Participatory Qualitative Research With Children: Theoretical and Methodological Exploration Needed!

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Abstract. The pace of change in participatory, rights based qualitative children’s research has been remarkable. Not that long ago children were framed as objects of adult study whose alleged immaturity, unreliability, capriciousness and unformed mini-adult status rendered them capable of little else. Pioneering participatory researchers with children have provided a strong theoretical point of departure from the old order and developed new qualitative methods. A recent analysis of the state of the field review reaffirmed how qualitative research with children fulfills qualitative researchers’ emancipatory aims and proposed a number of questions for further theoretical and methodological exploration. In this review and discussion paper we continue the tradition of epistemological and political reflexivity challenging the old and imagining the new. We address three of the questions from the recent review of the status of the field. Question one is about the choice between studying concerns in children’s here and now with bigger questions about citizenship. Secondly we ask how we consider and express truth claims as we throw off the shackles of adultism within the qualitative tradition’s theoretical perspectives on multiple realities created and recreated during research. Our third question explores how and why this new paradigm must go beyond the European roots and verbal methods and fulfill qualitative research’s emancipatory mission by embracing different cultural understandings and expanding our methods. Our review paper examines the methodology and findings from studies in Australia and New Zealand as case studies to address these questions using critical reflection: a rigorous and transparent process involving a reflective journal or equivalent, trusted colleagues for feedback, and the time and space to think and revisit material. We operationalize this by describing each of the three questions in turn and suggest tentative answers by reflecting on pertinent studies, including critical perspectives on our own work. Finally, we use our reflections to propose ways forward to reconstruct an emancipatory approach to qualitative research with children that stands on the shoulders of the pioneers in our field. Drawing on participatory action research, we propose a formal participatory first stage of research to develop the most appropriate research question and methods: including principles to select the range of participants for study. This first stage should lead to a formal partnership which creates the collaborative and bridging spaces characterised by sufficient trust and safety to enable the more difficult discussions about our third question of accelerating existing moves from European roots. These modest proposals are derived from epistemological reflexivity which considers how the study design and processes shape research; but to come up with more detailed methodological guidance, we suggest stepping back from methodological musings and engaging in more theoretical reflection. We draw upon Bourdieu’s sociology of power to propose a new form of reflection: political reflexivity: exploring the macropolitics of institutional silencing and exclusion and examining power dynamics of research relationships.
Keywords: children, participatory methods, new sociology of childhood, children’s rights, qualitative methods.

1 Introduction and plan

The pace of change in children’s research has been remarkable. Not that long ago: “Fields that were ostensibly about children (such as education, child psychology and child health) often framed children as objects of adult study whose alleged immaturity, unreliability, capriciousness and unformed mini-adult status rendered them capable of little else (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018 p. 618).”

Pioneering participatory researchers with children have provided a strong theoretical point of departure from the old order from which to develop new methodologies. In this review and discussion paper we continue the tradition of epistemological and political reflexivity challenging the old and imagining the new. We build on a recent review of the status of the field that posed a number of theoretical and methodological questions (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018). We reflect on the methodology and findings from studies in Australia and New Zealand as case studies to address three of these questions. For us critical reflection is a rigorous and transparent process involving a reflective journal or equivalent, trusted colleagues for feedback, and the time and space to think and revisit material (Johnson & MacDougall, 2005). We operationalize this by describing each of the three questions in turn and suggest tentative answers by reflecting on pertinent studies, including critical perspectives on our own work. Finally, we use our reflections to propose ways forward to reconstruct an emancipatory approach to qualitative research with children that stands on the shoulders of the pioneers in our field.

1.1 Recent Advances in Qualitative Research With Children

A recent review of the status of participatory research with children (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018) noted that in the latter part of the 20th Century social and political movements challenged many taken-for-granted concepts. Examples include critique of power imbalances and calls for equity and fairness by feminists and the disability movement. Childhood research was influenced by these critical movements and when “childhood came of age, sociologically” (Jenks, 2000 p. 62), researchers could no longer uncritically adopt adultist methodologies. The predominantly European new sociology of childhood was at the forefront of the sociological coming of age (James & Prout, 1997; James et al., 1998) and strongly influenced fields such as; the new social studies of childhood, children’s geographies, early childhood education, children and the media, environment and ecology, urban planning, disaster studies and more.

