Researching Children: Research on, with, and by Children

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96.1 Introduction

Research about children and the study of children more broadly is one arena of knowledge production. Historically, as Scaruffi (2003) has pointed out, knowledge has been a tool for enabling its user to be the "subject" rather than "object" of change. Traditionally, children have been marginalized in the formal processes of knowledge production, which have positioned them as "objects" of change processes. Advocates for children's involvement as participants in research argue that positioning children as subjects in the research process increases their control in the production of knowledge about their lives.

In this chapter, we provide an overview of the history of writing about or researching children, in terms of what has been variously referred to as Child Study, Childhood Studies, and "Researching with Children." In doing this, we focus on the ways that children have been positioned in the construction of knowledge about them, through research *on*, *with*, and *by* them (In line with the Convention, we are defining children as human beings aged under 18).

In exploring this complex topic, we refer to the part knowledge plays in helping those who produce it to control their environment and give meaning to social life. We identify child research as a tool used by adults for promoting the "good" society. Further, we understand knowledge at any given time to be specific to that time and to be related to how, at that time, power works in terms of defining the "good" society. We argue that children typically have been at the bottom of the hierarchy of formal knowledge production, with their knowledge excluded or marginalized because they are outside the dominant knowledge production forums, including academic institutions.

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As advocates of research *with* and *by* children, we seek to avoid approaching this discussion in a way that simplifies either what such research, or research *on* children, is about. Instead, we attempt to contextualize child research historically, culturally, and politically. In Part 1 of this chapter, we discuss what has been the dominant tradition in researching children until late in the twentieth century, providing an overview of research *on* children, that is, research in which adults are researchers and children and childhood are the objects of that research. This brief overview provides a background to Part 2 of this chapter, in which we explore influences on researching *with* and *by* children, in "new" Child Studies, also sometimes described as Childhood Studies. In Part 3, we provide an overview of some of the main methodologies that structure contemporary child research. In the final part of this chapter, Part 4, we identify some of the tensions in child research as they relate to the methodologies outlined in Part 3 and in the context of the assumptions, values, and interests highlighted in Parts 1 and 2.

Our approach is informed by three themes of contemporary Childhood Studies, as defined by Woodhead (2009b): first, that childhood can be understood as socially constructed; second, that the status and rights of children need to be recognized; and third, that intergenerational or adult–child relations are significant. Our understanding of these three themes has influenced our historical analysis of the study of children. In the process of this analysis, we argue that, in researching children, "researchers also produce a version of 'the child' and indeed a version of childhood" (Kehily 2009, p. 7), the meaning of what it is to be a child. In this process, researchers also implicitly produce versions of "the adult" and of adulthood because any inquiry into childhood "is also necessarily an inquiry into adulthood" (Kennedy 2000, p. 516). Further, we argue that different versions of the child and childhood, and of children's status and rights, influence the way we research or study children. The assumptions and values implicit in these different versions also influence how children are positioned in the knowledge production process, that is, how they are positioned in their relations with adult researchers. In focusing on the role of assumptions and values in the design and conduct of our research, we are in epistemological territory. As Crotty (1998) forcefully argues

> Without unpacking these assumptions and clarifying them, no one (including ourselves!) can really divine what our research has been or what it is now saying... it is a theorising embedded in the research act itself. Without it, research is not research. (p. 17)

Associated with unpacking the assumptions and values underlying child research is an acknowledgment that the interests of those who undertake the research are implicit within the research. One fundamental assumption driving and shaping child research has been the conceptualization of the "good" society and the "growing up" of children in line with adult notions of the "good" society. Over the period of time under consideration, there have been competing discourses promoting different conceptualizations of the good society and the "growing up" of children. Dominant among these competing discourses has been a construction of the good society as a hierarchically ordered society governed by white, male elites. In recent decades, a questioning of this dominant notion of the social order has

contributed to a shift to a society in which persons – first slaves, then women, and now children – have increasingly sought more equal relations with white, adult males. In this process, the interests of adults in shaping knowledge production through control of children have been exposed.

Paralleling these changes in the construction of the good society, the discourse on children and childhood has also changed. A major change in discourse has been from an emphasis on children as property of their parents (economic assets) to one where children are being regarded as beings with rights. In this process, the face of policy has changed from one with an explicit focus on *child welfare* as about investing in children as future human capital (see Mason 2005; Hart 1991) to one which emphasizes *child well-being*. This more recent emphasis has been about the quality of the lives of children (as persons) in the present (Ben-Arieh 2010). Within this context, there have been attempts to change the ways in which child research is conducted and also to reassess the focus of this research. For at least some researchers, this change has meant a move away from research conducted *on* children, relevant to policy making aimed at molding children to *become* the adults desired by the social elites, to a focus on how children's lives *in the present* can be improved, as part of potential new social relations.

96.2 Part 1: Study of the Child Prior to the Late Nineteenth Century

For much of the history of the study of children, children's voices have been excluded by what Kennedy (2000) refers to as "deficit" theories, that is, that children have been constructed as "becoming" adults and therefore lesser than adults. On this basis, the study of children has, until very recently, been conducted *on* children to produce knowledge to assist with molding children to become adults able to contribute to the good society.

Attempts to use the deficit theory of knowledge to shape the child in terms of the social good can be traced to the writings of the early Greek philosophers. Socrates and Aristotle, in their ruminations, placed the child within a knowledge hierarchy where the (free, male) child was described as being on a lower rung of existence than adults and as having "deficits." It was the adult's task to remedy these deficits, so that the child would become what was required of an adult male in their societies (Kennedy 2000). The Greek philosophers, in their expositions on childhood, identified children's lowly place in the social hierarchy and identified the role of adults as one of guiding children away from the qualities that would make them inferior as adults. In doing so, these early philosophers established a pattern that has dominated Child Study. According to this hierarchical ordering of knowledge relations, male adults defined children (along with women and slaves) as lesser than adults and excluded them as "knowers," able to contribute to knowledge production.

The "deficit theory" of childhood continued as the pervasive construction of childhood until the emergence of the Romantic child in the publication of

Rousseau's *Emile* in 1763 (Kennedy 2000). Rousseau argued for children as beings in the present and pointed out the futility of adult concerns with what children will become, "when they are men [sic]" (Rousseau 1966, p. 72). In Emile, Rousseau argued, on the one hand, that children had the ability to reason with regard to matters affecting their "well-being" (p. 72). On the other hand, he also posited all kinds of limitations to their ability to reason. Specifically, he noted that their reasoning was limited to the knowledge they had acquired and to their understanding. Kennedy (2000) notes the ambivalence in Rousseau's challenge to the "deficit theory" of childhood and argues that this construction of childhood did open a space for a reversal of deficit theory, as evident in the concept of the child as "genius" or "integrated human being," in the thinking of nineteenth-century Romantics (p. 519). This "genius" construction of the child retreated to the background with the rise of the scientific approach to childhood in the late nineteenth century, the period typically defined as the beginnings of the study of, or research into, childhood (e.g., Fass 2004). Inherent in the dominance of scientific thinking from the late nineteenth century is the tendency to ignore the extent to which Child Study had been carried out by philosophers, by educationalists, and, of course, although rarely documented, by mothers, prior to the ascendency of scientific thought in the area.

96.2.1 Child Study in the Late Nineteenth to Mid-Twentieth Century

During the late nineteenth century, the scientific approach, which was to become the dominant approach to studying children throughout most of the twentieth century, began to play a major role in the study of children. At this time, there was a move away from reflections *about* children, characteristic of previous eras, to formalized study *on* children, generally referred to as Child Study. In this study, also referred to as paidology, or experimental pedagogy, researchers sought "to discover laws of normal child development" (Fass 2004).

A number of converging factors – socioeconomic, political, and intellectual – contributed to the dominance of this approach and to a new emphasis on children during this period. Socioeconomically, this was a period when Western world policy makers were confronting social issues accompanying the growth of industrial and urban societies, such as poverty and labor requirements. At the sociopolitical level, there was the overarching influence in European countries of the concept of liberalism with its emphasis on "the production and regulation of rational and civilized adult citizens" (Kehily 2009, p. 9). Factors such as these contributed to a focus on childhood as a site for investment, with reformers advocating schooling for the masses as a way of creating a better society. Along with the provision of public education came the relatively unquestioned assumption that it was necessary to grade children on the basis of age as a way of dealing with children *en masse*.

These socioeconomic and political factors meshed at the intellectual level with scientific theory. Science had been gaining preeminence in the late nineteenth century with a refinement of scientific methodology, including an emphasis

on the role of observation and experimentation in the discovery of universal laws. Darwinian biological, evolutionary theory, in its application of scientific methodology to discovering universal laws of human process, found resonance with evolutionary ideas postulated by others, including Rousseau, in earlier centuries.

The emphasis in this period on discovering laws of *normal* child development, with a special focus on issues of immaturity and stages of development, contributed to the systematization of research in Child Study. In this process, the concept of child development served as a lynchpin, connecting natural and human history (Borstelmann 1986; Prout 2005; Walkerdine 2009; Woodhead 2009a). The child was constructed as an instance of the uncivilized and inferior other (Prout 2005, p. 46). Child development was considered a process of adaptation to the environment, through a natural progression by stages, toward rational, civilized adulthood, in accord with governing principles of the liberal state (Walkerdine 2009).

Inherent within the developmental discourse was an institutionalization of power relations in which social institutions, policies, and practices nurtured and shaped the child's development for the benefit of society as a whole (Woodhead 2009a). It is at this point that experts (generally adult males, with some noteable exceptions, such as Susan Issacs, 1885) in expounding tenets of child development within the broader scientific discipline assumed prominence.

