentary.

Note: “out,” not outside. Is it “out” when Edna is across the courtyard at her sister’s, or when Rafael is across the courtyard at his aunt’s? Perhaps, but we’re talking sister and aunt, after all, and only across the courtyard. But it’s definitely “out” even though it’s inside when Rafael is in the other kid’s house in a different courtyard. “Out” isn’t about being outdoors. It’s about slipping up-gradient from the center of gravity. Edna is “out” when she’s down in the courtyard or around back playing with her dolls, playing Hide-and-Seek, and chasing a boy around the building. Rafael is “out” when he’s down in the courtyard playing with the little girl, when he’s dragging the chair on the sidewalk, and when he’s going to, hanging around

in, and returning from the swimming pool. He is “out” most of the time between 4:00 and 6:00 P.M., even when he’s at his aunt’s and Pablo’s mother’s apartments, because the center of gravity remains so clearly his own apartment—as when his mother calls him home from his aunt’s for his milk—although the fact that he felt constrained to say he was “going” when he left Pablo’s mother’s apartment implies a kind of gravitational center there too. But a loose one.

The whole thing’s loose for this four-year-old. It’s less that he goes “out” or “in” than that the center is squashed out and all the edges are blurred. Rafael just wanders around as though there weren’t any edges, as when, in Calle Abajo, he chased a chicken through the neighbor’s house, or in the post office stuck his hand inside a post box, or followed the operator into the back of the telegraph office. The only edge Rafael didn’t get to cross was that of another kid’s bath, whose mother stopped him from joining his friend in the tub. Yet there is a center, and whenever things get dicey—as when a mother scolded a little girl in the courtyard, or Rafael’s toy jeep fell apart—the center is exactly where he goes. With increasing age these edges will become clearer, the boundaries less negotiable. At the same time, he’ll stretch the elastic connecting him to home farther and farther. With use the elastic will lose its snap. One day it will break. Getting to that point is one of the things being “out” is all about, for both Rafael and Edna.

GETTING AWAY FROM HOME

Nothing in the behavior of the kids of the caserío suggested that this process was anything but continual. The distances they went when they were out just got longer and longer as their legs got longer, though no doubt the cognitive organization of these experiences advanced through a sequence of stages, and the whole evolving structure responded to the shocks of starting school, moving from elementary school to junior high to high school, and moving out into the world from there. Here are seven hours on a Saturday of twelve-year-old Titis, as described by fourteen-year-old Carlos Javier Santiago:

Titis left the house at 7:00 [A.M.] and went to town. On the way he stopped at the movies at 7:30 [to check what was playing] and then he went to church for just a few minutes. At 7:36 he went to the plaza. At 7:44 he went to the Bar Plaza. He left and went back to the caserío. On the way to the caserío he stopped at Luminado’s Store and bought two bananas, that was at 7:58. Then he kept going, went home, and came back out at 8:03 and went to his Aunt Juana’s. Then he went to Hoya Honda and on the way he stopped at Ramon’s Store, that was at 8:13. Then he kept going and stopped at another store to get some change to play billiards. He played and left the store at 8:26. Then he stopped at my sister’s house to get a drink of water. He stood there until 8:45 and then he went to the lake [in Hoya Honda]. On the way to the lake he found Orlando [another kid from the caserío] and they went together to the lake. First they went to pick oranges at 9:10 and they left at 9:30. Then they continued to the lake. After they left the lake they went to the Lion’s Club to eat the oranges. They got up at 9:54. After that they went to pick strawberries and they left at 10:10. Then they came to my sister’s house and had lunch at 11:31 and they left at 12:01. Orlando

stayed and Titis came to the caserío. On the way he bought some crackers. When he arrived at the caserío he stopped at Angel's Store at 1:00 and he sat down. At 2:05 he went home.

Note first that in the hour it took Rafael to no more than wake up, eat breakfast, and dress, Titis has already been downtown and back, seen what was going to be on at the movies, gone to church, hung out on the plaza, visited the Bar Plaza, and bought two bananas at Luminado's. As a younger kid Titis too had been taken to downtown Barranquitas by his parents, and then for seven years had gone to La Urbana, walking to and fro twice a day because he came home for lunch. Now he's in his first year at the downtown junior high school. Going downtown is nothing for Titis.

