

NEW APPROACHES TO
EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

CRITICAL CULTURAL STUDIES OF CHILDHOOD

Series Editors:

Marianne N. Bloch, Gaile Sloan Cannella, and Beth Blue Swadener

This series will focus on reframings of theory, research, policy, and pedagogies in childhood. A critical cultural study of childhood is one that offers a “prism” of possibilities for writing about power and its relationship to the cultural constructions of childhood, family, and education in broad societal, local, and global contexts. Books in the series will open up new spaces for dialogue and reconceptualization based on critical theoretical and methodological framings, including critical pedagogy, advocacy and social justice perspectives, cultural, historical and comparative studies of childhood, post-structural, postcolonial, and/or feminist studies of childhood, family, and education. The intent of the series is to examine the relations between power, language, and what is taken as normal/abnormal, good and natural, to understand the construction of the “other,” difference and inclusions/exclusions that are embedded in current notions of childhood, family, educational reforms, policies, and the practices of schooling. *Critical Cultural Studies of Childhood* will open up dialogue about new possibilities for action and research.

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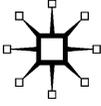
NEW APPROACHES TO
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Rules, Rituals, and Realities

Edited by

*Hillel Goelman,
Jayne Pivik,
and Martin Gubn*

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NEW APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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To our parents, families, teachers, and ancestors who nurtured, mentored, taught, and inspired us emotionally, socially, physically, intellectually, and spiritually. To the children and families who shared their experiences, knowledge, and wisdom. To our children, grandchildren, and future generations of children in British Columbia and beyond, for whom we wish to create a healthy, optimistic, and sustainable future.

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SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

*Marianne Bloch, Beth Blue Swadener,
and Gaile S. Cannella*

New Approaches to Early Child Development: Rules, Rituals, and Realities by Hillel Goelman, Jayne Pivik, and Martin Guhn is a welcome addition to the book series on *Critical Cultural Studies of Childhood* for Palgrave Press. In the series, we emphasize interdisciplinary and multitheoretical ways of examining childhood, and this book describing the dilemmas of research and results of research in a large interdisciplinary, multimethod/theory project, directed by and conducted by the authors, and many others, is an excellent example of types of work we wanted to publish in the series. Goelman, Pivik, and Guhn embrace the critical cultural studies of childhood orientation of our series in multiple ways by drawing in new critical theories into their research framework; they also highlight the ways in which alternative frameworks for theory and research help us to interrogate as well as understand childhood differently.

The book is written by the authors and their interdisciplinary team of researchers to illustrate how one project can be done by a large multibackground team, from multiple disciplinary backgrounds, and one that draws on different methodological and theoretical frameworks to understand childhood within diverse and nested contexts. By including chapters from a variety of the projects done by their team of interdisciplinary researchers (including graduate student authors/teacher/parents as co-researchers), the authors present an example of the ways in which a long-term collaborative group can come together to understand how children and families thrive under varying circumstances, and at the same time, ways in which social policies that affect children and their families could be envisioned differently. The research illustrates the utility of “mixed methods” in which empirical, statistical and qualitative/ethnographic research

together better illustrate how knowledge can be constructed in different ways, illuminating different aspects of childhood. This again forces us to deconstruct the hyperindividualism and the emphasis on only positivist and a certain narrow view of empirical research that is at the core of most American research on children, and the ways in which we come to think about their child development and learning. We are pleased to have our series with Palgrave where this type of study, with its multiple dimensions, can be published as an illustration of how to do research differently.

FOREWORD

Kofi Marfo

This is a timely publication in the context of significant ongoing shifts in the way we think about the nature of inquiry, the research mission of modern universities, and the relevance of institutions of higher education to their local publics. For a wide variety of reasons, including both a growing sense of moral imperative and perhaps an unspoken desire to push back against the deeply entrenched societal image of universities as Ivory Towers, research institutions are increasingly and explicitly embracing *community engagement* as a core mission. In North America, the past two decades in particular have seen an upswing of university-community partnerships, some of them supported initially by substantial leveraging of institutional resources in anticipation of long-term sustainability through payoffs in increased extra-mural grant generation. While community engagement initiatives across institutions may vary in their underlying values, operational models, breadth of focus, or success in garnering broad institutional involvement, they share one thing in common: the goal of using the intellectual capital and research machinery of the modern university not only to fulfill the traditional universal mission of knowledge advancement but to also make a demonstrably positive difference in the economic and social circumstances of local communities and constituent groups closer to home.

On a related level, continuing discourse and contemplation on the vexing challenges of disciplinary insularity in the academy appear to be ushering in an era marked by concerted institutional efforts to build bridges across disciplines. We are witnessing significant shifts in the valuing of interdisciplinary inquiry, and there is a growing commitment to interdisciplinary advanced graduate and postgraduate research education, even as this trend continues to be impeded by structural and operational barriers endemic to the administrative

organization and funding of academic units and their teaching and research programs. Within the behavioral and social sciences, in particular, the hegemonic paradigm wars of yesteryears are gradually giving way to increased openness to epistemological and methodological pluralism. When such pluralism, in combination with an interdisciplinary intellectual climate, succeeds in fostering a pragmatic ethos of multilevel research collaboration on important societal problems, the stage is set for meaningful and sustainable university-community engagement in which the voices and experiences of communities and community-based professionals are as valued as those from the academy.

