Children's Well-Being: Indicators and Research 14

Tobia Fattore
Jan Mason
with Elizabeth Watson

Children's Understandings of Well-being

Towards a Child Standpoint

Children's Well-Being: Indicators and Research

Volume 14

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Children's Understandings of Well-being

Towards a Child Standpoint

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Preface

Well-being is defined as a desirable state of being happy, healthy or prosperous. Thus the concept of well-being as we understand it today refers to both subjective feelings and experiences as well as to living conditions. Well-being is a multifaceted concept that refers to material well-being, emotional well-being, families and well-being, upbringing and well-being, health and well-being and a myriad of subthemes like social capital in relation to well-being, risk factors and well-being and sickness and well-being—in short, almost every possible theme can be related to well-being.

Well-being refers to individuals as well as to societies and to trends as well as to status. In philosophy, the well-being of a person in general refers to what is good for the individual from the perspective of the individual. Yet, the sum of all subjective well-beings does not necessarily aggregate to what may be best at the macro-level, as illustrated by the detrimental effect that consumption has on a global level. This is even more complex in relation to children, as well-being encompasses both children's life in the present and how the present influences their future and their development.

Today it is clear that children's well-being invites us to take into account numerous elements: children's conditions of living and objective well-being; the perceptions, evaluations and aspirations of other relevant social agents (stakeholders) about children's lives and conditions of living (i.e. their own parents, teachers, paediatricians, educators, social professionals); and children's perceptions, evaluations and aspirations about their own lives—including children's subjective well-being. Yet, studies on children's well-being have seldom utilised children's perceptions and feelings and thus have neglected the children's point of view.

The study presented in this book attempts to fill this gap by looking at children's well-being from a child standpoint. This approach is novel but gaining support in the literature. This growing support is based on three pillars. First, ample evidence has been presented showing that children's perspectives are different from those of adults, including their caretakers and parents. Second, studies have shown that children's subjective reports are correlated strongly with other (objective) positive

measures in children's life. Third, any doubts about the reliability and validity of children's subjective reports have been dismissed in recent years.

Furthermore, traditional research on children very often assumed that socialisation is a one-directional process, mainly related to parents' skills—those with knowledge about life and about the world socialise with those without knowledge, that is, the children. Only since the second half of the twentieth century has a bidirectional model of socialisation been assumed amongst experts. Two main consequences arise from that new model. First, adults can learn from children; in fact they often do, although there is a general tendency to undervalue the importance of such learning (these are seen as childish things). Second, adults have often attributed intergenerational relationship problems to the behaviour of the youngest generation members.

Thus, if we truly assume that well-being and quality of life include perceptions, evaluations and aspirations of people about their own lives, we must conclude that real research on children's well-being needs to include their voice. Yet, as I mentioned above, we are only starting to truly listen to children, to discover their opinions and evaluations and to recognise that children's points of view may be different from those of adults and that it is no longer clear that we adults are the ones who are 'right'.

A lack of knowledge and theories, as well as frameworks for research into and practice in how to include children's views in the process, has significantly hindered studies of child well-being. Fortunately, new research perspectives have emerged recently. They ask children about their lives and conditions of living and thus are promising first steps in the development of a new way of exploring children's 'real' well-being. The study of children's perspectives presents us with a different interpersonal and social world. The idea of 'children's cultures' makes sense when we know that children and adolescents have their own opinions, experiences, evaluations and aspirations, which *are not only constructed in their interactions with adults but sometimes independently from us.* In fact, many researchers have suggested that experiences, values and perceptions are much less shared between parents and children than was once presumed.

The book presented here describes an outstanding attempt, not only to include children's views but to partner with children to develop the concept of well-being and to study the phenomenon as the children understand it. The authors do this by placing the concept of children's well-being within the existing discourses on the topic and by developing their unique theoretical approach to the concept. Then, and based on what children told them, the authors identify different domains of children's well-being and touch upon its multifaceted nature. The book concludes with research and policy implications.

The authors are to be congratulated, not only for doing such superb work in their study and writing but first and foremost for taking another step on the long road towards including children's standpoints in the public discourse of children's well-being and, by doing so, improving the lives of children.

Jerusalem, Israel — Asher Ben-Arieh
June 2015

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Funding for the research that was the basis for this book was provided by the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People and by a University of Western Sydney partnership grant with the Commission.

The chief investigators on the project were Tobia Fattore, at that time a researcher with the Commission for Children and Young People, and Jan Mason and Elizabeth Watson, at that time researchers with the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney.

In writing up the research, we have constantly been reminded of the expertise of Jan Falloon, Penny Irvine and Ros Leahy, who assisted us in developing the research protocols, conducting discussions with children and reflecting on the research. Cath Brennan, Rachel Scott and Ainslie Yardley most ably contributed to various aspects of project administration and data analysis. In the final stages of preparing the book for publication, we have appreciated the expert editorial assistance of Marie-Louise Taylor.

Additionally, we wish to express our intellectual debt to Berry Mayall and Lena Alanen for their contributions to childhood studies generally but specifically in their theoretical work on child–adult relations and child standpoint theory. This work has been invaluable in assisting us in making sense of what children were telling us. We hope we have done justice to their pioneering conceptualisations on generation and childhood.

Collegial support from Asher Ben-Arieh, since his early expression of interest in this project at the Childhoods Conference in Oslo in 2005 to writing the preface for this book, has been a helpful impetus to our sustained work on this project. Of course, various members of our families, friends and colleagues have provided much valued support during the journey of completing this book. We thank you all.

Last, but of pre-eminent importance, we gratefully acknowledge those persons who, as children, participated in the research and shared their experiences and thoughts on well-being with us. We hope that in constructing narratives on well-being from the data these children provided in talking with us, we have heard well and understood what they were telling us about the meaning of well-being in their lives.

About the Authors

Tobia Fattore is a lecturer in the Department of Sociology, Macquarie University. His current research is in the broad areas of the sociology of childhood, sociology of work and political sociology. As well as his ongoing research interest in the sociological basis of children's well-being, his work also includes a study of children's work in developed economies that explores how transformations in employment structures have created different opportunities for children for social integration. He is also a coordinating researcher on the multinational study 'Children's Understandings of Well-Being: Global and Local Contexts' which involves a qualitative investigation into how children experience well-being from a comparative and global perspective, to explore the relative importance of local, regional and national contexts for children's well-being.

Jan Mason is emeritus professor at the Western Sydney University, where she was foundation professor of social work from 1995 to 2010. She was also the foundation director of the Childhood and Youth Policy Research Unit and then the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre at the university. Jan's employment prior to her university career, in various positions in the NSW Department of Community Services, informs her academic work. Her research focuses on linking theory, policy and practice on children's issues. She has published on child welfare and protection, child and family policy, child–adult relations, children's needs in care, kinship care, child well-being and researching with children. She is a member of the Board of the International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) and an expert adviser to the research project, 'Children's Understandings of Well-Being: Global and Local Contexts'.

Elizabeth Watson is a retired academic who most recently was an adjunct research fellow in the School of Social Sciences and Psychology and, before that, with the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney (now Western Sydney University). She taught for many years at UWS. She has a particular interest in research methods, methodology, epistemology and ethics, especially in exploring ways of researching collaboratively with more

marginalised groups. Her recent research has been in a number of social policy areas—children's well-being, kinship care, care and caring work including men's caring work and women's human rights. Over the last 13 years, she has collaborated with both Jan Mason and Tobia Fattore in a number of research projects, of which the research underpinning this book has been the most significant.

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Introduction

A reconstruction of childhood that acknowledges children as beings in the present as well as becoming adults (James and Prout 1990) has been central to the international child well-being indicator movement, spearheaded by Ben-Arieh and colleagues. These researchers have argued the importance of children being involved in all stages of research efforts to measure and monitor their well-being (e.g. Ben-Arieh et al. 2001), reflecting a fundamental shift in research on children where those researching children's well-being are acknowledging children as agents and including them as participants in research. An emphasis on children as subjects and on documenting children's subjectivities in well-being research is part of a broader social trend of acknowledging the individuated personhood of children as subjects endowed with rights.

Within the vibrant child indicator movement, differences are evident in the methodologies and methods employed by researchers in their efforts to gain an understanding of children's 'inner' worlds, the meanings children attach to the concept of well-being and the interpretations they give of their experiences. The dominant approach to measuring and monitoring adult well-being has been through self-reporting mechanisms using mainly quantitative methods. Where this approach has been extended to children, it has contributed to the knowledge of child well-being and has opened up the possibility of research strategies that allow children to be acknowledged as active contributors to knowledge about their own lives. More rare, however, is research that seeks to involve children as reflexive and critical agents and where children's knowledge and experiences of well-being are foregrounded, that is, research that documents what children and young people identify as well-being, what it looks like and the factors that affect their sense of it. The idea of children's engagement in this way in well-being research has presented researchers with a challenge, given the adultcentric and quantitative framework that typically foregrounds adult expertise in all areas of social science research. This book attempts to respond to this challenge through the use of qualitative methodology, involving children as participants in research on well-being from an epistemological position of valuing them as 'knowers'. In order to research in this way, we have had to confront the adultcentricism in much of the research and popular discourse on

children's well-being by adult experts. In the research presented in this book, we aim to facilitate a contribution by children, as an emic group, to a conceptualisation of well-being that could be used for policy purposes. The presentation of the findings from our research in the following chapters therefore responds to Gasper's argument that:

> We must address well-being not only by measurement but also, and sometimes instead, by for example rich qualitative description … We need in addition [to methods of conventional economics] cases of particular real people in their complexity, in their social and historical contexts Gasper. (2004, p. 30)

An intention in writing this book has been to describe well-being from the vantage point of 'real' children in their 'social context'. What distinguishes this book from other publications on child well-being (including those that have included children's perspectives) has been our attempt to construct a *child standpoint* on well-being. We believe this book is distinctive because it is based on our interpretations of what children have told us about their experiences and understandings of well-being. Hence our aim is to represent what children tell us is significant to their well-being and what this tells us about generational and social orders that frame these understandings and experiences of well-being.

In working up from the data gathered from children, this book presents aspects of their lifeworlds that they themselves see as important to their well-being. The challenge to our writing and research practices has been positioning children differently from what Fegter et al. (2010) have pointed out is their usual 'othered' position in the research literature on children. As Dorothy Smith (1987) argued for women, so we argue in relation to children that as adults we are accustomed to knowledge about children being created by adults for adults and children being treated 'as other', even within discourses in which they are ostensibly central.

In this book, we present what children told us about well-being in the explanatory social and political contexts of a child standpoint. In doing this, we hope to convey something about the generational ordering of childhood and about the social order from where children as subjects 'stand' and thus of childhood as part of a late modern social formation. We believe the identification of a child standpoint on well-being makes a particular contribution in the international context, one that is of significance for policymakers who are attempting to improve the lives of children.

In making this contribution we highlight some important aspects of child well-being, evident when childhood as a generational form is taken into account. We have seen this as a necessary first step in developing a construction of well-being with children that is in accord with Qvortrup's (2014) warning that, as pertinent as plurality or diversity in childhoods may be, it is important first to 'come to terms with what childhood is in generational terms' (p. 681). Therefore, we aim to contribute to the *study of childhood as a structural phenomenon.* Through an analysis of children's standpoints on well-being, we attempt to advance analytical strategies that more broadly characterise sociological studies of childhood, namely, how childhood is constituted as a social phenomenon and its practices, history, social meaning and value as a diverse set of cultural and social practices and ideals. In

particular, our analysis of what children understand and experience as important to their well-being provides insight into processes of generationing that reflect how childhood and adulthood are mutually constituted through competing and interlocking conceptions and practices associated with well-being and, subsequently, how childhood is experienced by some children. Child–adult relations are reflected in the practices that differentiate 'adults' from 'children', but they also reflect structural categories that regulate adults' and children's access to social resources. In addition, they are likely to reflect different conceptions of well-being—by adults of children as distinct from by children themselves. We return to this issue in the concluding chapter.

In prioritising children's conceptions of well-being in the context of intergenerational relations, we draw upon that tradition within the sociology of childhood that identifies childhood as a minority social position in terms of generational relations. Acknowledging the socially contingent nature of well-being, we also attempt to contribute to the study of *how childhood is experienced by children as a set of social interactions*. Based upon children's discussions of their experiences of well-being, our task also includes a focus on micro-social interactions amongst children and between children and adults. In doing so, we are drawing upon that tradition within the sociology of childhood that documents children's own lifeworlds, and especially those that prioritise as important children's interactions with other children, a lifeworld structured by their own understandings of their social worlds and not necessarily transparent to adults. These individual and relational practices are social practices that reflect, constitute, challenge and reproduce generational and social orders. While our emphasis is on developing a standpoint based on significant commonalities that arise from the structural location of childhood, our presentation of the micro-interactions that are important to children recognises critical points of contrast, such as gender, age, ethnicity, ability and disability, socio-economic status and geographic location.

It is in the interaction between these two analytical motifs, of childhood as a structural phenomenon and the daily interactions that constitute children's lifeworlds, that we find discussions of childhood, and of children's well-being, in peril. We find expressions of these concerns regarding children's well-being in images of rushed children, overburdened children, overly protected children and neglected children. Furthermore, the concept of well-being itself is a subject of policy attention and of general concern in the adult imagining and thus is a problem deserving policy intervention. Well-being is a word that has discursive power in contemporary social formations but is diffuse in policy discourse and popular conversation.

By focusing on childhood practices and childhood as socially constituted, broader social processes are inevitably also the subject of study alongside the structural conditions of growing up. By emphasising how childhood is constituted through specific social, political and cultural institutions, revealed through children's experiences and understandings of their well-being, we are simultaneously bringing into focus specific social, cultural and political institutions that are said to constitute childhood itself and the social formations associated with late, high, post-industrial or postmodern capitalism. Both the structures of childhood and the

subjective practices of children tell us something important about these broader social conditions.

The Structure of this Book

The book is in three parts. In *Part 1* we place our research of child well-being within the dominant discourses on this topic. We identify the broad social and political discourses framing contemporary approaches to child well-being research and policy. This provides a background to the epistemological structuring of our research project and analysis of the findings. In *Chap. 1* we present an historical analysis of the key discourses, as propounded by philosophers and social scientists. This chapter identifies the ways that child well-being has, until very recently, been excluded from these discourses. We describe how even in more recent research where children's voices are included, hearing them as 'real' tends to be rendered problematic due to being framed by positivist, measurement-based epistemology. In this chapter, we suggest that contemporary concerns with well-being, in particular the current social scientific focus on measurement, where they proceed without relevant reference to the historical, philosophical and social constructions of well-being, contribute to an elision between well-being and happiness by failing to take into account that hedonic and eudemonic concepts come from different philosophical bases.

The discussion in Chap. 1 provides a context for an outline in *Chap. 2* of our theoretical approach to research on child well-being. In this second chapter, we explain our use of standpoint methodology to explore with children a construction of child well-being from where they stand. We describe how we implemented an epistemological approach and methodological framework based on our acknowledgement that the concept of well-being is socially constructed and that children are generally excluded from contributing to this construction. In this chapter, we explain how, in being informed by standpoint theory for researching with children and in analysing what they told us, we were researching within a tradition that has promoted the contributions of other marginalised, emic groups to knowledge-producing forums.

Part II is about the themes or domains we have identified as the most significant elements of what children told us well-being meant. It is also about the complexity and multifaceted nature of their understanding of well-being. The child standpoint in the chapters in this part is generally implicit, with the concluding summaries of these chapters presenting a more explicit theorising of society as children experience it through child–adult relations. Firstly, *Chap. 3* provides an overview of the aspects of a child standpoint on well-being, as identified from what participants in the research told us about the nature of well-being. We attempt to convey something of this complexity with a diagrammatic overview, highlighting the major themes forming the substance of the child standpoint. We outline the importance of the interlocking domains of agency, security and sense of self for well-being and the salience children give to health, leisure activities and economic issues when

describing how they experience happiness and well-being in their day-to-day lives. A substantial part of Chap. 3 is an attempt to convey the significance of emotions and relationships as they underlie children's discussions of the meaning of well-being in all the identified themes. In placing their dialogue within the social science literature on these topics, it is evident that children place more emphasis on emotions and relationships than has previously been reflected in much of the literature on children's well-being. This raises questions as to why the importance of emotions and relationships to children has not received more attention in this literature.

In Chaps. 4, 5 and 6, we explicate and discuss the other key elements of child well-being: the domains of agency, security and sense of self. These elements are presented in the form of narratives constructed from children's data. *Chapter 4*, on children's experiences of agency in terms of their well-being, broadens the notion of agency as participation to include agency as a form of social action that is multi-faceted. Children tell us that agency, as an important factor in children's well-being, is relational. In this chapter, we explore the horizontal symmetries that characterise children's relations with significant others and the vertical asymmetries in child–adult relationships that limit children's agency and consequently child well-being. This discussion highlights the tension between children's everyday practice of agency and autonomy and macro-level structuring of child–adult relations.

Chapter 5, on safety and ontological insecurity, also emphasises relational aspects of well-being and further highlights the impact of macro-level structuring on children's everyday lives. Positioning issues of child safety within the contemporary focus on risk and ontological insecurity, the children's narrative in this chapter points to complex interconnections between their vulnerabilities, their existential concerns about security and the ordering of social relations. In particular, children emphasise the importance of home in providing both physical and ontological security; at the same time, they draw attention to the way in which child–adult relations, as the means for channelling social anxieties, undermine safety, both in the home and in public spaces. *Chapter 6* describes how a meaningful life is central to the concept of the self, as elucidated by the children. We discuss concepts of self-identity that children foreground in discussing well-being—the moral self, the purposeful self and the authentic self—and outline the social contexts that children prioritise as important to the presentation and development of their sense of self.

In *Part III* we discuss what we have labelled as dimensions of children's well-being. These dimensions represent some of the concrete areas of practice that children prioritised as important to their well-being: health, leisure and material well-being. Our analysis in Chaps. 7, 8 and 9 employs standpoint theory explicitly to, as in Leena Alanen's (2005) exposition of this theory, 'provide an account of society from where children stand', by not only 'explor[ing], analys[ing] and explicat[ing] the worlds that children know as insiders'—thus continuing with 'the groundwork laid by child-centred research'—but also by 'link[ing] children's lives with the normal organization of social relations' (p. 43).

Chapter 7 is an exploration of the dominant adultist discourse on children's structured and unstructured activities, as centred on preparing children for becoming adults and furthering the social order. We contrast the adult discourse with the

importance placed in the children's narrative on leisure activities as being conducive to experiences of happiness and well-being, in terms of having meaning in their lives and enabling them to experience autonomy and competence.

In *Chap. 8* we explore how children's economic well-being is deeply embedded in the economic well-being of their families, yet how it is children's access to direct and indirect resources, intersubjectively negotiated within households, that is significant to their well-being. We also discuss the importance that children place on being autonomous producers and consumers, a theme that has been taken up recently in economic sociology but the realisation of which is deeply embedded in significant social relations. Underlying both themes, children emphasise the importance of enacting moral practices as part of these economic practices.

Chapter 9 illustrates how a child standpoint, in 'looking up' (Alanen 2005), informs us of ways in which conventional adult discourse conflates health and well-being and places parents as the agents in promoting health in their children. The children's narrative in this chapter, in 'looking down' (Alanen 2005), informs us that children identify health as just one aspect of well-being. While children engage as agents intersubjectively, in furthering their health through eating and physical practices, by looking both 'down' and 'up', we gain some understanding of the multiplicity of network relationships in which children must engage in order to acquire a sense of well-being on issues of health.

Part IV presents some conclusions for research and policy development on child well-being that have been derived from considering the implications of the standpoint on child well-being conveyed in the chapters in this book. In confronting the challenges posed by applying a structural analysis through standpoint theory in our postmodern era, Comack (1999) uses the analogy of a quilt to discuss researching as a standpoint feminist. In adapting her analogy, we can liken ourselves, as authors of this book, to quilt-makers. In each of the chapters in Parts II and III, we present children's knowledge, in order that their voices be heard, in a way that can be likened to displaying patches of fabric. And through reflexive, theoretically informed discussions, we have assembled children's knowledge into meaningful patterns such as one would find on a complete quilt.

In the final chapter, we present a sense of the totality of the analyses provided in the book's chapters when they are displayed as a whole. In this concluding chapter, we summarise some meanings gleaned and draw from them some implications for indicator research and policy development on child well-being. We present a set of 'indicator concepts' derived from our reconstruction of children's standpoint on well-being. These represent a conceptualisation of children's well-being, from children's perspectives, that include domains and dimensions of children's well-being that could be measured and which provide guidance for developing more specific, concrete indicators.

Part I
Discourses on Well-Being and Researching a Child Standpoint

Chapter 1
Tracing Conceptualisations of Well-Being: Locating the Child in Well-Being Discourse

Introduction

Throughout history, reflections on well-being and on happiness have had an important place in thinking about the meaning of human life. Historically, the concept of well-being has sometimes been differentiated from the concept of happiness and at other times conflated with it. Whether dealt with separately or conflated, there is an enormous and daily growing literature on the concepts of well-being and happiness and related concepts such as the quality of life and, indeed, the meaning of life. There is also a rapidly increasing literature conceptualising child well-being. This chapter does not attempt to provide anything near an inclusive intellectual history of the idea of well-being and of the place of child well-being in it. Rather, we attempt to trace some key thinking in these areas in order to provide a context in which we position the theoretical approach to our research on child well-being.

We start from the argument of Ryan and Deci (2001) that current empirical research on both well-being and happiness is derived from two perspectives: 'the hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness and defines well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance; and the eudaimonic [eudemonic] approach, which focuses on meaning and self-realization and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning' (Ryan and Deci 2001, p. 141). In this chapter, we revisit some of the major contributions to these two perspectives, as they have influenced current well-being theory and research. At the same time, we acknowledge that the perspectives are not necessarily as distinct as such a process may suggest. We trace the eudemonic perspective in various manifestations: in the work of Aristotle and of some medieval religious thinkers, in some thinkers from Enlightenment times, and in current research by positive psychologists and modern philosophers. The perspective related to the hedonic approach of some early Greek philosophers we trace in Western Enlightenment thinking on utilitarianism through to its alignment, in the form of GDP (gross domestic product), with the concept of

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well-being in the twentieth century, and then to its salience in present times, in social and child indicator research.

In our overview, we draw on some Eastern conceptualisations of well-being and happiness, as relevant to the global context in which child well-being research is currently promoted. We also recognise the ongoing links thinkers and researchers have made between well-being theory and research and the concomitant implications for policy development. In this overview, particular emphasis is given to the predominantly etic and adultcentric framing of thinking and research on well-being and the implications of this framing for contemporary research and policy on child well-being.

This overview is the context for the final sections of the chapter in which we discuss, firstly, the dearth, until very recently, of literature on child well-being and, secondly, the recent impetus for hearing the perspectives of children on their well-being in child indicator research. Finally, we position the aim of our research, commenced in 2002, in the context of the chapter, as we sought to construct a child standpoint, or standpoints, on well-being.

Early Historical Conceptualisations of Well-Being or Eudemonia

The first of the two dominant streams in contemporary conceptualisations of well-being is that associated with the reflective concept of eudemonia or flourishing. This stream is identified in thinking dating back to early Western Greek philosophers and aligns with Eastern thinking as conveyed, for example, in the thinking of the Buddha. In both early Eastern philosophy, as orally transmitted from Buddha, and in Western philosophy, as transmitted in the writings of ancient Greek philosophers, such as Socrates and Aristotle, well-being was viewed as a complex phenomenon separate from the more simplistic experience of happiness.

In Buddhist thinking, happiness as a concept is typically referred to as an illusion. Because of its fleeting nature, happiness in the form of pleasure is not considered a satisfactory goal. Indeed, suffering and negative emotions are seen as having value (Joshanloo 2014). A premium is placed on wisdom that comes with personal awakening. Compassion and love for others are the goals of the contemplative life and, implicitly, virtues to be reinforced (Sangharakshita 1998). In early Confucian thinking, which emphasised the state as being the focus of well-being, virtue was reinforced through socialisation, even where it had hedonic costs.

Aristotelian writings make explicit that achieving well-being or eudemonia is about the fulfilment of our natures as human beings, about the life of an individual going well in all respects. It was attained through living the virtuous life—being a good person as determined by reason (Aristotle, Book X, Chapter 6, McKeon edition, p. 1104). The good or eudemonic life was the virtuous life, experienced in the

complete life. In giving centrality in his writing to eudemonia, Aristotle conceptualised it as being about the attainment of the 'highest individual good'. Here, Aristotelian teachings differed sharply from the teachings of some other early Greek philosophers, such as the Cyrenaics who focused on hedonism, as in the pleasures of the moment (Haybron 2008). In advocating pleasure as the highest good, this minor Greek school of philosophy associated it with bodily pleasures in the present. As empiricists, epistemologically Cyrenaics believed in individual, subjective experience, rather than objective knowledge of the external world (O'Keefe 2014).

Aristotle conceived of happiness not as pleasure but as that which 'comes as a result of virtue' and is 'god like', being associated with 'good acts' (Aristotle, Book I, Chapter 7, McKeon edition). As he discussed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the responsibility for the achievement of well-being lay with the individual through intellectual contemplation and the practice of virtue. His focus on well-being was essentially an etic one. Not all individuals could achieve the state of well-being or the good life, only the more educated *men* in society, the elite—not the masses and certainly not slaves or women. Children and younger people were explicitly excluded from achieving eudemonia by the status childhood, implicit in which was the inability to experience the complete life.

In Aristotle's view, the educated were responsible for thinking for the masses, a position that fits with conceptions of the state and policymaking of the times as the vehicle for furthering social well-being. Eudemonia was the end point of both individual lives and the politics of the state, achieved through obedience to rules (Gallagher 2010). Here Aristotle's thinking paralleled early Eastern thinking. For example, Confucianism argued explicitly for connections between state policy and the well-being of citizens (Chan et al. 2008), focusing on the achievement of social well-being or state harmony as a form of socialisation.

Aristotelian concepts of well-being continued to influence thinking in medieval times. Broad connotations of well-being, or flourishing, and the virtuous life where reason predominates have been traced in Islamic thought, specifically in the Falsafa view of happiness (Tiliouine 2014), in Jewish philosophy, as expounded by Moses Maimonides (Tirosh-Samuelson 2003), as well as in Christian thinking in, for example, the thoughts of Aquinas (Drakulić 2012).

During medieval times, in the theological framework associated with some of these philosophers, according to which reason could be moderated by faith, well-being came to be considered a divine gift or reward for the virtuous, well-lived life, attained through union, or the right relation, with God. For example, in Christianity, well-being was seen as a goal, achieved by continuous individual effort, in death not in life. The masses could now attain well-being. Suffering came to be seen as the path that humans were doomed to follow during life; and suffering was essential if one wished to attain well-being following death. As a divine gift, well-being was outside the province of temporal policymakers (Drakulić 2012).

The Shift in Western Thinking with the Enlightenment: Individualism and Utilitarianism

The Enlightenment of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries signalled a shift in dominant thinking in the Western world: both away from a reliance on religion towards a focus on science and objectivism and away from the religious belief in happiness in the afterlife towards the belief that individuals could achieve happiness on earth. This shift signified a rejection of the metaphysical and teleological ideas that had characterised eudemonia in both Aristotelian and medieval thinking but continued to give prominence to the concept of rationality that was central to Aristotelian thought.

Broadly, the focus on happiness in present life built on the hedonism of Greek philosophers, such as the Cyrenaics, and was applied within the context of Enlightenment ideas of individualism, democratisation and secularisation of society. Well-being was now constructed as the entitlement of all individuals, as a fundamental expression of humanness. This conceptualisation of the experience of happiness has become a guiding theme in the modernisation process of the West, linking ideas of modernity and progress (Zevnik 2014). Zevnik, on the basis of his genealogical research of happiness, remarks that '[e]ver since the birth of the secular experience of happiness in the eighteenth century, progress in Western culture has essentially been tantamount to progress towards happiness' (p. 148).

In bringing together ideas of well-being as rationality and pleasure, writers of the period argued that just as a science of physics had been constructed, so it should be possible to construct a science of well-being (Stoll 2014). These writers emphasised natural laws, scientific measurement, quantification and 'the idea of the rational pleasure-maximizing individual, the *Homo economicus* of orthodox economics' (Stoll 2014, p. 17). In arguments supporting the importance of the concept of the 'rational pleasure-maximizing individual'—that is, of rational *man*—Enlightenment thinkers gave primacy to 'the *sovereignty* [emphasis in original] of the individual in matters of personal welfare: By and large, people know what's best for them and tend to act rationally in the promotion of their interests', given that the individual has '*freedom*' and in particular 'the liberty and resources to pursue their various goals however they see fit' (Haybron 2008. p. 21).

It can be argued that it took a considerable period of time for women to be considered as individuals with sovereignty and not until contemporary times has this entitlement been postulated as a possibility for children. Further, the Enlightenment context, with its emphasis on individuality, clearly separated Western thinking on happiness and well-being from traditional Eastern (and also much Aboriginal) thinking. In particular, the concept of self, embodied in enlightenment thinking on the individual, contrasts with Eastern traditions which 'tend to regard the self as a small part of the collective and the cosmos' and de-emphasise aspects of the self, such as autonomy and independence associated with Western individualism (Joshanloo 2014, p. 482).

Key figures in translating Enlightenment ideas on maximising pleasure and minimising pain, in judging how actions contributed to well-being (the greatest happiness of the greatest number), 'the principle of utility' (Stoll 2014, p. 18), were the philosophers Bentham and J.S. Mill. The eighteenth-century philosopher Jeremy Bentham argued that 'the hedonistic value of any human action is easily calculated by considering how intensely its pleasure is felt, how long that pleasure lasts, how certainly and how quickly it follows upon the performance of the action, and how likely it is to produce collateral benefits and avoid collateral harms. Taking such matters into account, we arrive at a net value of each action for any human being affected by it' (Kemerling 2011). Bentham established the basis for the modern focus on rational choice theory and its application, at the state and international levels, to well-being policy, when he articulated a link between his principles of happiness and government policy, noting that '[t]he business of government is to promote the happiness of the society, by punishing and rewarding …' (Bentham 1789, Chapter VII.1).

John Stuart Mill extended Bentham's utilitarian theory while also challenging it with an emphasis on qualitative, as well as quantitative, aspects of the concept (Drakulić 2012; Haybron 2008). Mill argued that some actions are qualitatively better than others, and this has to be taken into account in measurement. Amongst the qualitatively superior ends are the moral ends. People have the sense that they have moral inclinations superior to mere self-interest and that their own sense of happiness is a by-product of putting the happiness of others before their own. In combining thinking on utilitarian concepts with Aristotelian concepts about virtue, as well as ideas on the importance of justice, Mill purported that there is more moral worth in some ends than in others. He argued for promoting higher, usually intellectual pleasures, over lower, usually bodily pleasures, and that reducing pain is often more attainable and therefore morally justified if it results in the greater good of all (Wilson 2014; Haybron 2008; Mill 1966 edition).

Twentieth-Century Developments in Thinking on Well-Being

In the period following the Great Depression and World War II, economists and psychologists, rather than philosophers, were at the forefront of the discourses on well-being in the Western world. The dominant perspective in the discourse, as expounded by economists, extended Enlightenment ideas through research and policy developments, emphasising an association between well-being and materialist and individualist values. The alternative eudemonic discourse, generally eclipsed by utilitarian thinking in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, except where it was visible, for example, in some of J.S. Mill's work, re-emerged more definitively in the mid-twentieth century in the work of humanist psychologists.

In the dominant discourse, concepts of capital and of economic welfare were promoted within an objectivist epistemological framework. In this framework, GDP was the tool used by policymakers to measure the productive capacity of national

economies, as a strategy in the rebuilding of economies and preventing economic depressions. Internationally, policymakers used GDP to portray well-being by 'a single objective dimension: material progress measured by income' (Conceição and Bandura 2008, p. 1), and so an underlying association between economic progress and moral progress was assumed and sometimes made explicit (e.g. Friedman 2006).

At the same time as the link between market growth and elements of well-being, formulated in the proxy of GDP, was gathering in strength, it was also challenged even within economic thinking—in terms of the disjuncture between national growth and individual happiness. Dissatisfaction with the association between GDP and well-being intensified in the 1960s and 1970s, with acknowledgement of the importance of social factors for human well-being (Drabsch 2012). Research, as in, for example, the *World Happiness Report* (Sachs et al. 2012), highlighted the fact that while basic living standards may be important to well-being and happiness, factors such as employment, quality of work, community cohesion, physical and mental health, participatory policies and quality education for all are equally significant. Globally, in the 1960s and 1970s, social indicators were developed to enable, at national levels, quantitative assessments of well-being and of the impact of policies on human welfare, in terms of various dimensions—'financial, education, employment, health, social participation and housing' outcomes (Alkire and Sarwar 2009, p. 5).

Where research in the dominant 'scientific' objectivist approach was applied to childhood, it was not in relation to children's happiness as children. The policy emphasis of this period continued to be on the socialisation of children into good, happy, but above all, normative adults, as part of modernity's approach to governmentality. Surveys, initiated in the late nineteenth century in Britain and elsewhere, were used to measure the way children progressed 'normally' through defined stages of development, as a way of investing in national futures (Prout 2005; Woolridge 2006). In this process, the 'passive' child was seen as the putty of adult socialisation, as expressed in its most extreme form by behaviourist psychologists

The alternative discourse on well-being, in the tradition of eudemonic thinking, is evident during this period in the phenomenological or qualitative conceptualisation of this concept by psychologists such as Carl Rogers (e.g. Rogers 1951, 1961) and Abraham Maslow (e.g. Maslow 1987). The theory and research of both these men had considerable impact on policies and practices in mental health, education and social administration. Particularly significant was Maslow's theory of development. The conceptualisation in this theory of the human tendency towards personal growth and self-actualisation can be likened to Aristotle's concept of the flourishing person. Both thinkers emphasised the connection of leading a virtuous life, being moral and having concern for the welfare of others with well-being. Maslow differentiated his concept of self-actualisation from Aristotle's concept of eudemonia by arguing that, where Aristotle's concept involved a 'hierarchy of human capacities in which reason took the top place', 'we must modify considerably our picture of the psychological organism to respect equally rationality, emotionality, and the conative or wishing and driving side of our nature' (Maslow 1987, p. 116). Although

Maslow recognised emotions as significant, he still gave primacy to rationality by placing it above emotional needs on the rungs of his pyramid.

Like Aristotle, Maslow, in focusing on adults as potentially achieving well-being through self-actualisation, excluded children, because he also considered that children lacked the knowledge of life experience to achieve this ideal.

Contemporary Conceptualisations of Well-Being

In contemporary research and policy, the term 'well-being' has been contrasted with that of 'happiness' as being the 'in term' (Gasper 2004, p. 1). The current use of the term well-being is as a 'broad, contested concept open to multiple interpretations and research approaches' (Camfield et al. 2009b, p. 67). For the purpose of our historical overview of contemporary developments, we do not discuss the multiplicity of uses of the term. Rather, we point to the ways in which, in contemporary conceptualisations of well-being, we can discern the continuing legacy of the two major philosophical traditions, albeit reinterpreted through modern economic theory of the developmental state. The continuing influence of both hedonic and eudemonic concepts can be traced separately but also as merging, through the eliding of well-being with happiness research and through the emphasis on measurement as fundamental to operationalising well-being in contemporary research and policy. The emphasis continues to be on economic growth, although this is increasingly being challenged by the need to take into account social issues.

The quantification discourse has been extended in recent years, through the process of complementing the collection of objective data with subjective data about people's thoughts and feelings in multidimensional measures. While the use of the words objective and subjective in this way introduces what Gough et al. refer to as 'a contentious and potentially problematic' distinction (Gough et al. 2006, p. 4), in terms of epistemology, this distinction is consistently used as a descriptor of research measures with generally accepted broad understandings. In these broad understandings, objective approaches to well-being are understood to be those that focus on measures, such as material resources and length of life, and subjective approaches are understood to focus, through self-reports, on persons' feelings and the meanings they attach to experience. Diener et al. (2002) define subjective well-being (SWB) as including both cognitive and affective evaluations of one's life as a whole and as 'a broad concept that includes experiencing high levels of pleasant emotions and moods, low levels of negative emotions and moods, and high level satisfaction' (p. 187).

Positive psychologists, particularly those who focus on SWB, point to the intellectual legacy for their theories of subjective well-being as residing with utilitarianism and the measurement tradition (e.g. Diener et al. 2002) and/or with Aristotle and the eudemonic tradition. Seligman (2011) clearly places his writing and research in the eudemonic tradition, as in the very title of his book *Flourish*. Deci and Ryan directly align themselves with Aristotelian eudemonic thinking when they state that

well-being consists of 'more than just happiness' and argue for a multifaceted approach to subjective well-being (Deci and Ryan 2008, p. 2). They describe the concept of well-being as being about 'fulfilling or realizing one's daimon or true nature', as 'living well or actualizing one's virtuous potentials' or capacities (Deci and Ryan 2008, p. 2). In describing virtue as being about 'making the right *choices*' (p. 7), these positive psychologists link virtue, as Aristotle did, with rationality. However, Lee and Carey (2013) argue that this concept of virtue differs from that of Aristotle. Whereas the Aristotelian concept of virtue is an objective one of a person being the best they could be; for Deci and Ryan, it denotes a subjective sense of 'doing that which is worth doing', through personally expressive activities, in terms concordant within the daimon or true self (Lee and Carey 2013, p. 17).

Diener et al. (2002) considers that the use of subjective measures to complement objective measures is an expression of democratic principles, enabling each individual to make decisions about, or evaluations on, their own lives and well-being. However, the extent to which individuals are actually participating as democratic citizens in evaluating their own lives can be questioned when, as is typically the case, participation in evaluation is limited by the constraints of responding to scales determined by others, by etic experts. Some recent indicator research does appear to have attempted to respond to this limitation, at the state level. For example, the Measuring National Well-being: Life in the UK, 2012 project, described as providing 'a unique overview of well-being in the UK today … in terms of the economy, people and the environment', included a 6-month debate across the UK on 'what matters' in developing a framework for measuring well-being (Self et al. 2012, pp. 1–2).