But neither is wandering around Hoya Honda, the region of small landholdings and factory chicken farms south of the caserío. Just past the development, Calle Villa Universitaria plunges 40 or 50 feet to a small stream—"Hoya Honda" literally means deep ditch or valley—from which it twists steeply to an upland and becomes lined with small bars and stores, homes, and estates, facilities like the Lion's Club camp for boys, and the large, modern chicken farms, where boys almost as young as Titis could work at night "grabbing chickens" to crate for shipment. Grabbing chickens was an important source of income, especially for older boys who had left school and could readily stay up all night. After crossing a second stream the road forks, one fork leading to the road to Aibonito, a town not quite 10 miles from Barranquitas, the other petering out in a labyrinth of tracks heading to holdings along a third stream, which, like the first two, also drains into the Río Barranquitas. The caserío residents called all of this "Hoya Honda." A number of them worked plots behind the caserío on the slopes falling toward Hoya Honda or labored irregularly on the estates that ran up its slopes. In essence, Hoya Honda was the caserío's backyard.

This is where, after a quick tour of downtown Barranquitas, Titis headed for a morning of playing billiards, picking strawberries and oranges, having lunch, and generally hanging out. Hoya Honda was different from either the caserío or downtown Barranquitas, where every square inch was under someone's eye. In Hoya Honda it was possible to spend an entire day without being seen by anyone. This was especially true in its southern reaches, where Hoya Honda faded into Helechal and El Negrón, the opening reach of the Río Usabón's Cañón de San Cristóbal. In the 1970s this was the city dump for both Barranquitas and Aibonito, but at the same time it was green and wild. Hoya Honda was a landscape that invited, and made possible, a range of behaviors different from those honed nearer home. It was a backyard beyond which lay wilderness.

"OUT" FADES INTO "SOMEPLACE"

"Out" lay in every direction from the caserío. Numerous places were more or less accessible via a swarm of paths from the kite field. But "out" was a space neither homogeneous nor isotropic, and there was somehow more of it, and it was visited more frequently in downtown Barranquitas and in Hoya Honda than anywhere



FIG. 8—Roasting chickens in one of the little hidden camps the kids had carved out in the brush behind the caserío's apartment buildings. At right is the coinvestigator, Ingrid Wood. (Photograph by the author, spring 1970)

else. These were not only closest to the caserío but also on Calle Villa Universitaria, and, as hinted at by Titis's morning, there was plenty to do in both. There was the plaza downtown where most of the long-distance "taxi" stands were.¹ Kids shined shoes there, met school friends, and hung out. They visited the shops and the post office. The church was there, and the town's movie theater. At night there was a flood of kids, and adults too, going to the movie. They'd come home in clumps, laughing and talking about the film and calling out to each other as they walked up the hill, splitting at the top, a few heading all the way down to the casitas.

If you got up early enough the next morning you could catch the kids straggling home from Hoya Honda after a night of grabbing chickens. Sometimes they would have chickens with them, live ones like those the chicken-and-egg man sold from his truck whose necks you had to snap on the way back to your apartment. The kids would have money then and might sell their chickens for more or, if it were a weekend or a holiday, make plans to roast them in one of the little hidden camps they had carved out in the brush behind their apartments. They would make a spit and play cards or read comics while the chickens roasted (Figure 8).

They also liked to "make picnics" in Hoya Honda, especially in El Negrón, where they could fish and swim. This called for a hike through Hoya Honda to Helechal. There, where the Aibonito Road crossed the Río Usabón, you could scramble over the barbed wire by the bridge and easily get down to the river, wide and marshy here behind a dam. Below the dam the valley narrowed and deepened. The current



FIGS. 9 (*above*) and 10 (*below*)—A trip to El Negrón, a 4-mile hike from the caserío. Manolo uses a net bag to fish in the water impounded behind the dam on the Río Usabón. Where El Negrón opens into the Cañón de San Cristóbal, Victor spreads his arms in a gesture toward the expansiveness of the space. (Photographs by the author, spring 1970)