A number of key figures and events helped shape the directions of the study of children during this period. Central here was the psychologist G. Stanley Hall who is credited with initiating, in the USA in the 1880s, what came to be known as the "Child Study" movement (e.g., Bronfenbrenner et al. 1986; Ziogou et al. 2010). He was markedly influenced by post-Darwinian theory, as evident in his adherence to recapitulation theory, which posits that children repeat in their development the physiological and cultural development of the species (Kessen 1979). In 1882, Hall introduced a course in Child Study at Clark University and promoted Child Study as the core of the new profession of pedagogy. This course, in combination with Hall's organizational efforts, stimulated and consolidated interests and activities occurring at the time in countries such as Germany and the UK. In this way, he effectively promoted the discipline of Child Study through much of the Western world (Fass 2004). In 1895, in describing the Child Study movement, James Sully stated, "we now speak of the beginning of careful and methodical investigation of child nature, by men [sic] trained in scientific observation" (cited by Prout 2005, p. 45). This was study *on* children, where the child was the other of male adult researchers.

Child Study with an emphasis on principles of development was strongly linked during the early part of the twentieth century with the discipline of child psychology. It was the major influence on the conceptualization and study of the child. Ensuring "normal" development and minimizing deviations from the norm (the "abnormal") was fundamental to developmental psychology and harked back to earlier deficit theories. In this process, Bronfenbrenner et al. (1986) has argued developmental child psychologists were professionalizing knowledge trends that already existed in society (p. 1221).

The early child development psychologists emphasized quantitative methods, particularly experimental research and objective testing. Additionally, in the

aftermath of the Boer War and under the umbrella of pediatric study, the survey method also became a major tool for researching young children. In England, the survey was used for measuring the "normal" child and for controlling for deficits, as children progressed through defined stages. This form of child research represented an attempt to find answers for military failure in the degeneracy of the population. During the following decades in the UK, Europe, and the USA, health surveys and measuring, recording, and tracking mental capacities, including abnormalities, of samples of children became standard procedure for investing in national futures (Prout 2005; Woolridge 2006).

A number of psychologists played particularly key roles in the construction of "normal" child development in terms of mental abilities, competencies, and personality. One of these psychologists was Arnold Gesell, who founded the Yale Clinic of Child Development in 1911. From within his maturation viewpoint, he described major developmental milestones, identifying patterns of development, deviations from the norm, and the influence of environmental factors on children's progress through the stages (Woodhead 2009a, p. 49).

Jean Piaget's work on child cognitive development is generally recognized as the archetype of developmental theories (Walkerdine 2009). In his research (based on studying his own children), Piaget proposed a series of stages which children passed through at different ages. Piaget's teleological approach carries a presumption that later stages build on earlier stages and are more developed than earlier stages. This approach also applied to other psychologists who theorized in terms of stages of development in childhood, including Kohlberg, who conceptualized stage theory around moral development; Bowlby, who directly applied evolutionary theory to the development of emotional attachment; Maslow, who theorized the existence of a hierarchy of needs; and Freud, who described stages of psychosexual development (Slater et al. 2003, p. 42).

In marked contrast with much of the developmental theorizing of the time, where the child was treated as a passive object of research, there was embedded in Piaget's work the notion of the child as active, as directly acting on the environment. However, the concept of the child as actor, like Piaget's work more generally, was not quickly assimilated into American and British psychology of the time (Slater et al. 2003 cited in Slater and Bremner 2003). This is attributed, by Slater et al. (2003) in part, to the fact that Piaget's writing (in French) was difficult to understand and, in part, to the dominance in psychology at the time of the objectivist, mechanistic thinking of the behaviorists.

Behaviorist thinking, based on Pavlov's theories of classical conditioning as a way of explaining human behavior, was adopted by psychologists in the USA in the early and mid-twentieth century and incorporated into child psychology and child development theory. In its early and classic form, behaviorism was encapsulated by Watson who, writing in the early twentieth century, considered that "the infant was little more than the machinery of conditioning, and infancy and childhood consist(ed) of constant warping and molding under pressure of the environment. The child is passive and receptive and can be shaped in any direction" (Watson 1992, p. 94 cited in Slater et al. 2003, pp. 50–51).

Following the Second World War, there was a new emphasis on the nuclear family and the role of mothers in the home in furthering the emotional health of children. Quantitative psychology and developmental testing of children became tools for reinforcing concepts of the child as fragile and at risk and the mothers' responsibilities to mold the child as acceptable to the state (Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie 2006, p. 131). Developmental psychology became an instrument of state policies on children and became part of general public consciousness, as reflected in policy formulations, parenting advice, and texts, as well as in policy and practice interventions governing families (Prout 2005; Rose 1990). Mayall (1996) reflects on the possibility that developmental concepts have been reified in the policy-making process to an extent that weight has been given to them beyond what some researchers themselves would have considered applicable in terms of their findings.

96.2.2 Challenges to Child Study

The underlying epistemological assumptions of developmental psychology were generally unquestioned. The adult interests they represented were concealed through claims of the "rigor" of empirical investigations (Hogan 2005). The implicit construction of children in developmental psychology texts of the time was of them not yet able to speak on their own behalf. The assumption, as identified in the work of Bowlby (1946), was that "children's personal concerns and knowledge as such were not valid or reliable as research data; that they needed to be interpreted and reported by adult observers and investigators" (Satka and Mason 2004, p. 103).

A similar teleology was evident also in much of the sociology and anthropology of the twentieth century, where the main tenets of developmental theory had also been incorporated (Mayall 1996; Waksler 1991). Sociologists had generally conceptualized children as adults in the making, with the task of adults being to socialize children away from the status of uncivilized child to that of civilized adult and responsible citizen (Christensen and Prout 2005; Kehily 2009). For anthropologists, children were of little concern and, in ethnographic work, interest was largely in relation to the role of the socialization process in ensuring cultural values, and traditions were maintained (Christensen and Prout 2005).

These epistemological assumptions have continued as influential in child research in spite of some challenges to them. During the late twentieth century, two of the major challenges to the discourse of psychological child development gained stridency, both from within and outside the discipline. One of these challenges was to the assumptions of the universalist and context-free nature of child development theory, and another to the assumptions implicit in the construction of childhood in developmental theory.

The first challenge to the discourse of child development was from outside developmental psychology and related to the separation, in Child Study, of children from their contexts. This challenge, made explicit in the late nineteenth century by, for example, the sociologist Baldwin (1895) and the educationalist

John Dewey ([1896](), [1902]()), highlighted the importance of looking at the everyday meaning of children's lives (Hogan [2005]()). In the period of the 1930s–1950s, anthropologists Malinowski and Mead demonstrated, through their ethnographic accounts of childhood in non-Western countries, the existence of cultural variations in child-rearing practices (Hogan [2005](); LeVine [2007]()).

Vygotsky a Russian psychologist was a relatively lone voice from within the discipline of psychology, when, in research publications over the period 1924–1934 (the year of his death), he drew attention to the role of social and cultural factors in children's cognitive development. In the latter decades of the twentieth century, Woodhead ([2009a]()) notes there was within psychology "a dedicated handful of developmentalists (who) were interested in cross-cultural studies" and in the role of the social in contesting the normative nature of Child Study and its universal assumptions about children (p. 50). For example, in 1950, Erik Erikson published *Childhood and Society*, in which he described the impact of social experience on biologically determined developmental stages (Erikson [1950]()). In 1974, Martin Richards published an edited collection, *The Integration of a Child into the Social World*, in which the emphasis was on "the accommodation, negotiation and integration of *a person*" (Richards [1974]()). The child was credited with agency (John [2003](), p. 23). In the 1980s, there was a renewed interest in the work of Vygotsky.

About the same time, Bronfenbrenner was arguing that research must be ecologically valid and engage with experiences of relevance for children in their everyday lives (Hogan [2005]()). In a "propaedeutic discussion" on the state of developmental psychology in 1986, Bronfenbrenner et al. ([1986]()) argued that "in this postpositivist era, developmental psychology, no less than other areas of psychology and the other social sciences, shows signs of becoming aware of its, social, cultural and historical contexts" (p. 1218). In the same discussion, he emphasized the continuing teleological nature of developmental psychology, stating that "like it or not, our job is related to the business of finding values and norms for our society" (p. 1221).

Additional to the challenge to assumptions about the universalist and context-free nature of child development was a second major and related challenge to the discourse of developmental psychology. This was the application of constructionism to knowledge about children and childhood. With the deconstructing of knowledge generally, new epistemological assumptions emerged, according to which the world was becoming understood as known from particular positions, described by Smith ([1987]()) and Alanen ([2005]()) as "standpoints" of the knowledge creator. Historians such as Aries ([1962]()) and later Hendrik ([1997]()) exposed the essentialist nature of the concepts of child development and childhood. These concepts now began to be seen as social constructs, varying across history and across cultures.

Constructionism made it possible to challenge the way in which psychology and the social sciences, more broadly, had silenced the voices of children. It was now evident that the construction of children as *becoming* adults and as immature, passive, and irrational in comparison with adults had marginalized their voices and excluded them from knowledge-producing forums. It was now argued that

children were like other groups whose voices have been silenced because they have "little or no power in the construction of accounts about them, no access to texts, and no avenues into the corridors of knowledge production power" (Lincoln 1993, p. 320). They, too, had existed in social science texts only as defined by powerful and privileged experts (Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 1992).

96.3   Part 2: The Late Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Century: "New" Child Studies

Challenges to the construction of the child in research and the recognition of the significance of social context for research have been accompanied by adult attempts to reposition children as competent social actors, as experts in their own lives. In this process, adult researchers have sought to research *with* or facilitate research *by* children in contrast to researching *on* them. As Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie (2006) argue "It may ... be fruitful to look at the autonomous child or the child as competent social actor as just another historical construction of childhood, inextricably tied up with new emerging constructions of parenthood, as well as with the specific economic, sociocultural and political context" (p. 134).