Significant concerns have been expressed about the cross-national application of Western frameworks to well-being research and policy for developing countries. For example, Van Hoorn (2007) draws attention to the way culture and language may affect ratings of SWB. Further, the conceptualisation by positive psychologists of flourishing or well-being, as determined by individual choice and efforts, ignores the social and cultural contexts in which individuals' lives are situated (Becker and Marecek 2008), while the emphasis placed on the connection between well-being and mastery and control of the individual's world downplays the significance of harmony for the lives of those in non-Western contexts (Joshanloo 2014). Becker and Marecek (2008) note that the continuing emphasis in well-being research on the individual as the unit or measurement not only has the effect of decontextualising and universalising but also fails to identify structural factors of class, gender and ethnicity, as they contribute to individual well-being.

Issues of structural factors and social justice loom as important in the work of economist Amartya Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum on the Capability Approach. Both writers have highlighted the extent to which poverty and inequality continue to exist, despite evidence of significant economic growth. In her work, Nussbaum provides a focus for 'a comparative account of the quality of life and a theory of basic social justice', with attention 'particularly on the struggles of traditionally excluded or marginalized groups' (Nussbaum 2011, p. 186).

Both Sen and Nussbaum, more particularly Nussbaum, acknowledge conceptual links to Aristotle's eudemonia in their notion of optimal human functioning. Robeyns argues that a defining characteristic of the Capability Approach is the extent to which it is 'extremely interdisciplinary, perhaps even post-disciplinary', involving interaction between quantitative techniques and qualitative, ethnographic methods (Robeyns 2006, p. 371).

Sen initially developed the Capability Approach as an alternative to standard economic models where the emphasis is on preference satisfaction or choice-based approaches to well-being (Jayawickreme and Pawelski 2013). Central to the Capability Approach is the distinction between 'capabilities' and functionings. Functionings are what an individual may value doing or being, while 'capability' refers to 'the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for the individual to achieve' (Sen 1999, p. 75). Capability is therefore a form of freedom to achieve alternative functionings and lifestyles.

Nussbaum has provided an account of capabilities and well-being that presents a set of human capabilities, which she claims together constitute a truly human existence and which she indicates should be translated at the local level for policy implementation (Nussbaum 2003; Robeyns 2006). While Sen has refrained from such an explicit list, he has nevertheless used specific lists in his empirical work (Robeyns 2006). Some researchers, such as Robeyns and Alkire, have developed ways of forming lists to enable participation in the selection or modification of lists of capabilities by those populations to which it is applied (Robeyns 2006). The Capability Approach has been a significant influence on policy development at both state and international levels, as reflected, for example, in the Human Development Index, designed to shift the focus on national and international accounting to a more people-oriented approach.

Well-Being in Childhood

In the history of the conceptualisation of well-being, there has generally been silence on the topic of *child* well-being, until very recent times. This lacuna has characterised both streams of thinking on well-being. The inherent adultcentricism in the history of thinking on well-being has been associated with ideas of the child as an *adult in deficit.* Historically, within the context of an emphasis on children as 'becomings', a focus on them as experiencing 'well-being' would have implied a logical contradiction.

This potential contradiction as evident in earliest writing on well-being was directly exposed and rejected by Aristotle. He explicitly excluded children from discussions of well-being when he wrote: 'A boy [sic] is not happy … owing to his age; and boys who are called happy are being congratulated by reason of the hopes we have for them. For there is required … not only complete virtue, but also a complete life' for well-being (Aristotle, Book I, Chapter 9, McKeon edition, p. 946).

Writers and researchers in both streams of thinking on well-being have been influenced by the construction of children as adults in deficit, unable to experience well-being until, as a consequence of socialisation, they have achieved the status of adulthood. Evident in the history traced above—whether in the eudemonic tradition or in the hedonic, utilitarian tradition—are implicit, sometimes explicit, assumptions denying the significance of experiences of well-being for children in their present lives.

The changes in thinking that have prompted the study of child well-being are associated with a number of factors that coalesced in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in a reconstruction of childhood. The first of these has been linked with adult advocacy in the late twentieth century for the extension of Enlightenment thinking to children. This occurred in the context of a shift in social values in the West, away from hierarchically organised relations to social relations of more equality (Beck 1992; Giddens 1998), including the right of children to participate in decision-making related to their well-being. This shift can be traced in the doctrine of children's rights and is evident in the principle in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (1989), which states that children's voices should be heard in decision-making about their welfare.

The focus on children as rights holders has been complemented by changes in the conceptual framing of children and childhood. Particularly influential has been the theoretical contribution of 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. The book *Childhood Matters* (Qvortrup et al. 1994), derived from this project, described 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. xi). This project drew attention to the idea that children are a particular population group, deserving of policy attention separate from families. Writers within the new sociology of childhood emphasised that children's lives and cultures are deserving of special study (James and Prout 1990) and that central to this process is recognising the child as a *being* rather than (or as) a *becoming*, as active rather than as passive and as subject rather than object of policy (James and Prout 1990). This conceptualisation provided the theoretical impetus and legitimation for the study of children's life spaces and of a child standpoint on children's lives (see Chap. 2).

Child Well-Being in Contemporary Research and Policy

Reviews of current uses of the term 'child well-being' note that while it is a frequently used concept, it is inconsistently defined and that there is little agreement amongst researchers on how it should be measured (Pollard and Lee 2003; Statham and Chase 2010). This reflects the trend in the use of the concept well-being more broadly, as discussed above. There is, however, some consensus that the contemporary concept of well-being as applied to children in research and policy is

multidimensional in character and involves empirical studies and normative assessments, sometimes implicit but at other times explicit, and is about research and policy (Ben-Arieh et al. 2014). Contemporary researchers and policymakers, influenced by the shifts in the framing of childhood, are taking children into account in various ways in researching their well-being.

Employing the analytical framework of earlier sections of this chapter to outline some current directions in child well-being research, an alignment is readily apparent between the use of the hedonic, quantitative approach in the development of indicators of adult well-being and in the development of child well-being indicators. The majority of research on child well-being has taken place within the measurement framework of child indicators. As others have noted, in measurement of child well-being, social indicators play an important role in the formulation of policy (e.g. Fernandes et al. 2012). The eudemonic, qualitative approach to well-being research is most apparent in studies of child well-being that focus on children's subjective responses, particularly when child rights are a major focus in the development of research methodology.

A 2009 OECD report identified two perspectives on childhood as characterising child well-being indicator research—'the developmentalist' and the 'child rights'. Both these perspectives can be seen as cross-cutting the hedonic, quantitative and eudemonic, qualitative approaches to studying child well-being. The report's use of the term 'developmentalist perspective' parallels the traditional construction of childhood, with the continued incorporation of assumptions inherent in this construction. In the report (OECD 2009), the developmentalist perspective in child well-being research is described as focusing on 'the accumulation of human capital and social skills for tomorrow', that is, on well becoming (p. 25). This perspective can be seen to influence many of the research studies that emphasise quantification and measurement (e.g. Land et al. 2007) and in State of the World's Children reports (e.g. Bellamy 2004). Typically, in this research, knowledge has been sought about children's well-being in various ways: through research on them as 'becomings', by focusing on them attaining developmental milestones, by looking at behaviour problems and deficits and by measuring children's performance according to the goals of child institutions, such as the school and the social welfare system. A recent application of this approach describes 'a concept of child well-being' developed in economics (Conti and Heckman 2012) that 'envisions a core set of capabilities as capacities to function, including cognition, personality, and biology' and views the child 'as a work in progress' (p. 2).

The OECD report distinguishes the child rights perspective from the developmentalist perspective in defining the former as having 'a strong rights-based emphasis on children as human beings who experience well-being in the here-and-now' and seeking children's input in the process of deciding what their well-being might be and how it might be best measured (p. 25). The report cites work by Ben-Arieh and Frønes (2007) and Casas (1997).

A turning point in the move from the developmentalist perspective to what the OECD report referred to as the child rights perspective was the Multi-National Project for Monitoring and Measuring Children's Well-Being. The group

collaborating on this project spearheaded a move in research on child well-being away from a focus on survival and basic needs and towards attention to children's lives beyond survival, from the negatives in children's lives to the positives, from traditional domains to new domains of well-being and from focusing on preparation for adulthood (well becoming) to the present lives (well-being) of children (e.g. Ben-Arieh et al. 2001). Ben-Arieh and his colleagues have consistently argued that it is important to focus on children as a population group who need research and policy uniquely focused on promoting their well-being (e.g. 2001). They have pointed to the value of knowledge as the evidence base or 'firm foundation' for making 'better decisions and more appropriate services and plans' for promoting children's well-being (2001, p. 2).

It is in this context that increasingly in research on child well-being, there is an emphasis on the inclusion of subjective reports from children on their well-being. For example, studies by Bradshaw et al. (2007), Bradshaw and Richardson (2009), Cummins and Lau (2005) and Land et al. (2007) all used subjective scales as well as objective scales of child well-being.

Fernandes et al. comment that very few of these type of indicator studies 'truly translate children's thoughts on their own lives' (2012, p. 247), signifying the limited application of the newer construction of childhood and raising questions about the extent to which much current child indicator research actually accords with the child rights perspective as defined by the OECD report. This finding can be attributed to the fact that the positivist model of knowledge that characterises much child well-being research in the quantitative measurement stream, even where it uses subjective scales, remains problematic in actually reflecting children's voices.

The placement of subjective scales within measurement-based frameworks occurs in a context in which the expertise of the adult researchers to make decisions on the research instruments and the interpretation of data is typically not questioned. In using such frameworks, when opportunities for children to respond on subjective well-being scales are included, children's voices are likely to be muted through the privileging of quantitative over qualitative data. In this process, as Nussbaum (1999) argues, in approaches based on concepts of utility, there is a lack of recognition given to the fact that subjective preferences may be distorted by oppression.

Research attempts to more 'truly' translate children's thoughts on their own lives into indicators are typically those that seek children's input when deciding what are the important elements of child well-being prior to measuring them. These attempts are explicitly child rights in perspective and/or particularly comprehensively qualitative in focus. These research studies tend to also be more holistic and eudemonic oriented, in both content and findings. Examples include research conducted by the University of Western Cape, Child and Youth Research and Training Programme (September et al. 2004), which sought to develop child well-being indicators directly from children's perspectives, as a step towards 'institutionalising their participation in a national monitoring system' on child well-being in South Africa (p. 8). Further

examples are two research studies in Ireland by Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2005) and Hanafin and Brooks (2005). Both studies adopted an explicit child rights approach and included children's voices as a basis for the development of child well-being indicators. The qualitative project reported by Gabhainn and Sixsmith used photography in working with children on a co-construction of their well-being. The research by Hanafin and Brooks included children as contributors (along with adults) to their data sources, in constructing well-being surveys.

An additional approach to research conceptualising children's well-being in eudemonic terms is that utilising the Capability Approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Researchers at the Bielefeld Center for Education and Capability Research in Germany, Sabine Andresen and her colleagues, have been attempting to apply the Capability Approach's focus on the abilities, conditions and freedoms people require in order to be able to bring about the 'good life' to well-being research with children (Andresen et al. 2010). This approach has in common with the developmentalist approach a focus on child development, but it is the intrinsic rather than the functional aspect of this characteristic that is valued (Volkert and Schneider 2012). It more generally fits within the rights perspective, which places emphasis on social justice and on involving children in identifying capabilities and functionings that are important to them (e.g. Andresen et al. 2010). Fegter et al. (2010) highlight the need to take into account issues of the construction of childhood in identifying the good life for children. Their discussion of the 'othering' of children that 'takes place each time *we* talk, write and do research about *them*' (p. 10, emphasis in original), in defining the adultcentricism that has characterised child well-being research, points to the difficulties that all of *us adults*, as researchers, have in 'truly' [re]presenting child voices on what well-being or the 'good life' is about for *them* (p. 10, emphasis in original).

In developing our research into child well-being, we argued there are likely to be differences in the meanings that adults and children attach to well-being, attributable to differences in positioning of adults and children in terms of time and generation and consequent life spaces. We considered that as a consequence of children's generational location, it is important to acknowledge that their social and cultural realities are likely to be different from those of the expert adults conducting research and that these differences have implications for how we understand and measure children's well-being. In defining the aims of our research, we asked: To what extent are existing well-being indicators a reflection of what we adults construct as the appropriate boundaries of childhood, rather than what children actually do and want? To answer this question, we attempted in our research to position children centrally as knowers and to arrive at a child standpoint or standpoints.

In the next chapter, we describe how in acknowledging that as a consequence of children's generational location their social and cultural realities may be different from those of the 'expert' adults conducting the research, we adopted an epistemological approach and methodology designed to explore children's views on well-being from where they stand.

Chapter 2
Researching Children's Understandings of Well-Being

We learn about children, only from children (R.D. Laing 1978, p. ix)

Introduction

As signalled in the previous chapter, the aim of our research project was to explore some Australian children's understanding of well-being in the context of their generational positioning as children. In this chapter, we outline the epistemological and methodological framework of the project and aspects of its implementation, including our approach to data analysis and to presenting and discussing the findings in the following chapters.

Theoretical Approach

Our starting point in the design of this research project was our acknowledgment that the concept of well-being is socially constructed and contested (eg. Manderson 2005; Camfield 2013) and that constructions of child well-being have typically been adultcentric. We located our research in a framework informed by thinking that has challenged the ways social science research has traditionally marginalized and muted emic groups – women, non-Westerners and non-white people – by excluding them from knowledge-producing forums (Mason and Watson 2014). Dorothy Smith (2004) analysed how public discourse, especially as regulated within academic institutions and schools, appears open but is in fact powerfully regulated by devices that determine the authority of the speakers and also 'whose voices will count', so that the authority of white men is the dominant knowledge both for persons in this social category and those outside it (p. 177).

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Most recently, children have been recognized as a group whose knowledges and subjectivities have been muted or denied legitimacy (eg Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers 1992). In the production of knowledge, children have existed only as defined by adults, those writing and teaching in disciplines such as medicine, psychology and social work and those acting as intermediaries for children – parents, teachers, psychologists and social workers (Oakley 1994; Mason 2004). Increasingly, the ontological basis for this marginalization has been questioned (eg Qvortrup et al. 1994), and arguments for the inclusion of children in knowledge production forums have been made on the basis of a 'new' construction of childhood, variously labelled as 'new childhood studies' (eg John 1996a, b) or 'new' sociology of childhood theory (eg James and Prout 1990).

Applying this new construction to understanding child well-being means acknowledging that children are *beings*, as well as *becomings*, that they are *active* rather than *passive*, and that they have rights to be subjects/participants in, rather than objects of, research and policy. This construction provides the basis for research within an epistemological framework that recognizes children as knowers, as experts in their own lives.

In attempting to implement a research project in which children were included as knowers, we wanted to move beyond what Hunner-Kreisel and Kuhn (2010) label the 'perspective of the child' (p. 116) to take into account structural issues. We considered it important to use a methodology that would bring into view the structural issues that contribute to children's exclusion from knowledge-making and the continued marginalization of their voices.

Specifically, we were informed by child standpoint theory, as used by Alanen (2005) and Mayall (2002) to describe the location of children in generational relations in research on children's lives. Feminist standpoint theory was initially formulated by Sandra Harding (1986) 'to analyze the merits and problems of feminist theoretical work that sought a radical break with existing disciplines through locating knowledge or inquiry in women's standpoint or in women's experience' (Smith 1997, p. 392).

Swigonski has summarized the ideas underpinning feminist standpoint theory, on which childhood theorists have drawn:

> A standpoint is a position in society, involving a level of awareness about an individual's social location, from which certain features of reality come into prominence and from which others are obscured. Standpoint theory begins with the idea that the less powerful members of a society experience a different reality as a consequence of their oppression. (1994, p. 390)

For Dorothy Smith, standpoint theory is about the 'actualities' of lives, as lived 'in the local particularities of the everyday/everynight worlds' in which our bodily being is achored (1997, p. 393). Standpoint theory makes explicit the connection between an experiential methodology and a political methodology. Leena Alanen considers it conceivable to articulate 'from where children stand and act, as subjects, in their everyday lives, an account of society from such a point – that is from a children's standpoint'. Such an account 'would explore, analyse and explicate the

worlds that children know as insiders, and in this continue on the groundwork laid by child-centred research' but additionally 'link children's lives with the normal everyday organization of social relations' (2005, p. 43).

We sought to construct with children a child standpoint on what children consider to be well-being, from where they stand in social relations. We hoped that the standpoint(s) on child well-being constructed from the research would reflect something of contemporary children's voices while also placing those voices within what have been described as the 'institutional and societal boundaries defining the space within which they can act' (Hunner-Kreisel and Kuhn 2010, p. 116). Being informed epistemologically by standpoint theory meant that we recognized that children's knowledge on their lives had status, validity and worth in its own right. We were acknowledging that children have knowledge of their lives from where they stand, as a marginalized group, and are also able from this vantage point to comment on adults' lives as they affect them as children. We used a theoretical approach that would take us beyond treating children as 'other' in the research, to treating them as knowledge co-constructors.

In so far as we are, in this book, attempting a construction of a particular standpoint, we do not explicitly identify what could potentially be variations in children's experiences of well-being (in their standpoints) due to factors such as gender, race and class. This was not a focus of how we implemented the research or of the analysis presented in this book. Although different experiences in terms of gender and class may be apparent in the presentation of the narratives on well-being in the following chapters, they have not been clear enough to be reliably presented. Accepting that a failure to take into account the diversity of experiences within any particular social grouping is an apt criticism levelled at standpoint theory, we nevertheless believed that an important step within childhood research was to explore how what children told us about well-being was related to their social location as children. The extent to which factors of children's social location, additional to generation, define multiple standpoints on well-being must wait for exploration in further research.

In following through on our aim of constructing a child standpoint on child well-being, through engaging children as subjects and knowers, we hoped to inform policy making and practices of monitoring child well-being, and thereby contribute to positive differences to the ways children's lives are lived.

Methodological Framework

We sought to design research in which children would be able to participate in the data gathering and analysis stages of the project to the fullest extent possible, given the structurally defined constraints within research initiated by us, as adult researchers (etic experts) employed in academic and statutory institutions. We attempted to take into account that in research, as in adult–child relations more generally, the fact that adults are more powerful than children means adults' views of reality and their

structuring of research situations dominate and influence interactions with child participants. This meant confronting what Tess Ridge refers to as the 'ethical considerations and issues of power and control' (Ridge 2003, p. 5). In seeking to co-construct with children a child standpoint on well-being, we hoped to implement a process in which, as Westcott and Littleton (2005, p. 144) describe it, 'the roles of "teller and told" are shared and jointly created in both interviews and analysis of data' (cited in Mason and Hood 2011, p. 4).

Elsewhere we (Fattore et al. 2012) have described how we tried to limit adult-privileged processes through employing qualitative methodology to co-construct knowledge on well-being *with* children. We consider that use of qualitative methodology, with an emphasis on co-construction, distinguished our approach from research such as that of Bradshaw and Richardson (2009), Rees et al. (2010) and Cummins and Lau (2005), where they used subjective scales in accessing children's knowledge on well-being. The methodology used in administering scales, on which children are asked to respond, has been within an epistemological framework where adult constructions of well-being have been imposed on children, through the use of categories developed by adult researchers. The use of such methodology in this way serves the purpose of adding children into research, of 'counting them in'. As significant a step as this is, we argue, as Walby (1988) has in relation to women and Oakley (1994) has for children, it is important not just to add children into research and academic knowledge but to also integrate the position of children in this knowledge. It is important as a next step to identify a child position from where children are structurally, or generationally, located in knowledge on their well-being. We believed this step would help to achieve our aim in moving towards this goal of documenting children's contributions to knowledge of their well-being through methods that suited them, not as children but as participants in the co-production of knowledge.

In our use of qualitative methods we followed Denzin and Lincoln's (1998) definition of qualitative methods, as those that enable researchers to attempt 'to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them' (p. 3). These methods are valued because, in providing data based on direct experience, they are able to produce particularly reliable knowledge about the social world (Finch 1986, p. 165), even recognizing that it must always be the case that individual researchers can only describe others' worlds in terms of 'apprehension of them in the context of my [the researcher's] world' (Wooley 2007, p. 180). Epistemologically, our methods were underpinned by a phenomenological philosophy according to which we sought rich, in-depth data that would enable us to derive meanings from the children's words and develop constructions of well-being through an interpretive process. From early in the process of data collection we spiralled between concepts derived from the data, theory and then back to data collection, analysis and theory, in an iterative way. As part of the iterative process, in order to arrive as nearly as possible (given phenomenological limitations) at a reconstruction of child well-being, we placed an emphasis on being aware of and questioning our assumptions, heeding the argument made by Michael Crotty in his classic on research epistemology:

> … at every point in our research – in our observing, our interpreting, our reporting, and everything else we do as researchers – we inject a host of assumptions. These are assumptions about human knowledge and assumptions about realities encountered in our human world. Such assumptions shape for us the meaning of research questions, the purposiveness of research methodologies, and the interpretability of research findings. 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 … Far from being a theorising that takes researchers from their research, it is a theorising embedded in the research act itself. Without it, research is not research (1998, p. 17).

The emphasis placed on individual and team reflexivity meant that researchers, as individuals and as a team, attempted a consciousness of self in the research process, through self-analysis and collegial dialogue and challenge. At the individual researcher level, we understood that this meant applying self-scrutinizing practices in listening to individual participants, so that we questioned our attitudes and assumptions, as well as the language and processes we used as academics and as members of the culture of adulthood (Mason and Urquhart 2001). At the level of the total research team, we scheduled structured, reflexive opportunities, where we confronted and challenged our individual assumptions and interpretations in our collection and analysis of data.

The Research and Its Methods

The children who participated in this project, when initially recruited, were aged between eight and 15 and resided in the state of New South Wales, in Australia. The focus on this age group was a pragmatic one. In the New South Wales context, this was an age group on which there had been limited research and policy focus, in contrast with very young children and the older teen period – groups that had been more frequently targeted by research aimed either at early intervention or reduction of problem behaviour.

A total of 126 children from both rural and urban locations participated in the first stage of the research. Of these, 92 children contributed to stage 2 and 53 contributed to the final stage. A purposive sampling strategy was employed in seeking diversity among potential child participants, who were enrolled in government, Catholic and independent schools selected from each statistical sub-division of Sydney and one regional statistical division. The sample was designed to promote inclusion of children from across the socioeconomic spectrum, and was large enough, when combined with the diverse methods employed, to enable the research to be open to different stories, experiences and understandings of what well-being means for children. The final composition of the sample was determined through the voluntary consent of the children and of their parents/carers to the children's participation in the project.

A lengthy engagement process characterized our recruitment of children to the research. Dialogue between researchers, school staff, parents and children ensured

potential child participants and their carers had the information required to give informed consent to, or decline, invitations to participate in the research. As part of the formal process, in co-operation with school staff, a class or several classes were selected. The researchers discussed with these class groups what the project was about, and left information packages with the school. These packages included age-appropriate material for the children and their parents or carers (see Appendix 2.1). Interested children and young people took a package home. Researchers were available, by phone or in person, to discuss with children any concerns or issues they had about participation in the project. To include children interested in participating in the study, we required written consent from both the child and their parent or carer.

While the children and young people were advised that they could withdraw from the research at any time, the researchers treated consent as an ongoing process. Therefore, they regularly checked with the child and their parent or carer regarding their willingness to continue participating. This consent process was most marked at the beginning of each formal stage of the research.

The research was conducted over three formal stages with those children for whom we had the necessary consents. The first stage involved minimally structured interviews in which children chose to participate as individuals or in small groups. The researcher sought to explore with the participants what well-being meant for them, how well-being was experienced in everyday life, and what factors contributed to a sense of well-being.

In encouraging participants to take the interview in directions that suited them, we were commencing what Moss (2006) has described as a dialogic process in which child–adult research negotiations occur through a 'culture of listening' (p. 21). Greenfield (2004) has noted: 'The success of research with young children lies in the watching, listening, reflecting and engaging in conversation; seeking to enter the child's world in just a small way' (p. 4).

When the child participants in this research project were asked directly what well-being meant to them, they responded in a variety of ways. Some had an immediate, direct response; others required prompting, with the interviewer suggesting something like 'some people consider well-being has something to do with feeling happy or good'. Generally, either early in the interview or as interviews progressed past the initial responses, children were able to respond in terms of their conceptualizations of well-being, as will be clear from extracts included in, for example, Chap. 3. Older participants, in particular, articulated a standpoint on the world, aware they were making certain claims to knowledge based on their position as children.

As part of the dialogic process of the first interview, and in an attempt to reduce researcher–participant asymmetry, we gave each participant a booklet outlining the research questions. By increasing participants' control over the research process, these booklets enabled children not just to participate with ease in the interviews, but also, at times, to take the initiative in moving the interview forward. The interviewers had a similar booklet that included suggested prompts for each question and

possible task-orientated activities to employ if, and as, appropriate (see Appendices 2.2 and 2.3). One of these activities was the use of a magic wand as a basis for discussion. This was a popular prompt, as indicated in the following extract:

Interviewer: What sorts of questions would you ask if you were doing this project?
Participant 1: Um, I definitely like this wand idea. I think if I could make, if I could ask any child what they would like in the world I would definitely ask it. I think it would be interesting to find out what everyone's ideas are. What they want.
Participant 2: It is like a creative way of asking what would you really like. It is like putting a edge to it.

On the basis of our reflections on the first-stage interviews, we identified the need for a second stage of interviews, which were not envisaged as part of the initial design. The second stage was designed to check back with those children who continued to this stage of the project, that in our interpretations of their first interview, we had 'got it right'. We also asked participants for clarification to obtain greater insights into what was important to the child's well-being. This checking-back process entailed using specific themes for each participant, extracted from their first interview, as the basis of the second interview. Each participant was asked whether these themes made sense to them, and to elaborate on those themes that did make sense. They were also asked whether they would add themes or change the emphasis of the themes. In this way, the participants' interpretations of our initial attempts at analysis were built into the ongoing development of our analytical framework, verifying, extending or challenging the findings from the analysis.

The third stage involved participants completing a task-oriented project in which they explored a particular theme or themes of significance to them. Westcott and Littleton (2005), among others, note the importance of introducing into interview formats with children tools and artefacts that can help them to share their knowledge and facilitate joint meaning-making. Our participants could choose how they wished to explore the well-being themes or themes of interest to them. For example, they could opt to use photography, collage, drawing and/or journal-keeping as the basis of individual projects. These projects were not included as data, but they were used in a fourth stage of the project as a prompt. Fifty-six children participated in this stage of the study. In the following extract from the fourth stage, participants, who codenamed themselves Dolphin Blue and Dolphin Green, describe the project they completed:

Interviewer: So can you tell me what your project was about again?
Dolphin Blue: It is about, um, racism and bullying … We try and make it like a story.
Interviewer: Okay. So … is it your story or did you collect information from other people's points of view as well?
Dolphin Blue: Um, we just like, we said once upon a time and then there was, like, bullying and then racism. And then there will be, like there is going to be peace.
Interviewer: Is it like, almost like a true story?
Dolphin Green: Yep …

Analysis and Presentation of a Construction of a Child Standpoint on Well-Being

The process of interrogating and organizing the data into themes commenced with the first-stage interviews and was followed through to the latter stages of the project. To assist us in this process, we used the software package NVivo and the techniques outlined by Richards (2005). We asked of the data: (i) What does well-being mean for the child or young person? (ii) How is well-being experienced in everyday life (what people, places, things and times are associated with well-being)? (iii) What factors can be identified that contribute to a sense of well-being?

In identifying dominant and minor themes, or what we later referred to as domains and dimensions of well-being, we attempted to mirror the fieldwork process at an interpretive level. The team involvement, in reflecting on data and interpretations, was central to the iterative process. Following an initial identification of themes by those with more specific responsibilities for data analysis, the total research team met to consider the appropriateness of the themes in terms of their specific knowledge of the data. These meetings were informed by a process (Bazeley 2009) in which portions of data are shared with others, as a way of arriving at and checking on meanings implicit in data. Involvement of the team in this way had the added value that the assumptions and interpretations that followed from initial interrogation of the raw data could be confirmed or challenged by those involved in the fieldwork, in terms of their memory and understanding of individual children's responses.

It was as a consequence of the team process that we identified the importance of introducing the second stage of interviews, referred to above, where participants could comment on the themes we had identified in their individual transcripts and, in so doing, contribute to the ongoing development of our analytical framework. The third and fourth stages of interviews, with those children who continued to be willing to contribute to the research, added yet more depth to our understanding of child well-being. The iterative process that characterized the implementation of the project was also part of the way in which the chief investigators wrote up and presented the findings in various proceedings and publications.

In the chapters that follow, we present knowledge on child well-being as co-constructions of the authors and the child participants in the project. These constructions were developed by the researchers through a process that Richards (2005) describes as grounding the data in threads of theory. The use of theory in this way enabled meanings to be constructed from the data and an understanding of the composite data on specific themes to be presented as chapters and as a coherent standpoint or standpoints.

As part of the discussion in each chapter, in reporting on what children told us, we generally include their contributions in the form of interviewer–participant dialogue, rather than quotes from individual participants. This reflects our intent to provide transparency in the process of constructing a child standpoint, heeding Richards' advice to 'contextualise quoted material' (Richards 2005, p. 194). A

significant part of the context for the conduct of this research project was an emphasis on locating the social relations (adult–child, researcher–interview participant and child–child) in each discussion. While this book is an attempted co-construction with children, we acknowledge that our voices, as authors, are firmly embedded through the research and writing process. Indeed, this is reflected in the somewhat different writing styles of the various chapters, following from which of the authors took the major responsibility for each chapter, in what was an iterative, collaborative, authorial process.

In presenting a particular reconstruction, we have also sought to highlight both the individuality and plurality of children's voices, and where they may contrast with our own voices (Davis 1998). It will be evident to the reader that some children's voices were louder than others, either overall or on the themes of specific chapters. Sometimes the loudness of particular voices reflects the number of interviews/activities in which individuals participated. At other times it signifies the way particular aspects of well-being were emphasized by different individuals.

The names of children included in these dialogues are pseudonyms; frequently, the pseudonyms were self-chosen. A list of pseudonyms and the age of each child is presented in the Appendix at the end of the book. We have not included specific ages next to individual participant names in the extracts provided in chapters, because in the context of the narratives we considered it appropriate for children's contributions to stand separately from assumptions about specific ages. Undeniably, age was at times a factor in the facility with which older children contributed on a particular theme, and also in the content of their contributions. However, it was also frequently possible to identity contributions by younger children similar to those of older children, but differently articulated. In multiple participant interviews, regrettably, it was sometimes not possible for the transcriber to aurally identify the specific children contributing to the various comments in the dialogue.

In Chap. 3, on the overview of children's understanding of well-being, we present the dominant themes or domains of well-being that we identified in the data, in the context of aspects of emotions and relationships that were fundamental to children's discussions on well-being. In Chaps. 4, 5 and 6, we outline constructions of agency, safety and the self; and in Chaps. 7, 8 and 9, we describe what children told us about some of the domains of well-being that we identified; that is, children's experience of leisure, economic well-being and health. In the final chapter, we outline some conclusions and implications, drawn from the previous chapters, that are pertinent to the development of indicators for child well-being and for policy development for child well-being.

Meaningfulness of Engagement in the Research

Among the children who agreed to participate in the project, there was a variety of responses to the actual research process. Some of the children who consented to participate in the project did not wish to proceed beyond stage 1. Those who found

it most meaningful will obviously have been the children who participated in all stages of the research. The following extracts are from interviews with two of these children. In an interview with Ali, she indicates how she understood and experienced the research interview:

Interviewer: Mmm, okay, thank you very much. And how was it, doing the interview, for you?

Ali: It was very good. I thought that you were very understanding and you didn't really worry about what we were going to say or anything. You just really wanted to know how we felt.

And later in the discussion:

Ali: It was really good because you didn't ask, like, personal questions like [other interviewers], you asked what we thought and you weren't like most people, most interviewers where they changed the story and say, they say the people said this, and stuff like that.

In a group discussion we are reminded of the reason why many children agree to contribute to research projects:

Participant A: … I like these kind of things, where we get to be interviewed about our well-being, because I think if our ideas are expressed to a higher power people, they can then

Participant J: Our voice will be heard.

Participant A: Our view will be noticed. And that is why I agreed to do this.

Participant J: Yeah, same.

Getting children's views 'noticed' by 'a higher power' – that is, policy makers – is the responsibility of the authors, and also the readers, of this book. This responsibility signals the dilemma experienced by adult researchers employing, and policy makers attending to, standpoint theory in the interests of the group, children, to which we do not belong. Historically, standpoint research has helped marginalized groups to pursue their own interests, as an alternative to dominant groups using research in the administration and management of marginalized groups (Harding 1993). The imperative for us (as adult researchers and policy makers who value child standpoints but by definition have stakes in the social order, which may be at variance with those of the children) is how to ensure that our research does not construct knowledge in ways that adults can use for purposes of controlling children in the interests of adults. We hope that our research will, instead, contribute to children's views on well-being being 'noticed' and taken into account in the framing of policies that respond to what children define as their well-being.

Appendices - Chapter 2

Appendix 2.1: Information and Consent Form – Child Version

An information booklet to help you decide about taking part in the -

'Children's Well-being' Project

By the Commission for Children and Young People and the University of Western Sydney.

This is a booklet to help you decide whether you want to take part in a special project about-

What makes children feel good, and

What it's like for children when things are going well for them.

The project is called the -

'Children's Well-being Project'

We have written this book to help you decide if you want to spend some of your time talking with us about these things.

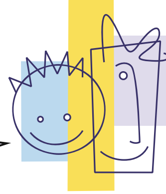
Who wants to know about these things?

The people doing the project come from the Commission for Children and Young People and the University of Western Sydney.

Hi,

The Commission -

- **listens to children,**
- **helps make New South Wales a better place for kids to live.**

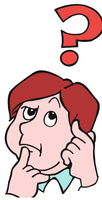


The University of Western Sydney is a school for adults. Adults go there to learn new things. It is a big school with about 35 000 students. People who work at Universities try to find more out about the world.

The people working on this project are trying to find out about the things that make children feel good.

Why are you doing the project?

We are interested in finding out what makes children feel good. We want to know about when things are going well for children.



The best way for us to find out when things are going well for children is to ask children like you.

We will use what you tell us to make New South Wales a better place for children.

Where do you live?

We all have things that make us feel good. These things might be -

Things you like doing.

Important people in your life.

Special places you like to visit.

Special times of the year.

Things that you own.

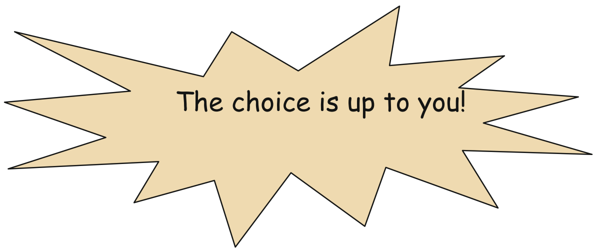
What you like about yourself.

We want to ask you about the things that make you feel good and why?

We also want to ask you about what it is like when things are going well for you.

You might like to tell us about these things

Or you might not want to tell us about these things.



What will be involved if I take part?

We will come and visit and spend some time with you.

We could talk together, even with some friends, if they want to take part as well.

You could take photos.

You could draw pictures or make a collage.

You could write a story or keep a journal.

You could make a map of important places to you.

Or you could do something else you think of!

Do I have to take part?

No you don't. If you don't want to, that is okay. Just say -

If you do want to share some of your time with us, to tell us about the things that make you feel good and times when things were going well for you just say -

If you decide to take part and later change your mind and not want to take part anymore, that is okay as well. Just let us, or your mum, dad or the grown up who looks after you know.

Will anyone know that I am taking part in the project?

What you tell us is special and belongs to you. We will look after the things you tell us to make sure no one else can look at it.

We won't tell anyone else that you took part. That way you can tell us whatever you want and no one will know it came from you.

The only time that we would have to tell someone else is if we were worried -

- that you might be badly hurt by someone,
- that you are not being cared for properly
- that you might hurt yourself or
- that you might hurt someone else.

Is there anything that might make me upset if I take part?

The project is about things that make you feel good.

But talking about things might make you feel sad or upset.

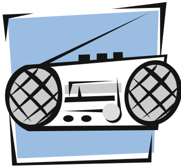
If that happens we will stop the project.

We will talk with your mum, dad or the grown up who looks after you if you are upset. We will give you, and them, the names and phone numbers of people who you can talk to about what is making you upset, if that is what you want to do. We can help you do that.

Will I be given something for taking part?

To say THANKS for spending your time with us we would like to give you a voucher -

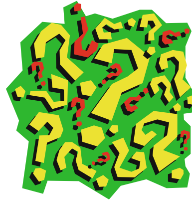
To go to the movies



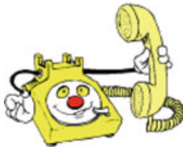
Or to buy some music.

You will get the voucher even if you decide not to answer some of the questions we ask you or start to take part in the project and decide, later on, that you don't want to take part anymore.

Do you have any questions about what we have said?



Your mum, dad or the grown up who looks after you may be able to answer them.



If they don't know the answer you, your mum, dad or the grown up who looks after you can contact us and we can answer the questions you have.

You can contact us even if you want to talk a little bit more about taking part in the project.

I hope this book has helped you decide whether you want to take part in the project.

Thanks!

Dear parents and carers,

This booklet has been written to help you talk with your child about taking part in a study about children and young people's well-being.

We encourage you to discuss this book with your child. This information should assist you and your child to decide whether your child will take part in this study.