The pioneers of this field critiqued research that framed children as human becomings rather than human beings, whereby adulthood is regarded as the goal of individual development (Qvortrup et al., 1994). Morrow (2002) proposed these principles for a new sociology of childhood:

- childhood is a social construction, not a biological fact, that varies over time as well as within and across societies;
- childhood is a variable of social analysis;
- children’s social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspectives and concerns of adults;
- children are active in the construction and determination of their own lives, of the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live.
The Children’s Rights movement added further impetus to the need for change in research with children, clearly articulating the need to involve children and to take seriously their views and perspectives. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child became an article of faith for many childhood researchers.

Change also arose from the growing mistrust of professional expertise and a reluctance to continue to allow experts to speak exclusively for people of all ages. These new approaches went beyond theoretical concerns to contribute to practice and policy utility based on leadership from influential research and children’s organisations encouraged qualitative researchers to adopt these new paradigms. One recent example is the call for a citizen-child approach in which:

“The citizen-child inspired researcher problematizes and reduces power relationships between adults and children during data collection and the wider structures and cultures of research and child engagement. The citizen-child approach upends the view of children as passive and compliant citizens and enhances opportunities for children to become participatory citizens. In keeping with the emancipatory and democratic aspirations of qualitative research, we use the word citizen with care because there are three different definitions. Personally responsible citizens obey the law, pay their taxes and be kind to others. Participatory citizens join organizations, vote in elections, and volunteer to help others. Socially critical citizens will investigate why the situation is like it is and fight to achieve justice. The citizen-child approach draws on rights discourses to critique the representation of children as passive and compliant citizens, enhances opportunities for children to become participatory citizens and through participation in research, invites them to consider their role in the world as advocates for social justice (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018 p.619; adapted from Gibbs et al., 2013 p.130).”

This citizen child theory takes a child-centred approach and argues for the rights of children to exercise agency in their own lives: with critical citizenship rather than more general adulthood the endpoint of childhood. However, to advance our theoretical and methodological understandings a recent review of the field argued that we need to resolve the type and scale of research questions, negotiate truth claims when data from adults and children differ and extend the field’s European roots.

2.1 First Question to Resolve: What Do We Study?

Part of the adoption of the new sociology of childhood was a welcome call to study the here and now of children’s lives, avoiding the trap of framing children as human becomings. Research questions about the here and now of important aspects of children’s lives such as education, play, physical activity and health are important to redress historical imbalances. However, the new sociology of childhood and the citizen-child approaches also argue that children are active in the construction and determination of the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live: moving our gaze to some big questions about society (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018).

The here and now of childhood

In response to concerns expressed by governments and health authorities about increasing levels of obesity, diabetes and physical inactivity in children, the South Australian government commissioned a 2005 research study that sought to involve children aged under 12 in defining their meanings and views about physical activity. Instead of adapting strategies from adult research or interviewing adults about children, this qualitative study combined focus groups, drawing and mapping techniques and photographic methods with 204 children aged four to 12 years in metropolitan and rural South Australia. Two of the research questions were “What are children’s theories of physical activity, play and sport? What do children want to tell adults?” Children were enthusiastic participators in the research and appreciated the opportunity to communicate their views. The terms physical activity and exercise had little meaning or engagement for children, who described them as terms adults use. Play and sport had powerful, contrasting meanings for children: with play child-centred and sport
controlled by adults. Children did not endorse the prevailing health promotion idea about sporting heroes as role models and challenged other health promotion principles by arguing that they could easily combine physical activity with television and computer time. Children did not make the meaningful links between physical activity and health status that underpin so much health promotion. In the research children participated enthusiastically and brought ideas that challenged ideas adults hold about children. The findings were used to develop a range of health promotion strategies informed directly by children’s theorising (MacDougall et al., 2005).