In this section, we argue that the economic, sociocultural, and political environments of the last 40 years or so have provided a context conducive to a reconstruction of the child and childhood in the knowledge production process. We identify in the following discussion some of the features of this changed context and discuss them under four headings. The first is the sociocultural trends associated with economic developments that increasingly foreground the child as a social actor. The second is an explicitly political agenda advocating for the rights of children as a minority group. The third is a general challenge to the monopolization of knowledge by social elites, and the fourth is the theorization of children as having conceptual autonomy.

96.3.1 Context for Repositioning the Child

96.3.1.1 Sociocultural Trends

The current focus on child agency can be understood as part of a broad social trend associated with economic changes that have accompanied globalization and resulted in a move to "the liberal, free market oriented society in need of autonomous, entrepreneurial individuals" (Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie 2006, p. 134). With the strengthening of the capitalist enterprise, as a consequence of industrial developments that characterized the previous century, there has been a marked trend for individuals to assert their own interests and be part of more flexible family relationships. A shift to what Giddens (1998) has described as a "democratization of the family" has meant (in the West, at least) a general

move away from hierarchically organized relations to relations of more equality and intergenerational negotiation (p. 65). Cross-cultural research in the Asia Pacific region has suggested that in spite of changes occurring to traditional patterns of adult–child relations, there is considerable variation in shifts in these relations in countries across the region (Mason et al. 2009). Attitudes promoting choice, negotiation, and flexibility are now emphasized (Beck 1992). Within this context, the child is considered to be an actor, one with opinions, and who needs to be consulted in decision-making.

The most direct way in which entrepreneurial values have influenced researchers in attributing agency to children can be traced to commercial interests. Marketing has targeted children as consumers of products for over a century. In the last 15 years or so, marketing research has placed a direct focus on children as consumers, using methods such as focus groups to access their interests (Cook 2009, p. 332). Similarly, in the 1960s and 1970s, the broad consumer or service user movement "filtered down [sic]" from adults to children (Williamson and Butler 1995), and children began to be recognized as actors in their role as consumers of these services.

96.3.1.2 The Child's Right to Participate and to Voice

Advocacy for children's right to participate has been part of the "identity politics" movement, which emerged from the radical margins of liberal democratic societies in the civil rights era in the USA and emphasized empowerment of the oppressed. Adult advocacy for children's rights to voice and to participate at the international level has been given impetus by, and influenced by, attitudes that recognize children as social actors able to make choices and to negotiate. Child advocates, particularly educationalists, have argued for the child's right to participate since the early 1920s. Educationalists, such as Dewey, Makarenko, and Montessori, from diverse national and ideological backgrounds, argued for the participation of children in decision-making in schools and communities in terms of both learning and governance (as cited in De Winter 2002). The promotion of child participation by, for example, Dewey and Makarenko was explicitly about actions geared toward the creation of the good society, a democratic society for the former and a socialist society for the latter.

A forceful advocate who worked at the international level was Janusz Korczak. An educationalist writing and working in the early decades of the twentieth century, Korczak advocated for recognition of children's right to voice their opinions. In speaking of the importance of hearing the child's voice, he questioned "(w)ho asks the child for his [sic] opinion and consent?" and clearly saw the child as a social actor in the comment that "(c)hildren are not people of tomorrow; they are people today" (Lifton 1989). Korczak wrote the first Children's Charter and spoke of the need for a Declaration of Children's Rights (Williams 2004). While the 1923 and 1959 UN Declarations of Children's Rights were steps toward Korczak's goals, it was not until the 1989 United Nations Convention of the Child that the conceptual agency of the child, as embodied in the participation principle, was given prominence at the international policy level. This principle was later

articulated as a right for children to participate and have a voice in decision-making (Quennerstedt 2010).

Embedded in the Convention is an ambiguity about child agency. On the one hand, the Convention in promoting child participation gave formal status to the concept of the child as social actor, able to negotiate in relations with adults. On the other hand, the Convention enunciated constraints on this agency, through the inclusion of notions of competency and maturity. In this seemingly contradictory approach, the Convention perpetuated an ambiguity that was evident in earlier times in Rousseau's discussion on the child. Indeed, this ambiguity has plagued children's rights arguments since their early exposition by the seventeenth century philosopher John Locke. Locke had recognized that children had rights independent of their parents but considered that parents could override these rights when children lacked sufficient rationality (Caplan 1997).

The constraints in the Convention on children's agency can be seen as in line with the argument that the actual formulation of the Convention was an adultcentric process, in which children's views were not taken into account (Ratna 1998), and that its image of childhood has been produced by adults as external observers (Freeman 1987).

Although the concept of child rights has gained global acceptance, understanding of what this actually means varies greatly (Hinton 2008). For example, research on child participation in the Asia Pacific region suggested that, in some Eastern countries, where individual rights and democratic processes have less prominence, "the meaning of children's participation has been revealed as being, at best, ambiguous and, at worst, imperialist" (Bolzan in Mason and Bolzan 2009, p. 80). Further, in relation to the example of India, Ratna (1998) noted that the Convention can be criticized because of its distance from the context in which the lives of the Indian children, who were his concern, were situated.

In spite of cautions and criticisms, the Convention is generally recognized as an important reflection of the changing views on childhood, an impetus to further changes. In addition, the Convention raises, what John identifies as, new challenges for those researching children (John 1996). These challenges were explicitly articulated in a newsletter of *Children's Rights International* of 2005 (Children's Rights International (CRI) 2005). In the newsletter, this organization, established under the auspice of the World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights, stated "The voices of children themselves must be prominent in [the] exploration of what is going on in their lives – we must approach children as knowing subjects" (quoted in James 2007, p. 261). Additionally, the Convention is considered to have made a direct impact on child research by requiring states parties to report regularly on progress toward the rights enshrined in the Convention (Beazley et al. 2009). In facilitating this requirement, adults now have opportunities to promote processes whereby children's voices can be heard. Beyond this, as Kavita Ratna has commented in the introduction to the Indian *Concerned with Working Children Report* (Ratna 1998), the Convention provides both a legal framework for holding child rights activists accountable and opportunities for children to advocate for their rights.

96.3.1.3 Challenges to Knowledge Monopolization

Constructionist thinking has fuelled challenges by women, nonwhite, non-Western, and indigenous people to the domination of knowledge by elites. As these groups have attempted through "identity politics" to confront oppressive practices, they have critiqued the ways that dominant knowledge frameworks have centralized power in elites and marginalized those with different knowledge (e.g., McGuire 1987, p. 2 cites Tandon 1981; Hall 1979). Here, the writings and educational practice of Paulo Freire in the 1970s have been important in challenging the way elites have used their social power to determine what is useful knowledge (Au 2007). For Freire, gaining control of knowledge and an associated understanding of the world was a way in which oppressed persons could move from being the object to being the subject of knowledge and in that process become fully human. Freire worked, through dialogue, for the empowerment and emancipation of oppressed groups (Au 2007).

When empowerment as a concept is applied without reflection, it can be critiqued, as it has been within the social work discipline. For example, Pease (2002) argues, in relation to social work practice, that empowerment is a modernist concept that treats power as a commodity and can consequently have unintentional, disempowering effects for those to whom the concept is applied. Inherent in the concept is a powerful–powerless dualism, which he argues can camouflage diverse experiences and contribute to the domination rather than liberation of those being empowered (Pease 2002).

Adult attempts to empower children, in order to facilitate their contributions to knowledge production, are likely to reflect both the ideals and the problems inherent in a more powerful group seeking legitimation and empowerment of a silenced group. In this context, it is not always evident that children themselves have at various times, through youth rights movements, actively sought to have their voices heard in knowledge production. Because of the role schooling plays in "knowledging" the child, education has typically been the target of youth rights movements seeking to have an impact on knowledge. For example, the Youth Liberation movement of Ann Arbor (1970–1979), Michigan, USA, founded by a 15-year-old with other young people, had as one of its key aims, student control of education. Similarly, the "Young People's liberation movement" in the UK, titled *Underground Power*, sought to have input into the curriculum and governance of the schooling system (Bird and Ibidun 1996).

It is possible that youth movements, through use of the Internet, in this twenty-first century, are able to promote the voices and interests of children and youth, so they are heard more clearly and immediately than was the case in the past (at least in affluent minority world countries). The use of the Internet as a means of connecting youth and providing opportunities for them to debate and organize toward their liberation is exemplified by the National Youth Rights Association (NYRA available at http://www.youthrights.org/). This organization was founded in 1998 in the USA with approximately 10,000 members and includes in its challenges the issues of ageism and ending mandatory attendance at school. Such challenges by children and youth are significant in that they indicate opposition to adult constructions of

the "good society" as imposed through education systems. In this context, it is pertinent that Bird and Ibidun (1996), in writing about their *Underground Power* movement, state that adult assistance is of crucial importance in really hearing what young people are saying and transferring resources and skills to them, in particular through "trust(ing) them to work out how best to use them" (Bird and Ibidun 1996, p. 122). John (1996) refers to bridge-building activities as a way of transforming power relations between adults and children and enabling transfer of resources and skills. Bridge-building activities are central for much of contemporary research practice, built on collaboration and partnership in research with children and in child-led research.

96.3.1.4 Theorization of Conceptual Autonomy: "Voicing" the Child

Theoretical arguments for children's agency complemented the more directly political activities for children's rights. Researchers, who since the 1970s have argued for including children's knowledge within the adult knowledge production system of academia, have provided a legitimacy previously lacking. As Quennerstedt (2010) notes (in discussing the UN Convention), the language used by researchers, because it assumes authority, spreads beyond academia and influences how children are perceived.