If you have any questions about the research project, you may, contact:

Consent Form to Participate in the Research Study

Children and Young People's Understandings of Well-being

I ______________________________________ (please print name) agree to take part in a project about children's well-being. My parent / carer has agreed for me to take part in the project as well.

I know:

- It is okay for me to stop being part of the project whenever I want to. ☐
- A researcher will come and visit me. We may talk together and I will do other activities like take photos, do drawings, keep a journal or make a map. I will decide with the help of the researcher what activities I will do. ☐
- If anything we talk about makes me feel upset, the project will be stopped. The researchers will tell my parents. We will be given the names of people I can talk to about what is making me upset, if that is what I want to do. ☐
- What I say during the project is special and belongs to me. The researchers won't tell anyone else that I took part. ☐
- The only time the researcher's would have to tell someone else is if they were worried ☐
  - that I might be badly hurt by someone,
  - that I am not being cared for properly,
  - that I might hurt myself or
  - that I might hurt someone else.

- To say thanks I will be given a voucher for a music store or to the cinema. I will get the voucher even if I decide not to answer some of the questions or if I change my mind later on and I don't want to take part anymore. ☐

A copy of this form will be left for me. If I have any questions about the project, I can contact either:

Name of Participant ___________________________________

Signature of Participant ___________________________________

(indicate if verbal consent [_])

Name of Researcher ___________________________________

Signature of Researcher ___________________________________

Date: _______________

Taking Part form: Children's Well-being Project

Please return this form to your class teacher by

I ___________________________________ (please print your name) am interested in taking part in the 'Children's Well-being Project.

I understand that my parent/carer also has to agree for me to take part.

I understand that a researcher will contact me to talk about taking part in the research.

Name ___________________________________

Signature ___________________________________

Date: ____________________

Appendix 2.2: Interview Booklet – Participant Guide

Question 1: This research is about well being. Other people are using this word in many different ways. What does it mean for you?
Or
Is it a word that means anything to you?
Question 2: We are already talking about what words mean. How about these ones? What *is it* that makes you feel okay, good, well or even better than okay?
Question 3: Can you remember and tell us about a time in your life, now or before, when things were going really well for you?
Question 4: When you are not having an okay time, what needs to change to make it an okay time?
Question 5: We also want to know about other children and young people you know or who are in your class. What do you think makes them feel okay, good, well and great?
Question 6: If you wanted to find out from children and young people what well being meant, what would you be asking them?

Appendix 2.3: Interview Booklet – Fieldworker Guide

Question 1: This research is about well being. Other people are using this word in many different ways. What does it mean for you?
Or

Is it a word that means anything to you?

Prompts for Question 1

- Is it a word you use?

Is it a word that you have heard used before?

- Are there other words that you would use instead?
- How about for other children/young people you know? What do you think it means for them?
- If no response, then "That's fine" and move on.

Task Oriented Activities

Face Graphics to be used as an example of what some people mean by well being. Fieldworker refers to 'well' faces as what some people may mean when using the word 'well-being'.

Picture Elicitation interviewee to chose a picture(s) to describe well being. Interviewer asks 'Can you pick a picture or pictures that best describe what the word well-being means for you? What is it about the picture/s that made you choose them?

Drawing interviewee to be asked to draw a picture of what well being means to them. What are the important part(s) of picture?

Question 2: We are already talking about what words mean. How about these ones? What *is it* that makes you feel okay, good, well or even better than okay?

Prompts for Question 2

Some kids say that what makes them feel good is…. And others have told us what makes them feel good includes……. There is no right or wrong answer.

- How about for you?
- Are there particular people?
- Are there certain things that you do?
- How about certain times?
- How about certain occasions?
- Are there particular places you like going to?
- How about particular things that you own?
- Do you have any other ideas on what it is that makes you feel okay, good, well or even better than okay?
- Further prompt for each response – 'Is this all the time or some of the time, or for today?'

Task Oriented Activities

List exercise – list everything that makes them feel good, including who or what makes them feel good?

Ask them to explain why they have included each item or provide an example of why they chose that item.

Question 3: Can you remember and tell us about a time in your life, now or before, when things were going really well for you?

Prompts for Question 3

- How did it happen?
- Who was there? How were they involved?
- Could it happen again? Discuss in terms of examples provided by participant

If prior time provided or no response –

- How about now? What things are going well for you at the moment?

Task Oriented Activities

Drawing invite participant to draw a picture of themself when things were going really well for them. Get the participant to explain the picture to you. Ask the participant to point out what they think is the most important part or parts of the picture.

Question 4: When you are not having an okay time, what needs to change to make it an okay time?

Prompts for Question 4

- Imagine you had a magic wand and could change whatever you wanted, what would you change to turn a not okay time into an okay time or great time?
- Would it be the people you were with or the things that you were doing? Is it something else?

Task Oriented Activities

Magic Wand – use of it could form a focus for discussion

Other notes – For older participants it may be more appropriate to talk in terms of 'power to change things' or 'if you had a wish to make a not okay time into an okay time, what would you wish for?'.

Question 5: We also want to know about other children and young people you know or who are in your class. What do you think makes them feel okay, good, well and great?

Prompts for Question 5

- We are asking because you are the expert about other people like you.
- What do you think makes other children like you feel bad or lousy?

Task Oriented Activities

Use the rating scale (floating question – see below), taking note of the definitions provided by the participant of each picture.

Question 6: If you wanted to find out from children and young people what well being meant, what would you be asking them?

Prompts for Question 6

- We have been finding out what well-being means to you, but how would you go about finding out about what well-being means for children and young people?

Other notes – Substitute 'well-being' or 'feeling okay, good, well and great' with language used by participant.

Part II
Domains of Child Well-Being

Chapter 3
Overviewing a Child Standpoint on Well-Being

Introduction

From our analysis of the research data collected from children in the state of New South Wales between 2002 and 2004, we gained an understanding of what the concept of well-being meant for these children in terms of their lived experiences. In the first part of this chapter, we describe the main elements of this understanding as depicted schematically.

In the second and third parts of the chapter, we conceptually extricate the mediums of emotions and relationships from the schema, in order to explore their significance as phenomena fundamental to a standpoint on child well-being. We identify the lacuna in the etic literature on children's emotions and describe how children relate both happiness and sadness with the concept of well-being. We explore some aspects of what children say about the importance of relationships to well-being—the specialness of family and friends and the significance they attach to being cared about and cared for, as well as the value they place on caring for others.

When we situate what children told us about experiences of emotional and relational well-being in the contexts of broad philosophical and social science approaches and of contemporary child well-being research, as outlined in Chap. 1, we learn something about being human and about the social ordering of childhood.

Summarising the Main Elements of What Well-Being Means to Children

An overview of the meanings attributed to well-being by children in our research project is depicted diagrammatically in Fig. 3.1 and illustrates that, like well-being for adults, well-being for children is complex and multifaceted. From what children

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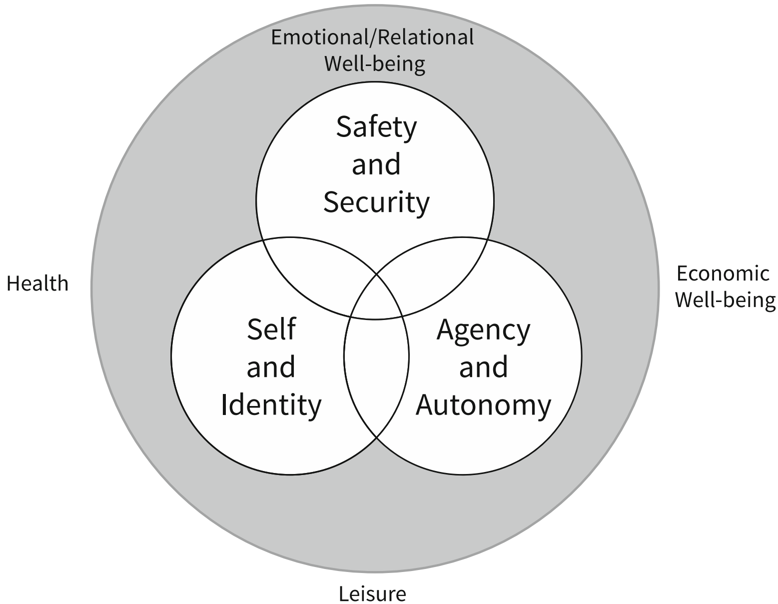

Fig. 3.1 Children's understandings of well-being

told us, we built a picture of domains and dimensions as interrelated rather than isolated entities and of emotions and relationships as the underlying mediums permeating discussion (in this and the following chapters) on the elements of child well-being. Against the background of emotions and relationships, we identified some major themes, referred to as domains of child well-being—agency and autonomy, safety and security and self and identity. These domains are depicted in the diagram as interlocking circles, indicating both their specificity and their interconnections. The three centrally placed domains are also connected with three additional themes, or what we refer to as dimensions, placed around the periphery of the circle. These dimensions refer to concrete areas of children's lived experiences evident in our analysis: economic well-being, health and leisure. These domains of well-being are dealt with independently.

The diagram represents the construction of children's understanding of well-being from our research. It depicts a child standpoint, to the extent that embedded in what children told us are challenges to adultcentric discourses on child well-being. These challenges affirm that not only are children authoritative about their own well-being, additionally, because of their location, structurally, in the social order, they see things differently from adults. While children's discussions show differences between them in their experiences, even of the social order, there was a marked commonality in the way they experienced their lives as a consequence of their status as children, structured generationally, in relations with adults at both macro and micro levels. Not shown on the diagram, but also evident in the analysis of children's discussions in the following chapters, is the way children's well-being

is framed by hierarchal adult–child relations of the generational structure in which well-being was experienced or jeopardised. Hence, we refer to the chapters in this book as providing a child standpoint on well-being.

Situating the Emotional and Relational Elements of the Child Standpoint

The lacuna we found in the literature on what children find important for their emotional and relational well-being reflects the traditional marginalisation of emotions in Western modernity and the social ordering of childhood.

The Marginalisation of Emotions in Social Science Research

Both the hedonic and Western eudemonic traditions of well-being have reflected the broad philosophical and social science trend that has until recently been characterised by the banishment of emotion 'to the margins of Western thought and practice' (Williams 2001, p. 1). Williams considers that this has been a consequence of the dominant view in Western thinking that 'has sought to divorce mind from body, nature from culture, reason from emotion, and public from private', with emotions requiring taming 'by the steady hand of (male) reason' (Williams 2001, p. 2). Similarly, Nussbaum has made the point that generally, in the construction of what it is to be a human adult by the broad social sciences, 'emotions are condemned as enemies of reason not only by many traditions but by the view of rationality that dominates our public life, the view of economic Utilitarianism' (Nussbaum 1995, p. 361).

Williams suggests that in contemporary thinking, our attitudes to emotions are changing, so that emotions, '[t]he "fractious child" of modernity', have 'truly come of age' (2001, p. 1). Certainly, increasing attention is now being given to emotions by some researchers within the social sciences, including sociology and geography, as well as in neuroscience, including some research on children (e.g. Kraftl 2013). Anderson and Smith (2001), reflecting on the increasing attention being given to emotions, argue that as 'the human world is constructed and lived through the emotions', the suppression of them 'in both research and public life … produces an incomplete understanding of the world's workings', and that 'to neglect the emotions is to exclude a key set of relations through which lives are lived and societies made' (p. 2).

In the context of humans as rational beings and of rationality as 'the universal mark of adulthood', childhood has been constructed as 'the period of apprenticeship for its [rationality's] development' (Prout and James 1990, p. 10). The social ordering of childhood, through developmentalist practices, has been directed to

controlling and regulating children's emotions in the present and the child as 'good' and obedient. Cockburn (2010) argues that while 'care and the nature, extent and consequences of children's care are the subject of some of the most powerful modern knowledge disciplines', these disciplines, in bolstering their own expertise through the process of responding to the developmental agenda on personhood, 'have created a passive image of children in requirement of treatment, education, rescue or development' (p. 29). The dominant discourse on children's emotions and relationships is about the role of the expert in monitoring and assisting children to appropriately express appropriate emotions and similarly assessing and monitoring the skills children need to develop so they can engage appropriately in relationships.

Where children's emotions are increasingly acknowledged in contemporary research on child well-being, it is typically in the use of the term 'social and emotional well-being' with a developmentalist emphasis. As Hamilton and Redmond (2010) point out, 'the terms social and emotional *wellbeing* and social and emotional *development* are sometimes used interchangeably' (p. 16, emphasis in original). In the social and emotional literature, children's emotions are referred to in terms of the skills or competencies that children need in order to develop and go on to live successful lives. According to Boyd et al., these skills 'form the basis for self-regulation, enabling children to withstand impulses, maintain focus and undertake tasks regardless of competing interests' (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2009, p. 60, citing Boyd et al. 2005).

In child indicator research, even when a child rights approach is adopted, scientific ideals of rationality have been incorporated in the use of research methodology derived from neoclassical economics, which employs what Nelson (2010) refers to as a narrow methodology. This narrowness is exemplified in the application of scales to the measurement of child subjective well-being, through methods described as 'subjective/self expressed', in contrast with 'subjective/qualitative' methods (Bradshaw 2010, p. 186). These methods limit children's expressions of well-being in terms of emotions, when they respond on scales, through a process, derived from neoclassical economics, of 'forcing dimensions of a phenomenon to fit into a particular pre-determined mental framework, [whereby] elements of reality that do not fit must be contorted or lopped off' (Nelson 2010, p. 246). Where child well-being has been associated with emotions, in, for example, indexes of well-being, it has frequently been about children's emotional 'health' or otherwise associated with measures of happiness.

An alternative approach to recognising and focusing on children's emotions has been signalled in the work of McAuley et al. (2010). In a chapter on children's views on well-being, they examined what is known about children's emotional life from a range of studies and consultations. In the following sections of this chapter and throughout this book, children's emotions, relationships and additionally child–adult relations are thrown into relief by the way in which our qualitative research methodology addressed children's subjective experiences—their internal states. Qualitative research, such as that on which we draw in this chapter, is recognised as having 'transformed' the significance given to emotions in research and the place of

emotions in interpersonal interactions through exploration of research participants' situated emotions (Copp 2008, p. 250). Using qualitative methods has been shown to produce rich and complex understandings of personal experience and family relationships, as well as illustrating the 'emotional messiness, uncertainties and fluidity that constitute relational experience' (Gabb 2009, p. 49). Both richness and messiness are evident in the construction of a child standpoint on well-being in this and following chapters.

Emotions and Child Well-Being

Bringing emotions into the picture of child well-being, albeit in a tentative way in this book, enables us to learn not just about children but about being human. It identifies the centrality of emotions to our lives and sheds light on 'the embodied world around us', on 'sociality and selfhood, conceived in intercorporeal, intersubjective, communicative terms' (Williams 2001, p. 73). As stated in discussing the diagrammatic overview of the children's understanding of well-being, emotions underlay children's discussions of what we refer to as dimensions and domains, so that, for example, in chapters on topics reflecting these dimensions and domains, children refer to diverse emotions, including anger, grief and shame. In this chapter, our discussion of emotion centres on children's references to happiness, acknowledging its salience for well-being within the dominant traditions of utilitarian hedonism and eudemonic well-being in the form of positive psychology, whether the focus is on subjective happiness or pleasant feelings.

In using the word emotion broadly, as affect, in discussing child well-being, we are recognising it is a contested concept. There are various views within the well-being/happiness literature on whether happiness is an emotion or a state, dependent on the approach that is taken to the wider issue of well-being (see Haybron 2000 for a discussion of this). As a state, happiness has been conceptualised by a stream of thinkers, going back to Rousseau, as immanent, along with innocence, in the Apollonian ideal of the child. According to this ideal, the child is 'the heir to the sunshine and light … [s]uch children play and chuckle, smile and laugh, both spontaneously but also with our sustained encouragement. We cannot abide their tears and tantrums, we want only the illumination from their halo' (Jenks 1996, p. 65).

Child Well-Being as Happiness

Where children define well-being as happiness, they are confirming the significance given to happiness in both the hedonic and eudemonic approaches to well-being and reproducing the social order.

For example, when the interviewer asked, '… if you wanted to find out from other kids what well-being meant to them, like what would you ask them?', Participant H replied, 'Just, what would make you happy?'

And when the interviewer said to Goon, 'Okay, and I was wondering if you could draw me a picture of what well-being means to you', Goon's answer was 'Happy'.

In the following extract, Kitty spells out what happiness means in words that fit with the description of the Apollonian ideal:

> I thought it meant being good … Being happy and having fun and that.

Along with an emphasis on children becoming rational adults, this idea of the Apollonian child provides the basis for controlling and regulating expressions of emotion that do not conform to the ideal. Indeed, it can be argued that this ideal model of the good, happy, fun-loving child whom adults do not want to see crying or having tantrums is incorporated into the construction of surveys of child well-being that focus on the extent to which persons experience happiness and positive emotions in their lives and consider negative emotions, such as sadness, as detracting from well-being (e.g. Diener 2000; Diener and Biswas-Diener 2008.

This was certainly the interpretation of well-being articulated by some participants. For example, one participant, codenamed Donald Duck, when asked by the interviewer to identify 'Which ones [pictures] are most important [for describing well-being]?' responded:

> Um, I think happy and the ones that make people feel happy and not sad.

However, a significant number of children responded in ways that indicated a nuanced understanding of the emotions contributing to well-being, in which feelings other than happiness, in particular feelings of sadness, were included.

As put straightforwardly by Participant 521S: 'You can feel happy and then sad. Like, that is part of well-being.'

For another participant:

> Interviewer: What do you think it [well-being] might mean, to you?
> Amber: Um, oh, I don't really think about it. I don't know.
> Interviewer: It is used a lot by a lot of adults and some kids. People use it in different ways, but some kids have said that they think it means, perhaps feeling good or feeling happy or feeling okay.
> Amber: Or sad.
> Interviewer: Or sad. Do you, do you think well-being is about feeling sad? All the feelings we've had, yeah, yeah.
> Amber: I think well-being is all our feelings.

In the following discussion, Angel tells us how negative and positive feelings (using Diener's [2000] terms) can interweave in one experience in giving meaning to a life event. For Angel, the life event was the end of her grandmother's visit to Australia and her return to her home in the Philippines. She experienced this as both 'a happy and sad time':

> Interviewer: Yeah, can you tell me about the happy and sad parts?
> Angel:'Cause my grandma was happy. That is the happy part. And
> Interviewer: She was happy.

Angel: Yeah, the sad part is that she was leaving … I was pretty sad that day'cause my grandma was leaving, but my family was there to cheer me up.

Here, Angel was engaging with the messiness of life, which is omitted from hedonic theories. Lilienfeld and Arkowitz (2011) note that as a result of this omission, hedonic theories fail to take into account the significance of negative feelings in our lives.

One participant explained why sadness is important to well-being, as part of what one experiences in living a full or flourishing life:

Participant: Um, but anyway, I think that it's like important to be sad. Like sometimes, but there is like two different sorts of sadness. Like there is just one where you know like everything is going to turn out okay. Or there is one where like if a person's died or something you are always going to have that, like sadness.

Interviewer: Forever. Yeah …

Participant: On the secret garden, um, there was this girl, have you seen that [film]? … Yeah, like her parents didn't treat her well and they always went out to parties and then she said she didn't know how to cry. And stuff … That is why you have to, like have a cry sometimes, because it is important to know how to cry.

This acknowledgement by children of negative feelings, as in sadness, as well as positive feelings as having a place in experiences of well-being has greater resonance with Eastern eudemonic traditions of well-being, such as Buddhism, than with hedonic utilitarianism or even Western eudemonic traditions. Joshanloo (2014) points to the belief in non-Western traditions that there are positive aspects to negative emotions, such as sadness and suffering, and that experiences of hardship can contribute to well-being. He argues that 'contemporary subjective well-being measures are not able to reflect these important subtleties of Eastern emotional and spiritual experiences, because for researchers developing these measures, the presence of negative feelings necessarily signifies unhappiness', and that while there is a 'theoretical potential' for integration of negative emotions in Western eudemonic models, this integration is hampered by the emphasis on positive affect and the failure to develop measures that accommodate the 'subtleties of people's experiences of negative affect and suffering' (p. 487).

Some children also identified experiences of well-being in accord with Eastern conceptualisations, when they referred to peace and calm as significant for well-being. For example, Goon said well-being was about 'Sometimes [being] peaceful', while CB stated it was about 'a little peace and quiet' and Apex said well-being was achieved through 'meditat[ing] … all that Chinese stuff'. While these subjectively experienced emotions were highlighted by children in explicitly defining well-being, in their discussions included in other chapters, their emphasis was frequently on socially situated emotions, that is, emotions such as shame and anger that are intersubjectively experienced. The framework for children's intersubjective experiences of well-being is in their discussion of relationships.

Relationships and Child Well-Being

Relationships, particularly intimate relationships with family and friends, were described by children as of fundamental significance to their well-being, reflecting the importance of the social in human well-being. Gittins has noted that 'the essence of any society is interaction', and therefore 'a society will always be composed of a myriad of relationships between people, from the most casual to the most intimate' (1985, p. 71). Aspects of the emotional content of children's relationships, as they emerge from the data of this project, are separated out and explored in the following sections. This exploration is important for understanding what children valued in relationships and also as a preamble to the narratives in the later chapters where relational contexts framed children's experiences of the dimensions and domains of well-being.

The significance children gave to the emotional content of relationships can be understood in terms of what Gilligan (in talking about women) refers to as an 'embeddedness' in social relationships (1982) and what Deci and Ryan (2000) refer to as 'relatedness'. In their eudemonic approach to well-being and self-determination theory, Deci and Ryan describe relatedness, in association with autonomy and competency, as a central concept for well-being.

Historically, psychosocial research *on* children has largely been within the developmentalist perspective. Even where this research emphasised the significance of children's relationships, it typically lacked a depth that only becomes possible with acknowledgement of emotions and of the significance of intersubjectivity. This can be attributed to the lacuna on emotions, as described above, and to the fact that an emphasis by Western researchers on individualisation and individuation of the self has run counter to exploration of relatedness (Gilligan 1982; Kagitcibasi 2005). For example, Deci and Ryan (2000) note that while the idea of relatedness is central to theories of attachment (as initially propounded by Bowlby), it has not been widely discussed. Further, theories of attachment have been largely related to very young children and have ignored dyadic interactions (Carol and Solomon 2008) in the context of research directed at governing children (and their mothers) towards non-problematic behavior and normative adulthood. Consequently, concepts such as attachment have been employed in ways that have had the effect of objectifying children and of 'reconfigur[ing] personal experience in terms of mechanisms of adjustment' (Satka and Mason 2004, p. 97).

Some researchers within the child rights perspective have acknowledged the importance of reporting on and monitoring children's relationships through the introduction of scales on the topic (e.g. UNICEF 2007; Bradshaw and Richardson 2009). However, even these attempts, using what we described earlier as a 'narrow' methodology, have been seen as too broad in terms of fitting within the prevailing outcome framework of governmentality in, for example, an OECD report (2009). In reporting on their research, the authors of this report explain that in selecting dimensions and indicators of child well-being of relevance for policy, they 'largely followed the framework of research in the UNICEF (2007) report' but 'omitted the dimensions of "family and peer relationships" and "subjective

well-being" … because this report has a strong policy focus'. The authors argued that their reasons for the omission were based on the fact that '[i]t is unclear how governments concerned with family and peer relationships and subjective well-being would go about designing policies to improve outcomes in these dimensions' (OECD 2009, p. 29).

In the process of questioning the social practices framing the study of childhood and of changing the research gaze from the objectified, well-becoming child of developmental psychology to the child as subject through qualitative research, researchers have been able to hear from children themselves on important relationships in their lives. In such research, children tell us what is significant about family and friends for present well-being, as distinct from, or additional to, well-becoming (e.g. McAuley and Rose 2014).

The Specialness of Care: Care *About* and Care *for*

It is in constructs of family that ideas of intimate relations in an ideal form—of long-term loving and caring relationships—have 'become reified and sanctified' (Gittins 1985, p. 71). In identifying family and friends as important to them, children highlighted the specialness of families and the significance of friends for them in their present lives. Children typically spoke of family as comprising mother, father, siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles and sometimes also cousins and occasionally more broadly, as with Ali:

> Yeah, I think that family can be anybody that, that you admire and stuff like that.

Whatever the composition of family, it was the ideal of it as 'special' in terms of well-being that was clear in children's discussions. Pipsqueak tells us:

> Pipsqueak: Family is special.
> Interviewer: Family is special. What makes family special?
> Pipsqueak: Because they listen to you if you are, um, not happy.

Emotions that make family special to children are described as underlying care, that is, of oneself being cared about and of caring about others. In reviewing the difficulties researchers have had in defining care, Hamington forms a definition in which '[c]are is committed to the flourishing and growth of individuals yet acknowledges our interconnectedness and interdependence' (2004, p. 3). This definition is in accord with children's emphasis on care as contributing to their well-being through the mutuality of the caring relationship. For example, when an interviewer referred to a picture that Esme had signalled was important to her:

> Yeah. Okay. Alright. Um, okay so this is like the family. And what's, what is it about family?

In response, Esme emphasised the reciprocal nature of family relationships:

> That you've like got each other.

There are three elements in what children told us about the importance of care *by* and *of* family and friends for their well-being. The first is about the importance of

significant others 'being there' and caring *about* one, the second is about others caring *for* or 'help[ing]' one, and the third is to do with children themselves caring *about* and *for* others. What children are discussing as important to them in the context of relationships, with both family and friends, has striking resemblance to what Aristotle (whose views of family were hierarchical and patriarchal in the extreme) defined as the three aspects of friendship associated with a flourishing life. These are pleasure, utility and virtue (Book VIII, McKeon edition). The pleasure and utility aspects parallel what children talk of in terms of being cared about and being cared for. The virtue aspect parallels what children talk about in caring about and caring for others. The interdependence that children recognise as inherent in relationships means that these aspects are intertwined in their dialogue.

In an emphasis on family as being 'there for you', children were defining emotional well-being in their relationships in what feminist writers such as Dalley (1988) refer to as 'caring about'—indicating warmth and support and a context for active interactions.

For example, Prudence, who told the interviewer that families are important because '[family] is one of the main sources of happiness in most people's lives', responded to the interviewer's question, 'Mm, I wonder why that is?' with the following:

> Maybe because they are always there and you can always rely on them to help you.

This idea of family members contributing to well-being because they care *about* you was made explicit in many of the children's discussions. When the interviewer asked Denny if the word well-being meant anything to him, he replied:

> Yes it does mean something to me. It means someone nice and caring.

With further questioning by the interviewer, Denny related this to his parents, while for Ali it applied to grandparents:

> Interviewer: Okay, so are grandparents important to well-being?
> Ali: Yeah … Because they are always there for you and stuff like that. And they care.

This concept of persons being 'there for you' is further explored in Chap. 5 in connection with children's discussion of trust and ontological security.

The importance of care was also recognised in terms of its absence. For example, Beckham responded to a prompt on what well-being meant for him:

> Mmm, more love and care.
> Interviewer: More love and care, yeah. And how should adults do that?
> Beckham: Less fighting and more spending time with the kids and stuff.

When Beckham focuses on parents as ideally being less concerned with their own issues and spending more time with him, he expresses a view that had salience for children in research by Bessell and Mason on children and communities (2014). These children placed value on and wanted more time and engagement with their parents and were concerned about the way parents' time burdens made it difficult for them to actively engage with their children.

Nussbaum's description of emotions (when linked with cognition) has relevance for what children such as Beckham tell us about the importance of being cared *about* by parents at the emotional, or affective, level. She describes emotions as

'forms of evaluative judgement that ascribe to certain things and persons outside a person's own control great importance for the person's own flourishing' and 'are thus, in effect, acknowledgements of neediness and lack of self-sufficiency' (Nussbaum 2001, p. 22). Beckham's comments, as well as comments by children included in other chapters (e.g. Chap. 5) and in other research on children's needs in out-of-home care (Mason 2008), point to the threat posed to child well-being when parents and carers are unable to respond to children's 'neediness'.

Children's lack of self-sufficiency is also acknowledged when they talk about the importance of being cared *for* at the instrumental level. Children considered significant what Dalley (1988) identifies as 'caring *for*' and Hegerty et al. (1993) identifies as instrumental relatedness. Legolas made explicit the importance of the instrumental care provided by families:

> Interviewer: Okay, caring so your family cares about you.
> Legolas: Caring and what else, jobs, like jobs.
> Interviewer: What do you mean jobs?
> Legolas: Washing up done for you, … does your washing.

In discussion in other chapters, children make clear the important role of parents and carers as providers of everyday care, through food, shelter, clothing, healthcare, transport and organisation of everyday practices.

Children also saw instrumental care as important for them in sibling relationships. In their comparative study of child well-being in OECD countries, Bradshaw et al. (2006) noted that 'little is known on the relationships between siblings' (p. 62). There has been only limited research on sibling relationships in childhood, and this research, as summarised by Ripoll-Núñez and Carrillo (2014), has largely been focused on the cognitive, social and emotional outcomes or adjustment of children in their well-becoming. Where there has been a focus on siblings and children's well-being in their presents, it has tended to be in what are typically regarded as nonnormative and less than ideal situations for child development, for example, children whose siblings are disabled, children who are in out-of-home care (e.g. McAuley and Rose 2014) and siblings whose parents separate or divorce (e.g. Noller 2005).

The following excerpts from our research highlight the way siblings are valued for their usefulness, based on an age superiority of the sibling in providing help:

> Martha: Well, like, some kids … at primary school used to get teased and that … I didn't get teased, but before I went to high school, like, my sister would always go, 'Hey, you should, you know you shouldn't do this and you shouldn't do that'. Like'cause they are already at high school, like I had someone, you know, helping me, giving me advice; but there are some children that don't get that opportunity to have higher, like an older brother and sister.

And for Daniel:

> I used to share a room with my sister. [I] like to share my room with my sister, because sometimes I get scared and stuff and then I know my sister is there and if I get into trouble I can call her to help me.

The affective aspect of care, care *about* by a sibling, was less seldom spelt out. It was referred to by participant Music Lover as making the relationship 'very special' when it was present:

> What they are doing [in a picture to which this child is referring], that is important because, because older brothers and sisters, they are like very special to you, and when they take care of you it makes you feel like, um, you are special too.

There were instances in our research where children referred to sibling relationships as detracting from their well-being. Some research has indicated that of all children's personal relationships, this is the area in which children experience most conflict (e.g. Furman and Buhrmester 1985). This can be linked with other research that has described sibling relationships as distinctively characterised by competitiveness and conflict, as well as emotional warmth (Ripoll-Núñez and Carrillo 2014). Some of this conflict was evident in what children told us about relationships with siblings, as in the following comment from Ocean:

> …'Cause like sometimes my brother he annoys me and I'm the one who gets blamed. For no reason and I'm like doing this test, I'm like concentrating because the next day is our test and he comes in my room and makes paper aeroplanes with my papers and keeps on throwing it in my face and then I keep on screaming at him and I close the door in his face and I lean on it and my Dad keeps on saying 'don't do that' and he gets me blamed.

Jessica talks about difficulties in her relationship with her sister and the emotional distance between them:

- Interviewer: How do you and your sister get on now?
  - Jessica: Well, not well, not really that bad anymore because yeah, but we used to like fight …
  - Interviewer: Right. So it is just not so bad now. You are not close?
  - Jessica: Well, no, no, not really.
  - [Laughter]
  - Interviewer: The look on your face says that you are not.

The Specialness of Friendship

The significance of child–child relations for child well-being was given most emphasis in children's discussions on the importance to them of friends. Friendship is closely linked with well-being in discussions on adults and eudemonia in the Aristotelian-based philosophical literature. Indeed, Aristotle considered friendship so fundamental to well-being that he stated that 'without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods' (Aristotle, Chapter VIII, McKeon edition, p. 1058). However, as Healy (2011) points out, the philosophical literature on friendship has ignored children's friendships. In the social science literature, discussion of children's friendships, as Urquhart (2013) found in his review of the literature on research that was survey-based and quantitative, has been dominated by research on 'peer' relations (i.e. relations with children of the same age). A review by Gross-Manos (2014) indicates that the emphasis in research, until very

recently, has been on the cognitive and emotional advantages or the problematic aspects of children's friendships for their development. Some of the recent literature in the developmental context (e.g. Asher et al. (2014), still focusing on the influence child friends have for 'good' and 'ill' (p. 170), also notes the special value of the voluntary nature of child–child friendships, in contrast to family relationships. Asher, Guerry and McDonald draw attention to the dyadic nature of these relationships, and that child friendships are characterised by 'shared history and reciprocal affection' (p. 169).

In recent research findings on child well-being, within the newer approach of research *with* children, children highlight sharing and in particular reciprocal affection or emotional support as the aspect of friendships that contributes to their well-being. In his ethnographic approach to research with preschool children, Corsaro has observed the 'strong emotional satisfaction' children can get from participating in activities with other children and comments that this is only observable when the researcher moves away from focusing on the role of peer activities in children's social and cognitive development (1997, p. 123).

Drawing on findings of qualitative research, McAuley and Rose (2014) found that although children had multiple contacts with peers, they distinguished 'best friends' as those who shared with them and could provide 'both companionship and emotional support' (p. 1874). In research by Redmond et al. (2013), children similarly spoke of 'good friends' as providing relationships in which there was 'trust, closeness, and support' (p. 2).

In our research, the significance of friend relations is clearly stated by Sarah:

> You, yeah, you get so attached with your friends and you know, I think I have almost as close relationship with my friends as I do with Mum.

Much of the emotional aspect of friendship is expressed in terms of friends 'caring about' them and 'being there' for them, as in the following interview with Sarah and Beady.

> Sarah: Because especially my best friend, um, she is just always, always going to be there for me.
> Beady: Yeah.
> Sarah: And even if we have a bit of a disagreement, I know she is going to be there for me and I can always tell her anything. Which I'm really, really proud of. That we have that kind of closeness.
> Beady: I'm like that with my friend. I feel that too, and it is really like comforting to know you have that close relationship with someone that is like not blood related to you. You've just sort of met them.

In another interview, in responding to an interviewer's attempt to understand what children were saying about the importance of friends to their well-being, Participant 4 defined how child friendships differed from relationships with adults:

> Participant 4: … you've got this different bond with them [different from parents].
> Interviewer: Yeah, okay.
> Participant 4: Because you share most of the stuff with them.
> Interviewer: Yeah.
> Participant 4: They understand you more and … most of the time they can help you, your really close friends.

While participant 4 draws attention to the differences between the bond that exists with her friends and the one she has with her parents, Participant S describes those differences in terms of the way parents and children understand children's lived lives. She associates this with her friends being of a similar age:

> Yes, because with parents, sometimes they don't really understand situations. Like if I have a fight with a friend about something, they probably don't really understand it. So if I talk to a girl my age, like R., she will just, she knows what it is like and so she will comfort me and tell me options and that. So I can be very happy about that.

Participant A talks about the importance of shared experiences in contributing to understanding:

> But um, yeah, some things you have to just share with people [who are] the same, who are around the same experience … because they are often, they can understand a lot more.

And Nikita, in discussing how she was devastated by the death of her best friend in a car accident, to the extent that a deterioration in her health resulted in hospitalisation, tells us that it was friends who made the difference in enabling her to pull through:

> I went through a lot of counselling and … although like I had family, I had friends around and they helped me cope at the time. They were there for me, they supported me and that was really important to me … you tend to turn to your friends because of that, because they are not judgmental like adults can be.

The reflections of these children are in accord with a research project conducted by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People (2014) on support given by young people (aged 13–17) to those young people with mental health problems. The majority of these young people (74 %) said they would listen understandingly to a friend with a mental health problem, and only 48 % said they would suggest their friend talk to an adult. Children expressed reservations about trusting adults, fearing they might make things worse for their friend.

The crucial importance to children of shared experiences related to age, but also to the way age positions them generationally vis-à-vis adults, who may not understand them as other children do, fits with Berry Mayall's (2002) application of Mannheim's (1928/1952) concept of generation to childhood. Within this theoretical framework, children can be seen 'as people located historically and socially at a particular time, as an actual generation who participate in social events and as a unit who think and work together' (p. 40). In her empirical research, Mayall found that children understood they lived in a common domain, sharing experiences and 'social realities that are common to them in their status as children' (p. 123). Consequently, children experience a solidarity, as evidenced in their attitudes to teachers in the school situation and also in supporting their friends when they are bullied (Mayall 2002).

In what children told us in our research, the solidarity between children had emotional and instrumental components as well as an ethic of care, as in 'caring for'. For example, 521S describes how his friends showed solidarity in providing him with instrumental care:

> Um, they are like, can support you when things aren't going your way … Like they can help you do things, they can help you do the things that you need to do or they can like give

you good advice that you need, and they might just … help you by giving you like, um, good tips and, um, give you things that might help you do what you want to do.

For Ren, this help extended to the schoolyard:

> Um, like we understand each other. Like we talk to each other, like, like that private life type of stuff and about girls and stuff. And she helps me out if I'm in trouble. Or I like, if I'm like if some people are teasing me, she sorts it out straight away. She doesn't let it like just let it go, like you know.

A lack of friends to support her was clearly an issue for Dolphin Blue's well-being in defending against bullies:

> Interviewer: Okay, that is cool. And what was your project on, again? Bullying, was it?
> Dolphin Blue: Yep. It was about bullying, yeah bullying and bullying and loneliness, being left out.
> Interviewer: Is it a problem, that you can't say, work it out?
> Dolphin Blue: Sometimes it is.'Cause some people have, um, friends to back up for them. And some friends doesn't.

As implied by Dolphin Blue and other children, friends sometimes served an instrumental purpose, in being a buffer against bullying in the school setting. McAuley and Rose (2014) reported that children surrounded themselves with friends to feel safe and ward off experiences of isolation and bullying. Olweus and Breivik describe bullying by peers as inducing for children experiences 'in a sense representing the opposite of emotional well-being' (2014, p. 2594). This was certainly what children in our research implied when they mentioned bullying.