FIGS. 11 (*top*) and 12 (*bottom*)—Some things the caserío kids do when they are “out.” Scavenged cans, found leaves, and an encountered ledge make a shelf of goods in the game of Store. Angel’s store is just on the other side of the fence. (Photograph by the author, spring 1970)). At bottom, a game of School. (Photograph taken for the author by Victor Maldonado Burgos, spring 1970)



picked up, curled around gigantic boulders and soon tumbled over a cliff, roaring to foaming pools into which the boys would dive. It was already a canyon here, the sides sheer and high, the sun cut off. Farther on, the bottom became very narrow, littered with huge rocks from which you jumped to others, until the canyon wall just fell away and the river plunged, smoking, an easy 100 feet into the Cañón de San Cristóbal. It's supposed to be the highest waterfall on the island. The walls of the gorge rise hundreds of feet here, mantled in a dark, clinging green. The guys would fish in the pools behind the lip of the falls and look for crabs in the shadowy mud. They would pick oranges and raspberries and make a picnic (Figures 9 and 10).

You could drive there too, pulling your car off the road to Aibonito road just before the bridge. If you did that, though, it was less being "out" and more like being "someplace." It became an expedition. Because it was a drive, more people wanted to go, and maybe there was a caravan, and a certain amount of organization, not a lot necessarily but more than there would be if you were truly "out." A good example of how this might happen was the morning Popolo and three others came back from grabbing chickens in Hoya Honda. It was a school holiday, so kids were hanging around as though it were a weekend. Between 6:00 and 7:00 A.M. I'd already counted twenty-four kids, two girls and twenty-two guys. One of the girls, a twelve-year-old, was standing alone in front of the building Rafael lived in, twirling. The other, fifteen, was walking out of the Vietnam Courtyard with her father. The boys, between the ages of two and eighteen, were riding bikes, walking a dog, going to the store, playing with a broom, standing around talking, walking to town with good clothes on, and leaning against and sitting on porch railings. A boy leaning on the swing set in the courtyard saw a bird on a television antenna and started throwing rocks at it. Popolo had his BB gun with him, and he and the others were shooting at things as they walked. The two eighteen-year-olds and the sixteen-year-old peeled off at the store, where a fourteen-year-old joined Popolo. These two criss-crossed the baseball field and then walked up the path at the back of the apartment buildings to the Vietnam Courtyard, where they headed out to the street and across into the kite field past our house, their number growing as they walked.

By this point it was 7:30, and sixty-one kids, twenty-six of them girls, were out. Most of these kids were "doing nothing." Three boys, for example, aged ten and twelve, were repairing a slingshot on an anvil they'd constructed from a water tap and a block of concrete, and others were playing games (Figures 11 and 12). But some were working. Five girls, aged two to six, were taking out garbage, and another, aged twelve, was washing clothes. Popolo's group had now grown to seven, and they headed out into the middle of the kite field shooting at birds, then swinging back toward the caserío through Don Berna's property to the upper courtyard, where Popolo lived. There they killed Popolo's chickens. Thirteen boys were in the group now, ranging in age from six to sixteen, and they decided to pile into Popolo's car and go to a little swimming hole to swim and roast chickens. I'm not sure how they all got there. Some must have walked—it's not a long walk—because in the end there were twenty of them. They roasted four chickens and were back at the caserío by 2:30 P.M.

THE SPACES OF A KID'S UNIVERSE

Certainly most of what was going on with Popolo's group was "nothing," and "out" was where it was happening, but the trip to the swimming hole was "something," and it happened "someplace." It was right on the edge of being "nothing," though, which is what a trip to the swimming hole would ordinarily have been. A better example of going "someplace" was when the caserío went en masse to watch several of the boys run in a marathon. The trip wasn't just being "out" and happening to find yourself at the marathon, especially several car loads of you; it involved advance planning, calendar marking, organization. The kids had been training for weeks—it was a half marathon (21-kilometer/13-mile) run that attracted an international field—and the whole thing was a big deal. When on your return your mother asked where you'd been you didn't say, "Out," you said, "At the marathon with the Maldonados. We went in Toco's car. There were so many people there! And Berto came in thirty-sixth!" You'd been "someplace."

This race was a once-in-a-year event—for most people it was probably a once-in-a-lifetime event—but every "someplace" for the people of the caserío had an eventful quality to it: helping a neighbor move, rushing an expectant mother to the hospital, or going to the airport to pick up a brother coming home from the mainland. "Where have you been?" Not "out" but to the neighbor's new home, to the hospital, to the airport—neither the anonymity of "out" or the impossibility of "everywhere" but some named place. The name infuses the place with the purpose it embodies (out-of-town move, health care, air travel); it implies a goal. The goal imposes energy demands that structure the effort required to get there.