Many of those theorizing in this area (e.g., Mayall 2002) explicitly aim through their research to promote social justice for children, sometimes in alliance with them (e.g., John 1996). Alanen (2010) refers to the "normative" intention of contemporary childhood researchers to improve children's social position through endorsing children's agency (p. 5). In pursuing this intention within the social sciences, there have been a number of major theoretical contributions to repositioning children (and, of necessity therefore, adults) in knowledge production about children.

One of the earliest theoretical contributions to children's conceptual autonomy was by Robert Mackay in an article published by Dreitzel in 1973. Mackay's article was presented with commentary in a book edited by Waksler (1991). Waksler described the article as an "intellectually radical" concept at the time of its publication (p. 23). In the 1973 article, as republished in Waksler, Mackay critiqued the validity of the "normative" sociological frame. He argued that the notion of socialization is based on "common-sense assumptions" of adults and mirrors an adult view of children as incomplete beings, as "deficient vis-a-vis adults" (pp. 27–28). In challenging adults' attribution to children of deficit, Mackay was challenging a notion that has been inherent in writing on socializing the child since the tracts of early Greek philosophers. He identified the way in which the formulization of a normative socialization process led to a dichotomy between children as "incomplete – immature, irrational, incompetent, asocial, acultural" and adults as "complete – mature, rational, competent, social and autonomous, unless they are 'acting-like-children'" (Waksler 1991, p. 28). Mackay claimed that in this process, intersubjectivity or the interactions between adults and children were ignored and the child treated as incompetent by adults such as teachers (Waksler 1991, p. 28). He pointed out the paradox that while ignoring children's interactions

with adults, adults were relying on the child's interpretive competencies within adult–child interactions for the project of socialization (Waksler 1991, p. 35).

In a publication in 1976, Speier referred to adult conceptualizations of the child as the "adult ideological viewpoint" (1976a, p. 99). This labeling of the role adults played in knowledge production about childhood was a significant step in furthering the promotion of child conceptual autonomy as utilized by later researchers.

A further and widely influential theoretical contribution has been the largely sociological project conducted between 1987 and 1992, under the auspices of the European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research, the Childhood as a Social Phenomenon project. In the book *Childhood Matters* (Qvortrup et al. 1994), derived from this project, authors from 16 industrialized countries described the social position of children in their countries as part of the project's aim "to provide children and childhood with conceptual autonomy" and "to give a voice to children" as subjects in research (p. 1). The editors noted that what characterized these reports was that:

> Contrary to custom, childhood is not perceived as "the next generation", rather it is seen as part of today's society. Even if it is true that children grow up and become adults, it is equally true that they live and lead a life as children. It is astonishing how widely this trivial fact has been ignored by the social sciences. We think that it is about time that it be taken seriously as a research object in its own right. (p. 394)

This project challenged earlier treatment of childhood as ontologically different from adulthood and highlighted the way in which social ordering between adults and children on the basis of age had placed limitations on children's rights to contribute their knowledge (Qvortrup et al. 1994). Further, the editors articulated the importance of the constructs of the child, children, and childhood and recognized the interconnections between the reconceptualization of these three constructs (Qvortrup et al. 1994, 2009). The project, like conceptual research following it, also emphasized that childhood is a structural form of society, a permanent but changing element (Qvortrup et al. 2009).

Another particularly significant theoretical contribution to repositioning the child was the identification by James and Prout (1990) in their book, *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, of what they referred to as an emergent paradigm. Jenks (2009) considered that the articulation of this paradigm contributed to a "consolidation" of earlier thinking in the area and also became "a manifesto" for further theorizing (p. 93). Of the five key features outlined in this paradigm, the first was that childhood is to be understood as a social construction. Drawing on earlier interpretive analyses, they remarked that, while biological immaturity is a feature of human groups in all societies, childhood itself as an institution varies across cultures. Second, the authors noted that childhood, as a variable of social analysis, cannot be entirely separated from other variables such as class, gender, and ethnicity. The third feature noted by James and Prout (1990) was that "childhood and children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, and not just in respect to their social construction by adults" (p. 4). This was also an acknowledgment that children are actors in their own lives.

The fourth feature they identified was the usefulness of ethnography as a method for facilitating a more direct voice for children in the study of childhood. Finally, they noted that the new paradigm, as it was emerging in childhood sociology, was directly engaging in reconstructing childhood.

In the second edition of this book, James and Prout (1997) note that, at the time of publication of the 1990 edition, a sociology of childhood was beginning to emerge as a distinct subdiscipline of sociology. This subdiscipline was given official recognition with the establishment in 1998 of the "Research Committee on Sociology of Childhood RC53," within the International Sociological Association. According to the website for the committee "(t)he aim of RC53 is to contribute to the development of sociological and interdisciplinary childhood research, uniting professional knowledge, scientific rigour, and dedication of its members to work on childhood issues on the national, regional, and international levels."

The sociology of childhood paradigm has been widely recognized as making a major contribution to repositioning the child, either of itself or in conjunction with theorization in the disciplines of anthropology, history, and philosophy, which have also played major formative roles in the new multidisciplinary area, typically referred to as "Childhood Studies." The 2009 publication of the *Palgrave Handbook of Childhood Studies*, bringing together leading researchers in the area, demonstrates, the editors tell us, the current maturity, diversity, and legitimacy of the area of Childhood Studies (Qvortrup et al. 2009, p. 1).

In the remainder of this section, we outline some key aspects of the conceptualization of childhood as articulated by childhood researchers. Early conceptualization of sociological thinking on childhood highlighted the oppositional qualities of traditional and sociological approaches to childhood whereby, according to the developmental process, adults had been defined as active and as being and children as passive and becoming. This dichotomization has been effectively challenged by Lee (2001). Prout (2005) argues that while useful in the early reconceptualization of childhood, there is now a need to move beyond the conceptualization of dualities to take account of the heterogeneity and complexity of childhood (and, at the same time, of adulthood).

A central focus in this more recent thinking has been on children as social actors, as active participants in society, who through their individual competencies contribute to social and cultural reproduction (James and Prout 1997). Children's competence is understood as framed by the context or structure in which childhood and children individually are situated. In a chapter in their edited volume, Hutchby and Moran-Ellis (1998) discuss childhood as a time of social activity involving issues of and struggles about power and relations that can be constraining or enabling (pp. 9–10).

Mayall (2001) has described child–adult relations as having three interlinked components. The first is at local levels, where individual children and adults interrelate "across age divisions, power inequalities and (in families) household norms and needs" (p. 2). The second is where the social group of children and of adults interrelates across the generations signified by childhood and adulthood. Third, adults and children belong to different generations and therefore have throughout their lives different knowledge and experiences (Mayall, p. 2).

Generation as a concept is, Alanen (2003) argues, "the very basic tenet of any sociology of children/childhood" (p. 29). The social worlds in which children live are not just "culturally constructed" but also generationally structured. It is through the investigation of the social organization of specific generational structures from which children's powers derive or are constrained that we can understand the range and nature of children's agency (Alanen, p. 42).

While the articulation of theoretical concepts, such as those described above by researchers in the sociology of childhood, is the major driver of contemporary research with children, key contributions have been made since early in the development of the area by researchers from other and diverse disciplinary backgrounds. These include the disciplines of psychology, education, geography, law, health, and early childhood education. Multi-disciplinarity is a significant characteristic of "Childhood Studies," the label most typically given to the contemporary study of the child (Kehily 2009; Qvortrup 2009). This approach to childhood and children is now a major feature of academic and professional forums and publications. These include the growing number of academic study programs with a focus on the area, the numerous conferences and seminars reflecting this approach held each year, the development of book series reflecting the topic (e.g., the Falmer Press and Rutgers University Press), and an ever-growing range of texts and other books in the area (e.g., Kehily 2009; Wyness 2006). Additionally, there are journals with a focus on the area (e.g., *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research* and *Children and Society*), and also special editions of broad child research journals focused on aspects of this area (Fernandez 2011; Mason and Danby 2011).

The documents referred to here are (at least initially) English language publications. While there are some researchers in the edited volumes from countries other than those where English is the first language and some publications in the area in other languages (e.g., German, Finnish), it is inevitably the English language that has come to dominate Childhood Studies globally (as in many other areas of scholarship). As Beazley et al. (2009) argue, even where research being reported on is from the Global South, it is very often led by researchers from the North, leading to a phenomenon in the South in which Beazley et al. consider researchers are muted and children of the region silenced. However unintended, what flows from this domination of English-speaking researchers could well be regarded as a form of colonization. There are implications here that the international research community needs to come to terms with and seek ways to counter.

96.4   Part 3: Researching Children as Knowing Subjects – Research Practice with and by Children

In the early monographs describing research in Childhood Studies, there was a tendency to resist drawing boundaries, editors instead opting to develop compendiums of exemplars of research as descriptive of the topic. For example, Christensen and James (2000) in their classic text on *Research with Children* focus on exploring "the complexity of the epistemological and methodological questions"

that arise in this research, through contributions from authors of diverse disciplinary backgrounds, theoretical perspectives, and research practice. Prout, in his forward to the 2008 edition of *Research with Children*, comments that, in avoiding giving recipes for researching with children, the book has promoted the idea that researchers should explore broad methodological problems and find their own solutions within the particular circumstances of their own work (Christensen and James 2008). Greene and Hogan (2005) took a somewhat different approach in their book on *Researching Children's Experience* by including in-depth chapters on different methods used in researching with children and thereby providing valuable discussion of rationales for and issues associated with particular methods. In the edited book, *Doing Research with Children and Young People* (Fraser et al. 2004), a number of researchers contributed discussion aimed more broadly at key considerations in planning, conducting, and disseminating child research. In an even more recently published volume, entitled *Rethinking Children and Research*, Kellett (2010) extends the focus to include as part of an overview of key issues in child research, practice-based perspectives. In doing so, Kellett provides practical guidelines for designing, implementing, and presenting child research.