This book is simultaneously a significant scholarly contribution to early child development research and a primer on what can be learned about interdisciplinarity, methodological boundary-crossing, multilevel collaboration, and the pursuit of community-based policy-responsive inquiry from a highly multifaceted program of applied research. The volume embodies the exciting possibilities waiting to be realized fully as the changing intellectual traditions and values identified in these opening paragraphs approach an ideal point of convergence. This is the stage at which *interdisciplinary inquiry as realistic problem solving in community contexts* (as was the case with the CHILD Project) necessitates not only the harnessing of expertise and synergy across disciplines and methodologies, or the building of collaborative alliances beyond the academic environment, but also the courage on the part of researchers to interrogate within their own specialized fields the worldviews, assumptions, and conventions informing all aspects of inquiry.

Beyond the many policy insights and the high level of theoretical integration within and across disciplines—accomplished comprehensively in the opening chapters and complemented so well in the chapters reporting on specific projects—the scholarly appeal of this volume lies also in the kaleidoscopic assembling and interweaving of findings on questions so wide-ranging that only an innovative and unconventional project like CHILD can unite them in one forum. Throughout the book, Goelman, Pivik, Guhn, and their collaborating authors also provide valuable education, implicit as well explicit, about the challenges and benefits of inquiry in which space for culture-building and continuous in-situ interrogation of mindsets, methods, and tools are an integral part of the research implementation process. What happens when working closely with research participants and communities results in insights that are not consistent with previously held assumptions and understandings that informed

the choice of research design and instrumentation in the original proposal? Should a research team see such a scenario as an opportunity to explore the authentic, and thus be open to a rethinking of the original plan, or should it push ahead with preplanned procedures in the name of “scientific” and procedural integrity? What would methodological integrity mean in this context? What deliberative processes would guide the resolution of such a problem within a collaborative research team, and what considerations would inform the nature of the resolution(s) reached? Finally, how does a research team negotiate the boundaries of flexibility with the funding agency and the local Institutional Review Board?

Collectively, these questions coalesce around fundamental values on conceptions of knowledge and its production, cultural/contextual variation, professional ethics, and personal and institutional accountability. Above all, they are questions that should be of interest to the research community’s core constituencies: professional researchers and their community-based collaborators, advanced graduate research education programs and the students in whose hands lies the future of inquiry, institutional research review boards with oversight and adjudicatory responsibility for the conduct of inquiry, and funding agency staff and blind reviewers who are often among the first to make decisions about the knowledge value of proposed projects. Those interested in these and related questions would find in this volume an invaluable reference companion as refreshingly informative as it is provocative.

As a member of the small group of advisors who participated in the steering of the CHILD Project, I have looked forward to seeing and reading a project-spawned publication that could particularly give future collaborative research teams the benefit of the lessons learned from the design, review, implementation, and monitoring of the project. It is a delight, therefore, to see this hope not only realized but also fulfilled as part of a book that also reports the substantive findings from the various projects. On the basis of my deep conviction that research education must *simultaneously* foster knowledge and competencies in the technical tools of design and analysis *and* prepare students to be able to think through applied behavioral and social science research as a socioculturally negotiated enterprise with profound ethical and moral ramifications, I consider this book a must-read resource in research education and invite those who teach research courses at the graduate and advanced undergraduate levels to give their students the benefit of the book’s unique contributions.

PREFACE

In the fall of 2002, a partnership of academic and community researchers submitted a grant proposal to a national funding council in Canada. A four-person team representing the partnership was invited to meet with the council's adjudication committee to defend the proposal. Numerous members of the review panel complimented the research team on the strength of the research proposal, but there were many questions that focused on whether the project was really feasible in the real world of research. In other words, the committee thought the proposal was a good idea, but had doubts as to whether it could actually be implemented. The team members tried to reassure the committee as best they could by pointing to the quality of the academic and community professionals on the project; to the research design and the harmonization of quantitative and qualitative methods; to the enthusiastic support for the project from the communities in which the work would be conducted; to the involvement of community researchers; and to the track records of the coinvestigators. Despite these repeated assurances, the review panel remained concerned. It reminded us of the old science fiction movies when one of the heroes (usually a teenager) devises a creative, daring, and even outlandish way to defeat the invading Martians, and the response from all of the high-powered military men is something like: "It sounds crazy—but it just might work."

When the "can you really do it" question was repeated for the fifth or sixth time, I tried a different tack. I pointed out that there were many different approaches to interdisciplinary research but that our project was somewhat unique in that it included 10 different studies all within one overall interdisciplinary framework. I said that if there existed a handbook that described exactly how to conduct this kind of collaborative, interdisciplinary research in early child development, I would buy multiple copies of this text, distribute it to my coinvestigators and use it to implement the CHILD Project. Such a text, if I could find one, would serve as a roadmap, pointing out the benefits of certain pathways and the challenges of others. In our experience,

however, this particular handbook did not exist. I then said that I was confident that by the end of the five-year period our project would be in an excellent position to produce a book on the strengths, weaknesses costs, and benefits of a collaborative interdisciplinary research project in early child development. Days later we were informed that our proposal was funded.

I am hopeful that the rules, rituals, and realities of research described in this book can be of assistance to those on their own journeys into new, complex, and challenging questions about children, families, research, and themselves.

HILLEL GOELMAN
Vancouver, British Columbia

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- Lil'wat First Nation
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