On the other hand, because being "out" is less about having a goal than discovering one; there is no goal to structure its energy surface. This doesn't mean its equipotential—that's the structure of "nothing to do"—differences between any two attractions may not be great. They could be different ways of getting to the same place, but, given their lack of differentiation, they impose little structure on the kid's being "out," and so he or she continues to be open to the possibility of the emergence of other things to do; open, that is, to switching (Opie and Opie 1969, 1). Things to do in town, like going to church, or swimming in the pool, or going to a movie, impose more structure. You can't just be "out" anywhere to do these things, you have to be at church, or the pool, or the theater. To get to these places energy has to be expended, and because this will have been wasted unless the kid is appropriately dressed for church, equipped for the pool, or armed with cash for the movies, forethought is required as well. Sometimes preparation can be minimized: You may need trunks and a towel to use the pool, but you can go to church dressed any way you want, and you can sneak into the theater. Although most of the time you made plans to go to these places, these places could emerge as goals—as minor "someplaces"—within the context of being "out doing nothing," as the church might on a hot day, just because it's cool inside, or the theater could be if you ran into a bunch of your friends on their way there and you decided to join them.

Obviously these places made greater or lesser demands and shaped a kid's energy surface accordingly: There was a difference between just dropping in at church and making the 6:00 P.M. Mass; there was a difference between sneaking into the theater and going with a date. The demands made by more distant places—such as the new home, the hospital, or the airport—extended this process. Events like these were big deals. They not only took a lot of time, they demanded a significant level of organization: There is no point in someone scrounging a truck unless he can count on hands to help him move the furniture. An imminent birth, no matter how casually a new baby was taken in the caserío, still involved getting people to promise rides for when the time came. Even picking up someone at the airport imposed a schedule.

Once the organization becomes very complex, there is a sudden flip: The kids suddenly find themselves tumbling “in,” “in” to school, “in” to the home. Unlike a trip to the theater, kids didn't need to expend remarkable quantities of energy to go home or to school. Home and school sucked kids in. If worn out, their feet would take them there on their own, or the school bus would. If not, others would pick up the slack: Kids were even taken to school and home against their will. “In” has a legal status that “out” lacks, but even without the law, home and school remain the great attractors. Kids roll downhill into them, from which they reemerge, reenergized, to once again ascend the slopes of “somewhere” or loll on the fields of “out.”

Thus there are the gravitational sinks of home and school, the demands made by trips to San Juan, the lesser demand made by a visit to the pool, and all the rest of “out.” You might also find a patch of “nowhere” to go. When there's nothing to do. When one is “all dressed up with nowhere to go,” the surface really is flat and equipotential. Every point calls with equal force—or fails to call with any. Unmotivated by any desire, the kid finds it impossible to move. In a sense, the environment shrinks to the space occupied by his or her body.

But the surface of “out” is incredibly ruffled and exhibits up close a topography of untamable variation. The kid's here-and-now lies in the center of her universe. At every moment she is confronted with the proliferating possibilities that the here-and-now constantly opens up, and these possibilities mimic locally those encountered globally: lots of local little “got-to's,” “somethings-to-do,” and “nothings.” She may find herself in a game in one of the courtyards. The structure of the game makes demands: At this point she's got to cover her eyes, run and hide, take her turn holding the jump rope, swaddle her doll. It's a local “got to,” a local movement “in”: the kid just rolls downhill to the next local moment. But from the corner of her eye she sees her best friend, with whom she's waited to play with all day, coming out of her apartment. Running to play with her is a “something to do.” It has energy costs, most obviously those associated with violating the structure of the game she's playing and insulting the kids she's playing with. Just then her mother calls her to come in. Breaking up the game to go in is legitimate, so it has zero energy costs—it's just farther downhill—but it may conflict with the desire to play with the friend. What's a girl to do?