In our research, children only occasionally discussed relational well-being beyond the family and school to the broader community; however, some children described caring at the community level as important.

In the following extract, Participant D extended discussion of the warmth in friendship and family relations to the local community:

> Participant D: I liked this picture because it has got two pictures of people cuddling each other. Like friendship. And I like this photo of a family altogether. And a local basketball area. So the council is thinking about the people in the community and the local town attending a parade together. Um, I like this one because I think the people are caring about the other people around them, so they have food and drink.

Ali also focused on community relations as significant, in describing why she selected a particular picture to describe well-being:

> [Because] I think it shows a community together and enjoying stuff. Like they all like yeah, they all enjoy.
> Interviewer: So in [the town] do you feel the community is together and enjoying themselves?
> Ali: Yeah, like especially at … the Christmas street party. It is like everyone is there and they are all enjoying themselves.

The importance of community celebrations in contributing to children's well-being is emphasised in the research on children, communities and social capital conducted by Bessell with Mason (2014).

Caring and Moral Agency

The children's discussions of relations with adults and with friends extended beyond an emphasis on being cared about and an emphasis on instrumental aspects of relations to being a good child for adults and a good friend for their peers. While the social sciences have at times dismissed the idea that children can be moral agents, Mayall (2002) has noted that children have been shown as able to engage in moral actions from a very young age. She has highlighted the way in which emotions experienced in relationships are central to children's expression of moral agency. Additionally, some researchers (e.g. McAuley et al. 2010) have referred to children's empathetic responses in contributing emotionally and practically within their families.

In our research, some children discussed the moral conception of relationships in reference to both families and friends—in terms of an ethic of caring about and for. From children's discussion of relationships, it was evident that it was not just being cared for and about by family and friends that was important to them. Children also considered that being virtuous in relations of caring about and for others—family and friends and at times the broader society—was central to their own well-being.

For example, when the interviewer asked Violet for a definition of well-being, Violet replied:

> To be a well child for my parents, a good friend for my friends.
> Interviewer: To be a well child for your parents. Yeah, okay. So what does that mean, being a well child? If you are a well child for your parents, what does that mean?
> Violet: Doing good things and not doing the wrong things.
> Interviewer: Mmm.
> Violet: And not doing rude and bad things.

The following exchange provides another example:

> Interviewer: What is it about being linked to, or knowing people who are winning, or going and seeing them win when they are from your local area? What is important about that?
> Prudence: Because it makes you happy to know they are happy …
> Interviewer: So that is what you said at the beginning, it is about, well-being is about other people's happiness as well as your own?
> Prudence: Yeah.

In the following extracts, Jackie and Angel are describing behavior based on moral concepts of the good or virtuous person as inherent to their well-being.

This exchange was part of the first interview with Angel:

> Interviewer: '… What do you think, um, if kids were trying to say that they had really good well-being, what is a word they might use? …'
> Angel: Um, do you do nice things to other people or are you very kind?
> Interviewer: Do you do nice things to other people or
> Angel: or you are really kind.

In a follow-up interview, the interviewer, referring to the first interview, asked Angel to tell him more:

[You have said] that doing nice things and being kind makes for well-being. Can you explain what doing, what sort of nice things do you think people could do that would make you feel well-being?

Angel: It is like when you help them and, and sometimes you take care of them. And when they are lonely you can go, like, play with them and things like that.

Similarly for Jackie:

Jackie: It [well-being] means to me, like, helping other people with their problems.

Interviewer: Right. Tell us a little bit about that. Is it about helping other people? Tell us a little bit more about helping other people. In what sorts of ways?

Jackie: If they've got a problem, um, … and things.

And later:

Jackie: I would really like to change everyone to start helping each other. So that when someone falls down and no-one helps them, like, and I feel really sorry …

Interviewer: So when you helped them, right that person who's fallen down and needs help, it makes them feel good because they feel cared for, is that right?

Jackie: Yeah.

Children's discussions on the importance of caring for, and being compassionate towards, others draw attention to an aspect of well-being often ignored in Western hedonic approaches. A concept of virtue as central to eudemonic well-being can be traced from Aristotle to the positive psychologists, albeit with a change in emphasis from an objective concept as in a person being the best they could be, to a subjective concept of 'doing that which is worth doing' (Lee and Carey 2013, p. 17). In terms of leading the compassionate and just life, virtue is also central to Eastern eudemonic traditions.

In the context of this chapter's overview of what well-being meant for children, the emphasis children give to the importance of caring about and for others adds something to the way virtue is conceptualised in much of the well-being literature. These children's contributions on being good, on caring about and for others, support the application to children of a statement by the philosopher David Hume that 'Feelings, not reason, lie at the heart of morality' (Mayall 2002, p. 88). Chapter 6 explores in greater depth children's understanding of themselves as moral agents. This is also explored in Chap. 8, in the context of economic issues.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, the overview of the child standpoint constructed from our research has highlighted the centrality of emotions and relationships for child well-being and indicated some ways in which the child standpoint contests the traditional approaches to well-being. The standpoint conveyed to us in this project contests the social ordering by expert, etic knowledge, in so far as the only valuable knowledge on child well-being is an adultcentric one, driven by the developmental agenda on personhood. In demonstrating that they have knowledge of well-being, indeed a very nuanced knowledge, children challenge a conceptualisation of well-being as

pertinent only to 'complete' (read 'adult') persons and the consequent marginalising of children as 'becoming adults'. For children, the experience of well-being is not as something finally achieved but as something they are aware of experiencing or at least potentially able to experience in their presents. Strikingly, for children, well-being is something that is beyond the dominant conceptualisations of well-being as happiness and pleasant feelings; it reflects the messiness of life and an intersubjectivity in which they are both dependent on others and actors themselves. The child standpoint constructed here highlights the extent to which the policy on child well-being, where it emphasises measurement and outcomes as a process of governmentality, risks failing to achieve child well-being goals in so far as it ignores the extent to which being social is part of being human.

Chapter 4
Agency, Autonomy and Asymmetry in Child-Adult Relations

Introduction

It is clear from what the children in our research tell us that the practice of agency in their lives is very significant for their experiences of well-being. In this chapter, our focus is firstly on the concept of agency and the ways in which children's discussions of agency connect with concepts of competence, autonomy and independence within adult–child relations. Emphases in discussions in the literature on child agency and autonomy vary according to whether the writers are informed by theory based on a traditional liberal approach that emphasises freedom as negative liberty and autonomy or whether they are informed by communitarian, postmodern or critical theoretical approaches that emphasise agency as action embedded in social contexts and thus constituted in relation to and with others. Both approaches are relevant to understanding what children are telling us about the significance of agency and autonomy for their experiences of well-being.

From children's discussions of agency as important to well-being, we find that children's experience of agency is complex and multifaceted. One critical dimension of their experience involves agency as autonomy and freedom to be able to make choices, or agency as self-determination. An extension of agency as self-determination is agency as children's ability to influence, organise, coordinate and control aspects of their everyday life. However, we distinguish between self-determination as an ability to exercise choice in decision-making and self-determination as freedom of action in everyday life, in order to emphasise that both, while related, are experienced as different by children. This is particularly important because the participation discourse often promotes children's participation in decision-making while neglecting the importance of self-determination over concrete practices in everyday situations.

Another important dimension of agency is making a difference within relational contexts, where children seek out opportunities to participate in and influence situations that affect their well-being. In these instances, we see that agency is an

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expression of the moral self, something we explore further in Chap. 6. This informs a related dimension of agency—that is, agency as the ability to negotiate in asymmetrical adult–child relationships. Hence, while exercising choice is important for the exercise of some dimensions of agency, other dimensions of agency are only realised as part of social arrangements. Drawing upon the work of Kuczynski (2003), we elaborate, from children's perspectives, 'horizontal symmetries' that facilitate children's agency and the characteristics of relationships that promote children's sense of well-being.

In discussing these different dimensions of agency, we show that a tension exists between 'in-principle equality' and guidance. This tension can be seen in how children's practice of agency and autonomy in their everyday lives is framed by the macro-level structuring of child–adult relations, underlain by an ideology of adult-centricism. We discuss the vertical asymmetries that are expressions of this adult-centricism, which include dependency on adults for resources and inequality in institutional status and power. The resulting asymmetries in adult–child relations are evident in adult control of resources for day-to-day living and differentially constructed normative behaviour for adults and children.

Agency as discussed by children in terms of the development of competence and mastery, as both an internalised sense of esteem and a source of social recognition, is also discussed in Chap. 7.

Agency in Childhood

Assumptions about the nature of child agency and children's capability to make a difference have varied with different constructions of childhood. Typically, liberal theories of freedom exclude children as being capable of exercising agency. An emphasis on the child as evil in various historical periods has assumed not just agency but autonomy of individual children. It has held children responsible for their actions. In contrast, an emphasis on the child, in different (or even the same) eras, as innocent, or blank slates, has been associated with children as passive becomings. These ideas of children's agency still hold powerful sway over thinking around the nature of childhood and childhood development and are associated with particular social orders. Jenks (2005) explores this connection in suggesting two images of 'childhood' that have captured Western thinking about childhood and children—the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The Dionysian child is the wild child who, left to his or her own devices, would cause chaos. This is the image of the child associated with the Christian doctrine of 'original sin', who must be subjected to strict forms of control. Childhood agency is therefore a disruptive social force, an expression of freedom and individuality that has the potential to threaten the social order. The Apollonian child, in contrast, is the child born into the world as pure and innocent. Childhood is a time that should be sanctified and protected from the corrupting influences of the world. The child is impressionable but should nevertheless be allowed to flourish and develop his or her individuality.

In both these constructions, there is an 'othering' of the child. As Smith (2011) points out, both images construct governable subjects for the purpose of control of disorder and for reproducing authoritarian social orders (in the case of the Dionysian child) or for purposes of promoting individuality, as a practice of creating reflexive and self-responsible citizens (in the case of the Apollonian child). Fundamental to both, however, is a strict dichotomy between the competent, rational adult who can provide authority, whether that be through forcing compliance or by providing guidance, and the irrational child who is either incompetent or possesses an inferior competence to adults. This strict division between adult and child, and the consequent 'othering' of the child as incorporated into the dominant construction of childhood in the social sciences, has typically contributed to the muting of children's voices and a lack of attention to issues of agency in adult–child relations. Qvortrup (2014) points out that children have been virtually non-existent in the social sciences, and where children were represented, the interest was rarely in children themselves or their lifeworlds; rather, it was in the social function of childhood per se as a transitory mechanism for reproducing adult social orders. In this process of othering, the phenomenon of adulthood has been defined through its contrast with childhood. In writings from the time of early philosophers through to modern philosophers and social scientists, adulthood has been conceptualised as the 'gold standard' against which children have been measured and found wanting in terms of agency.

In contemporary times, this dominant construction has been challenged conceptually and practically, as increasingly children have been seen and related to as social actors, as subjects of democratic relations and also as significant economic agents (Mason and Watson 2014; Oswell 2013). The competence agenda that has been a key feature of the thinking of 'new' childhood studies scholars has illustrated children's capacities to engage in everyday social relations, negotiate complex interactions and utilise a range of emotional, intellectual and material resources to effect change. As Hutchby and Moran-Ellis (1998) point out, children's competence as social actors is assumed. The task is to understand how children's agency is expressed and how agency is received, whether acknowledged, ignored or controlled in everyday interactions with other children and adults. This acknowledgement of child agency has, as Oswell points out, been linked with a focus on children's well-being.

Conceptually, the writing of James and Prout (1990) has been central to the acknowledgement of agency in childhood. In their argument for a reconstruction of childhood, they conceptualised children as active subjects, as social actors, countering the earlier construction of children as passive objects in relationships of dependency on adults. Outlining a 'new paradigm of childhood sociology' (1990, p. 5), James and Prout identified, as one of the key features of this paradigm, that '[c]hildren are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live. Children are not just passive subjects of social structures and processes' (1990, p. 8).

Significant in the new childhood studies approach to childhood was the situating of major concepts in what Alan Prout refers to as 'the oppositional dichotomies of modernist sociology' (Prout 2005, p. 62). In this process, not only was the concept of the child as active contrasted with the child as passive, in addition, emphasis was

put on children as ontological 'beings', in contrast to the traditionally dominant psychological focus on them as 'becomings'. Prout discusses the problems with such a conceptualisation. Amongst the strategies he identifies to move past these problems, he refers to that articulated by Alanen (2001), which highlighted the significance of a 'generational system' or 'order' (2001). In this strategy, generation is seen as the system of relationships in which the positions of 'child' and of 'adult' are produced, making 'a shift from seeing childhood as an essentialized category to one produced within a set of relations' (Prout 2005, p. 76).

In exploring children's agency in this chapter, we make use of this strategy to inform us on children's discussions of their experiences of agency in adult–child relations. Although children discussed agency in their relationships with other children, it was their relationships with adults (parents and sometimes teachers) that were dominant in these discussions.

Children's discussions frequently focused on the concept of competency, in ways that have significance in terms of sociological thinking on agency and liberalist ideas of freedom and autonomy or independence. Interwoven in these discussions were issues of control and the ability to reflect on decision-making. In some contexts, children identified the importance of agency as participation in decisions that affect them, a concept of agency that has become synonymous with the 'participation principle' associated with Article 12 of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which informs most policy approaches to children's participation. However, children also identify how agency as decision-making is reliant upon reciprocity and mutuality.

Competency and the Exercise of Agency: Biological, Temporal and Social

While children can be actors in any given situation that presents the child with the possibility to act, child *agency* is understood as socially situated and as differing with the contexts in which it is exercised. Agency is constituted intersubjectively, within the parameters set by and enabled through structures represented in social space. This includes the socio-structural context that determines the parameters in which the dispositions and choices of individual actors are played out, and the immediate interpersonal and organisational context, which provides the more concrete context of action and can be analysed in terms of motivation, justification and understandings/meanings of action. Sociology of childhood theorists have highlighted how adultist attitudes in modernity to children's potential to act and make a difference to the world have typically been framed by assumptions about children's competencies, based on theories of child developmental stages. These assumptions are reified by developmental psychology. Associated with the reification of what is the 'normative' way to act at a specific age, or 'stage of development', have been critiques of those children defined as deviating from the normative. Behaviour of

children constructed as 'out of place' or 'out of time' has been referred to derogatorily as in the use of the word 'precocious' to describe children who speak with a maturity typically attributed to a later stage of development. Similarly, the word 'parentification' is used critically of children whose behaviour, in caring for others, resembles that typically ascribed to parents (Bessell with Mason 2014).

The linking of specific child competencies with age has been contested by childhood studies research (e.g. Alderson 2008) and shown to be situated within social contexts, which include largely adult-defined social institutions and the cultures that children construct between themselves (Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 1998, p. 19). They include, as specifically significant 'arenas of social action', the family, the peer group and child institutions such as the school. The way children define competency in the exercise of agency and the place of context in this process is illustrated in the following extracts which indicate a tension between the agendas that inform adults' actions and those that are important to children. In the first extract from a discussion with Apex on his use of technology, Apex challenges the marginalisation of children as 'small' people and asserts that they have capability as beings in the present, to contribute through specific competencies:

> Yeah, just because they [children] are small, they are not insignificant in the society. You know. They have got a lot to add as well. That is what I reckon.

Elsewhere in the discussion, Apex accepts his age and position as a child as limiting his knowledge and the ways he can contribute, confirming the appropriateness of his subordinate place in the social order in terms of *becoming* knowledgeable and requiring parental guidance during this process:

> INTERVIEWER: Do you think parents try and change young people a lot?
> APEX: Yeah, affects someone, yeah. Because the way you grow up, you have to be a little bit strict, 'cause if you are not the guy's not going to learn. Yeah, so that is that.
> INTERVIEWER: So you've got that in mind.
> APEX: 'Cause it improves your behaviour in a way. It makes you into a person.

In asserting that he can exercise agency as a 'being', able to contribute from specific competencies while at other times requiring monitoring in his learning until he 'becomes' a person, Apex provides support for challenges to the way early sociology of childhood theory dichotomised 'becoming' and 'being' as childhood states. His discussion points to the importance, identified by Prout (2005) and Kraftl (2015), of understanding contemporary childhood, of taking into account that it is characterised by diversity and hybridity, hybridity in the sense that it destabilises bio/social dualisms, as is also the case with adulthood. Apex is illustrating that his competence as a social actor has some continuity with those competences associated with being an adult. In this sense, competence is an expression of a shared social competence, regardless of how young or old a person is. However, Apex is also acknowledging his difference from adults. This difference is manifested in physical differences associated with biological maturation, but also in socially constituted age-related differences. These differences are one important way in which children differentiate themselves from adults, as well as adults differentiating themselves from children. It is on the basis of this differentiation that, for example, childhood cultures separate from those of adults. The adult discourse hides children's

agency and thus children are deemed as lacking competence. However, from a child standpoint, as participants within these cultures, both their agency and competence, and those of other children, are in sight. Thus children are part of practices that are distinct from those of adults but also engage with adults, and these interactions highlight both difference and sameness across intergenerational divisions, bringing into focus children's status as both being and becoming.

Strawberry, in her discussion, tells us how biological capabilities merge with the social ones when she talks about her gradually evolving control of herself as she *becomes* older—as part of 'nature' and biological development, but also contextualised by entering a new social stage in going to school:

> [Adults] are in charge of me when I was small. I'm in charge of myself when I am big.
> INTERVIEWER: Okay, so how do they start to understand that?
> STRAWBERRY: Yeah, it happens gradually. It is just nature. I don't know how it happens.

She then tells us something about how the biological or physical competencies become social:

> Yeah, that is how it is.
> INTERVIEWER: Until what age do you see that happening?
> STRAWBERRY: About five. As soon as like you get to school you will be like dressing yourself. You will be like having showers. Because before you might like put the shirt [on] the wrong way. You might slip in the bathtub or something.

Mayall (2002), in her discussion of empirical findings from several studies of children's relationships with parents, describes how children understand that they are both learning and participating through their agency in their own socialisation. They 'juggle possibilities and constraints in the here and now' and at the same time are themselves participating in preparation for adult life (p. 47). In juggling these possibilities, Strawberry demonstrated an ability for rational thought on the relationship between agency and competency, which challenges an assumption implicit in many of those who, in theorising agency, construct children as lacking an ability to reason. For example, the work of Anthony Giddens (e.g. 1984) in defining agency as knowing the world and, as a result of reflexivity on the world, being able to change it, has influenced theory on children's agency within new childhood studies. However, because of his aim to develop a theory of agency that has relevance across time and space, his theorising on agency and competency literally excluded children (Oswell 2013, p. 48). This exclusion reflects assumptions of many philosophers and social scientists before him, that children cannot practise agency because they cannot reflect rationally on their actions and are therefore unable to experience well-being (see Chap. 1).

This exclusion of children from liberal theories of self-determination and agency implies that children are irrational and incapable of exercising reason (Ballet et al. 2011). Challenging the construction of children as irrational, some of the participants in the research were explicit about the place of reasoning in their decision-making. For example:

> STRAWBERRY: Like having your own ideas means you like grow up a little bit more and means you're intelligent. And if you keep on following other people's ideas, you start

> not to learn by yourself. You learn from other people. What I mean is like you're not supposed to learn from other people, like you are supposed to, but not all the time.

In an interview with Sarah and Beady, where they were discussing the relationship of well-being to agency and self-efficacy in school and life, Sarah said:

> Having a voice and being able to give our own opinion, our perceptions and opinions of what is best for our own well-being, gives us our own personal success.

These quotes equate rationality with 'voice' and explicitly with an ability to contribute to decision-making. Agency as 'having your say in formal decision-making' is the concept of agency most usually associated with what is meant by 'children's participation', the most significant example being Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This idea of voice is summarised by Bonvin and Thelen (2003, cited in Bifulco) as a capacity to express opinions and have these opinions given due regard in public discussion. While it assumes an ability to assert individual preferences, it is also premised on forums that allow those preferences to be acknowledged (Bifulco 2013). Further, children are also implying that rational decision-making fits with Biggeri et al.'s claim that there are different degrees of capability in the exercise of rationality. Rationality can be present in children, but it may differ between children and at different times in their lives (Biggeri et al. 2010). Indeed, in writing of research where she found that some children as young as seven undergoing orthopaedic surgery 'can be as rational as some adults', Alderson (1994) makes the point that 'young and old share a partial rationality' (p. 61). Her powerful reminder that rationality is not necessarily a static and invariable quality of adults is given weight by Lee (2001), who exposes as fallacious the assumption that adults can ever be considered as complete. It is evident, particularly in contemporary society, that adulthood is itself a time of 'becoming'. From what children are telling us, they have a capability to exercise rationality but may require, as Biggeri et al. (2010) suggest, the assistance of others and particular social arrangements to enable this capacity.

Autonomy, Freedom and Choice as Well-Being: The Exercise of Agency Within Generational Relations

Much of children's discussion about 'struggles for power', and how their agency is enabled or constrained, is in terms of the connections they make between their well-being and freedom, autonomy and options for choice. Freedom and independence of actions, or autonomy of the self, have been key concepts in Western thinking since the Enlightenment. As central categories of modernity, individualisation and democratisation have also been strongly contested.

It can be argued that the widening of the idea of the individual's right to freedom, as part of modernity, to various groups—slaves and women—has more recently extended to children as well. Children's right to freedom has been advocated by educationalists, such as John Dewey (e.g. 1902), John Holt (1974) and Janusz Korczak (Williams 2004), since early in the twentieth century. Their arguments for

children's rights to have their voices heard through participation in decision-making were given some acknowledgement in the 1924 Geneva Declaration and the 1959 UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child. They were given broader prominence in legal codification in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, in what has become known as the participation principle, which (as we have noted above) has been widely interpreted as emphasising the right of children to participate and have a voice in decision-making (Quennerstedt 2010). In the following extract, Prudence appropriates the right to autonomy in decision-making:

> Yeah, um, I think that because, that kids deserve their rights to make their own decisions and if they don't want to do that, they don't have to.

Embedded in the language of thinking on freedom and autonomy are assumptions about well-being. Markus and Schwartz (2010) identify assumptions in 'American' society—about freedom, autonomy and choice as they relate to well-being—in the following syllogism:

> The more freedom and autonomy people have, the greater their well-being
> The more choice people have, the greater their freedom and autonomy
> Therefore, the more choice people have, the greater their well-being (p. 344).

As in this syllogism, the concepts of freedom and autonomy are often elided in the literature. In Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary, autonomy is defined as self-governing, and freedom and autonomy are listed as synonyms. Clairborne (2010) states that relating the concept of agency to the concept of autonomy/freedom is a 'chicken or egg' question. For practical purposes, he resolves this question by arguing that agency, as in a state of having power to act, is a precursor to autonomy. On this basis, it can be argued, children assume they have agency when they argue the importance of autonomy, or freedom and choice, for their well-being. In the following extracts, Luke and Nikita make links between freedom and well-being.

When the interviewer asks Luke what makes children his age happy, Luke responds by emphasising the importance of freedom in being able to act in the present but also comments on the importance of this freedom in enabling him to plan for his becoming life:

> A number of things really … Ah, a fair bit of freedom. Being able to do what you like. Planning a good future.

Nikita, on the other hand, asserts the importance of autonomy for her well-being:

> You know, it is what you want to do. I mean you've got your future ahead of you. It is all yours and you are holding it in your hands …

The way in which Luke and Nikita link autonomy with both their present and future lives reflects findings from Uprichard's (2008) research, that '"[l]ooking forward" to what a child "becomes" is arguably an important part of "being" a child' (p. 306).

Psychologists such as Kuczynski (2003, p. 9) and Ryan et al. (2008) argue the importance of autonomy, as in 'self-determination', for well-being. Ryan et al. state that, like Aristotle, they consider 'eudaimonia is necessarily rooted in human autonomy' (p. 158). They define autonomy as meaning 'self-governing', implying 'the experience of regulation by the self', in contrast to 'heteronomy', referring to 'regulation from outside the self, by alien or external forces' (Ryan et al. 2008, p. 157).

The conceptualisation of autonomy as self-determination promoted by Deci and Ryan (2000) was the basis for the inclusion of 'a set of five questions on the concept of 'autonomy' by the UK Children's Society in compiling the *Good Childhood Report* (The Children's Society 2012, p. 48). Using questions derived from those designed by Deci and Ryan for use with adults, the Children's Society found 'strong evidence of links between children's happiness about the amount of choice they have in life, their sense of autonomy and their overall well-being' (p. 48).

The discussions of Daniel and Martha in the following extracts expand on the nature of the links between the importance of choice, the use of autonomy and well-being. The interviewer, in talking with Daniel, picked up a comment by him that, when given the option in school, he chooses to work in a group:

> INTERVIEWER: You like groups better. Yeah. You like to choose. What sort of things is it important to have choices about?
>
> DANIEL: Um'cause sometimes it is like, [if] people choose and tell you what to do you might not like it. And then like, if you choose your own choice, you will like it, because you made your choice and it is your final decision. But if someone choose[s] it for you, you may not, you may have a different opinion of it.

Martha also draws attention to the importance of choice in decision-making, arguing that for a child this can be difficult but this does not mean that children should not be involved in decision-making:

> MARTHA: It takes time. Like, it just depends on your experiences and your choices and the decisions you make, and even if you made the wrong decision, you can learn by it and what and like learn from your mistakes.
>
> INTERVIEWER: How do you learn from mistakes?
>
> MARTHA: Like say you made a wrong decision, you go, 'I made the wrong decision because I did that' and then maybe when you make your next decision you don't do the same thing.

Daniel and Martha indicate that freedom to choose is supported by a capability to reflect on their capacity to make and evaluate choices in their best interests, which is facilitated through the freedom of being able to 'learn from mistakes'. The opportunity to learn from one's mistakes creates an opportunity to exercise one's reflective capabilities.

In discussions in the literature (Ballet et al. 2011; Fegter and Richter 2014) of children making choices, questions emerge about children's ability to make choices in their own interests, for their well-being. Unlike Martha above, Longstocking and Pippi, in the following extract, would appear to support a qualification on their capability for self-determination.

The interviewer summarises what she thinks they have said:

> Um, and I think you were saying, that at your age you need some freedom. Because you don't want to feel like you've got a parent watching you all the time. Um, and that as you get older you get a bit more and more freedom each year in terms of what you are allowed to do. Um, and I guess, part of having that freedom is that it allows you to make your own decisions and your own choices about things?

Longstocking's response indicates that children recognise that expressions of self-determination are also reliant upon relationships of dependency:

> Yeah, but I think it is also good to not have too much freedom. Like—

INTERVIEWER: Okay, yeah—
LONGSTOCKING: 'Cause if you like it is good to have some freedom, but if your parents just didn't care what you do and let you do everything, you could end up in trouble. So in a way we might—
PIPPI: If you ask to go somewhere and your parents say 'no', we might get upset at the time but really it might be for the best.

Children are asserting their ability and desire to participate in decisions that affect them and as dialogue partners in the negotiations involved in everyday life. However, self-determination is a capability that can only be expressed as part of concrete relationships and the opportunities that such relationships facilitate. There is support in what these children, and Luke in the following extract, are saying for the role of adults in assisting children in their use of freedom, through what Ballet et al. (2011) refer to as frameworks for choice, by helping them develop evaluative capacity, or through what Lansdown (2005) refers to as opportunity structures, by facilitating them in making choices (Fegter and Richter 2014, pp. 747–78). Both Ballet and colleagues and Lansdown suggest that children's ability to make choices requires frameworks of guidance that support children to evaluate and revise their choices. Parents, for example, can engage in dialogue with children about their preferences. Through deliberative processes, agreement and understanding between dialogue partners can be reached. Self-determination is therefore relational, based on interdependence, is embedded in opportunity structures and, when associated with a sense of well-being, requires intersubjective agreement. We would suggest that this is relevant for all individuals, and recent social-theoretical debates have suggested that concrete spheres of life, whether that be the intimate sphere, market or political life, require the realisation of particular dimensions of individual freedom (Honneth 2014). However, children's position within generational orders makes the sociality and relationality of this individual freedom highly explicit.

When the interviewer asked: 'Mmm. So doing what you like. What sorts of things are important to be able to do, to have that freedom?', Luke responded:

Um, good parents, I suppose. Um, good school, by our standards of course.
INTERVIEWER: By your standards. Okay. So, by your standards, what would make a good parent?
LUKE: I suppose one [where] they would help you out. They would let you have your freedom.

Luke's response indicates the extent to which his freedom is both dependent on and enabled by the mediation of others. In an interview with Nikita, she also acknowledges the importance not only of parents but also of the broader society in mediating her freedom. And she asserts the importance of her being able to exercise autonomy in making decisions about her future life:

NIKITA: … parents play, you know, a huge role and society and community plays a huge role, but ultimately you play the biggest role in deciding your future and where you want to be in 5, 10, 15 years from now. Um, so I think that it is important that if you want to be heard you, despite whatever you are going through or feeling, you, you let those thoughts and whatever come out in certain ways …

Lansdown (2005) argues that children require opportunity for autonomy in different contexts and across different areas of decision-making. Ballet et al. (2011) elaborate

on what these opportunity structures are by describing conversion factors that allow children to 'convert resources or commodities into capabilities and functionings' (p. 29). These include individual, societal and environmental factors, such as public policy, legal rules, social norms and attitudes about children and power relationships. In terms of agency, children's ability to convert capabilities into functionings is highly reliant on the attitudes of important adults, including parents and teachers. Drawing upon the work of Ryan and Deci, Ballet and colleagues suggest that important adults can be either 'autonomy supportive' (engaging in conversation, promoting reflection around decisions, providing reference points for decision-making and so on) or 'controlling' (expecting that the child will conform to adult demands and so on) (p. 30). Similarly laws, institutions, norms and the characteristics of interpersonal relationships with adults in general facilitate or constrain 'potential and achievable functionings' (p. 34). The significance for children of opportunity structures is evident when Martha and Ali talk about the effect on them of the lack of opportunities they experienced to exercise autonomy and choice during the significant family event of parental divorce.

For Martha, a lack of opportunities to exercise choice around her parents' divorce was experienced as intense powerlessness:

> INTERVIEWER: When that happened, did you think there was anything you could change to make that better for you?
>
> MARTHA: No, not really 'cause it is not like um, I'm just a child, I'm not the parent that is actually breaking up or whatever. I can't really, you know, it is not my opinion that is going to affect their problems and that, so really a child can't do anything when their parents are sort of breaking up or divorcing or whatever, like that. The child, you know, has no power for those times.
>
> INTERVIEWER: What is that like for children? What was that like for you in that time?
>
> MARTHA: Upsetting … Yeah and you just feel weird. Like say I was living with my mum you know, I felt weird around my dad, and it feels weird … When you don't have a choice … you feel kind of angry that you can't make your own decision and someone is making it for you and um, you feel, 'Hey, like I'm old enough' and they treat you like immature, kind of baby kind of stuff. But you would like them to treat you as though you were independent, you know, well you know, yeah.

Here, it seems that Martha recognises that divorce is a couple decision but nevertheless argues that some right to her independent contribution is warranted, given the impact of parental divorce on her and on children generally. Martha's experiences provide an example of the importance of being able to contribute to decisions and participate in the process of having one's needs and preferences heard. Yet Martha is also acknowledging that her own preferences are only one set of considerations that need to be taken into account.

In the following extract, reported in full to highlight the nuances of the discussion, Ali indicates her limited opportunities to exercise agency in decision-making about with which parent she resided following their divorce. In using the opportunity of the discussion to reflect on her capacity for choice, she also seems to identify further opportunity to exercise her agency, in order to be more comfortable within herself, by 'evening up' the situation of living with each parent:

INTERVIEWER: Was it [where Ali should live] a decision that you made or was it a decision that your mum and dad decided?
ALI: Um, it wasn't something Mum and Dad decided definitely.
INTERVIEWER: Oh, wasn't it?
ALI: No. But Dad still wanted us to go there with him. I don't know what it was.
INTERVIEWER: Was it something you wanted?
ALI: Yes it was, it was something I wanted, but I didn't want to hurt Mum. Like.
INTERVIEWER: Yeah, it is hard. You don't want to choose one over the other.
ALI: Yeah like when it first started I didn't like choosing one over [the other] and I still don't like doing that.
INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay. Do you think it works well, now that you are living with your dad, when you get to see your mum?
ALI: Yeah, but I probably, if I wanted, like I probably could see Mum more often, which I am – I'm going to go and see Mum more often—
INTERVIEWER: Yep—
ALI: And that way it kind of evens it out. I would rather it be more even.

Martha's and Ali's reflections inform us that, while contributing to decision-making in parental divorce processes is inevitably fraught, this should not exclude them from opportunities to participate in negotiation around divorce. By recognising the complexity of both the process involved in a matter such as divorce and the complexity of the considerations that are part of such a process, Martha and Ali show sensitivity and competence as actors, in part because they recognise the limits of their own autonomy, that the expression of their preferences is part of a social rather than individual process. Researchers who have focused specifically on children's views on participation in divorce proceedings have similarly found that, while children have not wanted to choose between parents, they have wanted to participate in negotiations about divorce outcomes where they affected them (e.g. Smart and Neale 2005). Evident here is the applicability of Lansdown's (2005) concept of opportunity structures to enable children to use their autonomy in divorce decision-making processes, towards promoting their well-being.

The discussions about divorce make it particularly clear, as is evident more generally in the preceding sections, that exercising agency was for children about making a difference within a relational context. This meant they sought opportunities to participate in and influence situations that affected their well-being, parental divorce being one of these situations. The importance of opportunities to enable children to realise their potential for self-development and translate capabilities into functionings is central to the application of the Capability Approach to furthering child well-being as described by Fegter and Richter (2014).

Interdependencies and Asymmetries: Practices of Negotiation, Enabling and Constraining

For children, making a difference in relational contexts in which they are positioned as dependents ultimately entails issues of power dynamics. Asymmetries in child–adult relations are highlighted, especially by those social scientists who place

emphasis on interdependencies (e.g. Punch 2001, 2005; Alanen 2001) and on bidirectional influences between children and parents from infancy on (Macoby 1992). For example, Macoby identifies that interdependencies function within a broader context where child–adult relations are based on asymmetry. She points out that the differential between parents and young children in power and competency, as structured by children's physical and social positioning, is 'enormous' (Macoby 1992, p. 1006). Parents not only have greater knowledge on which children depend; through their greater size and strength, they can control children physically and also control their access to things and people (Macoby 1992).

There is an argument in the literature that the power balance in contemporary Western society has shifted so that there is greater equality in child–adult relations than has historically been the case. This change is seen to be a consequence of the reframing within Western cultures of family lives, with the extension of democratic principles to families and an increasing reliance on negotiation for child–adult decision-making (Oswell 2013). Research by du Bois-Raymond et al. (1993) in the Netherlands, and in East and West Germany, found a 'general trend towards a situationally based family culture of negotiation between parents and children'. This trend was associated with 'a shifting balance of power and modes of social control in intergenerational relations in favour of the child', associated with increased obligations for parents to justify their actions in their relations with children (p. 97).

In our research, Ocean gives us a model of child–adult negotiation and symmetry in an example of decision-making about family meals:

> Well, I think that both sides should cooperate together and should have like meetings together and make up the rules, because it is more fair that way. And just fair. Like if you, if you want, like some of the people in your family want to have dessert after lunch, but the rest don't, they can just, the people who want to can have dessert and the others don't. Or something like that.

Families represent important sites in which children exercise their agency. For most children, it is the first and most enduring site in which their sense of agency is developed and practised. While Ocean emphasises the importance of deliberation, her example also directs us towards the idea of the family being an important site for practising a 'situated agency' involving everyday social events. However, in contrast to the belief that there have been moves towards more egalitarian adult–child relations, there is an argument that childhood continues to be a time of subordination and that it remains 'the only form of social subordination equated with a state of freedom' (Scott et al. 1998, p. 697). In support of this argument, Jensen and McKee (2003) report, from an analysis of children's lives across generations, that power relations appear to be little changed, in terms of their implications for children's lives, from those of two generations ago when it comes to making decisions about major issues for children. Such decisions continue to be made by parents on the basis of what they consider to be in their children's best interests.

The findings of our research provide some evidence of a collaborative approach in families that has pertinence at the emotional level, in terms of what Giddens describes as a 'democracy of the emotions' (1999, p. 20). Building on Giddens's (1984) concept, Kuczynski (2003) describes a model of 'interdependent power

asymmetry' (p. 4) as a challenge to the static model of unidirectional power asymmetry in adult–child relations. Kuczynski argues that a model of asymmetrical power that emphasises static and vertical difference in power relations is inadequate for understanding the micro-interactions of ordinary family life. A model of power also needs to account for horizontal features of power relations within the family that include cooperation, negotiation, mutuality and intimacy. Parents and children draw upon individual, relational and cultural resources of power in their social interactions. These are deployed strategically and also as unreflexive habits that constitute ordinary social interactions. Different configurations of resources and power are drawn upon to produce both vertical and horizontal power arrangements. Both parents and children draw upon resources and are engaged in processes through which power is transacted in interactions. This model allows for children's agency by assuming that 'both children and parents have resources to draw on in their relationship, despite absolute differences in power' between children and parents, and that 'both parents and children are at times receptive and at times vulnerable to the other's influence' (Kuczynski 2003, p. 15).

Nikita seems to sum up such a model when she discusses the importance of respect across the generational divide as being at the core of effective transactions between parents and children:

> I think that it's just basically, just looking at it from their perspective. You've got to give and take, and parents do a lot for you and we may not always appreciate it or be able to see it because we want what we want. Like we seem to think that is it. But that isn't it, you've got to have respect for other people. You've got to see it from their point of view. And I think that I just try to do that as much as I can, because I know how I want to be listened to and um, therefore I try and show people that same respect in order to gain some.