Social and economic concerns
One example of a study seeking child perspectives of adult issues was conducted in South Australia in the wake of excessive job losses in the automotive industry, an industry that is being restructured globally. The research approach was informed by the new sociology of childhood’s acknowledgement of children’s agency when they sought children’s accounts about parental job losses. The research was nested in a longitudinal, mixed-method study of 372 displaced workers. Researchers interviewed 35 boys and girls aged four to 19 from 16 families. Many children did not see the job loss as a major problem, some felt they now had a better life, and many valued not moving for new work. While some reported social, health and financial impacts, others were shielded by parents. Their accounts contribute children’s perspective of adult domains such as family functioning, government policy, and the impact of work hours and working conditions on individual and family health, showing the value of family-friendly work patterns and of gaining children’s perspectives (Newman et al., 2009).

Philanthropy and Altruism
The participatory agenda with children has often been driven by programs and practice then evaluated by researchers. Two examples are the subject of research in teams led by the second author. The first from Victoria in Australia is Kids as Catalyst: a six-month creative leadership, and child-led social change program (https://kidsthrive.org.au/programs/schools/kids-as-catalyst/) Based on the philosophy that “children can thrive when we acknowledge their capacity to lead local change” it calls for early engagement, new ideas, respectful community partnerships, and recognises children as vibrant catalysts for social justice. One of the program’s aims is to activate children as major contributors to and creators of community, involving fostering children’s leadership and entrepreneurship. A research evaluation of the program is currently underway to identify outcomes for the children involved and the changes that arise from their projects.

A second example is the Welcome Campaign conducted by Behind the News (BTN), a children’s television news program of the Australian government’s national broadcaster designed for children. In Australia the status of immigrants and refugees is highly contested politically, with powerful elites vilifying children’s rights philosophies and the individuals and organisations who argue to uphold rights. In this context, children and young contributed to an emotionally charged issue by aiming to welcome children to Australia and help them settle. BTN launched a campaign to create a book to be included in the welcome packs that the government gives to migrant and refugee families when they move to Australia. (http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s4685689.htm) BTN asked children and young people to create an artwork that either says welcome, shows, their favourite place to visit in Australia or what they love most about living here. One child’s post on the website said:

“I thought it was inspiring, because the refugees wouldn’t know anything about our country and they could get very worried, if they had the book they would learn and not be afraid anymore.”

Another post by a parent said:
“It’s very hard you know especially the journey of 3 days in a boat that my children didn’t eat and drink and they are sea sick it’s very hard I never forget these three days in my whole life. They reckon the welcome book is a great gift to comfort other kids moving here.”

In this section we have shown examples of research redressing historical imbalances by talking to children about the here and now, seeking their accounts of more adult concerns about employment, and engaging with philanthropy and altruism.

2.2 Second Question to Resolve: How do Truth Claims Deal With Data From Adults And Children?

Many conferences and publications have variations on the theme of “hearing children’s voices”. At the same time, childhood (and indeed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child) inextricably involves adult-child relations. In this section we explore questions of truth claims in research studies when collecting data only from children, or when combining data from adults and children.

Children’s and Parent’s Accounts of Chronic Disease

The case for appropriate inclusion of adults is illustrated by a study of enablers and barriers to physical activity with parents and their children aged 9-16 years who were diagnosed with asthma, diabetes or cystic fibrosis. Multiple qualitative methods included interviews, focus groups, mapping and photovoice. The accounts of children were best summarized by the theme “I just put my mind to anything and I can do it.” Children and young people participating rarely cited barriers to physical activity. Indeed, the title of the paper came from a 13 year old boy newly diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes who said:

“There’s nothing I can’t really do because I just put my mind to anything and I can do it.”

By contrast, the theme best summarizing parent’s accounts was “I do what I have to do so they can do anything”. Parents were interviewed separately from their child and acknowledged the general benefits of physical activity and specific benefits for children with chronic diseases.

Some parents took this daily management as part of their everyday family life but observed that they were ‘always planning’. Planning and vigilance were noteworthy for parents of children with type 1 diabetes, especially when the children participated in physical activity. Often parents managed their child’s capabilities in subtle ways and children were aware of the compromises parents made.

Other times, parents described their micromanagement of their children accompanied by deliberate decisions to hide this management from their children. They wanted their children to have as normal a life as possible and assumed extra responsibilities that they deliberately concealed from their children and significant adults (Fereday et al., 2009).