In our attempt to provide an overview of child research for this part of our chapter, we struggled to identify an overarching approach for the framing of agendas and research questions in this area. We espouse the view that, strictly speaking, there is no overarching epistemology to describe contemporary research relevant to this chapter but have nevertheless found it useful to follow an approach employed by Denzin and Lincoln (2005). They use the term "qualitative enquiry" in an epistemological way to refer to research which has as its "shifting center" an "avowed humanistic and social justice commitment to study the world from the perspective of the interacting individual" (p. xvi). "(F)rom this principle flow the liberal and radical politics of action" employed by researchers with diverse foci (p. xvi). Denzin and Lincoln draw attention to the blurring of disciplinary boundaries and a focus on interpretive and critical approaches as characteristic of qualitative research and theory in the social sciences in the last 25 years. The fact that researchers in the qualitative project can be located "on the borders between postpositivism and poststructuralism," employing a great diversity of research strategies (p. xiv), explains in part the difficulty we confronted in attempting to draw boundaries within which to discuss research with and by children. We recognize that there are those who would object, and object strongly, to what might be considered a blurring, or indeed ignoring, of the boundary between the fundamentally different epistemological positions of objectivism (positivism/postpositivism), on the one hand, and constructionism/constructivism, on the other hand. However, in pragmatic terms, we have found it useful to include methodologies that can be located "on the borders between postpositivism and poststructuralism," where such methodological approaches appear to respond to the challenges of giving conceptual autonomy to childhood, to hearing children's voices, and to treating children as "knowing subjects." For us, these have been the crucial criteria for inclusion in our coverage of child research.

Accepting that the constraints on a chapter prepared for a handbook make it impossible to give more than a glimpse of the richness of research of the area, we briefly describe some research projects as examples of these methodologies, when applied to child research. Given that numerous scholars from many disciplines (and countries) are making valuable contributions to both theory and practice in children's research, we have had, of necessity, to be selective in our choice of those researchers whose work we highlight in this chapter. It is regrettable but inevitable that in this process some key researchers have been omitted.

96.4.1 Methodologies in Researching with and/or by Children

We understand methodology as being about the principles and theoretical perspective adopted by the researcher. These principles and theory, along with the overall plan of the research, determine the methods used by the researcher (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 2006). The methodologies we highlight range from the postpositivist, in which children are included as a unit of analysis, to the poststructuralist. After discussing some of the postpositivist research, our major focus is on the broadly labeled poststructuralist methodologies of ethnography, standpoint, ethnomethodology, participatory, and child-led research.

96.4.1.1 Postpositivist Methodology

We use the term postpositivist to refer to a stream of contemporary childhood research in which researchers have responded to the call by Qvortrup et al. (1994) to conceptualize childhood as a category, as a unit of analysis, and do this with an overall commitment to humanistic and social justice values. In collecting their data, researchers we identify with this approach are challenging the subsuming of children within families and counting children in as individuals, attempting to make them visible and in that sense recognizing them as social actors. For example, Wintersberger (1994), in the large European project reported in *Childhood Matters*, put children centrally in economic analysis when he examined the costs of children to society, working from a position that recognized children as contributing their labor to society.

In research on families' economic situations and in particular poverty, there are now increasing numbers of examples of the way children are being disaggregated from families and treated as a conceptual category. For example, a survey of family economic well-being in the USA between 1996 and 1998 included in its statistical analysis the number of children below the poverty level by state (Zedlewski 1999).

Ben-Arieh (2010) describes the rapid growth of childhood social indicators in the last 25 years as in part attributable to the sociological emphasis on childhood as a social category and the importance of focusing on children's current living situations, in contrast to focusing on them as future adults. The "KIDS COUNT" project (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2006) documents more than 100 indicators of child well-being relating to economic status including poverty rates and health, safety, and risk factors (Annie E. Casey Foundation 2011).

Epistemologically, this work on social indicators has counted children in, but, in doing so within a postpositivist framework, it places the pursuit of measurement as central and gives it a privileged status. By privileging measurement in this research, attention is focused on the adult-centered measurement activity, and the particular child–adult relations, part and parcel of all adult research on children's issues, do not feature. Beyond treating children as a conceptually autonomous unit, attempts are being made to bring children's voices into quantitative work. For example, in the work of Bradshaw and Richardson (2009) where they explored children's well-being, children's responses were gathered as part of the data set. Another example is the work of Cummins and Lau (2005), who developed subjective well-being scales for children by substituting items from existing adult scales of well-being with other items able to be understood by children. Thus, a seven-point scale might be replaced by a three-or five-point scale on the same sorts of well-being measures. Camfield et al. (2008) note that this approach, in which child-focused measures are ones designed for adults, modified for measuring children but modified in terms of administration rather than content, "suggests an understanding of children as incompetent adults."

Greene and Hogan (2005) comment that, while methods such as large-scale surveys and standardized questionnaires can be useful in conveying the diversity of children's lives and describing something of their experience, they cannot include subjective content in terms of children's own constructions and negotiations of their worlds.

Scott (2000) attempted to confront this limitation and the potential of "adultcentric" bias in the large-scale British Household Panel Survey. In this survey, launched in 1991, interviews with children were employed to survey health-related issues. Scott found pretesting of questions and the use of focus groups was important in ensuring that the questions asked of children in the survey were not adultcentric.

96.4.1.2 Poststructuralist Methodologies

The following methodologies, which we locate conceptually near the poststructuralist border of the qualitative framework, have in common the employment of research methods that attempt to minimize adultcentricism in promoting social justice for children. It is through these methodologies that researchers are attempting epistemologically to reposition children. In attempting this, they draw from an in-common range of qualitative research methods and tend, albeit to different degrees, to emphasize researcher reflexivity. The actual research processes and emphases vary with the theoretical foci of the specific methodologies. In drawing on the literature for examples of the following methodologies, we have tended to use the researcher's own labeling of their methodology; it is thus their description of their research methodology that has led to its inclusion here and its placement under the headings we have developed. We have not taken issue with where this disagreed with our own understanding.

Ethnographic Methodology. Ethnography has been identified by James and Prout (1990) as one of the four key features of the new Child Studies paradigm.

Ethnographic inquiry is about seeking "to uncover meanings and perceptions on the part of the people participating in the research" and viewing these "against the backdrop of the people's overall worldview or 'culture.'" It is about attempting to "see things from the perspective of the participants" (Crotty 1998, p. 7). Jenks (2000) constructs a broad definition of "childhood ethnography" which takes account of children as social actors and experts in their own lives. He describes ethnography as a process that enables engagement with children and elicitation of their cultural knowledge. It can be a number of things, including describing ways of social interaction and storytelling (p. 71).

Some ethnographic researchers of children's lives highlight the problematic nature of the adult researcher role in research of children's worlds. For example, Mandell (1991) described the difficulties she experienced in attempting to assume the "least-adult" role in studying young children while at the same time finding that children were able to accept adult researchers on their own terms.

Christensen (2004), in looking back on her long-term ethnographic child research project in a local district of Copenhagen in the early 1990s, discusses the important insights she gained about the researcher's relationship with informants. In the project, where she focused on children's everyday health and self-care, her field studies involved following the daily school lives of the children in the classroom, after-school centers, and summer camps, as well as their homes. She used verbal and nonverbal methods of communicating with the children. In a 2004 article in which she examined the issues of power, voice, and representation in children's participation, she concluded that engaging in research with children as active participants requires that the researcher investigate "key cultural ideas about what it means to be 'an adult'" (Christensen 2004, p. 174). She also found the issue of power to be complex, so that in research power moves between different actors (adults and children) and different social positions and is produced and negotiated in social interactions. Moreover, she concluded that research requires that people want to be part of it, and in participating in the process, children will test out the researcher.

Knupfer (1996), in discussing her ethnographic research with Chinese children in America, drew attention to the cultural issues that beset ethnography. She asserts that researchers come to ethnography with their own cultural biases and adult-centered views of what constitutes childhood. She discusses her concerns about how to work ethnographically within paradigms built on Western-based assumptions, without transgressing cultural models of childhood. As a telling example of cross-cultural dilemmas, Knupfer cites difficulties in researching within a paradigm where children are actors, as in research with a Chinese boy. When requested to make a decision about the way he would like to participate in research he replied to the researcher "You decide." 'Such decisions were, in his view, clearly those of an adult, and he deferred to me out of respect'(Knupfer 1996, p. 140).

The reflexivity that researchers such as Christensen (2004) and Knupfer (1996) bring to ethnographic research and to adult–child interactions during research was also a key component in a research project reported by Davis et al. (2000). In an ethnographic project applying participant observation to the everyday school lives

of disabled children, the researchers interacted with children and staff in the field over a period of 5 months. By the researcher taking on various roles such as friend, teacher, and entertainer at different times in the research, he was able to learn about children's cultures and, in the process, challenge the perception that disabled children are not capable of social action and show that "the social worlds of disabled children are as fluid as that of other social actors" (p. 219).

Standpoint Methodology. Standpoint methodology applied to researching children and childhood is derived from critical feminist methodology. This work is grounded in the work of Smith (1987) who coined the term standpoint theory. Feminist standpoint theory, as described by Harding (2004), focuses on relations between knowledge and power and provides "a guide to improving actual research projects–as a methodology" (p. 291). It is a methodology that has been extended to research with other marginalized social groups such as black persons and lower class women (e.g., Hill Collins 2000) and acknowledges the significance of "outsider" status, enabling groups with this status to see things about social structures and how they function in ways that members of the dominant group cannot (Smith 1987).