Respect for each other's point of view is relevant to what Kuczynski (2003) describes as horizontal features of adult–child relations: 'enhanced mutual conflict and cooperation, child assertion, negotiation, mutual responsiveness, shared power, play, intimacy, and friendship-like qualities in parent–child relationships' (p. 15). Such features are apparent in the comments of some children in our research on their transactions with parents, and they were considered important to contributing to a sense of well-being. For example, in the following response from Beady, we get a sense of a mother–child relationship where 'shared power' and 'friendship-like qualities' prevail:

> Mum is always saying do what you want to do. Do this, do that. Like not forcing me, but like be happy, make sure you are happy, make sure you are doing this if you want to be doing that. So it is good to know that she doesn't want me to do anything because of her, she just wants me to be happy in what I'm doing.

Pippi and Longstocking, in response to the interviewer's suggestion that they can negotiate in relations with their parents, indicate how they assert themselves to negotiate parental agreement to their going to a party:

> INTERVIEWER: Okay. And do you think maybe it is kind of easier in a sense [accepting parents' regulation of their activities], because you do have a good relationship with your parents that you can sort of do a bit of negotiating if you like?
>
> PIPPI: Mmm (indicating agreement)—

LONGSTOCKING: Yeah, like just say, you want to go somewhere and it finishes, like a party or something, and it finishes at one o'clock in the morning or something and you go to your mum 'Oh, can I please go' and they go 'No' and they are like 'I'm not letting you go to a party that finishes at one o'clock' and you can say 'I'll come home at an earlier time, I'll come home at ten'.
PIPPI: Then they will let you go.
LONGSTOCKING: Then they might let you go. Just that sort of negotiating.

In the next extract, in what Hayley tells us about her relationship with her mother, we can assume an implicit acceptance by Hayley's mother of Hayley's resistance to her wishes:

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So it is a happy family altogether (referring to a picture chosen by Hayley as representing well-being). Okay. Can you tell me a bit more about your family?
HAYLEY: Oh, they are nice sometimes and I don't know, like sometimes I don't have to do things if I don't want to. Like if my mum tells me to clean my room, I don't really have to do it.
INTERVIEWER: Right—
HAYLEY: I just play games in my room instead of cleaning it.

In the above discussions, children provide evidence of horizontal features in their relations with their mother—that these parents are listening to or respecting their children, albeit, in diverse ways. These discussions also reaffirm the importance of a situated and relational agency. However, in other discussions, children talk about experiences that illustrate the extent to which vertical asymmetry plays a part in subordinating children in child–adult relations.

The vertical asymmetries, against which some children rail in their discussions in our research, occur at the point where macro-level policies impact on the micro-politics of the family. These structural asymmetries are embedded in an adultcentric ideological framework that distinguishes between adulthood and childhood. This framework posits what Qvortrup refers to as a 'natural order' in which adults have a 'natural' right to assert power over children on the basis of their dependency' (Qvortrup et al. 1994, p. 3ff). Such a stance is implicit also in some 'child-centred' literature. It is also evident in the work of Giddens (1999) in that, while he argues for a 'democracy of the emotions', with dialogue between parents and children, he nevertheless asserts that parent–child relations 'can't, and shouldn't, be materially equal. Parents must have authority over children, in everyone's interests … based upon an implicit contract' of the greater knowledge of parents (1999, p. 5).

Giddens considered that, while parents should assume 'in-principle equality' with children, the 'greater knowledge' of parents legitimates parents' authority over children, based on the notion that the child would agree to the legitimacy of parental decision-making if she or he had the same knowledge (Giddens 1999). Some of the comments of children in previous sections of this chapter would support the idea that parents' authority provides a framework of security and guidance within which children's preferences can be exercised. The exercise of agency, particularly at very early stages in their lives, is negotiated and worked out intersubjectively. However, the concept of 'in-principle equality' is essentially challenged in children's arguments for the importance of 'fairness' in relations with adults. It may be, as Jensen

and McKee suggest, that 'because we feel that children are listened to within the space available, we have problems in seeing a persistent power structure of adults over children' (Jensen and McKee 2003, p. 167, drawing on Hood-Williams 1990). This suggestion has particular relevance to what children have been telling us in our research, as illustrated by the following extract from a discussion in which Prudence tells us:

> Well, adults can ask you to do things and you have to do them cause they are adult …. But if you ask parents to do things, they don't have to do it.

She gives a telling example where a relationship that enables her to have 'a say in everything with him [her father]' does not necessarily mean that she will be *heard* in terms of her father changing his behaviour in response to her request:

> PRUDENCE: Um, one time I was um, I was home alone and I asked my dad if he could not leave, like'cause he always when he gets up he makes his lunch and goes straight to work, so I asked him [not to leave] the knives and the butter and everything out … and like he says 'Yes, sure', and I have like a say in everything with him. But he doesn't usually listen to it.

In the following extract, Nikita makes explicit how children's well-being is challenged by the generational location of children, vis-à-vis adults, and their associated lack of power. Nikita's comments follow from a longer discussion in which she discussed the importance of family and friends for the warmth and support (i.e. horizontal aspects) they provide to children, but here she maintains that, if children are 'not heard', they can't be 'truly happy', with implications for the well-being of children as a generation:

> I think if you are not happy and if you are not heard, basically if your voice or your opinion is not heard, I don't think, you know, you can be truly happy. You need to get your opinion across out there, especially for young people it is really hard because you know people just take, take us for granted and they think, oh well, we will decide what is best for their generation and that is from their perspective. They have already lived through adolescence, and you know some of the adults may have forgotten what it is like to be us, but you know, I think that is really important, people need to listen to us and realise that, you know, we also have our opinions and maybe if they listened, you know, our generation wouldn't be so lost, as they call it, you know.

At the core of Nikita's discussion is an assertion of a child standpoint posed as a response to the adultcentricism she experiences. Nikita explicitly links happiness with being heard and points out the generational constraints that prevent young people from being heard. Adults, by taking young people for granted and by assuming that they know better because they have experienced adolescence and that this past experience privileges their knowledge over young people themselves, reproduce intergenerational relations that suppress opportunities for dialogue between children and adults. Adultcentricism, or adultism, has major implications for child well-being, because inherent in it is '… a belief system based on the idea that the adult human being is in some sense superior to the child or of greater worth, and thus the child, by default, inferior or of lesser worth', enabling the rights of children to be overridden with equanimity by adults (Shier et al. 2014, p. 6). The way an adult-centred approach, which legitimates parents' authority over children, can affect an individual child's well-being is illustrated by Sponge in the next extract. In

response to the interviewer's question, 'So are there things that your dad does that make you feel not so good? … What sort of things?', Sponge replies that it is the way his father can establish rules to which the family agree and then break them through use of his greater power to scare and reduce his children to tears:

Um, one night we went out for dinner and when we got home, we weren't home that late, I asked if I could go on the computer.'Cause I'd bagsed it ages ago.' Cause we used to fight over the computer, we don't now.

INTERVIEWER: Okay—

SPONGE: And um, he (father) said 'no I've already bagsed it', and I said 'well can I go on it (later) …' and he went on the computer and like I came up to the door and I said 'well can I please go on in an hour', because we have this hour rule…That is when we didn't have broadband and um, he said 'no' and he yelled out 'no' and then I went, I got really scared and I went into my room and started crying. And then my sister came in and she asked what is wrong and I told her and stuff. And then she went to my dad and said 'Why won't you let Sponge on the computer in an hour?' and he said 'Listen, you are not the boss of me, blah, blah, blah, blah'. And then she went out the door and ran to the park all crying and stuff—

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and the bad thing about that time was because you'd already bagsed it?

SPONGE: Well, that is, not mostly, it is because see, because he is the adult and he is the oldest he thinks that he can be like, he is in charge, which he is, but like he has the best power and he is first.

Sponge is telling us here that his father's status as an adult, as older than his children, enables him to change the rules of family engagement to suit himself. The fact that he relates as the 'boss' to his children 'legitimates' his decision to pursue his own interests. Adults' status as 'boss' of children was explicitly spelt out by a number of our research participants in relation to parents and adults more generally. For example, Tulee, who in equating childhood with having fun (in contrast to adulthood), implicitly accepts the social order but nevertheless expresses resentment of elements of this ordering:

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything good about being an adult?

TULEE: Yep.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah—

TULEE: To not be bossed around.

The importance Tulee attaches to not being bossed around means that, when later in the interview he is given a magic wand, he explains he would use it to reverse generational ordering:

TULEE: So we [children] wouldn't get bossed around too much.

INTERVIEWER: You wouldn't be bossed around too much. Yeah. So why would you want to turn children into adults? So you would be able to rule the adults instead?

TULEE: Yep.

The school is also a place of resistance by children to rules regarded as not being in the interests of their well-being, particularly when (in contrast with the previous comments by Nikita and Prudence) implemented in a context where children experience adults as not caring about them. This is illustrated in the following interview with Ren and Anonymous:

INTERVIEWER: So why do they hate school because of the teachers?

REN: … because teachers [for Year 9], because they care more about the rules than us now.
INTERVIEWER: Okay
REN: They make more strict rules.

As part of the same discussion, Anonymous would, like Tulee, reverse the ordering of child–adult relations as experienced in the school:

INTERVIEWER: So let us say you had to pick some school but you could change it. How would you want to change it? What would make it better?
ANONYMOUS: Um, the teachers couldn't (tell you what to do) all the time, you would have, you would be able to tell the teacher what to do.

The findings detailed in the discussion in this section reinforce, at least for some children, the findings of Jensen and McKee (2003) that, contrary to the contemporary 'symbolic' and conceptual emphasis placed on the child and agency in childhood, the reality is that it is adults who 'determine the rules' (p. 12) for children's lives and that children are well aware of this. While some children accept the social order and rules that it implies, others resist and question this order, particularly, but not only, where it is linked with adults who they experience as not caring about them. In these instances, children are implying that constraints on their autonomy implicit in their subordinate status vis-à-vis adults limit the extent to which they are able to experience well-being, as children. This finding suggests that Deci and Ryan's conclusions (e.g. 2008) from findings in research with adults, that the interconnectedness of relatedness and autonomy (as well as competency) is essential to well-being in eudemonic terms, are applicable to children. Much of children's discussion in the following section would indicate that macro-level structuring of children as subordinate vis-à-vis adults can, to some extent, cancel out the importance of relationships as contributing to well-being, when defined in eudemonic terms, because of the limits it places on children's exercise of autonomy.

The Social Structuring of Children's Everyday Worlds

Alanen (2001) notes that, for a child, having agency is inherently linked, relationally, to children's powers or lack of them 'to influence, organize, coordinate and control events taking place in their everyday worlds' as determined by the structures in which they are positioned as children (p. 21). The findings in the previous section indicate that in children's day-to-day lives their positioning means that the powers they have are 'largely a matter of coping with adults' decisions' (Jensen and McKee 2003, p. 8). These adults may, additional to their parents, be the adult policymakers, employers or others who exert day-to-day influence on children's parents' lives and on children's school experiences (e.g. Bessell with Mason 2014). At the micro-political level of family and child–teacher relations, children's continued dependency on adults is underpinned by macro-political level policies and practices. The macro-level policies of particular importance, from what children tell us, in legitimating asymmetries in adult–child relations are those that exclude children from the labour force, limiting their ownership of financial resources and enforcing the

school as the everyday location for children. In the school, the typical hierarchical governing of relations reinforces the discounting of child knowledge.

In their discussions of their 'everyday worlds' of the home and school, children in our research highlighted how their structural position of dependency on adults, in particular for resources and money but also for transport, limited their exercise of autonomy according to adult priorities. Kitty provides an example of the way in which adult control of finances affected her autonomy in relations with friends.

KITTY: Because, because, um, they [my parents] mightn't want to get something that expensive.
INTERVIEWER: Mmm. So it is to do with cost, and the adults have the money sort of thing.
KITTY: Yeah.

Children see that not only are they dependent on parents for money; their parents largely decide how the money is to be spent (Hood-Williams 1990). One participant responded to the question '… what would be good about getting pocket money?' by stating 'You can spend it how you like'.

Rosana tells us that, even when parents give their child money, it is not the same as spending one's own money because children still experience constraints associated with the way they can spend it:

ROSANA: … sometimes it is like just their parents giving them their money, and sometimes like the stuff that they buy is like something that their parents, it is actually their parents buying it because their parents gave them the money.
INTERVIEWER: So the parents have more choices about what you are doing with it?
ROSANA: Yeah.

Some children do find space to negotiate their needs for money, as illustrated by Watermelon and Anonymous in their strategies to obtain money for shopping:

WATERMELON: I love shopping.
INTERVIEWER: Yeah, you love shopping. What sort of things do you like shopping for?
WATERMELON: Clothes, food.
INTERVIEWER: Clothes and food. Yeah, okay. Um, so I guess one of the questions then is how do you afford shopping? Do you get pocket money or do you—
[Laughter.]
WATERMELON: I just ask.
INTERVIEWER: Yep, yep. So you just ask your mum or your dad or—
WATERMELON: Yeah.
ANONYMOUS: I have to call my mum. I have to bribe her (for example by offering to do a job for her mother).

Some children discuss constraints on using money in the exercise of agency, as associated with scholarisation policies that exclude them from earning money from working, as in the following extracts:

INTERVIEWER: … Did you want to change anything else? …
HAYLEY: Retire and not go to school … But I would like to get some work … Get money.

Beady and Sarah discuss the way having money promotes autonomy though enabling them to make their own choices:

INTERVIEWER: So … there are some benefits from working. That is like independence … Okay, tell me a little bit about that then—

BEADY: Oh, you ask if you can do stuff and your parents go ‘Oh, you can’t buy that with my money’. But because it is not their money you are spending, it is your own. And I bought a guitar and I also got like a $700 guitar and like I bought, oh yep, my own guitar. Oh, yeah.

SARAH: Yeah, you get satisfaction in being able to save your own money, and I’ve been like I started saving with all my pays and stuff and saving for a car, and even though it is a long way off yet but it helps give you goals. Helps you sort of lead into a direction you want to be in.

Ridge (2003) noted from her research that where children in low-income families received pocket money they were able to use it for ‘some small measure of economic control within a tight economic environment’. They were using it, for example, ‘not just for sweets and treats but also to sustain their social lives, paying for bus fares, buying clothes, and securing essential items for school’ (p. 6). In our research, as Beady, for example, tells us in Chap. 8, children also value having money because it enables them to exercise agency in caring for others.

In the following discussion, Sophia extends our understanding of the way children experience, through their location in the family and school, constraints on participation and autonomous action through spending money, at the broad social level:

INTERVIEWER: Mmm. And one of the other things that you were talking about was one of the things that made you, I guess made you feel pretty bad, certainly not good, um, some of the things we see on the news, hear on the radio, we’ve got wars, murders.

SOPHIA: Yeah, ‘cause that is always a sad things going on, and they are not really happening here like and then people died in an earthquake or something and I cannot do anything about it, personal.

INTERVIEWER: So the fact that you can’t do anything about it personally, how does that make you feel?

SOPHIA: I don’t know. Sort of you have to get on with it, kind of thing. You would have to wait and see who makes a difference. It is hard to when you are younger, you’ve got so much else going on, like you have to go to school every day. It is not like you can. It is not like you have enough money or anything. Yeah …

Sophia does, however, accept that the constraints on her autonomy have less significance than would otherwise be the case, because she will have that kind of autonomy when she is older. By getting a stable job, obtaining a qualification and having an independent income, Sophia is suggesting that the range of her capabilities will develop and consequently her capacity to exercise autonomy. In so doing, Sophia also highlights the structural limitations associated with childhood and being a child:

INTERVIEWER: Do you think, does that, is that sort of a feeling of not really having a lot of control or power because you are young? Are you saying that because …

SOPHIA: Oh, not really, it is just sort of like’cause you don’t really have a stable job’cause you have got to go to school. You can’t have a full-time job or anything or you are not qualified and stuff, so you can’t um, you couldn’t, it is just not possible. It doesn’t only feel like a lack of power, it is more just ’cause you will get older, so that is okay.

Similarly, Sarah builds on her discussion above by indicating ambivalence about achieving autonomy through the social exercise of earning money where it is accompanied by taking on responsibilities associated with adulthood and, consequently, the loss of ‘time to be kids’. As we discuss in Chap. 7, Sarah’s ambivalence

about the demands of responsibility or employment is associated with a deeper association between well-being and adult constraints and expectations. As we explore in that chapter, children also experience a sense of well-being during moments of freedom from adult-imposed and institutionalised obligations. This is because, despite popular discourses that imagine childhood as a period of life free from responsibility, much of children's time, including their free time, is being colonised by a different kind of responsibility associated with the making of the self:

> SARAH: It is just you find that you don't get time to be, like once you started working you don't like have much time to be kids. And that is what the girls I work with they said you know you, you will find once, they are 18 now, you find that you don't have time to be a kid, at work especially and then when you get some there is not really that much time anyway. I mean, don't, I love working and I love the responsibilities and the independence that you get with it, but it is often, it makes you step up and be more mature with it. It helps you grow up a lot faster.

Working and earning money clearly marks out adulthood from childhood for Sarah and her friends. Schooling not only constructs childhood and adulthood as oppositional categories; as children tell us, through its ordering of a hierarchy of authority relations in day-to-day interactions, schooling discounts children's knowledge, as inferior to adults' knowledge and able to be marginalised. Adulthood therefore has a normative status in these conceptions. This deficit model of childhood makes invisible the degree to which children can and do exercise agency and autonomy and thus also the extent to which they are capable. As Lansdown (2005) suggests, this means that the onus is on children to demonstrate their capabilities or achieve some age-related milestone, in order to be given social recognition as competent social actors.

Luke puts succinctly the reason teachers will always win any argument within the school's hierarchal structure:

> Always the teachers. Strangely. Because they are always the adult, with the power to send me to some higher power.

The use of power in the school setting to discount children's knowledge and define whose view of the world is legitimate resonates with Mary John's support for Dorothy Rowe's statement (1989, p. 16) that '[i]n the final analysis, power is the right to have your definition of reality prevail over other people's definition of reality'. John (2003) claims that for her this statement 'neatly captures the usual power relationships between adults and children' (p. 47). The significance of these comments is illustrated in the following example in which Tweetie and others discuss teacher–child relations (voices not able to be distinguished by transcriber):

> PARTICIPANT: Yeah, and that if something happened in class and the teacher says something and it is not true, they are going to believe the teacher—
> PARTICIPANT: Yeah—
> PARTICIPANT: You can't express your point of view without being—
> PARTICIPANT: There is all—
> PARTICIPANT: They are going to believe the teacher—
> PARTICIPANT: They have always got the power—
> PARTICIPANT: Yeah, because they have just got to tell us that we are being rude or smart alecs—
> PARTICIPANT: And they send you out. And we don't even get a say about like what we do.

PARTICIPANT: If the principal or someone comes up there and the teacher said something, they would believe the teacher not the kid.

Tweetie generalises beyond the school, telling us that adults generally don't listen to children:

…'Cause we are younger, so they think that we are always lying.
PARTICIPANT: Yeah, because if an adult says something it has to be true.

The comments above reflect children's experiences of constraints on their autonomy, inherent in their subordinate or 'inferior' position in generational relations, as it affects their exercise of agency in furthering their well-being. Children can assert agency, at times successfully, in asking to be taken into account, negotiating, resisting and challenging parental and school rule-making. Nevertheless, as Jensen and McKee (2003) point out, their exercise of 'agency takes place within the framework formed outside their influence' (p. 8).

The comments by children on their lack of power, of being non-bosses, and having their knowledge negated, equates with a conceptualisation of children, described by Hood-Williams (1990) and also by John (2003), as non-persons. To the extent that this is a continued conceptualisation of children, it perpetuates the philosophical and social science discourse on well-being according to which children have been considered as non-persons and therefore unable to experience well-being until they attain adulthood (as discussed in Chap. 1). This is exemplified by Ocean in the following extract when he tells us how his positioning as a child imposes constraints on his control of his own life and how this means that well-being is not a possibility for him until he is positioned differently, as an adult.

The interviewer referred to a written statement by Ocean in which he had said '… the kids my age want to grow up so they can finish their lives quickly because they don't enjoy it':

INTERVIEWER: That is a very interesting statement. Can you explain that one?
OCEAN: Well, sometimes people, like children, don't like their lives, how it is going and they can't change the rules and just don't like it. And they just want to finish school and uni quickly so they can just get married and live on their own.
INTERVIEWER: And be independent? Mmm, is that because they don't have any power?
OCEAN: Well, they can't really control themselves the way they want.

Our examination of the 'politics of everyday family life' shows that parents and children are able to exercise their agency in what can be considered interdependent power asymmetries within the family. Both adults and children draw upon their capabilities within opportunity structures that reflect individual, intersubjective and social configurations. These configurations change over time as social circumstances change and also as part of the process of what children describe as 'growing up'. However, we have also shown that, while children are able to and do exercise their agency, significant vertical asymmetries exist. These are experienced by children as part of their ordinary interactions with adults and reflect the continuing inferior status of childhood within the intergenerational order. These inequalities, as we have shown, are legitimated through institutional rules and law as well as cultural constructs of children as incompetent. By overly focusing on the

democratisation of everyday life, we risk failing to see the continued persistence of these structural inequalities.

A Child Standpoint on Agency

The narrative presented in this chapter highlights the significance of the social organisation of generational relations in positioning childhood as a subordinated status. The significance of this positioning, as it influences their exercises of agency, varies according to children's experiences of the extent to which they are valued as persons by those constraining their autonomy. Within their relational positioning vis-à-vis adults, children exercise agency as mediated by specific contexts, whether biological or social. Children consider the exercise of agency as being about making a difference in a relational sense, in ways that contribute towards their well-being, both in their present lives and in preparation for their later stages of life.

Depending on specific contexts, children's capability in the exercise of both agency and autonomy can be enabled by opportunities, or constrained by the lack of them. The constraints may be accepted, negotiated around or resisted. Constraints are described as more easily accepted where relationships with adults are seen as caring and promoting children's best interests. Constraints are more likely to be resisted where children connect them with unfair or uncaring adult responses. Caring relationships provide the context within which children are negotiating and ordering the functioning of an agentic self.

Children invariably attribute constraints on their agency and autonomy or freedom of choice to their status of being non-adults. While some children resist an adult-imposed social order and others accept it, some of the children who contributed to the child standpoint on agency and autonomy constructed in this chapter believe it is only when they acquire the privilege of independence and power, which they associate with adulthood, that they will experience well-being.

Chapter 5
Safety and Ontological Insecurity: Contesting the Meaning of Child Protection

Introduction

Issues of safety were prominent in children's discussions of well-being, reflecting the salience that is placed on safety in contemporary society. Beck (1992) has argued that the normative basis of late modern society is safety and that social values are about prevention of and protection from harm. He contrasts these negative, defensive values with more positive, social change values of earlier eras (Parton 2006, p. 57). Risk anxiety, a widespread ontological insecurity about the future, has become a feature of Western societies.

The way ontological security is related to well-being is described by Padgett (2007), drawing on the work of both Laing (1965) and Giddens (1990), when she refers to ontological security as 'the feeling of well-being that arises from a sense of constancy in one's social and material environment which, in turn, provides a secure platform for identity development and self actualization' (p. 2). The ontological insecurity pervasive in contemporary life 'is in part channelled in and through concerns about children and the nature of childhood' (Katz 2008, p. 6), so that children are positioned centrally as a focus of protection and well-being in discourses on risk at both private and public levels.

In this chapter, we firstly explicate the major approaches to issues of child safety, briefly tracking their distinct histories and the way these histories are interconnected in modern times by the discourse on risk, surveillance, regulation and control of children. We discuss where children's voices have been situated within these approaches.

Secondly, we present a narrative constructed from what children told us in our research. The narrative identifies the value children place on protection within the family and the significance of relationships in mediating children's experiences of safety and security, while also problematising the concepts of vulnerability and protection in the private space of the home. The narrative informs us of the way a structural inconsiderateness to children in public spaces combines with the

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protectionist discourse in constraining children's use of public spaces, except where spaces are child specific.

Highlighted in the narrative, and in the final section of the chapter, is evidence of the ways in which concerns about concrete manifestations of harm to children, and protection from it, are intertwined with children's own existential concerns.

The Interface Between Discourses on Child Protection, Safety and Well-Being: Where Do Children Fit?

Two major policy approaches respond to the focus on child safety. The first of these approaches is that of child protection. Historically, the child protection approach has placed the child as an object of interventions to protect childhood and also to protect society from children as becoming adults (Mason 1986; Parton 1985). More recently, child protection policy and practice seek to prevent harm to children through regulation and surveillance (Parton 2006). The second approach, that of seeking to promote child well-being, attempts to place the child as subject and monitor children's lives. Increasingly, this approach acknowledges that children have valid perspectives on issues of their own safety (e.g. Ben-Arieh et al. 2009; Ben-Arieh and Shimoni 2014).

Concerns for child safety and well-being are relatively recent, and the politics of ensuring children's safety and protection have historically been complex. Increasing social intolerance of adult maltreatment of children has been interlinked with attempts to buttress the status quo of adult society through the control of adult–child relations. As Nigel Parton has argued in his book, *The Politics of Child Abuse*:

> … debates about the nature of child abuse and what to do about it [and we would argue debates about child safety] are in essence not technical but political debates about the good society, and the relationship between the family and the state … (1985, p. xi).

Hence, any understanding of what child protection and safety practices mean in terms of child well-being is anything but straightforward and needs to be situated in political and ideological contexts.

Records of examples of cruelty to, as well as neglect of, children can be found since the earliest times of recorded history. While it is likely that there have always been individuals who have condemned cruelty to children, it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that abuse of children became a social problem (Nelson 1984). Prior to this, there were policies from early in the seventeenth century to deal with children who were without means of economic support, who were 'destitute', such as England's Poor Laws. These kinds of policies, the precursors of laws against child neglect, continued as the main reason for state-sanctioned intervention in families in the Western world during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Laws against assault to children can be found earlier than the nineteenth century, for example, in the American colonies. However, these laws were generally only applied to contractual arrangements, as the authority of fathers in families remained

inviolate (Mason 1986). This authority did not necessarily diminish with modern eras. With modernity came greater separation of family life (the private) from the functioning of the state (the public), and in the process, the power of the father within the family was strengthened. This strengthening of male authority has been traced to the emphasis put on rationality and male authority as the embodiment of reason. Men ruled in the family, as they did outside it, as 'the universal voice of reason', as 'supposedly impartial and objective' in contrast with the emotionality of women and children (Seidler 1997, p. 36). In this context, the predominant concern until the 1970s was the protection of society from deviant youth and children who could *become*, as adults, threats to the stability of adult society (Mason 1986; Parton 1985).

The 'discovery' in the late nineteenth century of physical abuse of children as a significant social problem in the industrialised world has been attributed to the connection made between parental treatment of children and social problems and concerns about family violence, as it affected women as well as children (Parton 1985). However, this discovery of child abuse and its connection with family violence did little to challenge male authority and violence, because family violence was typically defined as a crime of the immoral or alcoholic and depraved poor, and focused on women as well as the racially inferior (Gordon 1990; Mason and Noble-Spruell 1993).

During the twentieth century in Western countries, and increasingly in non-Western countries, as the values around children and childhood changed, the momentum to protect children from abusive as well as neglectful parents achieved greater recognition at the level of state legislation. Underlying the implementation of these state laws and child protection and practice was the medicolegal discourse on child safety. This discourse assumed a 'universal' childhood, where the dependent, vulnerable child is temporally set apart from the adult world by policies of familisation and scholarisation (Mason 2004). Through policies that support the family 'as the social unit with reference to which childhood is conceptualised' (Makrinioti 1994, p. 268), children exist only in their status as dependent on parents, economically, physically and emotionally. This status legitimates parental power over children, except where this power is shared with the school. Scholarisation processes can be understood as a means of separating children from labour and therefore from the public arena, and as a way of governing them towards becoming the normative adults required by the society. The emphasis on children's place as being in the family and in school has the dual function of protecting children from adult society and adult society from children and the delinquent youths or adults they may become. While conceptual connections have been made between the way in which private patriarchy has been supplemented by public patriarchy in the governing of women and children, Scourfield (2003) points to the complexity in the governing of children through child protection policies due to the way patriarchy is entwined with issues of class and race.

In the inquiries and research into child protection of this period, the concept of 'risk' became central to child protection discourse. This concept of risk, as currently superimposed on earlier protective discourse, responds to a pervasive ontological

anxiety and instructs parents to protect their children from both present harm and threats to their future well-being (Jackson and Scott 1999; Parton 2006). It puts child sexual abuse concerns into the public arena through a concern with 'the pernicious consequences of sex and violence in the media and also from the unforeseen (but constantly anticipated) danger from a specific "monstrous" individual – the shadowy figure of the paedophile' (Jackson and Scott 1999, p. 88). Associated with these fears of sex and violence towards youth (but also fears of out-of-control youth), children are considered both at risk and themselves risky. Therefore, they and their parents are deemed in need of surveillance and regulation in many areas of children's lives, from the use of public transport, unchaperoned, to the use of the internet, technology and public places.

The focus on child well-being, which can be traced parallel to and merging with the focus on child protection, has its roots in an emphasis on child survival. A concern with child safety, in terms of child survival, entered the policy arena as a socio-medical problem in the mid-nineteenth century in advanced industrialised nations. The recognition of the importance of child survival was associated with state interests in the regulation and control of populations (Scheper-Hughes 1987, p. 2). It assumed importance at the level of international policy with the launching in 1982 of 'The Child Survival Revolution' by UNICEF, in response to 'a worldwide "silent emergency": the deaths of millions of children each year from preventable causes' (US Fund for UNICEF 2008, p. 5). The strategies for this worldwide approach to child survival were generally focused on child and maternal health issues, but they also included strategies to mobilise communities and political processes towards the goal of reducing child mortality.

Child survival continues to be a focus of contemporary child indicator research and policy, importantly, set within a framework that acknowledges other aspects significant for children's quality of life. For example, in the Index of Child Well-being in the European Union (Bradshaw et al. 2007), child mortality is one of three domains in the cluster 'risk and safety'. As Ben-Arieh et al. (2014) note, in the child well-being approach more generally there is a sensitivity to children's vulnerability and the extent to which they are at risk in relation to adverse trends.

The concept of risk has been incorporated into the child well-being approach used in the development of the European Index, where child well-being outcomes are seen to be 'the result of the interplay between resources and risk factors concerning the personal situation of the child, his or her family, friends, situation at school and the wider society' (Bradshaw et al. 2007, p. 135). Research and policy on child well-being and child indicators frequently takes a child rights approach, as in the development of the European Index, where Bradshaw et al. recognised child mortality as 'the most severe violation of children's rights and a proxy for the safety of children' (2007, p. 163).

In the emphasis on survival and the sensitivity to risk, much child well-being indicator research and policy uses the term *safety* synonymously with the term *security* (e.g. *A picture of Australia's children*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2012); indeed, in some languages, such as Spanish, the two words mean the same. However, some surveys of child subjective well-being juxtapose the word 'future' with

the word 'security', making a temporal distinction, in domains employed, between children's 'present safety' and their 'future security' (e.g. Cummins and Lau 2005; Gonzales et al. 2012).

Both the child protection policy and the child well-being policy reflect modernity's focus on risk and safety/security and on monitoring childhood. The extent of intermingling of the two discourses on the issue of the surveillance of child safety can be observed in some Australian documents, such as the NSW Interagency Guidelines, where the 'central vision of *Keep Them Safe* is that child wellbeing and child protection is a collective or shared responsibility' (2014). Similarly, the Victorian Government Protocol Document *Protecting the Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Young People* 'details current policy and practice to promote and support the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Victorian schools and licensed children's services … in working together to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect' (State Government of Victoria 2011/2014). While the child well-being approach continues as something of a counterpoint to the child protection approach—in so far as it promotes a broad conceptualisation of well-being as 'the qualities of life' and the 'many possible dimensions of a good or bad life' that is underpinned by children's rights values and the significance of the ecological context of children's lives (Ben-Arieh et al. 2014, p. 1)—the broader discourse of surveillance of children permeates many aspects of the well-being discourse. It is present not only in the way it incorporates the concept of risk but also in its monitoring functions. This is explicit in systems and policy documents that elide the words 'well-being' and 'surveillance'. For example, the Western Australian *Health and Well-being Surveillance System (WAHWSS)* includes a questionnaire for parents and carers to answer on behalf of children (Western Australian Government 2011). More globally, both discourses are part of what Katz (2008) describes as an ontological anxiety over the geopolitical future that has challenged the configuring of boundaries between adulthood and childhood and focused on 'the securitizing of children's everyday lives' in attempts to resolve contemporary problems through a focus on today's children as the adults of tomorrow (Katz 2008, p. 7). In this securitising process, the focus is on children's safety in the present and security in the future.

The adultcentricism that has marked the discourse on risk and child protection is reflected in the historical marginalisation of children's voices on issues of their own safety and security. Child protection policy and practice has developed 'without direct reference to the prime objects of the exercise, children themselves' (Butler and Williamson 1996, p. 86). It has generally only been when children have become adults and reported on their childhoods that we have seen a widening of the debate on risk and protection. This has happened, for example, as a result of the focus on institutional child sexual abuse that has occurred since the late 2000s in various jurisdictions. Children's experiences of abuse have now entered the discourse, voiced by adults. That children's experiences of abuse are still most loudly heard through adult voices reflects what Butler and Williamson (1996) argue as 'the relative worthlessness' attributed to 'childhood experience in itself (as opposed to its value as preparation for adulthood)' (p. 86). While there have been initially isolated and now increasing attempts (e.g. Butler and Williamson 1996; ChildFund

Alliance 2013; Tucci et al. 2008) to hear children's voices on child protection issues, it is within the child well-being approach to safety that their voices have been more actively promoted. Significant has been the research by Ben-Arieh et al. and Ben-Arieh and Shimoni, which has identified that the views of children and adults on child safety differ and also that children make links between their subjective well-being and their safety (e.g. Ben-Arieh and Shimoni 2014).

In spite of the framing of the contemporary discourse on child safety and protection by issues of ontological insecurity, and the increasing acknowledgement of the importance of children's subjectivities, negligible attention has been given to how children themselves experience ontological security and insecurity. An exception has been the inclusion by González et al. (2012) of an 'Existential Sense of Meaning Scale' in their survey of adolescent safety and security. In our research, children, in making connections between emotions and their understandings of well-being, also gave salience to the significance of their experiences of ontological security and insecurity for well(or ill)-being. In the children's narrative, presented in this chapter, issues of ontological security and insecurity are interwoven in children's discussions of protection, safety and well-being.

Children Connect Protection and Safety to Their Well-Being

When we elicited children's views on well-being, we did not seek responses on specific domains, such as safety or protection (see Chap. 2). However, many children directly responded to our general question by linking well-being with safety. For example, in the following extract from an interview with Bobbie, issues of protection and safety are linked with a more general statement about well-being—in holistic or eudemonic terms—as living well:

> Interviewer: Um, so this research is about well-being. Other people are using the word in many different ways. Is it a word that means anything to you?
> Bobbie: Um it is like the way we've been protected and ourselves in general – like safety and things like that. Sort of got to do with the way you live [well] and everything.

Some other children, when asked about well-being, more specifically connected safety and well-being with not being harmed. For example, in the following group discussion, Participants 1, 2 and 3 positioned themselves in relation to others, as knowing subjects, in differentiating between those who protect them and those who may potentially harm them:

> Interviewer: When we are talking about young people's well-being, what do you think, you know, where do you think that might be, what that's about?
> Participant 1: Keeping them out of danger …
> Participant 3: That you know that like nothing is going to like happen to you.
> Participant 2: And when you are around people, that you know won't like hurt you or anything.

Butler and Williamson (1996) carried out research in which children talked about safety; they summarised that many children use the word 'safe' as meaning a person

who can be trusted, who is reliable, as implied in the discussion of Participants, 1, 2 and 3. Trust is a key concept employed by participants in our research in discussions of safety and protection, in terms of being able to trust their physical environments and more particularly in terms of their relationships with others. Psychological processes, in which emotions are experienced in relations with caretakers and in the routines of daily life, are at the crux of experiences of basic trust and ontological security (Giddens 1991, building on the work of Erik Erikson). In locating the development of trust with the caregiver and in the mutuality, or intersubjective responsiveness, between caregiver and infant, Erikson emphasised the importance of family and the home for children's experiences of ontological security.

The Home and Intimate Relationships as 'A Protective Cocoon'

This conceptualisation of security as provided within the home and family has been a key aspect of modernity's construction of children as dependents requiring protection and of the idealisation of the home as the appropriate location for children (Harden 2000; Slater 1998). In accord with this construction, children typically described their home as the place of intimate relationships and the place where they experienced, or could expect to experience, security. When children located their place of security within the home, where home became a 'haven', material and social environments were often contiguous. In the home, they tell us, they could be protected from external dangers by, firstly, material features of the home installed by their parents.

Bobbie describes the material elements of protection, such as locks on the doors to keep others out, as part of parents' protective role in controlling who can enter the 'safe' place:

> Interviewer: Yeah, okay. So can you tell me a bit more about the way that you are protected? So what sorts of things protect you?
>
> Bobbie: Well our [parents] and that. 'Cause they, like at night they've got locks on doors so people can't get in.

And Luke considers a potential danger in his town is reduced by the safety of his home:

Well, I suppose we could get broken into around here.

But he rejects it as a potential threat:

But I doubt it, because we've got fairly good locks.

Pertinent to what Bobbie and Luke are saying here, Harden (2000), in describing findings in her research where children also identified feelings of safety with the home, draws on Goffman (1971). Goffman argues that the physical space, 'walls, ceiling and floor', of the home is significant. It places barriers around individuals that allow them to keep potential 'matters for alarm' outside the home; thus, people can create an 'inside' and 'outside' (2010, p. 285).

Additionally, home was a place where children could experience safety through being able to belong, because they could engage emotionally with their caretakers in having a sense of trust.