The implications of contrasting accounts from children and their parents have profound implications for truth claims and the transferability of theorizing arising from this study. A publication based solely on the accounts of children could have suggested an unproblematic relationship between chronic disease and physical activity. The conclusion could have been drawn that children were active agents managing their lives despite the potential consequences of chronic disease. However, the addition of parental accounts changed this from an empowerment and agency narrative to one of children being provided with opportunities to overcome barriers through actions simultaneously undertaken and concealed by parents.

Analysis of this study suggests that we should take care with truth claims based on data solely from children. Clearly in this case qualitative methods uncovered children’s accounts of their worlds. However, these accounts did not and could not include the actions of responsible adults who, in the pursuit of a normal life for their children hid their micromanagement. The critique that adultism does not provide a full picture of the lives of children must be balanced by caution that while
children are perfectly capable of giving detailed accounts of aspects of their lives, there are occasions when they just do not have access to information about all the forces that shape them.

**Duty Holders and Duty Bearers**

Other ideal candidates for inclusion in research are duty bearers, defined as adults who identify the human rights claims of rights-holders (the rights of children being researched) and the corresponding human rights obligations and entitlements of significant others. We need to enhance the capacity of children as rights-holders to claim their rights and fulfill their obligations as duty bearers (MacDougall, 2009). As people whose actions support the rights and citizenship of children, the inclusion of duty bearers can improve the dependability and transferability of participatory research.

In the aftermath of disasters in poor countries like Nepal sex trafficking and child marriages increase. Child Nepal is a Non-Government Organisation (http://www.childnepal.org/index.php/major-programs?id=37) that conducted a project to contribute to government recovery actions in preventing trafficking of children and women and protect those who have been rescued from trafficking or are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violence. This involved working with adults to expand and strengthen community-based groups to prevent and protect children and women from trafficking, abuse, exploitation, and gender-based violence. There was a strong focus on improving the capacities of duty bearers and service providers to take preventive measures and protect those who are trafficked and at risk.

At the same time, Child Nepal worked with children as rights holders to establish community counselling and protection centres for children and youth vulnerable to trafficking. These provided recreational services and encouraged children to reveal the problems faced. The program covered child rights, trafficking, leadership skills, work opportunities, savings and credit, health and wellness, and gender-based violence.

The twin focus was therefore on working to educate and empower children as rights holders to recognise and speak up about trafficking, while ensuring that adult institutions would be more likely to believe children and act as duty bearers by taking appropriate action.

This section has identified an example where the variations in accounts between truth claims was such that relying solely on one perspective would have yielded significantly incomplete data. The children’s rights example shows how the dialectical relationships between duty bearers and rights holders suggests research synthesizing the accounts of children and adults.

**2.3 Third Question to Resolve: Diversifying From European Roots?**

The history of this field shows how European geographical and cultural contexts have shaped representations and critiques of childhood research. Cultural contexts are now expanding as researchers are studying children’s agency across cultures and minorities (eg., Punch 2015;2016). But there is much work to be done.

**Writing a New Story**

In March 2013 the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth’s (ARACY) report card compared the health of children in Australia with member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Australia ranks highly among OECD countries for 12 out of 46 indicators and in the middle for one-half. Tragically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are doing worse than average on 100% of the indicators. At the Launch of the Report Card an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ARACY Board member challenged the audience: “Let’s write a new story, to read a new story to our children” (MacDougall et al., 2014).
This new story must address how, in Australia, there are distinctive social determinants of health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over and above those in the more general literature from developed countries. These distinctive factors include history, racism, spiritual attachment to country, participatory policy processes and culturally safe and appropriate interventions (O’Donnell & MacDougall, 2014). These latter determinants are crucial for qualitative researchers because they lead to quite different types of research questions and methods-guided by deep participation of Indigenous people.

Righting a New Story

The nature of rights are also both different and problematic for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service’s Child Rights Report Card (https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/02918.pdf) shows obstacles to the basic right of registering the birth of children. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are separated from their homes and communities and placed with families with insufficient opportunities for them to fully live their culture and language. They are over-represented in the criminal justice system which does not meet international standards. An overarching critique was that there are not enough mechanisms that allow and support Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children to participate in decisions that affect them.

Inspection of Figure 1 supports our earlier finding that social determinants of health differ between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non-Indigenous Australians. Distinctive claims are for rights to: detention as a last resort, growing up in a living culture with family and community, and freedom from discrimination.