As articulated by Alanen (2005), children's standpoint is helpful in enabling us to begin forming an account of society from "where children stand and act, as subjects in their everyday lives" and as adding to our understanding of children's lives, when it links their lives with "the normal everyday organisation of social relations" (p. 43). Mayall (2002), in discussing the need to focus on children's own "experiential knowledge" and "how they experience and understand the social world and the structures of knowledge that are not of their making," points out that standpoint theory is valuable for understanding adult–child relations, both individually and in terms of groups, as well as in furthering knowledge about child rights (p. 25). In considering the fit between the social order and children's experiences and understandings, Mayall gives as an example her research findings on the implications of both traffic danger and stranger danger for childhood. She draws on her research on the lives of children in London, where she found that children's rights to explore are inhibited by the emphasis on protecting them within their homes. Children find this emphasis damages child–parent relations through the conflicts around negotiations about where and with whom children can go (Mayall 2002, p. 138).

In research on children's well-being "informed by standpoint theory," children were acknowledged both as authorities on what contributed to their well-being and as active in shaping and interpreting their world (Fattore et al. 2009, p. 59). As in Mayall's (2002) study, children identified parental concerns about their safety (as well as aspects of the built environment) as limiting their ability to participate in social life. They also identified factors contributing to their sense of safety and security. These included "being with other people," "having parents that treat you well," and having a "safe place to be" (p. 18). The research highlighted as a challenge for the development of child indicators the existence of a diversity of child standpoints. While such a finding presents a challenge on a number of fronts, it specifically raises difficulties for the development of child indicators (Fattore et al. 2009).

There are some additional unacknowledged hazards in relation to child stand-point research and the sociology of childhood more generally. When we recognize children as social actors, adopt a child standpoint, or foreground children's life projects, there can be a naturalizing of the concept of the actor. Honig (2009) argues this runs the risk of coupling an epistemological critique with a normative position.

Ethnomethodology. An ethnomethodological approach (Garfinkle 1967) is employed by those researchers interested in understanding how social orders are constructed through everyday interaction. It is often used in conjunction with conversation analytic methodology (CA) (Sacks 1995), where language is considered central to social life and the social order and crucial to making sense of social actions and interactions. In this methodology, the analytic process is concerned with "the organisation of the meaningful conduct of people in society, that is how people in society produce their activities and make sense of the world about them" (Pomerantz and Fehr 1997, p. 65). Those who employ the methods developed as part of this approach focus on both verbal and nonverbal (sound quality, pauses, and sometimes gestures) communication, as features of talk. Linguistic interchanges become the basic data for study. Language, which "comprises an array of social practices," is investigated within specific institutional sites, such as the school or home (Heritage 1997; Watson 1992).

In research on adult–child conversational interactions, Speier (1976b) examined the ways in which adults restrict the conversational rights of children. For example, he highlighted the ways in which adults enforce silence upon children by terminating their right to continue a particular topic when there is a disagreement or argument, by refraining from talking to a child, or by telling a child to be quiet.

Another ethnomethodologist, Thornborrow (1998), highlighted the way children's competence is constructed by adults. In an analysis of talk in children's television programs, she identified the various ways in which the adult presenters circumscribed the spaces for child presenters. She compared this program with a program where children were, themselves, the presenters. The researcher's analysis of the children's talk in interactions with adults and with other children raised issues about the extent to which there is the space for children to present as competent participants in the production of mediated discourse.

Danby and Baker (1998) have also explored the construction of children's competence. By examining the verbal and nonverbal interactions of some boys in a preschool classroom, they demonstrated the complex work in which the young children engaged as they organized and managed their social situations and play spaces, including a conflict in relation to play. This analysis produced evidence of how treating children as competent social beings can inform teachers' understandings of different classroom practices.

Participatory Research Methodology. In considering child participatory research, Holland et al. state that "participation in research appears to be fairly broadly conceptualised" (2010, p. 361). For Reason (1998), "at the heart of inquiry methodologies that emphasize participation as a core strategy" is a participative worldview which is "more holistic, pluralist and egalitarian" than earlier "scientific

worldviews" (p. 262). Reason (1998) identified three approaches: cooperative inquiry, participatory action research, and action inquiry. In this section, in order to describe some aspects of child participatory research, we use Reason's headings. Additionally, we describe two other forms of participatory research, those referred to by researchers as "rights-based" and "child-led" research approaches.

Reason argues *that cooperative inquiry* (Reason), also referred to as *collaborative research* (Mason and Gibson 2004), is ideally about all those involved in the research project collaborating in all aspects of the research. He acknowledges that, in fact, participants may take on different roles and that some members may have organizational roles where they act as facilitators of the inquiry process. At a minimum, in this approach to research, all participants need to be informed about the research process and give informed consent to decisions about process and outcomes (Reason 1998). The research we include as examples of this approach generally approximate the process Reason is describing.

In their (Extra) Ordinary Lives project, Holland et al. (2010) aimed to scrutinize participatory research with young people in care through a collaborative research process. They sought collaboration in determining the research agenda, methods of research, and analysis of the data. They reported on the ethical problems that emerged as a consequence of the collaborative processes, including the domination of some voices of young people over those of others, and issues of maintaining confidentiality of personal data in analysis sessions. An additional issue in employing a collaborative approach was the resource-intensive nature of the project. The researchers concluded that, in spite of these drawbacks, the process was a valuable way to conduct the research. The critical and reflexive ethical framework for conducting the research was particularly important in enabling transparency about the process; the "how" of participation and the ways that participation impacted on the claims made both for and from the research (p. 373).

Involving children as coresearchers has been found to contribute difficulties, such as additional funding costs and approvals to pay children as research leaders (Smith et al. 2002). However, Smith et al. found considerable benefits were obtained from recruiting child coresearchers. The benefits of the involvement of young researchers included their input into improving on the original research design and enabling access to a wider group of participants than would otherwise have been possible. Further, the insider perspective brought by children as coresearchers enabled data additional to that which the adult researchers would have been able to obtain to be included and inform policy.

The development and employment of methods to enable children to collaborate as participants in the research typifies what is critical to much collaborative research. In a description of a research project in the UK, Morrow (2001) explained how three qualitative research methods were used to explore the children's subjective experiences of their neighborhoods. The methods were structured in terms of questions to which children were asked to respond by giving written accounts of aspects of their lives such as friends and schools and by employing visual methods where they could volunteer to take photos of places important to them and group discussions where they talked about their towns and

neighborhoods. Important was the way in which different forms of interconnected data were generated by the methods used, leading to a number of health/well-being-related themes, including issues typically ignored in health-related research and policy for young people (Morrow 2001).

Research in Gedeo in Ethiopia by Abebe and Kjørholt (2009) used multiple qualitative methods including observation of children in school and places in which they worked, in-depth child interviews, and task-oriented child-focused activities such as story writing, where children wrote about their experiences of work. These methods were designed to give children more control over the research process. The data produced through these methods, together with data from the use of similar methods with adults in the community, enabled the researchers to generate in-depth knowledge about children's everyday lives and the factors impinging on them.

Researchers developing market strategies aimed at children as consumers have valued the use of creative qualitative methods. Banister and Booth (2005) describe using "creative qualitative techniques" (p. 157) to explore "how children learn to attach negative meanings to products and brands through the socialization process" (p. 162). They demonstrated the value of using methods such as projective techniques, photography, and interviews in addition to "quasi-ethnographic methods" as a way of moving toward "child-centric" approaches to research with children and in helping children to tell their stories in their own way (p. 157).

Clark (2001) in her mosaic approach used cameras, tours, and mapping as part of her constructionist approach to engaging with and hearing very young children. These activities were designed to build communicative bridges between children and adults, on the basis that children have knowledge and also are skilful in communicating this, providing adults can tune in to listening to young children. Clark claims that the participative (rural) appraisal, discussed below, used in international development programs, inspired some of the participatory activities developed as part of the mosaic approach.

Participative rural appraisal (PRA) as described by O'Kane (2000) is a methodology from within the interpretive tradition and constructivist paradigm. O'Kane emphasizes that it is a process (rather than a technique) and involves "information sharing, dialogue, reflection and action" (p. 138). She describes PRA as a process for "breaking down the power imbalance between adults and children" to create "a space to enable children to speak up and be heard" (p. 138). PRA enables the researcher to recognize both researchers and researched as active participants in data collection and focuses this around defined activities. Methods used in PRA such as drawings, mapping, and stories can effectively engage children, allow them to shape the agenda, and reduce adult power imbalances.

O'Kane (2000) describes a research project using PRA methodology, where she focused on children's involvement in decision-making in foster care placements. In this research, the child was approached as the "social child," the child who is seen as having different social competencies from the adult, but not necessarily inferior competencies. Therefore, in ensuring effective engagement with children, it was necessary to develop techniques that built on the children's competencies. In the case of this research, participatory techniques – individual interviews and focus

group discussions – enabled dialogue to both focus on concrete issues and deal with abstract concepts. In discussing the disadvantages of using participatory techniques in relation to this project, O'Kane notes that the researcher may have less impact on the research agenda and the process can be time-consuming as it requires time to be spent with children, in both developing and analyzing participatory techniques and in making contact and giving information to potential participants, as well as negotiating, arranging, and giving feedback. Her research with Thomas (1998) drew attention to matters of concern for children and contributed theoretically to discussions of how children as social actors, whose lives are structured and regulated by adults, attempt to push back and negotiate boundaries (Thomas and O'Kane 1998).

PRA is closely related to *participatory action research* (PAR). In a report on a Save the Children project (2001), the researchers appear to be using the terms PRA and PAR interchangeably but claimed they were using participatory action research, as defined by Whyte (1991). Whyte defined PAR as involving "people in the organisation or community under study" actively participating "with the researchers throughout the research process from the initial design to the final presentation of the results and discussion of their action implications" in order to improve their situations (p. 36). In this project where the child participants were migrant children and youth on the borders of China, Myanmar, and Thailand, the researchers worked together with migrant children from diverse cultures and speaking various languages to explore what the children perceived as their needs and how they wanted to respond to them and document what they had learnt. Based on the input to the research in the early stage in each project site, activities were developed, implemented, documented, and evaluated by the field researchers and the children and youth participants.