The topography of out has essentially this nature: an endlessness of potential movement, little of which is continuous or long smooth, much of which is characterized by abrupt, discontinuous switching. Think about some of Rafael's activities. At one point, he headed toward the field, but in the road he found some sticks and used them to beat the cars parked along the road. Then he started tossing flour around, for it was Carnaval time, and one of the kids got flour on Rafael, so he hit the kid with one of his sticks and followed him to his house. That all happened in a few minutes, but Titis's whole morning was structured in precisely the same way. Given the number of "control factors" kids respond to, this surface must be locally catastrophic, folding over on itself again and again (Poston and Stewart 1978).

The convoluted roughness of this surface needs to be contrasted not only with the equipotential flatness of "nothing to do" but also with the almost-as-smooth, if steep, surfaces of "in" and "someplace." It's not as if a lot of switching takes place on the road between Barranquitas and Bayamón. An adult might have to decide whether and, if so, where to stop for barbecue, although, because few residents of the caserío owned cars, this was usually a decision made by the long-distance "taxi" driver—but kids never had anything to say about it at all. Stuck in the car, their energy surface was pretty much the same in every direction. To a lesser extent this was also the case with local "someplaces": Once you had gone to the trouble of getting your swimming trunks, you were pretty much going to the pool. Nor was there much switching when it came to local "someplaces" like the fields in back of the caserío where kids helped their dads, the food stands up at Barranquitas Regional College, where they sold the snacks their mothers had made, or even the shoe-shine stands on the plaza if the money was going into household accounts. If the swimming hole had been a "someplace" on the edge of "out" the day Popolo went there, these workplaces were "someplaces" on the edge of "in."

And the way "in" was definitely smooth. It was smoother for younger kids, and smoothest of all for those elementary schoolkids bused to El Portón, but, except for those who dropped out, it was surprisingly smooth for all students. On the way home from La Urbana one could always go via the plaza and hang out with an older sibling, or stop at a store for a piece of candy or fruit, or—with increasing age—just gape at the passing scene or flirt or visit. But usually what happened was the kids came home, even the older ones, changed their clothes, and then went out and did all that as an extended riff of "nothing." It was different for kids on sports teams—and for the oldest kids with jobs—but few of these lived in the caserío.

It is the distinctive roughness of "out," the constant grappling with alternative possibilities—not at all greased like school, or like the way to and from school or like the way to and from Bayamón—but everything being open, undecided, unshaped, that makes even the minute amount of time spent "out" so decisive in a child's life and that, in the caserío, so marked a difference between boys and girls with increasing age. Although in their earlier years boys and girls were "out" equivalent amounts of time, from the earliest ages boys' "out's" were farther out, and after elementary school this difference increased with age in an almost exponential fashion. As a conse-

quence, although most kids of both genders knew where to harvest the abundant fruit that all but fell from the trees unpicked, I never knew an older girl to join the parties that sortied out to fish in the pools below the Cañón de San Cristóbal; although most kids of both genders knew the system of paths that led from the caserío in all directions through the brush and woods, I never knew an older girl to join the parties to El Negrón or to La Santa, a swimming hole near the confluence of the Río Barranquitas and the Río Usabón; and although most kids of both genders knew downtown Barranquitas equally well, I never saw girls walking these streets alone at night. With age, “out” became an increasingly male preserve, to eventuate in an asymptote like that of the woman Schefflen observed in the Bronx who for eight weeks never left her apartment.

These are the spaces of a kid’s universe: the constricting flatness of “nowhere to go,” the roiled bumpiness of “out,” the heights of “somewhere,” and the yawning chasms of “in.” You’re either sitting there banging your heels on the edge of the porch with nowhere to go, out having fun, going someplace interesting, or staying in. Or going in. Or having to go in. Which is what it usually was, “having to go in,” because who wants to tell one’s friends what a pleasure it is to leave them and go in and talk to Mamá while she’s cooking, even assuming you had the self-knowledge to realize that that’s what was tugging on you, what was making you hand the kite string to someone else and say, “Hey, guys, I gotta go. I gotta go in.”

Just as a little later it would be hard to say that it was the itch to feel again the kite string quivering in your hand that led your feet to the door and that, when your mother asked where you were going, led you to answer, “Out.”

NOTE

1. Called a “*público*” in Puerto Rico, this type of unscheduled intercity taxi is unknown in English-speaking North America. It carries passengers between two distant places for an established, fixed fee. The vehicle does not travel until the car is completely filled with passengers and it is the “taxi” driver who determines when that magic moment has arrived.

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