![Figure 1](https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/02918.pdf)

This section has identified significant ways in which social determinants of health and children’s rights are understood in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in Australia. These differences are so significant that participatory research must use new and developing theories to derive research questions and methods.
3 Ways Forward: Bringing Our Three Questions Together

3.1 Partnership Development and First Stages of Research

Lessons From Participatory Action Research

The first two questions in this paper are linked. We have established the importance of making the right decision about when to study the here and now of children’s lives, their developing relationships with the adult world and when to involve those adults and institutions with whom their lives are intertwined. There are clearly times to work only with children when previous research has discounted or failed to seek their perspectives. But when conducting research from a children’s rights perspective we should combine perspectives of children as rights holders and their dialectical relationships with adult duty bearers. However, returning to the first principles of research we must recognise that no method is in itself gold standard: the selection of method is always dictated by the best way to answer the research question. Further guidance from principles of participatory action research requires deep involvement between researchers and communities well before selecting questions and methods. Researchers and communities, in respectful relationships, negotiate power imbalances as they develop questions of interest to the community. Participation continues in the design of the study, selection of methods and analysis of emerging data to inform continuing cycles of action (Baum et al., 2006; ICPHR, 2013).

The First Stage

A formal first stage of participatory research sends researchers into the field early to understand context, develop relationships with adults whose co-operation is essential, develop relevant questions and consider how to engage children to evoke the richest data. This first stage confers practical and ethical benefits. Grant applications and ethics approval processes for participatory research can be problematic because it is easy for reviewers to critique the lack of detail about methods that can only be resolved by the partnership processes. A rigorous first stage can assure reviewers and ethics committees that the research plan is theoretically sound and can be reviewed as the details of each stage emerge (MacDougall & Darbyshire, 2018).

The study of children’s accounts of the closure of a car plant, discussed earlier, involved a first stage focus group in which researchers presented the question and overall method and sought guidance on the types and order of questions to ask children in subsequent interviews. The researchers reflected that the questions worked well and demonstrated to children that interviewers had prepared and were willing to listen (Newman et al).

Although first or pilot stages are often used in qualitative research with adults, their use assumes more importance in children’s research. First stages enact a commitment to participation, help bridge generational and experiential divides between children’s and adult’s worlds and provide relevant and useful research insights.

3.2 Communicative and Bridging Spaces

We have asked how research based on the new sociology of childhood is diversifying from its European roots. We showed how understandings of health and rights varied between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Australia. Illuminating these differences, an Australian systematic review of child health research concluded that most studies did not mention whether Indigenous peoples in general (let alone children) were involved in design and implementation. The consequences of this omission were that studies did not represent the demographics and lives of Indigenous peoples (Priest
et al 2009). The authors recommended “More work to ensure that Western constructs and Western concepts of child health, development and well-being are not imposed on Australian Indigenous peoples”(p. 61). They argued that Western research methods do not have to be disregarded. Rather, there should be a bridging space between paradigms to achieve positive outcomes for researchers and community members of all backgrounds.

The methodologically reflexive nature of participatory action research has provided guidance about engagement between researchers and communities, involving opening what Kemmis & McTaggart (2005) describe as a communicative space between participants. Communicative spaces are characterised by ethical relationships between researchers, their topic and those involved. Such relationships involve honesty, sensitivity, respectfulness, reciprocity, shared goal-setting, topic relevance, proximity between partners, sharing power, and time for relationship development (Rycroft-Malone et al., 2016).

One problem, however is that while we know a lot about how to do this with adults: “The rhetoric of the philosophical, epistemological or rights-based premises that children could or should be more actively involved as genuine partners in the research process is proving difficult to move to reality. We need answers to critical questions about projects that aim or claim to involve children as co-researchers (MacDougall & Darbyshire 2018. p. 626).”