In the following extract, Katie talks about security in terms directly linked with being cared for or loved in a relationship of belonging and trust:

> Interviewer: You've picked out [picture] number 8. Yeah.
> Katie: And it is a picture of a family hugging. So children, small children near the family. And they are well. They are safe with the family for love and—
> Interviewer: So do you think it is safe for children in family?
> Katie: Yeah, and also when for them to trust the parents.

For Katie, in terms of her well-being, trust and safety are linked with practical tasks her parents do for her (tasks related to her survival) within the emotional context of care and in the context of children's dependency on their parents:

> Interviewer: So how do we know if we are safe? What do parents need to do to keep children safe?
> Katie: Well, they need to, they need to um, do things to help them and so that the children know that, like help them, to cook for them, look after them to go to sleep. And um teach them, so that like, the children know that [they are cared for by] the parents—

Similarly, for Beckham, the importance of trust in the continuity of others' care for him is underlined in the following discussion where he connects his mother's care for him with his dependence on her for his very survival:

> Interviewer: Your Mum. Yeah. Tell me how your Mum is important?
> Beckham: Because if I don't have her, I don't know how [that]I would survive right now.

When the interviewer responds:

Yeah, okay. So why is Mum so important? What does she do that is really important to you?

Beckham indicates that he values both the affective or social side of care and the instrumental or material care she provides:

She takes care of me and she provides food for me and stuff.

It was the emotional elements of belonging and trust that children identified as intrinsic to what they particularly valued about home. They spoke about their own personal spaces within the home as fostering a sense of security and well-being. In the following extract, Pipsqueak and Bella bring together ideas of material surrounds, experienced in their beds, with a sense of belonging and protection:

> Interviewer: Okay, and so how do you feel when you go to bed and you are cosy in winter and you get to read or draw. How does it make you feel?
> Pipsqueak: Happy.
> Interviewer: Happy, yeah. Are there any other words you would use to describe how you feel?
> Pipsqueak: Um, um, um, um, safe.
> Interviewer: Safe. Yeah.
> Pipsqueak: 'Cause it is like a little box.
> Interviewer: Okay, so you can be safe in your little box. What are you safe from?
> Pipsqueak: Um, bad stuff.

Interviewer: Bad stuff. Okay, so it is a safe place to be.
Bella: I think that you know how the world is rough and stuff. When you are, when you are in bed sometimes, if you are not cosy you don't, you, if you are not cosy you worry about it.

Pipsqueak and Bella can be seen to be giving a literal interpretation of the 'protective cocoon' that Giddens uses as a metaphor to describe ontological security (1991, p. 40). Central to Giddens's conceptualisation of the 'protective cocoon' is the concept of trust, operating as 'a defensive carapace' that 'brackets out questions about self, other and the object world'. Giddens states that '[t]he protective cocoon is essentially a sense of "unreality" … it is a bracketing on the level of practice, of possible events which could threaten the bodily or physical integrity of the agent' in order to be able to get on with everyday lives (1991, p. 40).

The ontological security provided by the 'protective cocoon' can be recognised as operating for Tien in the next extract, where she refers to the cosiness she experiences in connection with her material environment and her trusting relations with her caring parents:

Tien: [This picture is about when] we can't go to school so we stay in bed, so it makes us feel warm and we can get lots of sleep so we can feel better.
Interviewer: Mmm.
Tien: And it's got blankets and pillows to keep you comfortable. And like and your parents, and your parents if you are lonely if the children need anything they ring a bell and the parents might know and the parents come to the bedroom and get [what children need] for them. And they eat in the bedroom. And read in the bedroom and sleep in the bed.

Some children spell out what they mean by trust, operating intersubjectively in their relationships with family and also with friends in enabling them to experience security and well-being.

Ali spells out the link between a relationship where someone is 'there with (or, for) them' (as discussed in Chap. 3) and the trust and safety inherent in reliable relationships, for ventures where she might otherwise feel unsafe:

I think that they need to um, to have someone being there with them when they go somewhere so that they don't feel unsafe. Someone that they can trust.

The concept of trust as it enables children to proceed in their everyday lives without fearing they will be hurt is described in the following extract from a discussion with several participants (individual participants' voices were not able to be distinguished):

Interviewer: So it [safety] is about, it is about being with people that you know won't hurt you?
Participant: Yep—
Participant: And that you can trust.
Interviewer: People that you can trust. And who are the sort of people you can trust, do you think?
Participant: Family—
Participant: Your family and friends.
Participant: And friends.

These discussions draw attention to the fact that being able to 'trust' others was fundamental to children's feelings of security at the social level. These others were

not just, or necessarily, family. However, they could be considered as familiar, supporting Luhmann's (1979) contention that a precondition for trust is familiarity (Jalava 2006).

In the next extract from a discussion with Stitch, he also tells us about 'trust' and how it is experienced in social relations—with family and friends. In the broader discussion from which the following is extracted, Stitch is talking about trust being important for sharing one's inner thoughts and feelings with others, as in being able to tell them 'secrets':

> Interviewer: … thank you very much, Stitch. I'm just wondering, on your first page here you said something about trust being very important. I'm just wondering what trust actually means to you?
>
> Stitch: Trust means for me that when you need to get something off your chest you can always tell a person you trust and they won't tell anyone else if you don't want them to …

In response to the next question, Stitch makes clear the role of familiarity in being able to trust:

> Interviewer: Mmm. So something um, something that you are worried about would be like that. Yeah? Okay. Um, how would you actually know if you could trust someone?
>
> Stitch: Um, if you been with them a long time and you probably already told them a secret and they haven't told anyone else.

When the interviewer reflects on what Stitch says and extends the discussion by a further question:

Mmm, so you sort of try them out first. Yeah. How does trusting affect how good you feel about things?

Stitch describes how those you trust feel like 'a part of you', invoking the significance of intersubjectivity with others as the core of trusting relationships and identifying familiarity in these relationships with these friends being 'as if' family:

> Probably affects you by, because you feel like, like they are a part of you. Like a friend, like part of the family that you can trust, and you feel and they feel that they are a brother or sister.

Children are thus telling us something about the nature of friendship, that people outside the family unit can also be trusted. For these children, trusting relationships are not limited to the home. Other research also informs us that peers, as well as adults other than family, such as teachers and neighbours (Bessell with Mason 2014), can provide this sense of trust, of 'being there' and of safety for children.

The Home as Risky: Reducing Capability for Agency

In the above extracts, Beckham, Katie, Ali and Stitch underline the centrality of trust in intimate relationships for experiencing well-being. Being able to trust reduces the complexity of the future (Luhmann 1979, p. 20) and thus is important in enabling individuals to engage in the world and exercise agency. It can be argued

that, in learning to trust through their experiences of safety in their dependence on their parents, children are then able to use their agency to decide who amongst their familiars they can depend upon and trust. In making such decisions, children are clearly demonstrating a reflexivity around what is risky, which Harden (2000) points out is generally denied as a capability of children in public debates on adult management of risk to children.

In ontological terms, what children, and Stitch in particular, tell us about deciding which friends they can trust to protect them and keep them safe can be understood as reflecting what Giddens (1991) describes as the 'leap into faith' into the unknown (p. 3) and Mollering (2006) refers to as the 'leap of faith' (p. 105)—the suspension of doubt required for engaging with, and using agency in, the world. Taking that 'leap' is likely to be challenging for children for whom dependence on parents, trust and confidence in engaging with the world are problematic. In these instances, it is significant that, as Barbalet (2009) makes explicit, trust involves asymmetrical relations, and the person trusting is dependent on the power of the person they trust. Some of the children in our research indicated that they could not always trust that their parents would not harm them, that they would be safe with them.

In Participant I's interview, he talked about times when he did not feel safe with his father:

> Interviewer: … when things are going [not so well] and you don't feel so safe, what things need to change for you to feel safe?
> Participant I: My Dad doesn't always shout at me.

Later in the interview, after Participant I had been talking about threats he felt to his safety from others, the interviewer asked:

> And what about your Dad, do you think sometimes when your Dad yells at you it is because [like the teacher] he doesn't ask what is going on, too, or is that different?
> Participant I: That is different. Because, like once me and my brother went to my Dad's house and it was a long time ago and um, my brother, he was holding the shopping and he was going there and he had just come out of the toilet and his pants were still down, and then my Dad was holding a lot of shopping and then my Dad said hurry up, hurry up, we don't have all day, and then he kicked my brother and like my brother started crying and it was sad because he, he, he didn't do anything. And um,
> Interviewer: That is very sad. So sometimes your Dad is not quite so safe.
> Participant I: Sometimes. But sometimes, like he lets us go places and like we have a good time.

It can be argued that it is this ambiguity, connected with Participant I's emotional and material dependence on his father, that is at the core of children's experiences of vulnerability in their relations with their parents, who may at times threaten their safety but on whom they are also dependent emotionally for 'good' times and, indeed, for survival.

In the following extract, we learn more about how children's experiences of parental (in these instances, fathers') threats to their safety can threaten their ontological insecurity by creating what Giddens (1991) refers to as fissures in their protective cocoons.

In discussion with Beckham, the interviewer followed up on his earlier reference to 'feel[ing] hurt' by interactions between his parents:

And what about hurt? What's that about?
Beckham: Like, I don't know if it is – because, I don't know, I just feel hurt when like my parents [fight and split up].

When, a little later in the interview, the interviewer focuses the discussion around a written comment Beckham had made about a picture he'd chosen to discuss, we get an idea of how he experiences insecurity, in the form of fear of abandonment by his father. This fear disturbs Beckham's 'trust in the continuity of others' (Giddens 1991, p. 242):

Interviewer: Okay, I'm just wondering if you could tell me why you've got [the word] frightened there. So what would be frightening about it [the picture]?
Beckham: [Pause] like your Dad's going away. He runs off in a hurry, you don't know what is going on. You are afraid he is never going to come back or something.

The significance of feelings of powerlessness to avert a potentially harmful experience—implicit in what Beckham tells us about this interaction and in what Participant I tells us about his relationship with his father—is made clear in the following extract. In this exchange, Bobbie explains the importance of respect between parents and children, in enabling children to feel safe, not just in the home but in order to take 'a leap into the unknown' in relations with others (Giddens 1991, p. 41):

Interviewer: Yep. Okay. Um, so is feeling safe at home something that is important to your well-being then?
Bobbie: Um, I suppose so, because if you don't feel safe at home, then you are going to find it difficult to feel safe at other places.
Interviewer: Oh yeah, so if you can't feel safe at home, chances are you might not feel safe anywhere.
Bobbie: But then on the other hand you might have a bad family environment, so you are not going to feel safe at home so then other places you will feel safe.
Interviewer: Okay, so for some kids it could be [that] if you don't feel safe at home, somewhere else, like school for example, might actually be a safer place. Yeah, okay. Do you think there are other things that make us feel safe at home? So apart from stuff like, you know, having locks on your doors and windows. Um, what are some of the other things that you think make us feel safe at home?

In her responses to this last question, Bobbie identifies the importance of respect between parents and children in enabling children to feel safe in the home:

Bobbie: Um, the way our parents treat us and that.
Interviewer: Okay—
Bobbie: Like, if they treat you with respect and you treat them with respect and then you are going to have like a happy environment; but if you're the type of child that gets abused by their parents, then you are not going to feel safe at all because you are just going to think [at] home I'm going to get abused again sort of thing.

In aligning feeling safe with respectful adult–child relations, Bobbie is making a point that sociologists such as Goffman (1971/2010), Giddens (1991) and Honneth (1995) have made. Respect is important, particularly in association with trust, as a factor in the development of self and ontological security. The significance of respect in ensuring child well-being was recognised by Janusz Korczak (1929), the child rights advocate, who saw respect and its presupposition of the recognition of the human worth of the child as fundamental to the rights of the child.

Children's vulnerability to hurt or harm within the family is linked to their subordination in relations with parents. This means they are required to conform to 'parental will' (Hood-Williams 1990, p. 164) and cannot challenge parental actions that they find 'scary' and that constrain their exercise of agency. Conversely, children can experience parents' protective actions in the present, even where understood by them as expressions of care, as undermining their future security. In these instances, parental surveillance can affect children's exercise of agency in ways that children see as contributing to their future insecurity. This is illustrated by the following extracts from interviews with Bobbie and Prudence.

Bobbie, who earlier in this narrative indicates the centrality of being safe to well-being, also informed the interviewer that being protected from participating in the world outside the home was not necessarily conducive to well-being:

> Interviewer: And I think you said that one way your Mum looks out for you and tries to protect you is that she doesn't always let you do everything you want?
> Bobbie: Yeah—
> Interviewer: Yeah. Um, so for example she might tell you, you can't go somewhere because it might be late or you might get attacked or something, or it might not be safe to catch a train at night?
> Bobbie: Yep—
> Interviewer: Um, so do you think it is important for your well-being to have a Mum like that who does look out for you?
> Bobbie: Um, yes and no. Because, like, if we didn't have parents like that then bad things [could happen] or we could get ourselves into danger, but um, no, because we have to learn and experience life ourselves. We can't just be being protected all the time. Because when we do get older and we are out there by ourselves, we are not going to know what to do.

Here Bobbie is talking about the vulnerability she may experience in the future, as a consequence of untrusting parental protection practices. In the following discussion, Prudence also implies that, in mediating children's safety, parents provide them with valued care that can also increase their vulnerability by, for example, limiting the child's capability in coping with the world outside the home—for Prudence, a world defined in global terms:

> Prudence: Yep, I think you've got to do, like you can't just do stuff with your family and friends. You've got to do stuff internationally.
> Interviewer: Mmm, why is that?
> Prudence: 'Cause it like, um, I don't really know. Um, yeah I believe like it is really fun spending time with your family and friends, but I think it is important to go out and do stuff on your own and serve the world and stuff, because it helps you be braver.
> Interviewer: Be braver, yeah okay. Yeah. What is it about being brave? What might be a bit scarier or different out there?
> Prudence: Um, I don't know. Um, like if you were in New York or something and someone came up and hassled you, you need to know how to react and …Yeah, um, I think it is important that kids know how to react in certain situations and stuff.
> Interviewer: Mmm, how can we help children learn some of those [skills] or give them those opportunities? What do you think adults should be doing?
> Prudence: They should be teaching them how to react and giving them like lots of experiences and plenty of opportunity to do stuff.
> Interviewer: What sort of stuff?
> Prudence: Like go to Karate and learn how to defend yourself or something.

Protection by parents, as Bobbie and Prudence describe it, can be a double-edged sword. They acknowledge the value of parents' protective or caring attitudes to them. At the same time, they challenge these attitudes. In doing so, they are constructing their childhoods in terms of their becomingness, identifying how safety in their presents can mitigate against them acquiring skills they consider important for their future security. These are skills they consider will enable them to engage with multiple social spaces, skills that will move them beyond the boundaries of their intimate worlds to broaden their lifeworlds to 'out there'. In pointing to the implications of engaging in the world beyond that of their families, for their self-efficacy in the present and future, Bobbie and Prudence reflect Goffman's (1971/2010) contention that we do 'not so much come to know the world around' us as we 'become experienced and practised in coping with it'. Individuals become competent performers through building up 'experience in coping with the threats and opportunities in given situations' (Goffman 1997/2010, p. 249). Therefore, the concept of safety, initially associated with particular social constructions of the private sphere, extends to being safe beyond the family.

As these children invoke the need to be brave, resourced and prepared for situations in the world beyond the family, we see how they modify what safety means, in terms of its connectedness with their ongoing experiences, including changes in their self-understanding of their capabilities. In the context of the protection discourse, which is about adults controlling children's participation in public life (Harden 2000, p. 44), children are contesting the social order; as their lifeworlds expand, they are shifting responsibility for deciding on their safety to themselves.

In what amounts to a redefinition by Prudence and Bobbie of child safety—in terms of both becoming and being safe and of the significance of practice in this process—support is lent to Kitzinger's argument that it is important to empower children to cope with risk, rather than restrict them from exposure to it (1988, p. 83). Relevant to operationalising a parental role of empowering children is Nussbaum's Capability Approach, when it is understood in the terms described by Biggeri of assisting children, as their lifeworlds expand, to convert their capabilities into functionings as 'brave' and competent persons outside the home (Biggeri et al. 2010).

The fear and surveillance discourse, which governs children's lives, is accompanied by experiences of vulnerability in public spaces. The exclusion of children's voices from the public arena means that the consequent obstacles to them participating in this arena with ease are rarely confronted.

Riskiness in Public Spaces

Children tell us they feel excluded from and threatened in public spaces. As in research by Harden (2000), children tell us that they feel vulnerable in public spaces, pointing to fears of traffic and of dangerous strangers. The context for these fears is described as resulting from a structural indifference to children in urban public places, in association with socially constructed ontological insecurities that are symbolised as predatory monsters preying on innocent children.

Structural Indifference to Children

The disrespect and fears children experience in public places can be linked to what has been described by Qvortrup (2014, citing Kaufmann eg 1990) as structural inconsiderateness or structural indifference to children and childhood. This inconsiderateness combines with policies directly excluding children from public places. Where children describe more positive experiences of public spaces, it is typically associated with spaces designed to be more child friendly.

According to Qvortrup, 'the modern economy and infra-structure have not been built up with children or childhood in mind; planning has not *considered* childhood; it has practically been *indifferent* to childhood and its children' (2014, p. 670). Qvortrup (2000) has drawn attention to the way in which, in the 'increasingly more urban environments, dictated by adult economic interests, children's lifeworlds are squeezed, their degrees of freedom reduced and their opportunities for autonomous explorations more and more beyond their reach' (p. 93). Operating in a complementary way to the general inconsiderateness towards children in public places are policies that from the late nineteenth century have excluded children from the streets and located them in the home, as a method of surveillance and control towards conformity with social norms (e.g. Donzelot 1979; Mason 1991). In contemporary times, 'in effect, adults have (re)defined the public domain as their own private space' (Matthews et al. 2000, p. 281) by restricting or inhibiting, through surveillance measures, children's access to these spaces and locating them in the home for purposes of their protection and control.

Daniel talked about how the design of public spaces and the structure of buildings for the use of adults contributed to him feeling unsafe to the extent that his very survival was threatened:

> Yes, like they have like more adult stuff and then they have like long buildings [that are okay] for adults to walk past and the children won't be safe and they might die.
> Interviewer: Oh, how could that happen?
> Daniel: 'Cause the road is big and then they leave it for adults. 'Cause they know that adults can walk over. And they don't put any signs for safety. They just put [signs] for adults so then they can walk over.
> Interviewer: Do you mean like road problems. Like getting hit on the road, or do you mean safety because people might actually attack you?
> Daniel: Like roads … they [builders] don't care about children. And then they could just walk over and just get crushed by cars.
> Interviewer: Yeah, okay so sometimes the adults they are just not thinking about safety of children in road safety and things like that.
> Daniel: Yep.

Harden (2000) comments that children's smaller physical size limits the extent to which they can feel comfortable in participating in public spaces that have been designed primarily for adults. Participant B refers to her insignificance as a child in comparison with the speed of cars and feels her safety is threatened by drivers for whom she is invisible:

> Beady It is like zoom, zoom and they are there and they don't see you. It is like oh, is that a car? Because they go so fast and you try and have speed limits and stuff, but who cares? No-one can see you.

Traffic was a major concern for some of the children in our research, as it was in research by Virginia Morrow conducted in England. She has argued that traffic and busy roads are practical constraints on how children use their environments. A fear of size and speed of vehicles was of concern to some in our research:

> Participant 2: Someone got hit by a semitrailer in S. Street. That is why I always get scared of semitrailers. Like because my Mum and I were always standing in the middle of the crossing and big semitrailers just come past, and it is like that far away from you and it like scares you, like something is about to fall off because it is always rattling—
>
> Interviewer: So and there's, so there are things like the big semitrailers and …
>
> Participant 3: Like really big trucks because they look like, because they look like they are only like a few centimetres behind your car, and like when like the lights go green, it feels like they are going to just ride over you.

In research by Bessell with Mason (2014), children, in discussing their experiences of community, referred to drivers behaving in ways that endangered others, citing examples of road rage, speeding and other risky driving manoeuvres like 'burnouts' and 'donuts'. In the well-being research, children's concerns related not just to fear of the speed of cars and the dangers posed by large vehicles but also from their own knowledge of traffic accidents:

> Participant 1: And a guy got, a guy got smashed out the front of my Grandma's. Smashed, and there was a car, [demonstrating how the accident occurred] this is a car [and] this is the person. Ditto, ditto, ditto—

Children's fear of traffic is a major determinant of the way they feel about public spaces and their fear in using them.

Within his life span of 10 years, one participant experiences his neighbourhood as more risky than when he was younger:

> Participant: I used to be allowed to like ride by myself just around the block and everything with my friends, like when I was really little. My friends used to live next to me and we just rode around, but now I can't because it's busy and anything could happen—

Some children considered they were disadvantaged in their capacity to use the street, compared to the experiences of earlier generations, reflecting perhaps increased adult concerns and therefore restrictions on children:

> Beady: It is not necessarily quite as safe [as when parents used their neighbourhoods] … there is not that kind of freedom where everyone, I mean you can't even go on the street anymore, because you are afraid of getting run over by a car because there are so many coming around.

The extent to which cities are unfriendly to children has been recognised in the international Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) launched in 1996. This initiative attempts to respond to the disrespect and fear children experience in the urban environment. As part of the CFCI, a resolution was passed during the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) aimed at making cities livable places for all, with a special focus on children. The CFCI has a global secretariat, established by UNICEF to provide support and services to cities interested in

being part of the initiative and to encourage networking and sharing of experiences to promote the well-being of children in cities (Riggio and Kilbane 2000). An example of a city project with UNICEF Child Friendly status is Bendigo, Australia, which has established a set of indicators on which to base planning and monitor progress (Pope and Galvin 2013). The city's website states that its vision is to treat children as equal citizens and to hear children's views and take them seriously (City of Greater Bendigo 2014).

A factor working against the promotion of public spaces as child friendly is what has been referred to as 'propaganda' promoting fear, as exemplified by an article in a major Australian newspaper titled, 'Police threats to parents on children walking alone'. It states 'PARENTS have been "lectured" by police for letting their children walk to the shops or catch a bus on their own, with senior police saying incidents will be reported to the Department of Community Services if a child is considered at risk' (Arlington and Stevenson 2012).

Pitting Dangerous Strangers Against the Innocent Child

Children's experiences of exclusion from public spaces, as a consequence of an adultcentric indifference to them as small people not yet practised in the skills required to navigate the spaces of urban life, are exacerbated by what Altheide (2006) describes as the 'propaganda' that promotes fear and social control being imposed on children by public authorities, utilising the media, through the conduit of parents and teachers. As objects of the framework for this propaganda, children serve a dual role in which both protection and control of them is required as part of the process of furthering the construction of childhood innocence (Altheide 2002). 'Stranger danger' has been described as a 'buzzword' developed in education and the media in the early twenty-first century to refer to the threat strangers pose to children (Stokes 2009, p. 7). Pain (2006) argues that the notion of the dangerous 'stranger' serves a symbolic purpose in its contrast with the innocent child and cites Ahmed (2000) who describes the oppositional relations set up between the child and the stranger who comes to 'embody that which must be expelled from the purified space of the community, the purified life of the good citizen' (p. 22).

In the following extracts, Chub and Starlight seem to be referring to this 'propaganda' of fear and the role prescribed for parents as conveyers of this fear of strangers:

> Interviewer: Okay, and so why is it that you only talk to people that you know and not people you don't know?
> Chub: Um, they are strangers.
> Interviewer: Yeah, they are strangers, okay. So maybe it is not a safe thing to do.
> Chub: Mummy and school said that [I should] never talk to strangers.

That it is strangers, people 'you don't know', who are to be feared is indicated by Starlight:

Interviewer: … So what might, you know when you said they [your cousins] protect you because people might take you away or something, is that a real fear that children think about do you think?

Starlight: There are people, some kids like five year olds or six [year olds] think that people might take them away … like strangers in F or C [suburbs].

Interviewer: Mmm, mmm, and where do they get those ideas from?

Starlight: From the news or their parents, that the parents tell the kids to keep away from strangers and never talk to them.

Interviewer: Mmm—

Starlight: If you don't know them.

In the extract below, the interviewer reports back to Angel (and for the transcriber) on a photo Angel had taken (as part of the project) and what she had written on it about the role of trusted friends and her own agency in protecting her from risk:

Interviewer: Angel has got a photo now of a crossing near the lights. And I was wondering what this was all about when I got the photos back. It says:

This picture on the left is a picture of a crossing. Children can cross here because it is safe. Some kids might feel worried if they're by themselves. They walk home and no one's there. Some kids are used to walking by themselves. Other kids walk home with their friends. That's what I do. I walk with my friends. If I can't walk with my friends I walk by myself. I'm used to it. There's lots of other people that live near my house. I just pretend that I'm with them. I just follow them until I get home.

Interviewer: That is pretty clever. Um, what do you think might be sort of a worry if you are walking home on your own? Can you tell us about that?

Angel: Um, someone might just take you, and if no-one is around you and they can't help you.

Interviewer: So if people are around that you know, what could they do to help if that happened?

Angel: Like they can help you … and they can call police.

Interviewer: Angel, where did you get the idea that something could happen to you? Like what, what have you heard about that?

Angel: Um, 'cause my Mum always tells me to be careful 'cause someone might like get you.

Furedi (2001) argues—and statistics for the United Kingdom (Jackson and Scott 1999) support the notion—that, in Western countries such as the United Kingdom, concerns about the potential threat of strangers to children do not match the concrete reality of the extent to which children's safety is exposed to risks. A great deal of research has shown that the extent of risk to children's safety within the public sphere is outweighed by that experienced within the private sphere of the family (Pain 2006). However, to dismiss children's fears of strangers on the basis that they do not appear to match the actual risk may itself be risky. Pain argues that '[i]f an approach is taken to discerning risk and fear which is child-centred, cognisant of the social stratification of risk, and firmly grounded in particular places, parents' and children's fears may sometimes be seen to have a material basis' (2006, p. 222). Findings from Pain's research, which investigated more than one thousand UK

children's experiences of victimisation and fear of crime, showed high levels of victimisation and harassment of children in public spaces and revealed a correlation between these negative experiences and the extent of the children's fears. This research also provided evidence of the way in which such experiences and fears are socially stratified.

There is support for Pain's findings in Australian research by Bessell with Mason (2014) and Mason and Falloon (2001). From what children told us in these studies, children have reason for their fears, based on their experiences of harassment. This reflects existing structural ordering of child–adult relations. In these relations, adult hostility may be expressed in everyday occurrences, such as angry remarks to children on public transport or in the street (Mason and Falloon 2001), or as inconsiderateness to their well-being in leaving broken glass on their school oval following weekend drinking in the neighbouring pub (Bessell with Mason 2014). Further, the research of Bessell with Mason drew attention to potentially differing experiences for children in different socio-economic contexts. Unlike children in more advantaged areas, children in comparatively more socio-economically disadvantaged areas reported some direct or indirect experiences of dangerous strangers in public spaces. They gave examples of being spectators to drug-related violence directed at adults and themselves having felt threatened by alcohol-fuelled, potentially unpredictable, dangerous adult behaviour.

In revealing the extent to which children feel threatened by the structural inconsiderateness they experience in public spaces, our research provides a background of literal reasons why children fear negotiating public spaces. Additionally, some children in the well-being research, like Luke in the following extract, link a general fear with more specific experiences of potential dangers posed by adult violence:

> Interviewer: Okay, great, excellent. Um, [pause] … just looking at people in your class or people that live round you your age … do you know [of] anything that would bother children your age, young people your age?
>
> Luke: … just the senseless act of violence would probably really set me off, you know. I don't know whether it would make me angry with what was going on there or really, really confused.
>
> Interviewer: Has that happened to you?
>
> Luke: No, not yet—
>
> Interviewer: But [it is] something you have obviously worried about?
>
> Luke: Yeah, there is a lot of things. If I ever want to walk around here at night, to see people [who are] out, you know, gets me worried; gees, like they are drunk. I'm walking across the street. That worries me a fair bit.

In research on children, communities and social capital in Australia (Bessell with Mason 2014), children discussed being scared of adults who drank and therefore could engage in unpredictable behaviour in public places. In the well-being research, some children expressed fear of the dangerous, drunken behaviour in which teenagers could engage:

> Interviewer: And is it particular groups that worry you? Are there some people that you are more scared of than others?
>
> Participant 2: Teenagers …

Participant 3: Like the people that stay up late and reckon they are so good and run around the roads—
Participant 2: And they get drunk …
Interviewer: So it's, it's those teenagers—
Participant 2: They can like set fire to things and stuff.

Adults both fear for and express fear of teenagers. And as a marginalised group, in terms of power associated with size and age, teenagers are able to threaten younger children.

As discussed above, children's experiences of adults' hostility and lack of consideration for them in public spaces provide a context for fears of 'strange' people and situations. When children's vulnerabilities and literal reasons for fearing public spaces are combined with the protectionist panic elicited by global anxieties, which places responsibility for keeping children safe on parents and teachers, the outcome tends to be a construction of risk that lessens children's opportunities for acquiring agentic functionings. While serving to maintain a symbolism around innocent childhood, such policies fail to confront key structural features of child–adult relations, such as the generational inequalities in power and resources that can contribute to risk. Further, as Pain (2006) suggests from her research, the experiences of children in poorer circumstances 'appear far more pressing than the "SUV-clad lifestyles" of the small minority which have received more attention in public debates about fear' (such as the debate that suggests parents' fears of risk to their children are negligible) (p. 237). The significance of the contribution socio-economic factors make to dangerous activities was highlighted by Luke, in a continuation of his discussion above, when describing violence and drunkenness in his town, including the involvement of teenagers in such activities:

Interviewer: Mmm, so yeah. I wonder what would need to change to actually make this town turn it around? What do you reckon?
Luke: You probably couldn't change it.
Interviewer: If there was one thing that you could change that would make a difference what do you reckon it would be? For young people? For you to feel okay about living here?
Luke: Probably to um, I don't know, um, give welfare to the single mothers around here. 'Cause like, some kids that you know, um, yeah they don't have a Dad, so yeah, they don't have as much money, so they just go out and plunder things basically.
Interviewer: Mmm, so you think money would make a difference?
Luke: Yeah, I think it would make a difference.

Our findings on well-being indicated that the public places where children did feel safe tended to be those specially designed to be child friendly—places where they could have fun or enjoy sport. For example, Tulee described enjoying playing sport 'near the old safe regional park', and some children described a local park as a place where they could enjoy meeting up with friends:

Bobbie: Yep, well down the road there is a park with equipment … with a slide and things … And me and my friends will just walk down there sometimes and just muck around, fool around … roll around on the grass and muck around.

Its physical layout promoted feelings of safety:

Bobbie: And because it is an open area, no-one is really going to be able to miss [seeing] it if you are in trouble or anything.

Another group of children described how living in a rural area away from big cities contributed to feelings of safety (again, individual voices could not be identified):

> Interviewer: So you feel, you feel pretty safe at home and with family and friends. Away from those teenagers. And away from big places like Sydney and Queensland where there are lots …
> Participant 1: Like where there is tourist attractions. 'Cause like people can bomb that or something or set fire to it.
> Interviewer: Mmm—
> Participant 1: That is like a main target if a terrorist ever came to Australia.
> Participant 2: Like the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Sea World, Dreamworld, Wet'n'Wild.

The fear of stranger danger and terrorist attacks has strong reverberations with other fears, which children's discussions indicate are fundamentally about ontological insecurity. The following section of the narrative draws together elements of children's discussions where the focus was predominantly on existential issues.

Existential Dread: Being Alone, Lost and Dying

When (adult) practices that attempt to manage ontological insecurities focus on the child's becomingness, through a quest for perfection and control around the future generation, the child as a 'bearer of experience' (Katz 2008, p. 7, quoting Castañeda 2000, p. 146) is erased. Katz reminds us that children are not only objects of adults' concerns and search for meaning, they are also 'subjects and social actors in their own rights' (p. 9). While it is difficult to track the child as 'bearer' of existential experiences in social science literature, such experiences can be explicit in fiction written for children and in children's own writings (e.g. McClanahan 1998) or conversations (Laing 1978).

In the focus of our research on children as subjects, existential concerns—that is, anxieties that go to the very roots of a coherent sense of 'being in the world' (Giddens 1991, p. 37)—were evident in discussions of fears of being alone, lost and dying. These fears were about children's sense of powerlessness when they were unable to trust in their relationships with others or the world around them and when their faith in the continuity of the survival of their very selves seemed threatened. At such times they were unable to effectively bracket out 'questions about ourselves, others and the object world which have to be taken for granted in order to keep up with every-day activity' (Giddens 1991, p. 37). For Giddens (1991, p. 47), '[t]o be ontologically secure is to possess, on the level of the unconscious and practical consciousness, "answers" to fundamental existential questions which all human life in some way addresses'. When these answers are not present, the individual is open to dread (Giddens 1991), a dread of the prospect of being overwhelmed by anxiety.

Children discussed feelings of dread that are associated with, on one level, concrete concerns of harm to themselves when alone, lost or having experienced death

as happening to someone close to them or as a potential happening to themselves. On a second level, and intertwined with the first, children discussed feelings of dread in terms of potential loss of self, or ontological insecurity. In the following discussions, children were talking about a lack of well-being associated with threats to the very essence of their being.

Angel spelt out the importance of trusted adults in protecting her from a dread of being 'all alone':

> Interviewer: Yeah, okay. So when she [Grandma] is not here, what changes in the family?
> Angel: Well, when I come home there is no-one here.
> Interviewer: Mmm—
> Angel: Yeah.

When the interviewer asks what that is like, Angel talks about fear of material harm—being stolen from. It appears that it is not so much because no one is there to protect her, but because, in being by herself, she is lonely, perhaps unprotected from her fears or anxious state:

> Angel: It is pretty scary because no-one is with me and I'm lonely, and sometimes someone else comes in and might steal stuff because I'm all alone.
> Interviewer: Mmm, has that actually happened?
> Angel: Not that much, but it might, like if you are alone.

While he can take safety precautions to protect himself from material harm, Participant E feels anxious when he is alone:

> I don't want to be home alone. Because I don't feel safe. I have to lock all the doors. I've been left at home before and I really don't like it … I don't really like staying home because you don't really know if someone is going to come.

The anxiety accompanies him into the bedroom, even when others are in the house, if he is alone at night-time:

> Interviewer: So do you feel safe as long as other people are at home with you?
> Participant E: Oh, I feel safe, yes, but when I'm in my bedroom [without] my sister there, I can't go to sleep …

We can sense the significance of a point made by Killinger, summarising from his interviews with children, that 'being left in an empty house connected with and amplified feelings of aloneness and rejection' (1980 p. 22). This experience of aloneness also related to children's discussions of being lost.

Children's feelings of being lost can be understood to be about loss more generally, as suggested by the term 'separation anxiety'. Separation anxiety has been described within the psychoanalytic literature on attachment (e.g. Bowlby 1952), sometimes graphically (e.g. Robertson and Robertson 1969), as of major significance in children's experiences and for their development as becomings. We can see from the following extracts how getting lost, and feeling alone in the world, is threatening to the child's sense of continued protection, physically and emotionally, because it is associated with a fear of separation from and rejection by those they want to trust are 'there for' them.

In the next discussion with Daniel and Katie, Daniel associates his fear of getting lost with his parents rejecting him:

> You are walking in the shops and then the full crowd and then you get lost from your parents. You thought that they'd left you and that they don't want you anymore …

Katie follows Daniel's comment with a discussion of her feelings on having been lost:

> I had that happen to me once.
>
> Interviewer: That happened to you once. Was that very scary?
> Katie: Yeah. But in the end I found them, in the end, like, I went to Luna Park. I went on this ride. When I came down, like my Mother had taken my sister to a baby ride. I was looking, where are they? And I waited for about half an hour and then I walked and walked to baby rides and looked around and saw them.
> Interviewer: So what was that like?
> Katie: I felt scared.
> Interviewer: Yeah, what were you thinking?
> Katie: I was thinking about I'm going to lose them. I [could] feel my legs getting hotter and hotter and hotter.
> Interviewer: Mmm, so it is scary when you are in a very strange place like Luna Park and you don't know anyone else, or it is a strange place. Is that what it was like?
> Katie: And like, um [another time when I was with] my parents, … I turned around and I thought, where was my parents? And I was crying. Later I bumped into this women and she goes, 'Are you okay darling?' Like I go, 'I lost my parents'. And later my Mother and Father were looking all over for me.

Again, for Katie, her fear of losing her caretakers are fears of loss of her parents' positive regard for her, their rejection of her as a person:

> Katie: And I turn around and my Mum and Dad picked me up and they gave me the bad look.
> Interviewer: Oh so they are pretty important occasions. Yeah. Has anything like that happened to you [Daniel], or anything else that is scary?
> Daniel: I just go to like the Easter Shows and it is all crowded and I keep getting scared because my parents might let go and then I probably get lost and they wouldn't find me.

In the first instance described by Katie above, she had been able to reduce her anxiety through the exercise of agency and consequently finding her parents. In the following question, the interviewer offers Daniel an opportunity to use a magic wand as a means of exercising agency in a hypothetical way:

> Interviewer: … If I could wave this and make anything in the world happen to make it a better place for children, what would need to happen to make it even better?

Daniel's response puts responsibility onto adults to put in place ways of protecting children:

> Make it safety for children. Like putting up signs that say 'be careful for children'. Putting a sign there like crowded people, like 'be careful, don't lose your children'. And look for kids that are lost, get them and put them in a department place where looking for and find parents. Parents will stay there and they can [find them].

It can be argued that fears of being alone and getting lost pose a challenge to children in 'bracketing out' anxieties, as they confront one of the main questions of existence, that of 'being', of life itself (Giddens 1991). In the following discussion, the participant is talking about someone, depicted in a picture, who feels 'as if' she is lost or dead as a result of being bullied:

Interviewer: Yep. She feels lost, [you] would feel lost if you are bullied. What do you think she means by lost, I wonder?
Dolphin Green: Um, banished.
Interviewer: Banished? So if someone bullies you, it is like you don't really exist?
Dolphin Green: It feels like she is dead.
Interviewer: Mmm, sort of dead inside. Like you can't exist if someone is going to be bullying you.