A rights-based approach to participatory research is described by Beazley et al. (2009), as research occurring in nonindustrialized countries and nonindustrialized regions of other countries, where 90.8 % of the world's children reside. The authors argue that the research agenda of Northern scholars continues to mute and ignore the voices of these children. Rights-based research acknowledges children's agency, "not as the outcome of academic theory, but rather as a recognition that they are subjects of rights" (Beazley et al. 2009, p. 6). Such research challenges the notion of children as passive victims of abuse, exploitation, and violence and seeks to connect with children's lives and to identify "themes, patterns and differences within children's experiences across times, places and cultures" (p. 6).

A rights-based framework was adopted in a research project with children in South Africa. This project was designed to contribute a children's perspective on the nature of child well-being to the development of a child rights monitoring framework for South Africa. In using a rights-based approach, child participation was regarded as a fundamental human right, and children were alerted to their entitlement as rights holders (September and Savahl 2009). From the input provided by children, key domains of child well-being and a preliminary set of indicators were distilled.

Ashan (2009) describes how, in her doctoral research implementing a rights-based research framework with children in a rural district of Bangladesh, she sought

to inform policy and practice in that country. The research was designed to provide understanding of the resistance in Bangladesh to children participating in decision-making. She found that using child-centered research methods, informed by rights principles, posed significant challenges for the researcher in having to confront existing child–adult relations. In particular, the research showed the importance of considering ethical responses within their specific contexts. The importance of taking account of culture and context and the tensions generated by rights-based research led to questioning the appropriateness of the universal rights framework of the Convention for researching the experiences of children in developing countries such as Bangladesh, with their particular sociocultural values and contexts.

Child-Led Research. Alderson (2000) has pointed out that children in schools regularly conduct their own research in the guise of learning. Further, she argues that the fact that children in poor and war-torn majority world countries are more adventurously involved in research than in Europe and North America indicates that the limitations on their involvement in research come not so much from children's incompetencies, as from the constraints imposed on them by adults. Kellett (2005) characterizes child-led research as potentially a new paradigm, in which children's oppression connects with issues of power and emancipation in ways similar to those associated with other oppressed groups, such as women and ethnic minorities. Accordingly, the interests of children will be best served when they establish their own research agendas and conduct their own research.

In her leadership role at the Children's Research Centre (CRC) at the Open University, Mary Kellett has described the primary objective of the CRC as "to empower children and young people as active researchers" believing they are "experts on their own lives." The role of adults is understood as being to support children to carry out research on what is important to them, through a program in which children are taught to research and then provided with individual support to carry out and disseminate research findings (The Open University, N.D.). Empowerment is the explicit objective of the Children's Research Centre at the Open University, from which many of the most accessible examples of child-led research emanate.

Both Alderson (2000) and Kellett et al. (2004) argue that, in order for children to do their own research, adults need to provide them with the same skills and tools necessary to enable them to conduct research, as they would other adults. The website of the Open University's Children's Research Centre provides numerous examples of research carried out by children on diverse topics, including "An empirical investigation of the use of digital school equipment in chemistry" (Lukacs) and "Attitudes to early marriage in a girls school in Qatar" (Ghulam and Mohammad). Some of the children's research is also being published in academic journals. For example, an article by Bradwell et al. (2011), in which they describe the research they had initiated and conducted in the UK to examine the experiences of "looked after children" in review of care proceedings, has been published in the Journal *Child Indicators Research*.

The way in which in child-led research adults deliberately act as resources to children is illustrated in an example of research with working children in India. Here, adults saw their role as one of empowering children, by acting as

"facilitators," supporting the research process by "taking a back seat," "giving inputs when required," and "learning from the children" (The Concerned for Working Children 1998, p. 9). In this research that took place in 1995, six groups of working children from different parts of India who were participating in children's unions collected and analyzed information about their own lives. The process and results of this research were reported in a document *Working Children's Report, India*, 1998, compiled in partnership with the children and submitted to the UN, in accord with the terms of reporting requirements under the Convention.

A Save the Children report (2010) describes the process and findings of "child-led" research in four African countries: Nigeria, Uganda, Angola, and Zimbabwe. This project was informed by Kellett's principles for extending the participatory research process by training children to lead in the research. Child carers attended a workshop where they shared in activities and stories of their own lives and were trained to use cameras and recorders and conduct interviews. The data obtained by the children in their home countries formed the basis for written case studies.

Both Alderson (2000) and Kellett (2005) argue the importance of child-led research in furthering the concept of children as active researchers. However, they also draw attention to the fact that involving children as researchers may amplify, rather than simplify, problems of power and exploitation and this needs to be taken into account in supporting and assisting child researchers and ensuring the evaluation of these activities according to the norms that apply to it.

In concluding this section, we note that in drawing on examples of research within a number of methodological approaches to researching with and by children, the diversity of topics to which children have made contributions is suggested but not detailed. In the context of this chapter, we are not going to expand on this to any degree, except to emphasize that the range of topics is extensive. They cover the broad topic of children's lives at any particular time and their experiences of poverty, refugee status, homelessness, being "looked after" in state care, being carers, friendship, abuse, illness, and disability. Children, as social actors and knowledgeable subjects, have contributed through research on their attitudes to environmental issues, work/labor at home and in public arenas, schooling, play, gender, sexuality, and spirituality. In short, children's voices are now documented on matters that are of concern to people generally and some that are of concern to children or some children specifically.

96.5   Part 4: Issues in the Repositioning and Voicing of Children in Research

In Part 1 of this chapter, we showed how Child Study was a tool used in furthering the interests of researchers in promoting the "good" society, within the specifics of particular historical periods and cultural contexts. In this process, we unpacked values and assumptions intrinsic to approaches to Child Study. We drew attention to ways in which the placement of childhood in an approach premised on notions of scientific epistemology "naively serve(d) the prevailing social, economic, and

political order" (Kennedy 2000). In Part 2, we argued that, to a large extent, the focus by researchers on the child as a social actor is "another historical construction of childhood" (Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie 2006, p. 134). A number of the methodologies employed by researchers in their efforts to epistemologically reposition children as social actors, or simply "add" them in, are described in Part 3. In this final part of the chapter, Part 4, we draw attention to some issues and tensions which need to be considered in repositioning the child as a social actor as described in specific methodologies.

In particular, we identify issues in treating child agency as a desirable social norm and tensions between participation and protection principles that arise in implementing contemporary child research when it seeks to reposition the child in knowledge production. We then turn to issues of authenticity in reporting children's voices. Finally, we consider tensions between adult interests and the interests of children in child research.

96.5.1 Issues in Treating Child Agency as a Desirable Norm

The concept of children as social actors with whom researchers negotiate in implementing research is central to many of the research practices described in Part 3 as basic to attempts to reposition the child in knowledge production. As Honig (2009) has argued, this risks naturalizing the concept of the child as actor. The risk can best be understood in terms of the influence of sociocultural values on the very way we define the child as social actor (as we explored in Part 2). It is evidenced in the tensions that arise when we attempt to apply this concept across cultures, both within minority world countries and from the minority world to majority world countries. For example, Vandenbroeck (2006) argues that the child as social actor and the associated notions of "negotiation, self-expression, and verbalization of the self" are "white, western, gendered, middle class norms . . ." (p. 77). Furthermore, the very concept of agency itself has generally been understood in "voluntaristic" ways, that is, as the freedom to act as an individual (individual volition) but has not included concepts such as "collective action." While the practice of adult–child negotiation associated with the liberalist concept of agency might not of itself be problematic, it is problematic as a norm, as Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie point out (2006). Researchers who emphasize the child as active and employ methods of negotiation in the research process are thereby reinforcing a "desirable norm" for adult–child relations. This can have the effect of marginalizing, or behaving coercively, toward children who are outside this norm (Vandenbroeck 2006, p. 73).

Both Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie (2006), researching in Belgium, and Knupfer (1996), researching in the USA, give examples of such coerciveness toward children who fall outside the norm – in the context of research in minority world countries. At a broader, global level, Punch (2003) has cautioned against imposing an essentialist approach to research conducted in majority world countries. She reported how her research in Bolivia highlighted the inappropriateness of

transferring essentialist constructions and assumptions about childhoods, such as those about adult and child roles, to research in a particular majority world country. The problematic nature of extending assumptions and values applied to children in Western countries to children in majority world counties has particular significance, given that, as Beazley et al. (2009) remind us, only 9.2 % of the world's children live in the Western countries in which much of the dominant framework for researching with children has been formulated.

96.5.2 Tensions Between Participation and Protection Principles When Engaging Children in Research Activities

Responding to children as social actors has, at least in many Western countries, brought to the fore a tension between researchers who place greatest value on the notion of the child as social actor and other adults who respond primarily in terms of their perceived duty of care responsibilities, where values of child protection are emphasized. The tension is most explicit when researchers seek to gain access to children and their consent to participate in research but meet resistance from carers and other adults acting as gatekeepers (Hood et al. 1996; Mason and Gibson 2004). In some Western countries, the conflict between researchers, on the one hand, and those who exercise a gatekeeping role in relation to child participation, on the other hand, occurs at the level of institutional research frameworks and ethics processes. Graham and Fitzgerald (2010) note that children and young people as an "identified vulnerable group . . .draw a particularly intense gaze from ethics committees as they negotiate the complex space between protecting children from risk and providing an opportunity for their participation" (p. 140). In the current era, this negotiation is guided by various protocols and policies – in the case of Australia by a *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* – in which children are defined as "minors who lack the maturity to make a decision whether or not to participate in research" (Graham and Fitzgerald 2010, p. 140).