One way forward is suggested by a paper from New Zealand by Smith et al (2002), reporting on a series of focus groups and “Youth Tribunals” co-developed and conducted with young people aged 10-17 years across New Zealand to “While the voices of rural youth in the study resonate with national youth themes, including the theme of “not being listened to” they also speak to the nuances and differences in the lives of rural New Zealand youth. We would argue that in sharp contrast to the organizing concept of one “rural childhood” our research clearly shows that there are different possibilities in growing up rural. Maori and Pakeha youth for example draw on different cultural and linguistic resources to voice their relationships to place and identity.” (Maori refers to a multiplicity of identities that constitute the indigenous population of people, iwi (tribes), hapu (sub-tribes) and whanau (extended families) who occupied New Zealand prior to the arrival of Europeans. The term Pakeha refers to people of European descent).” (p169)

This decolonising approach to research with children from Maori and Pakeha backgrounds provides valuable lessons for formal structures and processes in communicative and bridging spaces to contribute to the twin problems of involving children and young people in research and bridging cultural contexts. The findings add to our knowledge about communicative and bridging spaces, emphasising their ethical dimensions and resonating with a Canadian concept of the ethical space formed when two societies with disparate worldviews are prepared to engage each other. Ermine (2007) explored the need for a framework for dialogue based on recognition of the differences and ways to examine diversity and positioning of Indigenous peoples and Western society.

O’Donnell (2014) summarised a similar approach to the engagement of different world views using a metaphor, a theory and a style of Indigenous social science derived from Australia’s Northern Territory and made accessible by Aboriginal Elders and given the name ganma in the English language. Ganma refers to a river of water from the sea (western knowledge) and a river of water from the land (Indigenous knowledge) first engulfing each other, then flowing together and finally becoming one. The forces of the streams combine and lead to deeper understanding and truth as the foam produced when salt water mixes with fresh water creates and recreates a new kind of knowledge.
4 Concluding Remarks About Epistemological and Political Reflexivity

We have asked three questions of the developing field of participatory research with children. Two related questions debated the selection of research questions and the relative contributions role of children and adults to truth claims. Drawing on participatory action research, we proposed a formal participatory first stage of research to develop the most appropriate research question and methods: including principles to select the range of participants for study. This first stage should lead to a formal partnership which creates the collaborative and bridging spaces characterised by sufficient trust and safety to enable the more difficult discussions about our third question of accelerating existing moves from European roots.

These modest proposals are derived from epistemological reflexivity which considers how the study design and processes shape research (Gibbs et al., 2014). However, to debate these questions further, and come up with more detailed methodological guidance, we suggest stepping back from methodological musings and engaging in more theoretical reflection. Gibbs et al (2014) drew on Bourdieu’s sociology of power to propose a new form of reflection: political reflexivity. Bourdieu’s sociology of power explored the macropolitics of institutional silencing and exclusion and informs political reflexivity’s examination of power dynamics inherent in research relationships. Political reflexivity addresses external political influences on the researcher, the research process and the research participants” (Gibbs et al., 2014). Political reflexivity is highly relevant to participatory research with excluded groups of children because Bourdieu’s sociology of power explores the macropolitics of institutional silencing and exclusion.

We have already used principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR) which, with its close relative Participatory Health Research (PHR) is overtly emancipatory and participatory. PAR and PHR are more than methodology and methods, they are theories, paradigms of research (ICHR 2013) and are based on a critical theory epistemology which “…focuses on critiquing and understanding inequities in society, seeking to change them as a result of research “ (Baum 1998 p. 108).

A critical theory epistemology sits well with Denzin and Lincoln's framing of qualitative research as an emancipatory and democratic project that seeks to change the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). AR and PHR share South American roots and are comfortable with research involving cultural differences and power. There is therefore a synergy with qualitative methods derived from the new sociology childhood, adding benefits of a global perspective and lessons for negotiating and working across cultures. we propose that it will be easier to resolve some of the questions that we have posed by a synthesis of the theories and paradigms from the critical theory underpinnings of PAR and PHR and the methods stimulated by the adoption of a new social childhood.

In these ways, we envisage a Gamma of political and epistemological reflexivity whereby European inspired water from the sea and a river of water from the land featuring decolonizing theories first engulf each other, then flow together and finally become one. The forces of the streams combine and lead to deeper understanding and truth as the foam produced when salt water mixes with fresh water creates and recreates a new approach to participatory research with children.

Acknowledgments. We acknowledge children and colleagues who graciously gave us their time and wisdom. We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians on whose ancestral lands we conducted much of our research. We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of Aboriginal peoples to Country.
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