Implicit concerns about death, or non-being, were evident in the above comment about feeling 'dead inside', as they were in discussions about fear of cars in earlier sections of this chapter. In the following extract, Daniel makes explicit a connection between being lost, rejection and death:

> You are walking in the shops and then the full crowd and then you get lost from your parents. You thought that they'd left you and that they don't want you anymore and then you just die out …

The threat of death is 'a potent challenge to [the] bracketing process in all societies' … It has the potential to open individuals up to dread' by calling into question 'the meaningfulness and reality' of social frameworks, thus 'shattering their ontological security' (Mellor 1992, p. 13).

In the following extract, in response to an open question, Jon responded with concerns about potential death:

Interviewer: What about you, Jon? Are there other questions you would have asked [if you had designed the research]?
Jon: Um, like when how [we would] look like when we die, like when God died. How would they look like?
Interviewer: How would it look like when we die? That is one of the things that you would ask, is it?
Jon: Yes.
Interviewer: Is that something that you think about lots? Is it something that makes you feel good or makes you not feel so good?
Jon: Not feel [good] … It might be scary.

When the interviewer asked a group in which Katie participated:

> … Are there any times that things don't go well for children? Can you tell me any times for you that have been not so good?

Katie responded:

Um, when the bad things happen. Like when kids break their legs, arms and they have to go to hospital and the hospital costs you a lot of money. Like surgeons mostly. Like mostly you don't feel very much. They put this stuff on you and you go to sleep. … [it's] scary.
Interviewer: Yeah, why would that be, Katie?
Katie: Um, I don't know. It feels like, it feels like it is going to kill you.
Interviewer: Oh, okay—
Katie: There is a gas. It feels like it is going to kill you.

In the following extract, Nikita describes how she was not able to bracket out anxieties associated with the death of her best friend. At this time, her ontological security, her very selfhood, was threatened—to the extent that she stopped eating, threatening her own physical existence:

> Well about three and a half years ago my best friend was in a car accident and unfortunately he, he, it was fatal and he died from that. And I was quite shocked at the time, heartbroken, my life basically fell apart and I was still, you know, quite young and um, it was really devastating for me and hard for me to cope with it when he died. I stopped eating. I would only cry, I made myself really, really sick and I was hospitalized for that.

Attitudes to death have particular importance for childhood and for children. However, the dominant construction of children in modernity as 'becoming', along with the emphasis in the child protection and well-being discourses on survival, leave little space for considerations of children's emotions about death. On one hand, the emotions associated with fears of death are sequestrated out of existence, except as they are conveyed through adult projections onto fears of 'strangers'. On the other hand, death is ubiquitous in the form of violence through the entertainment media.

The way in which death or fear of death 'has the potential to open individuals up to dread' and cause them to question 'reality' was also evident in some children's discussions of terrorism and war. In the discussion by Beady and Sarah in the following extract, the interviewer followed up on an earlier mention of terror and insecurity:

> How does something like what is going on, say for instance, um, on the other side of the world, how does that translate into making you feel insecure?
>
> Beady: 'Cause [it is] everywhere, and it is always there and, like, every second it is like another attack, another bombing, another suicide. Another something that is going to take away someone else's life, so it is sort of you've still got your life, but it has been taken away from them.
> Sarah: I feel that if you hear about all these things that are on the TV and things that are happening overseas, and you think that we live in a country, they live in a country. It could easily happen to us. You just get this feeling like it is happening overseas. You don't, it could happen here and it just makes you feel, 'cause there is a lot going on. You just feel like—
> Beady: Fearful—
> Sarah: Yeah.

Sarah and Beady describe how this disruption affects the way they live their lives—their well-being:

> Beady: And fear leads, down the track, it can lead to being sad and stuff.
> Sarah: Yeah, you get over-obsessive with the whole idea that something is going to happen and you are not going to feel safe and secure.
> Beady: You stop living your life as you should.
> Sarah: Yeah.
> Beady: Yeah—
> Sarah: And like a lot of people stopped travelling after those, you know, terror and all that stuff like that.

While Beady and Sarah talk about the particulars of the way their lives can be affected by 'terror and that stuff', Participant M emphasises the importance of an active role in protecting the world and stopping wars:

> Interviewer: Okay, so when Ros came she talked about the project. About well-being. Does well-being mean anything, did that word mean anything to you?
> Participant M: Yep—

Interviewer: Yep, what do you think well-being is, what does it mean to you?
Participant M: Um, protect the world.
Interviewer: Protect the world.
Participant M: And like talk to people and find out what, like, what they do or, um … actually to just protect the world and all that stuff and stop the wars and all that.
Interviewer: So well-being is about stopping the wars and protecting the world.

This contribution from M, and the point made by Luke about the value of financial support to single parents, highlight connections, in the broader context of this chapter, between individual existential concerns and social disharmony at different levels. Such discussions point to a broader definition of child protection, as mediated by actions on social and global conditions.

More generally, the discussion in this section underscores the limitations of approaches to child safety, where the focus is on individual child survival and protection from or rescue from risky situations but ignores children's experiences of emotional security. The history of child protection practices is replete with such examples. Children have been rescued from situations of risk, only to have the losses and insecurities exacerbated by the rescuing process. From her research into journeys of children placed in care, McIntosh (2003) documents the way these children's experiences of grief as a result of loss of attachment (psychological dependence, love and trust) were experienced as 'a prolific loss of world, of place within it, of a connection with meaningful care and of being a self for another' (p. 14).

A Child Standpoint on Safety

It is evident from this narrative that issues of safety and security for children do not fit into neat categories. Survival concerns cannot be separated from issues of ontological security. Threats to children's safety, and policies and practices designed to protect that safety, cannot be separated from the adult–child relations that define vulnerability. The very adults children look to for protection may also be those from whom they feel 'at risk', not just those defined as 'dangerous strangers'. Further, adult protective practices, while valued expressions of caring, may also contribute to child vulnerability if they prevent children from practising behaviours that may empower them and/or separate their physical well-being from their emotional well-being.

Most fundamentally, a pervasive disrespect for children as 'beings' with feelings in the present bridges the private/public dichotomy. It also challenges the separation of children's safety from their future security when the practices towards children, in treating them as becomings, ignore issues for their well-being as experienced by them in their presents.

Ontological insecurity, as experienced by adults, structures how we respond to children. However it is not only an adult experience; insecurity affects persons across the generational divide. It is magnified by structuring of the personal and the

public in ways that ignore how adult–adult relations, played out at the family, social and global levels, impact on children in their presents. A broader conception of child safety and of protection is signalled—one that, in confronting risk, is cognisant of children as beings with emotions and of inequalities in the social order, whether they are inequalities of age or income and whether experienced in or outside the home or at the level of international and global hostilities.

Chapter 6
Self, Identity and Well-Being

In Chap. 3, we outlined the three dominant themes or dimensions to children's well-being evident in our research findings. We highlighted the interlocking nature of these themes of agency and autonomy, safety and security and self and identity. Chapter 4 defined and discussed a child standpoint on agency and autonomy and Chap. 5 did the same for safety and security. While the interconnections between the themes dealt with in each of these chapters were remarked on in those chapters, it is in defining and discussing the third of the dimensions, that of self and identity, that the interlocking nature of the dimensions is most evident. This chapter, in explicating issues of self and identity, builds on and develops concepts relevant to agency and safety in both concrete and conceptual ways, as we revisit some of the data employed in the overview Chap. 3, as well as Chaps. 4 and 5. In examining some of the data of earlier chapters in more depth, as well as additional data, to explain the connection between children's conceptualisation of self/identity and well-being, we are also highlighting the importance of constructing child well-being in holistic terms and cautioning against too readily reducing child well-being to separate dimensions and domains.

The importance of 'being me' is a central theme in children's discussions of what is important to their sense of well-being and is discussed in terms of issues of self and identity. In the literature, the concepts 'self' and 'identity' are frequently used synonymously, although at other times the way they are used differentiates between the terms and indeed each term can be defined differently depending on the theoretical positions of various writers. Furthermore, both concepts have been central to highly contested debates regarding the relationship between the individual and society. In writing on the history of theory on self and identity, Raymond and Baressi note the current lack of a common framework and that within contemporary disciplines self 'theory has become variegated and the self fragmentary' [in contrast with earlier historical periods] (2006, p. 5). This particular conception of the self emphasises how the self is diffuse and contingent, with few or no prior foundations. Others have countered this view, suggesting that, while the self evolves through ongoing processes of sociality (or subjectivation), individuals often develop a stable sense of

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self and individuals will seek out situations in which this sense of self attains validation. Common to both traditions, however, is the idea that the constitution of subjectivity is an implicit part of modernisation's emphasis on the individual.

In an example of contemporary theorising on the concepts within the discipline of psychology, Moshman describes identity 'as a theory of oneself', as 'a conception of the self that is structured in such a way as to enhance self-understanding' (1998). Within this discipline, the dominant paradigm on self and identity for children has been that constructed by researchers such as Maslow, Piaget and Erikson. It has been based on the idea of developmental stages that largely place issues of identity construction within adulthood (Maslow 1987) and adolescence as those stages where identity issues are at the forefront of development. This signifies a watershed between childhood and adulthood (Erikson 1968), as the stage of identity resolution (Marcia 1980).

Where the focus in psychological research has been on the development of self/identity, the emphasis has been mainly on the way the very young child separates from the mother through processes of individuation. The research on school-age children prior to this has been linked to the regulation of childhood (Markus and Nurius 1984), the focus being on the child's 'becomingness'. Markus and Nurius commented in 1984 that much of the research prior to and at that time was to do with self-concept and self-esteem and about regulating behaviour with an emphasis on children developing self-understanding and self-regulation. In more current psychological research, on, for example, the concept of moral identity, an issue significant to children in our research, the emphasis is on linking children's moral identity to moral behaviour (e.g. Hardy and Carlo 2011). We see within these traditions an emphasis on how the self is a project of individual development.

In dominant sociological traditions, Hitlin notes, the self has instead been conceptualised as 'the internalised, subjective-yet-agentic link between individuals and social environments', where 'the term "identity" is often employed as a placeholder for other social processes' while meaning many different things (Hitlin 2003, p. 517). The significance of identity formation as bound with processes of modernity has been foundational to sociology, with the relationship between self and society central to the discipline. Emile Durkheim (1893 [1984]) stressed how modern social formations are defined by an individualisation induced by a complex division of labour, which increases the possibilities available to individuals for shaping their own lives through a pluralisation of possible roles, relationships and commitments. Durkheim's insights, as developed further by Georg Simmel (1900), distinguished between the pluralisation of possible roles, choices and lifestyles and an increase in individual freedom and autonomy. While the former potentially reflected the weakening of group identifications, the latter was reliant upon guarantees from others. In recognising the intersubjective basis of the self, defining one's sense of self involves judging and recognising what is of value in the social formation within which one exists and thereby functioning with agency within the world.

Where writers on the sociology of childhood have contested the dominant developmental and socialisation paradigm, for its 'truths' about childhood, they have contrasted the emphasis in developmental theory on childhood as a period of

becoming and adulthood as a period of being, exploring the ways in which children are also 'beings'. In challenging the conceptual divide between becoming and being, Nick Lee (2001) exposed the ambiguity inherent in concepts of becoming and being as applied to both children and adults.

In the results of our research project, this ambiguity between 'being' and 'becoming' is a part of children's discussions of self and identity. In developing narratives about themselves as individuals, and thereby giving meaning to what well-being is about for them, children clearly consider themselves both as 'being' and concerned about their 'becoming'.

This chapter is divided into two parts, each with their own sections. In Part A, we focus on the 'individual self' and separate out the different meanings children attribute to the self to describe their uniqueness as individuals, both in intergenerational and generational relations. These are the constructs of the moral self, the purposeful self and the authentic self. In so doing, we attempt to focus on those elements of self that children prioritise as being of significance to an individual sense of self. However, the complexity of constructing a narrative of a child standpoint on self/identity, which attempts to bracket the sociality of self/identity, becomes clear. This is taken up explicitly in Part B, in which we present the concrete social contexts that children prioritise as important to the presentation and development of self. We take into account these constructs in presenting a child standpoint, firstly in terms of the sociality experienced in both intergenerational and generational relations, as they pertain to the presentation of the self by children in the intimate sphere of family, friendships and cultural practices, and secondly in the significance they attach to private space for processing the meanings self has for them as individuals.

Part A: Stability and Difference: The 'Unique Self' as Important to Well-Being

The discussions on well-being by children indicate complex constructs of self/identity. We identify three aspects of children's discussions of self/identity in this part: the moral self, the purposeful self and the authentic self.

The 'Moral Self'

Being recognised as moral agents within intergenerational relations was significant for children in contributing to their sense of well-being. Values, or actors' moral senses, serve as frameworks for evaluation of self and others, enabling individuals to determine what are the ideals that they consider important to pursue (Hitlin 2003). In terms of eudemonic philosophy, individuals pursue these ideals through virtuous activity in accord with a concept of the 'true self' or the 'daimon', which in

modern societies is conveyed through the stories or narratives we articulate to help us make sense of our lives (Bauer et al. 2008).

While there is acknowledgement in the literature that aspects of moral sense are present early in childhood (Hardy and Carlo 2011), the association between adulthood, rationality and reflexive consciousness has led to a discounting of the presence of cognitive aspects of a moral sense for children, so that Bauer et al. (2008), like many psychological theorists, describe the process of seeking the true self through virtuous activity as 'beginning in adolescence' (2008, p. 82). Alternatively, some of the researchers within the new sociology of childhood (e.g. Morrow 1996; Mayall 2002 and Such and Walker 2004) highlight that, while the developmental discourse discounts children's moral competence, children display in their discussions concepts of justice, sharing and caring for others. This was also our finding, as presented in several chapters of this book.

One of the defining characteristics of modern social life is that the source of orientation is increasingly an inner one, with individuals being responsible for developing their own idea for their life course, which is an expression of being 'one's self' (Guignon 2004). It is perhaps unsurprising then that this process also emerged clearly from children's discussions of what was important to a sense of well-being. A child standpoint on the moral self and well-being is clearest in a narrative by Sarah and Beady. While sections of this same dialogue have been presented in Chap. 4, we are presenting it here in more total form because of its relevance as an exemplar in describing a child standpoint on moral agency. Beady starts this narrative by discussing the importance of developing her own moral codes as a response to her parents' attempts to impose their values:

BEADY: Like, you've got your own values and morals and … they [parents] sort of want you to have theirs. Except they don't like that and we don't like that, and then they don't like us not having theirs.

Beady's need to develop her 'own values and morals' is described by her as part of a process of differentiation emerging over time within a generational framework. While not precisely defining a growing awareness of self, Beady and Sarah continue the discussion emphasising the delicate balance between the recognition of the value base developed as part of their socialisation and the development of their own self-identity. In this exchange, the participants recognise that the differentiation of self-identity is a general phenomenon shared amongst their peers, differentiating this standpoint from the standpoint of important adults and wanting their standpoint recognised.

SARAH: They are used to having their morals and values rubbing off onto us, but once, I think, I don't know whether it is just high school or just when you are growing up and overall that yeah, all those kind of changes that everybody goes through. I just think when we change, our parents often see that but don't see it from the way we feel it. I don't know if that makes much sense.

BEADY: Yeah, it does to me.

In the following responses to a question from the interviewer, the children define how development of a moral stance is connected with their exercise of agency:

INTERVIEWER: So you have some sort of control, so you might turn to other people for advice but you feel as though, well, look, it is my decision?

SARAH: I have to end up, I have to sort of, in other words I have to sign the paper, kind of thing. I've got, it has got to be from me and um, I do go to other people for advice. I don't think I've ever really made a major decision where I haven't talked to somebody. But I think overall I do what I think is best.

BEADY: You need to have strong morals and you need to know what they are. Like not be able to like say them like straight off the top of your head, but like learning from mistakes and stuff. And [that] helps a bit in like learning your morals.

SARAH: I think everybody learns from their mistakes, even now. I think the right and wrong that you learn when you are younger, and then you learn from your mistakes all through life and you need to have, I think you need to make mistakes. I think there is still room for us to learn from our mistakes.

At the centre of Sarah and Beady's discussion of the importance of moral frameworks to making significant decisions is the exercise of moral agency defined by an individual's ownership of the decisions they make ('I have to sign the paper, kind of thing'), through which they can indicate that they are moral individuals ('You need to have strong morals and you need to know what they are'). But there is also an acceptance that the enactment of moral agency occurs within a context of inequality between adults and children. Children also seek advice from others, including trusted adults, when making decisions. Yet the emphasis on learning from mistakes underlines the importance of autonomy for children in being able to make their own decisions. It follows therefore that seeking advice is not necessarily an acceptance of the legitimacy of unequal power relations between adults and children. Rather, advice seeking underscores the importance of relationships that provide a secure platform for children's enactment of their own independent decisions, and by implication an injunction to treat children fairly as dialogue partners in interaction. Developing relationships based on deliberation in which children feel as though they can 'learn from mistakes' reflects emotional connections and interdependencies between individuals, in this case between children and trusted adults.

The intergenerational context also emerges as a theme in how children discuss the process of identity formation, as emergent and evolving throughout the life course. Children emphasised how age-based responsibilities are negotiated as part of everyday interactions with important adults, especially parents and teachers. This was an important characteristic of children's experiences of safety, but these negotiations are also an important dimension for developing moral identity. Again, it is the dialogue between Sarah and Beady that provides an example of this when they discuss the processes through which they earn the trust of others:

INTERVIEWER: So are you given a little bit more responsibility and independence as you are getting older?

SARAH: I think so. Um, I'm not too sure whether that is just something that our parents decided to give us, but I think that is just what automatically happens. Like I get given different responsibilities. I get given a little bit different freedom than my three younger sisters. So um, in that sense I think it comes naturally because probably [I'm] treated a little bit differently, an' like I should know better. That, that I've heard that lecture many times.

INTERVIEWER: And so is that important to your sense of well-being? Being given more responsibilities?

BEADY: Yeah, it is important. It makes you feel good and it makes you feel you can do stuff and it gives you the ability, if that is the right word, um, to be able to do it. Helps you on your way to greatness.

What Sarah and Beady are explicitly articulating in their discussions, and other children more implicitly so (see below), has some resonance with Eriksonian developmental theories of ego identity formation. There is evidence in what the children say to support identity formation as a normative developmental task, linked to attaining the status of adulthood, to becoming. However, much of children's discussions indicate the importance of exercising self-direction, as part of childhood (not just adolescence as emphasised by Erikson), and in experiencing well-being. Sarah and Beady naturalise this process in developmental terms, for it is through trial and error, learning by mistakes, being trusted to make mistakes and hearing the 'lecture' that a sense of moral identity evolves. Sarah and Beady assert that being able to manage responsibilities is central to a sense of well-being, and they welcome the recognition from others that they are morally capable people. However, being recognised as morally capable has to be earned in encounters in everyday situations. This has resonance with theories of integrative growth (Bauer et al. 2005; Blagov and Singer 2004; Baumeister et al. 2013) that emphasise how moral identity is developed through doing. While not eschewing a developmentalist approach, these theorists suggest that coming to deeper understandings of one's self requires integrating new and old perspectives on one's life.

The children in the research describe two further interrelated aspects of developing a coherent self-identity as being significant for well-being. One aspect, which we describe as the purposeful self, is marking out a life path, one that brings together 'being' and 'becoming' through tracing who they were in the past, are in the present and will become in the future. Schwartz (2002) has described how in order for children to engage in the daily practices of life they are required to develop their own life paths. A sense of self is based on a stock of self-knowledge developed over time. New experiences or insights continually add to an individual's self-knowledge, and self-identity develops in an evolving way (Baumeister 2011; Côté and Scwartz 2002; Schwartz et al. 2008). The other aspect is what we describe as the authentic self, which is recognised in eudemonic philosophy as being closely related to virtue. This is considered essential for having a coherent sense of self in a world that offers what appear to be unlimited choices.

The 'Purposeful Self'

For children in our research, the answer to the question 'Who am I?' was located in their discussion of the importance of life plans to their sense of well-being. These life plans are about having a sense of purpose, linking past, present and future in a narrative, in which they were both being and in their becoming, understanding life beyond the here and now. It is an aspect of well-being that has resonance with

attaining a sense of ontological security and maintaining a coherent self-narrative (Giddens 1991; see also Chap. 5 in this book).

These plans could be concrete and externalised (for instance, obtaining good grades or getting a good job), but they could also be about an internal purpose related to developing both a moral and an authentic sense of self. What appears to be significant, regardless of the external or internal focus, is that this purpose creates a self-narrative regarding who one is, providing a guide to present action, creating a sense of consistency regarding who one is by developing some kind of narrative about 'who I am'. Interpretations of the past are used as a basis to develop broad courses of action for the future, which express value orientations that are important to a sense of self (see Bauer et al. 2008).

Unsurprisingly, given the salience of pedagogic practices in children's lives, many of the children's discussions revolved around the importance of learning and educational outcomes. However, they also included expressions of the importance of exercising talents as an expression of a unique self, which Seligman (2002) suggests are important for living a 'good' as opposed to a 'pleasant' or 'meaningful' life. The discussions reflect the use of cognitive and moral reasoning capacities, capacities not necessarily attributed to children and/or to hedonic concepts of happiness but present in eudemonic concepts (Bauer et al. 2008).

We can discern from Sarah and Beady's discussions of life plans, their rational use of their unique strengths and talents in the service of some longer term or greater objective:

SARAH: I think your education and your career. They probably can go into your well-being. If you have a good career, strong career, and you are happy with that, you probably would have a better well-being I suppose.

BEADY: Yeah. It is hard to like think what you want to do at the moment. It is like you get all these ideas and you think wait, there is a down side to that I don't like, but that is not in that and that is in that. And like there are so many to choose from.

SARAH: I think these days a high education is needed.

Their discussion also indicates how this sense of purpose is rationalised through competing demands and expectations—of attaining formal credentials and developing human capital on one side and of performing to informal expectations about individual capabilities (summarised in the phrase 'what they know is our best') on the other:

INTERVIEWER: So who expects those things?

BEADY: So, so teachers expect you to do well an' stuff like that.

SARAH: I'd, I'd say that they are expecting, they expect that what they teach is um, results in our good marks. So if they know that they've taught us everything we need to know for a specific exam, for example, they've obviously got their expectations because they've taught us the work. Whereas with parents they are probably only expecting us to do what they know is our best. So there are different kinds of expectations between teachers and parents.

INTERVIEWER: Right, so with education, that is important mainly for sort of your career and further …?

BEADY: Like how you do well is how you are going to reflect on the rest of your life, because the majority of your life you are going to be working, and if you don't do well in school you are not going to have a good job and you are not going to be happy.

SARAH: That is kind of true, I think, but I know my, my people I know like they've not, they've not had the best education. They may not have even gone past year 12 and they've still created a good career. I think your attitude takes a big role in your well-being too because if you have an attitude to do well, you have an attitude to be happy. You have an attitude to have a good career. But I think that maybe that might be the biggest one. I think now I've thought about it a bit, I think your attitude helps the most with your well-being because it—

BEADY: —yeah if you don't if you can't be bothered to do maths well you are not going to do well in it'cause you don't have—

SARAH: —you don't try.

In the following excerpt, Sarah and Beady continue by emphasising the importance of moral values as identity resources for linking past, present and future:

INTERVIEWER: Where do you think that motivation comes from, or the attitude comes from?

SARAH: I think that comes from your morals and values. And I think that would end up coming from your parents. Yeah, I think your education does play an important role because that is your, that is your first stability in life. And once you have that, your well-being will probably reflect from that. … Anything that you do in life, you have to have your heart in it for it to be worthwhile.

BEADY: You've got to know why you are doing it. I reckon you've got to know why you are doing it. Why you chose to do that. It is like when we make our career choice. I will probably go off, like [what] I thought and looked at, and like how my results have come back from my tests and how I've done over the years. Not for the money. I'd prefer to be doing something that I enjoy.

SARAH: That I loved.

We explore the relationship between a sense of well-being and the development of competence in the next chapter. Here we draw on Sarah and Beady's discussion for its interpretive construction of purpose and meaning that links the past, present and future through a set of abstract values related to eudemonic well-being. It is one's 'morals and values' that provide a motivation for developing a sense of purpose, whatever that purpose may be. While education provides a resource, it is the idea of 'knowing why you are doing it' that translates these resources into a desired social and individual outcome. This framing of purpose is highly individualised and places great pressure on individuals to 'make one's self'. However, in their discussion, Sarah and Beady are constructing a sense of self-identity that emphasises the importance of meaningfulness, which can serve as a buffer against an anomie that can arise from living in social conditions that perpetuate an illusion of infinite possibilities.

Children's discussions emphasise that well-being can be derived from a sense that one is contributing to a conception of the good life the individual finds meaningful, whatever that conception of the good life might be. What seems significant in children's discussions is having a sense that one's life has a purpose and that it has the potential to be rewarding in some way, even if it is not clear what this sense of purpose might be ('Anything that you do in life, you have to have your heart in it for it to be worthwhile'). By linking past, present and future, this sense of meaning-making has resonance for well-being. It provides an orientation for everyday

actions, which is vital for the development of a sense of self-integrity, as we explore further below.

Children's constructions of purpose stand as an important counterpoint to the concept of the potentiality of the child, which seems to have emerged in the late modern period in Western European contexts (Aries 1962). This idea of the 'becoming' child has led not only to an increased moral focus on child development but also to the idea of untrammelled human potential (which finds its ideal conditions within neoliberal social formations) and of the valorisation of practices of 'self-development' and 'personal change'. This ideal of the self with infinite potential has been instrumentalised within therapy speak, what Illouz describes as a therapeutic persuasion in interpersonal relationships (Illouz 2008). However, these analytical constructs do a disservice to most individuals' experiences, including those prioritised by children in this research. Rather than embracing infinite potential, it appears that children may be emphasising the importance of having a sense of purpose so as to identify a set of concrete alternatives to orient the future, which has some resonance with ideas central to humanist psychology and philosophy, those of a guiding sense of potential that might provide meaning in the present.

The 'Authentic Self'

Children's discussions of self indicate a process that revolves around forming a coherent sense of self, through defining the self as different from others and through experiencing stability and coherence of the self over time. In actualising this sense of self, the child discourse is about a set of attributes that they consider important to their identity over time and fits with the contemporary discourse on authenticity, of the authentic self. In this discourse, as 'a virtue term', the concept is 'seen as referring to a way of acting that is choiceworthy in itself' (Varga and Guignon 2014). Honneth (2004), drawing upon Georg Simmel, describes this creation of authenticity as a condition of social life. Individuals have no choice but to be themselves, using their own inner resources as the source for self-realisation or actualisation of well-being.

In the previous sections, we discussed the way children differentiated their selves from those of important adults in the context of intergenerational relations. In the examples provided in extracts below, this defining of the self also occurs within the relational context of their generation of peers, the group with whom they experience solidarity. For instance, Mon and Mic define themselves in opposition to their friends who engage in certain kinds of activities with which they do not want to be associated, in this case smoking.

INTERVIEWER: So it is important to be your own person for your well-being? So what sorts of decisions do you have to make to be your own person, to be yourself?
MON: You have to try and stand up to your friends.
INTERVIEWER: Mmm.
MON: It is hard but, balances it out.

INTERVIEWER: Can you think of an example?
MON: My friends like start smoking and we just sit away, and I don't know.
MIC: Yeah.
MON: Yeah. But we are still good friends with them, but we just don't do it.
MIC: Yeah, they could smoke and everything.
MON: And they get caught all the time … we don't want to get caught so we stay away, but we are still like heaps good friends.
MIC: So if you say no, sometimes they back off.
INTERVIEWER: Right, so you don't lose respect, like do you actually gain respect by saying to them no?

They describe how asserting themselves as different from their friends does not imply rejection of their friends; rather, it indicates that they are being authentic or true to themselves. They also describe how this expression of their authentic selves is accepted by their peers:

MIC: They are alright. They just stand there and go, oh yeah, like if you don't want to do it that is okay.
MON: They just move away and do it so we don't get in trouble with them. And that, that's sort of like telling them that that is a decision that you made. It is about don't be ashamed of being your own person.
MIC: We are not ashamed to be [with] them, one of them.
INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay. Right. So tell me a bit about that, when you said you are not ashamed of being around them.
MIC: I'm not ashamed because like they want to be friends, and people know that what they get is you. So like I don't be ashamed of their wrongs.
INTERVIEWER: What else do you need to do to be your own person?
MON: Stand up for yourself and don't do stuff that other people want you to do if you don't want to do it.

Mon and Mic's friendship with their broader friendship group is based on a mutual recognition of different ways of life. Despite the differences, Mon and Mic still maintain the friendship, in part because of the mutual self-respect garnered through the exercise of moral agency, in this case asserting their choice not to smoke, being 'your own person' and a mutual acknowledgement of differences in social practices—'They are alright'. The establishment of self-identity as difference is premised upon the mutual valorisation of the difference that others represent and of the unique attributes of others. This kind of everyday 'organic solidarity' (Durkheim 1893) recognises the complementarities between people of the same generation, based upon difference. In the following exchange, Rosana demonstrates the importance of this mutual recognition of difference to her sense of well-being, and the interdependencies that arise as a result, when discussing the things she and her friend are good at:

ROSANA: And then like um, she's like, sometimes she helps me draw pictures in my book or whatever, and then when it comes to sport and things, because I'm the sporty one she comes and asks me oh, what stretches do we do? Because we are going to do skip the skipping, so what stretches do we do, and all that kind of stuff.
INTERVIEWER: So you really help each other out in a real way at school things.
ROSANA: Yeah.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, so are you the same about anything or are you very different?
ROSANA: Um, we are the same in some things and different in others.

INTERVIEWER: So what is it that makes you friends, do you think?
ROSANA: Um, I don’t know. Maybe we do some things together and we do some things that are the same.
INTERVIEWER: Yeah. What is important about that to you?
ROSANA: That you get to see what other people do that you don’t do.
INTERVIEWER: So you learn things?
ROSANA: Yeah, and if she is really good at something and she helps you, then other people then think you are a bit better too. You would also say that hey, she helped me, and then they would probably go to her and say ‘Oh, your drawings are so cool’ and everything.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you kind of promote her as well.
ROSANA: Like she gets some credit as well.

The recognition of the skills and values of other individuals provides an opportunity for mutual recognition of the other person, which can provide a confirming exchange and a source of esteem. One doesn’t have to be good at everything, and indeed not at anything in particular. What seems significant is recognition of the unique value of the other’s attributes. This suggests the importance of both reciprocity as a moral act and also the sense of having some form of coherent self-identity as a project, as discussed in the previous section. While we discuss the deeply relational interdependencies that sustain the self later in this chapter, the foregoing discussions of asserting difference also highlight the importance of interaction partners for providing verification of a sense of the self. Individuals seek congruence in their perceptions of self and the conditions in which they enact their sense of self (Stets 2012). According to Stets, in his discussion of the importance of ‘identity verification’, our sense of self-identity is confirmed when we perceive that others see us in a way that we see ourselves, and individuals are generally motivated to ensure that their perceptions of self are in congruence with how others respond to that sense of self. Emotions such as pride and feeling accepted are experienced when one’s sense of self is verified by others; emotions such as shame, guilt or anger are experienced when the self is not verified (Turner 2009). The classic study of this process is provided by Goffman (1959), who suggests that individuals aim to avoid the embarrassment and shame that occurs with unsuccessful presentations of self. We see this process of identity verification in Mon and Mic’s acceptance of their friends’ smoking, which is premised on a mutual acceptance of Mon and Mic’s rejection of that activity (were this not the case, this could create a crisis in the friendship), and we see it in Rosana’s promotion of her friend’s skills at illustrating.

While the broader social implications of mutual recognition have been explored elsewhere, what is especially significant in this context is that mutual recognition of self requires social relationships and institutions that provide ‘everybody with the chance (as far as possible) to pursue their visions of the good life’ (Honneth 2007: 261). Implicit in this is the necessity and capability of appreciating the stranger and their individual traits. This is something we elaborate upon in the next part, where we explore the relational contexts for identity validation discussed by children.

Part B: Affective, Reflective and Conventional Solidarity: Concrete Contexts of the Relational Self

The first part of this chapter demonstrated that children's conceptualisations of their individual self-identities reflect meanings that individuals apply to themselves as a way of signalling their uniqueness from others. Children's discussions of moral agency, having a sense of purpose and the importance of developing a unique self, also indicate the sociality of this process because their notions of self are given recognition and validation through others, thus contributing to their sense of well-being.

This section explores children's discourse of the way the self is, necessarily, an interpersonal self, embedded in social relations. Based on children's discussions, three concrete contexts, which each emphasise different aspects of relational well-being, can be discerned. In relationships with family, children express affective solidarity and are other-oriented in a concrete manner, particularly where symmetries in these relations are experienced. But they also reflect intergenerational tensions in the context of asymmetrical relations, something we also explored in our analysis of the importance of agency to children's well-being (Chap. 4). In relationships with friends, children are able to express reciprocity that involves mutual acceptance of the other within the symmetries of the generation of children. In expressions of cultural identity, children are able to express more abstract values that provide opportunities for reflexive solidarity. These concrete contexts reflect different arenas of action within which identity work is undertaken.

Families as Sites of Dialogue: Affective Solidarity

As discussed in Chap. 3, everyday practices of care—what we described as caring about, caring for and caring of others—are expressions of an emotional environment in which a sense of well-being can flourish. Family contexts are especially important in this respect because they are a primary site in which individuals take this care for granted. Families are also a primary site of socialisation, which is critical for the transmission of values and identity formation. For example, Tree acknowledges the essential role that caring adults play in teaching children 'about doing the right thing':

INTERVIEWER: So tell me, how do children learn about doing the right thing? How does that all happen?
TREE: Your mum and dad teach you.
INTERVIEWER: Right, your mum and dad teach you. How do they do that? How do they go about teaching you?
TREE: They help you do all the right things. And they, they always know what is important for you.

In Chap. 5, we noted the key role trust plays in interpersonal relations as well as familiar everyday routines (through the mutuality of responsiveness) in contributing to children's experiences of ontological security. Prudence also provides an example of other contexts in which caring adults can provide a context of care and a sense of familiarity in which acceptance of the self occurs:

> PRUDENCE: It depends on the situation, I guess. Like if you had parents that you know really well, like my best friend's parents, I basically live at their house. Um, like they are used to what I do and the way I do things, and so they get some of the things that I do when I'm there. But if you went to a family that you didn't know very well and everything, it would be really hard because you couldn't tell them the way you did things and it would be hard to adjust.

Where this kind of care cannot be taken for granted, children often experience risk of actual or potential harm to the self, as described in Chap. 5 in our discussion of safety and ontological security. Prudence underpins the importance of familiarity and trust in family contexts by providing a counterfactual example in which 'identity threats' can arise in everyday circumstances. While a fictional situation, Prudence's example is resonant for children who do not experience the familiarity that caring family environments provide. A lack of intimacy and familiarity is associated with a lack of trust and a fear of being unable to be one's self:

> PRUDENCE: Um, I think it would be hard to understand like if you did something this way, like if you had bacon and eggs every Sunday for breakfast and then you went to another family and you didn't … it would feel really awkward and you wouldn't feel like you were doing something, you were in your natural place.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Just your new family.
>
> PRUDENCE: And with your old habits and stuff. It would be hard.
>
> INTERVIEWER: What other physical things would be really hard?
>
> PRUDENCE: Like if,'cause I do horse riding and then [if] I went to another family and they wouldn't let me do it.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay, so when those sorts of things happen, is that what you mean, when you go and stay with other people in your family or like there is divorce, is that what you mean?
>
> PRUDENCE: Yeah, but like if they did leave, it would be harder because you can't replace your family. Because like if you find someone else to be there it would be like you wouldn't trust them as much because you wouldn't know them as well or everything.

The significance of these discussions is partly in showing how relationships between children and caring adults (most commonly parents) provide a concrete context where the child's identity (what it is to be a child) and the adult's identity (what it is to be a parent) are subject to negotiation and mutual adjustment in adult–child relationships. It is in relationships with caring adults that children frequently make claims for renewed recognition of their identity and their parents can redefine what children can expect from them as part of generational relations in which parents have authority over children.

Furthermore, identity claims against caring adults are based in an ongoing negotiation of recognition changes in self-identity, as children's embodied needs and competencies, and their own sense of self, change over time as part of childhood. In their calls for 'parent education classes', Beady and Sarah demonstrate the tensions that can arise with parents in their claims for recognition of their changing sense of

self. Nonetheless, they are seeking empathy from adults (the purpose of the classes), so that adults can better understand the child standpoint:

INTERVIEWER: What do you think would help with those changes or with the adjustments [as part of growing up]?
BEADY: For parents to understand more, like understand we have to go through these changes and stuff.
SARAH: There should be children education classes.
BEADY: Yeah, so change it to adult rather than the teenager.
SARAH: There is a lot of the subjects about [becoming] adults and learning their experiences. Like commerce is about business studies and that is about being older, and childcare is about learning how to be a parent. Whereas I don't think parents go to classes to learn about what children are going through and what the experiences are like before them. I think they don't; I don't think they understand quite as much because they … are not really told about it and what is going on with us.

In response to the rejoinder that many adults make, that they were once children themselves, Sarah and Beady suggest that they are limited in their understanding because they did not grow up under the extant conditions of childhood, what Sarah and Beady describe as the 'pressures of the modern day', a refrain that has historically frequently been used to describe generational relations. Therefore, these participants are squarely acknowledging the sociological and generational dimensions of adult–child relationships:

INTERVIEWER: How would you want adults to act in these situations to show that they understand where you are coming from?
SARAH: Um, I think maybe they need to sort of, maybe they need to be a bit more listening around. I think we probably have to listen as well. I'm sure I don't listen as much as I probably should, but I think we need to have this kind of thing—
BEADY: —mutual thing where we both understand each other. And they grew up in that other era where there was more freedom. They didn't have so much pressures of the modern day.