Such conflicts have been described earlier as implicit in the unproblematized juxtaposition of the principles of child protection and child participation in the UN Convention. They accord with an analysis of Western "welfare" surveillance as a way of governing which has the effect of limiting individual agency without challenging the dominant liberal discourse of individual freedom (Wrennall 2010, p. 306).

The tension between values of child participation and child protection, explicit in some minority world countries at the level of research ethics committees, can be contrasted with an apparent lack of such tension in some majority world countries. Jabeen (2009) has described how, in conducting research with street children in Pakistan, although the researchers sought approval from various gatekeepers, it was not in fact necessary for them to obtain it or to have their research considered by research review committees, "as no such mechanisms were in place in the country at that time" (p. 211). Similarly, it is observed that in Sri Lanka following the traumatic tsunami in that country, adult researchers

had seemingly unrestricted access to children in unstructured and unmediated circumstances (Mason and Bolzan 2009).

The crux of the issue we confront in relation to the ethics of child research is based in children's structural disadvantage across diverse cultures. We argue that in both minority and majority world countries, children remain structurally disadvantaged in terms of their options for contributing to knowledge production. It is this structural inequality that researchers have attempted to challenge in their interactions with children, whether by taking a "least-adult" role (Mandell 1991) or by deliberately employing strategies for attempting to reduce power inequalities between adult researchers and child participants (Mason and Gibson 2004). Resolution of this complex issue has not received significant attention in the literature to date. Of relevance to this issue is the argument of Christensen and Prout (2002) for "ethical symmetry" as a strategy for dealing with the complex ethical issues accompanying researching with children as social actors.

Christensen and Prout (2002) argue that to respond to the ethical dilemmas of researching with children, two forms of complementary dialogue are required. The first is at the level of adult researchers using their research experiences to develop "a set of strategic value orientations for conducting ethical child research" that would take into account the notion of "ethical symmetry between adults and children and (adopt) a critical account of children's social position" (pp. 494–495). At this level, both ethical guidelines and individual ethical responsibility are in focus. The second dialogue is between researchers and child participants and recognizes both commonality and differences within and between the generations of children and adults.

96.5.3 Reporting Children's Voices: Issues of Authenticity

Central to achieving ethical symmetry are issues of authenticity in seeking to report children's voices. In this process, as James (2007) argues, the point of view being presented in findings is ultimately that of the adult author or authors. James writes that the author maintains control over both which children's voices are quoted and which part of children's voices. It is the author who chooses words, phrases, or dialogue as part of the interpretive process to fit the author's text. It is not always possible to discern in research on children's perspectives on a topic whether it is the child's voice or the researcher's voice that we are hearing. While reports on what children have said may indeed represent accurate records of what they have said, in arguing that these records are authentic portrayals of children's views, we need to exercise caution (James 2007).

Children themselves have expressed a concern that researchers should listen to, and give weight to, all the views being expressed, not just to the ones fitting the agenda of the researcher (Stafford et al. 2003). While this injunction applies more broadly to all research contexts in which the views of participants are sought, it is a key issue in the repositioning of children in the knowledge production process and central to the challenge to elite (adult) monopolization of knowledge.

In attempting to authentically present children's voices, researchers use a variety of reporting techniques. For example, providing the reader with audit trails, as advocated in qualitative research (Miles and Huberman 1994; Richards 2005), and/or introducing dialogical excerpts in preference to quotes are ways of making more transparent researcher–researched relations (e.g., Davis et al. 2003). The conversation analytic approach to talk between researcher and researched appears exemplary in making transparent both the interactional nature of research and the co-constructed nature of the interview (e.g., Danby et al. 2011). However, James (2007) notes even here children's "voices" are still subject to the mediating powers of adults in the recording, transcribing, analyzing, and reporting processes.

An alternative approach in the attempt to authentically present children's voices is instanced in child-led research. In this approach, children are provided with the tools to carry out their own research and also to analyze and report on their research. Children's control of this process has the appearance of placing them outside adult research agendas and, at the very least, ensures that their research is at no greater risk of misrepresenting the research participants than in research by adults with adult research participants. Even in child-led research, it is not clear whether in fact children are facilitated to promote child agendas as distinct from those of adults. It could, for example, be argued that the training provided by the academy homogenizes research training for children, as for other marginalized groups. Beyond this inevitable homogenization, as Greene and Hill (2005) point out, it is adult interests that control the world in which research results are published and disseminated, inevitably constraining children's agency as researchers.

96.5.4 Tensions Between Adult Interests and Children's Interests

Repositioning the child in knowledge production is essentially an adultcentric enterprise. Alanen (2005) has argued that Childhood Studies, unlike women's studies and other areas of studies developed around marginalized groups, have not emerged from or been constructed by those whom it concerns, children themselves. Childhood Studies is the work of adults, and in spite of the efforts of researchers to position children as equals by addressing power imbalances in the relations of knowledge production, it is doubtful that this position of equality can be reached (Alanen 2005, p. 45).

Focusing on the adultcentric nature of the child research enterprise raised for us the question of whether we should apply to adult researchers of childhood Oldman's (1994) analysis of child–adult relations in the schooling process. He argued that, in terms of schooling, children can be identified as primarily projects for adult work, that such "childwork" creates an employment industry for adults, and that it is adults' interests, rather than those of children, which are served by this relationship (1994). There is some support for this analogy given the institutional research contexts in which many adults function. Graham and Fitzgerald (2010) describe the way in which the emphasis on research "excellence" is increasingly about competition, benchmarking, and efficiency.

It is in the application of children's knowledge to policy making that the tension between children's interests and adult's interests is starkest. The importance to children of their contributions to knowledge about their lives actually making a difference beyond the academy to their lives and those of other children was made resoundingly clear by some children presenting at a child welfare conference to adult researchers and policy makers (Create Foundation 2010). In a PowerPoint presentation (provided to the authors), on the topic of including them in research, these children urged researchers to be proactive in promoting policy changes based on research to which children have contributed. They argued with force, "Actions speak louder than words so get out there and make change."

It is however at this broader level that the adultcentric orientation of the structures of our society is markedly evident, in the way adult interests typically limit the impact of child-oriented research results at the level of policy making. This point is illustrated by Bessell's (2010) analysis of how research with working children has influenced child labor policy. Her case study documents the way in which research that seeks to promote children's agency and perspectives, while having some influence on policy, can also be constrained in its influence by structural factors, including operative ideas and power. Ideologies about childhood and protection of children in the area of child work have meant that, in international policy development, it has been difficult to find a way to enact policies that are in line with what it is that children may be saying they want, while, at the same time, ensure there are effective barriers to protect those children who work, with policies that protect children from abusive and exploitative work situations. There are powerful interests at play here. Bessell's analysis indicated that key protagonists in the international labor movement promoted their concepts of children's best interests within the adultist structures of the unions. These structures like those inherent in international organizations more generally made it difficult to give priority to the voices and interests of children (Bessell 2011). As Roberts (2000) from her position as R&D coordinator of Barnardo's UK childcare agency reminds us, research is typically only taken up by policy makers when it accords with the knowledge and agendas of the knowledge "user organizations" (p. 230).

96.6   Concluding Comments

The discussion in this chapter implies that children's positioning in their interface with the knowledge production process must at this time continue to be marginal, reflecting their place in society – nationally and globally. Children remain limited in their power to use their knowledge to influence their social worlds. Even recognizing that power is a complex phenomenon, the structurally subordinated position of children means they must rely on adults to have their voices heard within the research context and beyond. In many respects, the position here is no different from that of adult research participants more generally. However, because children's agency is so easily marginalized and their voices seen as *requiring* interpretation, these issues are more likely to be writ large. The very process of

the exploration in this chapter of issues in child research has highlighted issues fundamental to research more generally and the importance of researchers maintaining a self-critical and reflexive stance at all points of the process.

Given this situation, it is essential to acknowledge and emphasize the very significant achievements of the contemporary child research agenda. Most evident here is the way in which the agenda promoting children as social actors has placed children's lived experiences in the public arena. McDonald (2005), in referring to Ridge's (2002) work, argues the importance of this achievement in considering a policy issue of such "moral salience" as poverty (p. 4). She reminds us that focusing on children's lived experiences enables us to move from the former abstracting approach to research, which treated children as objects, as "future human capital" (p. 7), to an approach that treats children as subjects, active beings in the present. Further, in moving the focus of research away from the family as a unit, focusing on children's lived experiences enables issues of intergenerational distribution of resources to be foregrounded.

In summary, research on children's lives, as they live them, contributes to efforts to promote children's well-being. Our analysis supports the contention that the way knowledge is constructed in child research is relevant to how we understand children's well-being. Those advocating and practicing research with children are demonstrating an alignment between children's well-being and the meanings that children attribute to their lives at the time they engage in research. In doing this, child researchers are taking steps, limited though they may be, toward what some of those whom we currently define as children are asking us to do – recognize children's status as "*people*."

In recognizing children as "people," child researchers can affirm through our research and its dissemination, the political claim that some young people have made, that they are "not 'kids' or 'children' but young *people*" (Bird and Ibidun 1996, p. 121, their emphasis). In so doing, we are emphasizing the inappropriateness of the dichotomy between child and adult and providing space for furthering what Honig has signaled as "(p)erhaps the most important desideratum for childhood research which is cognizant of the relationality of childhood and adulthood. . . the analysis of adulthood" (p. 74). This is an even more radical project and a much more all-encompassing one than that attempted so far in changing adult–child relations in knowledge production. Engaging children in this radical project could be an effective way of beginning to confront current tensions in child research and thereby contribute to resolving some of the structural impediments to repositioning children in knowledge production.

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