We see in Sarah and Beady's discussions that families provide a site in which negotiations over identity are played out. It is a site in which negotiations around forms of value and identity expression occur, which can translate into conflict between family members. Sarah and Beady, like many other children in this study, are acknowledging that their sense of self changes over time and that this is a function of intergenerational context as well as developmental change. Mayall (2015) suggests that what is at stake in these negotiations are the definitions of the status groups of 'adult' and 'child'. Through these negotiations between children and trusted adults, the boundaries of what constitutes these respective status groups are developed in an ongoing way that reflects larger social changes. For instance, Mayall points out that the nature of education has shifted dramatically in the space of a generation, with 'liberal' educational regimes being replaced by a focus on testing and performance. This has had a profound impact on the way children think about and experience their own childhoods and it creates a barrier to the extent that adults can draw upon their own childhood experiences as a resource to support their children. Mayall describes this as a 'structural lag' between people's dispositions and understandings of their place in the world and the 'social field' in which these dispositions and understandings are enacted (Mayall 2015, p. 16).

Nonetheless, families, as primary groups, also provide a context in which some aspects of personal identity are internalised because of belonging to that group, including cultural practices and cultural group affiliations (Hitlin 2003; Schwartz et al. 2006). Families provide a foundational context in which beliefs, assumptions and taken-for-granted practices are internalised. As we discussed in the previous section, families also provide sites in which consideration of, and reflection on, moral situations occurs (Bosma and Kunnen 2001; Côté and Levine 2002). Children identified caring adults as important interlocutors on matters of moral deliberation. Relationships characterised by trust between parents and children were described by children as providing a strong basis upon which they develop the self-confidence to discuss issues confronting them. Caring adults not only provide advice; by respecting children as dialogue partners, they also facilitate interactions through which children develop a positive relation to self and a sense of self-confidence. Prudence provides an example of the importance of intimacy in providing a context in which deliberation can occur:

INTERVIEWER: So sometimes would she [Prudence's mother] ask you if something seems a bit wrong? Or would you usually be the one that would say I want to talk to you?

PRUDENCE: Sometimes she would ask, ask me.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And in listening, how does that help you solve the problem? What changes for you then?

PRUDENCE: It doesn't, it just makes things easier to handle when someone else knows you and just knows your problem and is supporting you.

INTERVIEWER: Mmm, mmm. I know it is a hard question, but what shifts for you then with the problem? Like you come home feeling really yuck, Mum listens, what happens for you then?

PRUDENCE: It makes it easier to understand and stuff. And it makes it like seem like there is not so much, no one is just depending on you to fix the problem. There is someone else knowing and helping you.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so if you then came home the next day and said the next bit, would Mum give you some ideas on how to handle it?

PRUDENCE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So listening and knowing she is there seems more important from what you are saying than her telling you what to do?

PRUDENCE: Yeah.

Many of the participants emphasised the value of doing 'other-oriented' activities (Baumeister et al. 2013) for their sense of well-being. According to Juul, relying on the work of Dean, these kinds of concrete actions are examples of 'affective solidarity' that are 'based on close relations [where] moral responsibility is limited to the concrete others to whom we are emotionally connected' (Juul 2010, p. 255 citing Dean 1996). Doing things that practically assist others, such as helping out with domestic activities, caring for younger siblings and taking responsibility for certain facets of daily planning, all indicate this kind of concern for others. These concrete expressions of caring for and of others are important for many children in developing their sense of self. It is because of the emotional links that are the basis of these ties—evidenced through, for example, undertaking housework to 'make parents proud'—that affective solidarity can only be generated through close emotional

bonds. It is also this kind of solidarity that characterises kinship relationships, which can be abstractly communicated but must also be performed through concrete actions. It is thus the affective basis and practical expression of these acts which means it is rare to share affective solidarity with people for whom we do not have strong emotional feelings, such as strangers. According to Juul, 'This form of solidarity is thus a direct and personal one' (2010, p. 255), as suggested by Heart's discussion of doing household chores with family members:

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And why do you think it would be good to be able to do those sorts of things [household chores]?

HEART: I guess that the jobs go faster,'cause like if it was all my sisters doing it, it will go pretty slow, but like with all five us of helping …'cause my dad does the cooking or sometimes my mum or my sister or myself. Like we do the cooking and then like someone else does the dishes or like pack it in the dishwasher, and then someone else [packs away] the clean dishes and then the other person does the ironing. And like sometimes we take over with the ironing, because your hand hurts after a while. And then jobs go faster, so then we can sit down and relax.

As Jackie articulates, helping behaviours are also 'direct and personal' acts:

JACKIE: The other things are that make the family happy is if you do something good. If you don't do something good, then it is really a problem of doing it when you don't want to do it. So it's, you just have to do it.

INTERVIEWER: Can you just tell me a little bit more about what you mean by doing something good?

JACKIE: Well, you could do something good by cleaning the dishes. Washing the carpet, cleaning the floors and that would make some people happy. Oh, and you have to clean stuff, so like your room, you have to clean your desk every like week so when your friends come upstairs to play, well you're like they will have a clean room.

INTERVIEWER: Mmm, right. And so, so does that make you feel good, sort of cleaning up your room and stuff?

JACKIE: I meant by that, it is because you help people you feel good and you make them feel good. You can make them feel good. I would really like to change everyone to start helping each other.

It is in the context of developing 'affective solidarity' that we can interpret the link that many children make between a sense of well-being and 'being good'. Being good is an important means by which individuals express their capacity as social actors and through which we attain social acceptance. Mayall points out that this relationship characterises the very earliest interactions between parents and children. From a very early age, 'children learn that parents value interacting with them; so they find they are valued for their social relations with their parents, where parents initiate interactions through smiles and words and hugs and where children too initiate interactions, expressed through smiles and cries. That is, children learn, from birth, that they are valued in a double way, and inextricably, as body and as person, in relations with parents' (Mayall 2015, p. 19). Given the structural constraints of childhood and the limited ways in which children can obtain social esteem, children's other-oriented moral practices are one means through which they can attain social acceptance and a sense of being valued as worthy contributors to family life. Similarly, Micro and Violet define well-being as being good. Violet

describes this as being a 'well child for my parents', by which he means to act in an obedient way for his parents.

INTERVIEWER: This research is about well-being, and other people use this word in lots of different ways. I'm wondering what you think well-being is?
VIOLET: To be a well child for my parents. A good friend for my friends.
INTERVIEWER: To be a well child for your parents. Yeah, okay. So what does that mean, being a well child? If you are a well child for your parents, what does that mean?
VIOLET: Doing good things and not doing the wrong things. And not doing rude and bad things.
INTERVIEWER: What would be a rude thing that kids could do that would be not well-being?
VIOLET: Like doing, like trying to play tricks on teachers and elderly people.

Micro also emphasises that well-being is about not behaving badly, defined by the effects that one has on others; specifically, whether it brings embarrassment to one's self and shame to other people that one cares about.

MICRO: It means good in some way.
INTERVIEWER: Good in some way. Yep. Good in what way? Would you like to tell me a little bit about that?
MICRO: Children don't behave.
INTERVIEWER: Okay. Can you give me some examples of that, like you say when you think about what happens, you know, for you on a day-to-day basis?
MICRO: Like get people embarrassed.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, right, so when would that happen?
MICRO: Um, at schools.
INTERVIEWER: Right.
MICRO: Um, I don't know. You might do something that other people might find embarrassing to people in the street.
INTERVIEWER: Right. Is this about when kids like behave badly or something?
MICRO: Yeah.
INTERVIEWER: And they would, and who would they embarrass?
MICRO: Their parents. And family. Friends.

These children are setting out in their own terms a moral landscape of what it means to be 'good'. For Sayer (2005), this is an expression that we are normative beings. Our sense of well-being is intrinsically linked with how we deal with normative questions in everyday life—'how to act, what to do for the best, what is good or bad about what is happening, including how others are treating them' (2005, p. 949)—which we may encounter equally in fleeting interactions as well as in making major decisions that sometimes confront us. The normative core of these expressions of 'being good' also indicates that family and kinship as social institutions are not arenas of freedom but are characterised by non-voluntary relations (Blatterer 2013). We are obliged to meet certain expectations as members of families, no matter how democratised. According to Juul, this is significant as it is 'through these obligations that affective solidarities emerge because it [affective solidarity] can only do so through concrete acts of care directed towards people we have intimate and personal relationships with' (2010, p. 255). It is with family members that we are likely to experience the kinds of close emotional bonds through which affective solidarity can flourish via concrete expressions of moral responsibility; however, these bonds also create a sense of obligation between family members.

Friends, Mutual Acceptance and Belonging

As we have described in the previous section, families are sites in which affective solidarities are expressed. This is an important mechanism through which children can obtain self-validation as valued contributors to family life, which they identified as important to a sense of well-being. However from children's standpoints, in relationships with friends, well-being is experienced through quite a different set of mechanisms; these relationships are characterised by reciprocity and mutual acceptance.

A plurality of relationships falls under the term friendship. This is largely because, of all relationships, friendships are the least dictated by external norms of what defines a 'good' relationship—what Blatterer describes as friendship's 'normative freedom' (Blatterer 2013). However in their discussions, children did identify specific qualities of friendships that are important to a sense of well-being. Friendships characterised by equality, which differentiates them from relationships with important adults such as parents or teachers, were described as those that contribute to a sense of well-being. Friendships endure because they are relationships based in mutuality and trust. It is a reasonable expectation that one can feel accepted amongst friends, and when this condition is not met, there can be a crisis in the friendship relationship, potentially disrupting or ending the relationship. Children's friendships are also voluntary in that, unlike kin relationships, they are non-binding. One chooses whether to be friends with someone and can also choose to end the friendship. Friendships strengthen and wane over time.

Within this context of equality, children further identify qualities of intimacy and solidarity as important to friendships. These qualities further underpin a differentiation between two different kinds of friendship relationships that children identified as important to their well-being—between intimate friendships in which one can confide and broader friendship groups in which individuals feel they can fit in. While the former often involves dyadic friendships, the latter could be described as including friendship circles within which children socialise. While both types of friendships involve mutuality, it is the strength of the ties that distinguishes between the two. This distinction between confiding and fitting in maps on to the distinction between bonding and belonging friendships proposed by Brewer (2008). We discuss each in turn.

Bonding involves close attachments and intimate links between friends. People generally develop only a few of these very close friendships in which candour and deeply personal and intimate aspects of self can be shared. Such friendships involve an expectation of unconditional acceptance of the other. As such, these friendships often involve disclosing intimacies in a context of mutuality and trust. Prudence demonstrates the importance of friends providing an unconditional acceptance of self:

INTERVIEWER: So what would be hard, like why are friends just so important? We talked about it before, but I'm just really …

PRUDENCE: Um, some of my friends, like I really like them because they are there and they always support me and stuff, and it would be really hard to lose someone that is like that you trust so much and everything.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

PRUDENCE: But with Tracy she is more like um, a sister to me, so yeah, that would be really hard.

It is this kind of intimacy that distinguishes these types of friendships from friendship circles, within which one might be 'friendly'. Nonetheless, broader friendship groups are also critical to a sense of well-being by providing a context in which one is able to feel one belongs and can fit in, by providing group membership within friendship circles. Notably, many children discussed how these friendship circles can be unstable, with many children describing experiences of exclusion from friendship circles occurring quite frequently. Children described how friendship circles involve ongoing negotiations about inclusion and exclusion and are thus sites in which members exercise power to either marginalise or include others, with the boundaries for inclusion and exclusion often shifting as a result. For example, Ali confirms the value of friendship circles as important sources of recognition, largely because these groups function to define who is included and excluded:

INTERVIEWER: So what is the difference in whether it [being liked] happens or doesn't happen?

ALI: Well, if it doesn't happen you seem to get like lots of friends and you seem to get along at school fine. But when you don't have friends at school, it seems like you are all by yourself and nobody likes you and things like that.

Dolphin Blue also emphasises how friendship circles work both to include and marginalise. Dolphin Blue describes the feelings of being excluded as a kind of non-existence, underpinning the importance of friendship circles for recognition relations within children's practices:

DOLPHIN BLUE: Yes, because some friends don't cooperate with each other. Some friends do, but others don't.

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean by they don't cooperate? What sort of things might they do?

DOLPHIN BLUE: Like if you have three friends. One of your friends wants to be with the other friend and one of your other friends wants to be with you. But then your friends choose your other friend and you get upset.

INTERVIEWER: Mmm, so being left out.

DOLPHIN BLUE: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Can you make up, or does that mean it is like the end of being friends?

DOLPHIN BLUE: Make up.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Yeah. And so does that happen a lot, that you are friends and then not friends and …

DOLPHIN BLUE: Dozens of times.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder why does that happen?

DOLPHIN BLUE: Um, because they want to be with the good ones and not like all horrible people like that, and they don't want to be with people they hate. And some girls don't want to be with boys and boys don't want to be with girls.

When the interviewer comments: 'Mmm, so it is sort of sorting it out. What does that feel like when you are sort of feeling left out? Has that ever happened to you?' we get a sense of the way Dolphin Blue's sense of self is annihilated by her experience of ontological insecurity:

DOLPHIN BLUE: Um, it feels like very horrible. It feels like you are not there no more. It,'cause it feels like they are just ignoring you.

Many studies have shown that social connections are important to a sense of purpose, meaningfulness and being happy (Delle Fave, et al. 2011; Lambert et al. 2013). In the children's discussions, we see how lack of friendships, through their powerful ostracising effect, influence children's autonomous lifeworld practices—what in part defines childhood as a separate social group from adulthood. In this sense, friendships are critical in a broader sociological sense, because it is through friendships that individuals develop expectations about mutuality in informal relationships. It is in broader friendship groups that individuals increasingly learn and also reveal aspects of their personality—of what constitutes their self—and in which these presentations seek validation. As subjects requiring validation of our sense of self, all humans are dependent on social interactions that require mutual recognition of the other. Not receiving this recognition of self—that is, experiencing an absence of 'recognition relations'—can result in humiliation and disrespect, which can be injurious to an individual's self-identity (Honneth 1995). In children's discussions of recognition amongst peer groups, we see these relations being played out also, sometimes with injurious effects. Friendship circles are therefore a critical context in which individuals start to develop an awareness of being full members of society by seeking social confirmation of aspects of their identity.

Cultural Identity and Abstract Values Associated with Well-Being

As we have argued throughout this chapter, recognition from others is a necessary precondition for self-realisation (Honneth 1995, Juul 2010). Inherent in this is a requirement that we also acknowledge the conditions through which others can flourish and develop their sense of self. According to Juul and Honneth, processes of individualisation must be grounded in what they describe as 'a non-excluding concept of solidarity' that 'must deal with the good life for all'. It is in this context of interactions with strangers, whether they be other children or adults, that children identify more abstract values important to their sense of self and well-being. Concretely, we see this expressed in children's discussions of values that connect them with larger social and cultural groups to which they belong, both as members of 'society' and in more specific cultural group identifications (which we discuss, respectively, below). According to Schwartz, they 'represent an answer to the question "who am I as a member of my group, and in relation to other groups?"' An example is provided by Apex who, in discussing the importance of religious values, illustrates the action-orienting function of belief systems:

INTERVIEWER: So is it that your religious beliefs help you make decisions?

APEX: Yeah. We have to believe in something. Even if you are not religious. If you are like in a philosophical group or something. Yeah. There are people out there that don't have any religion. They are just with their nature and stuff. That is really good too in a way.

INTERVIEWER: So identifying yourself as a Muslim, does that help you out with what you do, how you sort of act. Tell me, can you think of an example where that helps you sort stuff out with your friends, for instance?

APEX: The argument thing I was telling, like walk away. The main leader of the religion said that the best amongst you are the ones who walk away from an argument. I did that and it works every time. It is amazing. You try to solve other people's problems. You don't solve the problem as in this is my friend, this guy is my brother. You solve it as everyone is your brother. You are solving it through the eyes of a proper judge. A true ruler. Who is not looking, is not taking sides. Is taking like what the fight is about and is taking the actual conflict in his mind. That is how you deal with projects. That is what I, I did before, you know. When I was in primary school. Like there were fights.

INTERVIEWER: So you feel as though practising as a Muslim has given you specific values.

APEX: Yeah. I don't take sides anymore. I don't get into the problem … Like when I get into a fight for something in an argument, you tend to worry about it a lot of the time and then other things affect that. Like other things get affected. So now you can just put it behind you. Learn to live. That is really nice.

Apex's discussion of religious moral practices reflects the sociological and anthropological analysis of morality as a system of abstract rules that guide social action. Much of children's discussions of moral practices, in the context of well-being, concern situated moral practices rather than the articulation of abstract principles. In this case, Apex refers to resolving conflicts between other children in primary school, which is an example of the making of moral meaning in everyday interactions (also see Sterponi 2003). More generally, within our research, the kinds of values that children identified as important to being a 'good person' included characteristics like not being judgemental of others (e.g. based on physical characteristics), being fair and treating others with fairness, being amenable to other people's ideas, being helpful and being cooperative. Children's discussion of well-being was framed around how these kinds of values are displayed by themselves in everyday contexts, including social interactions with other children and at home with family, as we described earlier in this chapter.

However, it is in the context of helping strangers that a more reflexive articulation of values emerged in discussing what is important to well-being. For example, Jackie defines well-being as helping others and in so doing constructs himself as a person who is helpful, as instanced in his story of rescuing the next door neighbour's dog:

INTERVIEWER: So what does well-being mean to you?

JACKIE: It means to me like helping other people with their problems.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Tell us a little bit about that. In what sorts of ways?

JACKIE: There was a time a few days ago where the next door neighbour's dog ran away, and then when he went over the fence to the building site. So we had to go with the construction workers then and we had to get to him, so it felt really good getting him back. And for the next door neighbour. It is like if you help someone that it feels really good for you. Helping makes you happy.

For some of the younger participants, these kinds of situated moral attributes were often expressed using the language of 'helping others', as a defining element of well-being and of being a 'well-being person'; as Tree articulates, 'If someone fell over you could help them and take them to a teacher, and that would be good.' For Violet, it is important to play with friends fairly and not be 'rude to them':

INTERVIEWER: I'm just wondering about the other part that you said about, um, your friends?
VIOLET: Um, like playing with them fairly, not being rude to them.
INTERVIEWER: What does that mean, to play fairly?
VIOLET: Like giving ideas to them and not being like don't do this and don't do that. Not being bossy? And being fair. And not doing rude things?

These discussions are stories about 'who one is' that purposively construct the self as a moral actor. For Søren Juul (2010), these could be described as examples of nascent forms of reflective solidarity, which 'is an open form of solidarity which demands an individual moral making up of one's mind' (2010, p. 254). In their discussions, children are not developing a list of virtues that are definitive of what it is to be a 'moral person' however. Rather, in emphasising values such as being helpful, fairness, listening to others and so on, they assume the importance of equality of recognition in social interactions. This recognition is important because it provides a basis for meeting obligations towards others where ethical, legal or political norms are inadequate (Juul 2010). In the context of recognition of others who are strangers, reflective solidarity is non-exclusive, based on a mutual recognition of interdependency as shared interlocutors and participants in social life. This is especially critical as, under conditions of individualisation and multiculturalism, it is not possible to specify in advance what the preferred values or ways of life should be. However, in expressing those values that one holds dear in others and wants to have recognised in one's self (as a moral agent and 'good person'), children are being 'gradually assured of the specific abilities and needs constituting [their] personality through the approving patterns of reaction by generalised interaction partners' (Honneth 2004, p. 354). In highlighting the importance of their own moral practices and the abstract values they respect in others, children are demonstrating an important aspect of Honneth's calculations: the significance of relations of recognition to identity formation and social integration.

As noted earlier in this section, this is also expressed through cultural identifications that are more routinely associated with group solidarities, for example, ethnic group identifications. The possibility of developing a sense of individuality is based on a relationality that derives from a mutual recognition of difference in other individuals, as discussed earlier in this chapter. However, children also discussed as important explicit cultural identifications that were based in a sense of sameness. This more conventional solidarity is based on common interests (Dean 1996, p. 18). It emerges from the traditions and values that unite a group and is often expressed in shared convictions or goals that connect people as members of a group. These group identities facilitate a sense of belonging and direct the personal identity alternatives available to the person (Phillips and Pittman 2003; Yoder 2000). This solidarity requires that an individual share and submit to the norms of the group. Jackie

provides a clear example of the importance of cultural practices to a sense of self-identity:

INTERVIEW: Okay. And um, maybe we could just talk a little bit about what you've just shown me. You showed me some photos of you with your Serbian national dance group.
JACKIE: Dancing clothes. We had a celebration. It was called the Belgrade night and we had to dance, Serbian dancing. I showed Toby photos [of] when we had to go there. We had also an honouring festival at the Serbian Club. Dancers from all over Australia came from Perth, Northern Territory, Darwin and there was the best dancers, and they were pretty good. And I showed Toby some other photos about when we went to Canberra to dance. I showed him when we were on the bus. Only three groups from New South Wales came to Canberra to dance. Just three groups from the whole of Australia came to dance. It was just a little celebration. We went to the Parliament House.
INTERVIEWER: And you like it because it's Serbian as well?
JACKIE: Yes. And our culture. It is not like someone else's culture. Like it is feeling, like say you don't copy other people and so you are doing like your own.
INTERVIEWER: So do you feel because of that you are able to show that you're—
JACKIE: —Serbian. That you have a Serbian background.

Rosana expresses similar sentiments of cultural belonging and enthusiasm about being 'Australian':

ROSANA: That is an Australian flag, yeah.
INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay, so what is it about the flag or the big clock in England that might make us feel happy or well or secure or … ?
ROSANA: The flag just makes me happy because it is my culture.
INTERVIEWER: Mmm, okay. Okay, so it reminds you of your culture. Okay. What is your, what is it about your culture that is important to be reminded about?
ROSANA: Just being Australian and not having all these busy cities and not being on the terrorist list and everything.

For Jackie and Rosana, a sense of well-being is associated with belonging to larger symbolic, cultural and political identifications, whether that be being Serbian or 'being Australian'. They both use intimate language in discussing their cultural identifications, indicating that these are identifications with powerful emotional resonance for them both. However, this intimacy is directed towards an abstract set of categories and practices that transcend their own self and their immediate interpersonal relationships, but which nonetheless link everyday life practices with cultural group identifications, a system of shared beliefs, norms and traditions that define larger social groups (Markus 2002). There must therefore be an exclusive basis for group definition and membership. Not everyone can be Serbian, for instance.

The sociological and philosophical implications of cultural group solidarities are a subject of ongoing debates, which are not the subject of this book. However it is worth noting that group membership can provide an important reference point under conditions of uncertainty by 'providing stability, helping individuals create a shared social identity, and allowing them to pursue higher order collective goals' (Lambert et al. 2013, p.1420). In Rosana's discussion about how relieved she is about being Australian, for example, we see how she sees this as protecting her from the vagaries of an outside world that is busy and dangerous. It is perhaps this feeling of

belonging and the creation of a shared social identity that is significant for these children's sense of well-being.

The Private Self: The Importance of Reflection and 'Time Out'

The notion of privacy as a fundamental and a universal human need is largely a contemporary construction based on a person's claim to be 'left alone'. According to Aries (1962), within Western Europe, up until the end of the seventeenth century, social and physical space was such that it was largely impossible to be 'left alone'. The desire for and cultivation of privacy emerged much later through the influence of the transcendentalists who sought refuge from the doldrums of everyday society in private experience (Baumeister 1987). However, in Western societies by the Victorian era, this notion of the private as a haven from the demands of the public sphere had become generalised. The family, once a unit tasked with the economic survival of its members, was transformed by industrialisation into a sphere for providing intimacy and emotional support for its members through the development of a strict division of labour and the embedding of childhood in a private concept of the family.

However, as Côté and Schwartz (2002) point out, the individualisation of identity, which characterises late modern societies, also places significant burdens on individuals. The freedom to make 'one's self' involves the exercise of significant psychological resources. For instance, continual negotiation within relationships (a precondition for the democratisation of family life), developing a set of lifestyle preferences, learning to take responsibility for one's emotions, planning ahead and being able to make pivotal life choices have been discussed by children as important to their well-being. Some theorists suggest that individuals are psychologically overburdened by the demands associated with being 'one's self'. Furthermore, processes of developing one's sense of identity are often undertaken in the absence of collective supports (Côté 2000).

For children, a lack of recognition of their need for personal space is embedded in dominant psychological paradigms, as exemplified by the writing of Maslow, who, in accord with the Aristotelian tradition, in identifying self-actualisation at the apex of a pyramid of needs, described it as a function of the mature adult rather than an experience of all stages of the life cycle, including childhood. Children in our study inform us that this process of identity formation and self-actualisation is both ongoing and central to their experiences of well-being and that personal space and privacy provides an arena for this to occur.

However, experiencing this privacy, in having time to one's self, seems especially a problem for children. Wolfe (1975) has highlighted the conflicting values that confront children in Western middle-class families, where privacy is emphasised by, for example, separate and private rooms for family members but little psychological privacy for children. In such a scenario, adults control to what degree and in what circumstances children can choose to separate from or relate to others (Wolfe 1975). These conflicting values are magnified in contemporary society

where there are increasing spaces designated for children, but the discourses on children's privacy focus on the risks that might arise in the confines of children's private spaces. This means that the way privacy for children is conceptualised by adults serves as a marker that differentiates adulthood and childhood.

This has contributed to the paradox whereby adults determine what is children's private space. For example, children are taught 'rules' so that they can protect their own and others' personal spaces in terms of the physical area around their bodies (see, e.g. Daymut 2009) and adults extend surveillance of children's activities in their 'private' spaces in order to protect them from vulnerability to online predators, commercial exploitation and cyberbullies. While the home is considered a place of relative freedom for both children and adults, in contemporary society, control over children is magnified as a result of these safety discourses.

The conflict in values governing responses to children's privacy is mirrored in contrasting legal codifications of children's right to privacy. For instance, we can compare Article 16 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which maintains children's rights to privacy, with public policy discourses promoting the importance of children's online activities being monitored by parents. To a large extent, 'good parenting' is associated in this discourse with the degree to which parents are able to monitor their children's whereabouts and activities, which also discounts or marginalises the need for children to experience privacy. This stands in contrast to the way in which adults demand privacy for themselves.

In Chap. 3, we discussed the relational dimensions of well-being. According to Shmueli and Blecher (2011), in American jurisprudence, relational justifications have also been used to deny extending privacy rights to children. The construction of the family as a 'relational unit' has been used to subsume the privacy needs of children within the family as a singular entity. However, as discussed in Chap. 5, the exercise of autonomy is important to child well-being. Amongst other dimensions of the relationship between agency and sense of self, children emphasised the need for time to themselves and to be left alone when they desire this. Sarah and Beady discuss several reasons why being left alone is important for well-being. Being alone provides time for self-reflection and plays an important role in facilitating imagination and creativity; it also gives children the space to work through the events of the day, which is critical to aspects of identity work. Being on your own requires limiting the ways others can access you and controlling one's own time, something we discussed more fully in earlier chapters:

SARAH: Mmm, I think even being on your own can often make you feel good. Um, I think giving yourself time to think and process everything that is going [on] around you. You can find good and happy things in life, and that can also make you happy as well.

BEADY: Yeah, that is important. Like I like creative writing a lot. That is another thing I really enjoy. Creative writing. It is special to me. … You can like write down your feelings in like another person. So like everyone else doesn't know that that is you, but you sort of know.

For CB, who emphasises the importance of sanctuary, this was found by sitting apart from others:

CB: Sometimes I like to sit alone by myself.

INTERVIEWER: Sometimes sit alone by yourself. And is that good?
CB: Yeah. I get a little, I get a little peace and quiet.

In the following extract, Sarah discusses explicitly the need to have a personal space in which to process events surrounding her life:

SARAH: I just think it is really, really important. Because there is so much going on in someone's life that it would be impossible just to sit there and go through it without having time to just sort of, even just lie down in bed before you go to sleep and just think about what's happened during the day and what were the good things and what were the bad things and what we could have done better or um, I don't know. I just think you need to have your own time to sort of think yourself with no-one else around you … it is good having people around you to talk to and have talk about, but you are the one who you need to spend the most time with I think.

Reflection is a way of moderating negative emotions but also a way of understanding other feeling states. Thoits (1990) discusses the importance of reflection as an emotional management strategy ('there is so much going on in someone's life that it would be impossible just to sit there and go through it'), especially where there is discrepancy between how one feels and how an individual is expected to feel, which Thoits labels 'feeling rules'. Thoits suggests that this discrepancy is more probable where there is role conflict (e.g. being an obedient child and desiring to express autonomy), when the cultural identity of a person is marginal to hegemonic cultural practices (thus creating conflict between two sets of cultural expectations) and when individuals are caught in role transitions that can produce emotional stress (e.g. negotiating the boundaries of responsibility and autonomy as children 'grow up'). Children's responses regarding the need for a private space can also be interpreted as a desire to exercise control over how they share or disclose information about themselves to others, what Shmueli and Blecher describe as 'interaction management, choosing when and how to interact with others, as well as information management, choosing when to disclose information to others' (2011, p. 772). This is supported by Wolfe's research on children and privacy. She found that children had needs, similar to those we found expressed by Sarah and Beady and CB, to process events in their lives. She concluded that, given the context in which children's interactions with others are typically managed by those in authority in the home and school, children seek privacy in order to process information. For children in our research, this privacy was frequently their bedroom:

INTERVIEWER: Do you have special places where you do this sort of thinking?
BEADY: My bedroom. It is just, it is your personal, it's, it's part of you as well. Like it is your personal space. And I think anything that happens personally would probably happen in that kind of environment.

Similarly, Heart chose a photo of a bedroom to describe what she associates with well-being:

HEART: This one. It is like of a bedroom.
INTERVIEWER: Okay. What is it about that one?
HEART: That like I can just, you know, when you go into it you know that if you can just rest somehow, and you know that no-one can bother you unless you are sharing with them. And like it just, you know, [makes me] happy and yeah.
INTERVIEWER: Okay. So do you have your own room at home then?

HEART: Yes. It is a place where I can do what I want and no-one is going to bother me.

For Prudence, however, the personal space of a room does not always work. She is unable to rely on parents not intruding into her personal space when she talks with her friends. The importance of private space as a form of interaction management is also illustrated in the significance given to communication with peers, whether in person or via communication technologies, constructed as an extension of personal privacy to include friends and purposefully exclude adults:

INTERVIEWER: Mmm, when you are crowded, how do you feel about yourself?
PRUDENCE: It makes you feel like you can't tell anything.
INTERVIEWER: Mmm. Mmm, okay, so is it that you don't have privacy or thinking time to work?
PRUDENCE: Um, you do sometimes but not all the time. There is no security about it. I couldn't talk to my girlfriend in there because [my parents] might walk in.
INTERVIEWER: And what happens if you don't get time alone. What happens to your happiness or your well-being?
PRUDENCE: You get kind of stressed and you feel like your head goes all cloudy, and you feel not isolated but like you're stuck in this corner and you can't move.
INTERVIEWER: Trapped?
PRUDENCE: Yes, that is it. That is the word.

Prudence reaffirms the importance of time for one's self as a sanctuary from the demands of everyday life. Her description is consistent with broader public concerns about children's privacy, suggesting that time for one's self is a site of struggle between children and adults. Her discussion also points to one of the ways in which emotional discrepancies can be managed in private space, being a space to share intimacies with close friends. This is also emphasised by Thoits (1990) who argues that working through emotional conflict requires both time to one's self (a space for reflection) and relationships where intimacies can be shared (support networks). Similarly, Van Manen and Levering (1996) suggest that sharing intimacies with close friends in a private space is critical to facilitating a sense of self, personal responsibility, autonomy and intimacy in human relations.

Because privacy involves a right not to share information or emotions, there is a deep connection between trust and privacy (Fried 1968). By respecting an individual's privacy, we also invest trust in them. According to Charles Fried, a legal theorist of privacy, this link between trust and privacy also implies an acknowledgement that we make errors; this is a critical aspect of human dignity, an issue that we identified as critical to children's conceptions of agency and safety. However, according to Shmueli and Blecher, 'Parental surveillance and intensive supervision remove the child from the realm of human interactions, making real trust and real intimate relationships impossible' (Shmueli and Blecher 2011, p. 788).

In their discussions about the importance of privacy, children are making a claim for a space in which they can undertake 'identity work'; they are also revealing how agency, safety and self work together to create a sense of well-being. Having time to one's self provides a means for reflecting on the vicissitudes and joys encountered in everyday experiences. As experienced by children, this is a critical function of the private sphere. Yet this need for privacy is highly regulated by public policy that focuses on the risks to children from risky individuals, commercial exploitation

or cyberbullying. In this way, protection policies and practices towards children's safety circumscribe autonomy in the home while ignoring the larger risks that are encountered by some children within the home and downplaying the importance of children's exercise of agency for their well-being.

It would seem that, at a policy level, promoting children's well-being requires an understanding of the interconnections and mutual constitution of the private and the public. Having time to one's self provides an opportunity, therefore, to reflect on the struggles and joys experienced in everyday life and, from both children's perspectives and much of the psychological literature, is important for a sense of well-being. Issues of privacy emerge as central to a sense of unique self. Therefore, it is understandable that in this arena the struggle between children's experiences of being and the persons others envisage them becoming is foregrounded, as children's autonomy is regulated by policies and practices of surveillance that are aimed at protecting them.

A Child Standpoint on Self/Identity

In summarising the child standpoint on self/identity inherent in children's discussions of well-being, we return to the interlocking dimensions of agency, safety and self as contributing to well-being for children. In the discussion in this chapter, children's struggles towards the realisation, in the present and future, of moral, purposeful and authentic self/identity relationships take place in a context of emotional interdependencies. These interdependencies take place primarily in the family, because this is the arena in which they are socially located for developmental purposes, and it is here that issues of care, autonomy, trust and protection surface as limiting or facilitating children's sense of a coherent self. Where care, trust and protection are experienced, children participate in relations of mutual respect and reciprocity, which they describe as being significant for the ways in which their self/identity meshes with well-being. Families can therefore provide a site of acceptance and care in which one can engage as a dialogue partner in interactions and demonstrate concrete acts of care—through which children demonstrate their capacity as moral agents.

The dynamics around private space highlight the way asymmetries in relations with adults can limit children's capacity to mesh self/identity with well-being, through the lack of control they have over their lives—a control that is important for the process of self-definition (Hague 2011). It is in friendships, where there are strong and empathetic bonds realised through symmetrical relations, that self/identity assumes particular significance in promoting well-being. And it is through larger group identifications that children can express more abstract values as part of their self-identity, values that mark an individual as belonging to a larger collective. In the processes of self/identity construction, children emphasised the significance of developing a sense of a unique self and the importance of processes of identity verification, which was recognised in difference from others and premised on

mutual recognition of difference. While emphasis in research is upon processes of identity construction in adolescence and into adulthood, we find that there is a process of self/identity construction that is an ongoing aspect of children's lives, as part of relationships and with both emotional and cognitive elements. This validates that children are continually working at realising well-being through both being and becoming.

Part III
Dimensions of Child Well-Being

Chapter 7
Activities as Autonomy and Competence: The Meaning and Experience of Leisure for Well-Being

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the importance children place on structured and unstructured activities that occur outside the home, for their well-being. In the first part of the chapter, we identify the dominant adultist discourses on children and activities, highlighting the centrality to these discourses of preparing children for becoming adults and of reproducing social norms that characterise, and are valorised in, late modernity. In the second part we present a narrative constructed from children's discussions, in which they associate their well-being with leisure activities when they are characterised by autonomy and the development of competence. As with the other chapters in this book, we follow child-led definitions of what constitutes leisure and what dimensions of these practices are important to experiences of well-being. In the next section of this chapter, we outline how children's time is structured, as part of broad-scale social changes, through intergenerational relations. These changes have defined the role of activities, including leisure time, in children's lives.

In considering children's discussions of activities in our project, we were confronted by what seemed an anomaly. While policymakers, educationalists and parents emphasise the importance of school and education for well-being outcomes for children and while education is a fundamental context of childhood and a critical dimension of social life, it was rarely discussed by children as important to their well-being. Why might this be so? Given that children spend a significant portion of their waking hours at school, we might expect that children would prioritise school as extremely significant to their well-being. Instead, nonschool activities were frequently discussed by children in their discussions of what is important to well-being, but in ways that inform us of the limits of formal schooling and other organised activities for children's experiences of well-being.

In this context we draw attention to the structural configurations of children's leisure time, which indicate that leisure is increasingly becoming a site in which children's time is controlled. The process of 'looking down' at the structural configurations of children's time serves as a preamble to understanding the values children themselves place on leisure. In the first part of this chapter, we describe how

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the value that is placed on the role of leisure in children's lives is associated with broad-ranging shifts in the virtues and skills that are socially valued, especially those required by the economy and for success in the labour market. In this shift of values, leisure, rather than being a domain of freedom, as implied in definitions and general understandings of the word leisure, is a site that, at a societal level, is an expression of parental anxieties about what should constitute a good childhood and also what is required to prepare children for a good adulthood. It is evident that the concept of leisure as applied to children involves a fundamental contradiction. By structuring children's free time, it is no longer free time. While social and cultural constructs of childhood convey this period of life as a privileged time for play, leisure, exploration and for being carefree, we suggest that, reflecting extant social conditions, children's leisure is also burdened with expectations of performance and achievement.

A tension between freedom and expectation is also evident in the themes children prioritise when discussing how leisure is important to their well-being and which helps us understand why leisure, rather than formal education, is discussed by children as important to their well-being. We explore these themes in the second part of the chapter. For children, leisure is associated with well-being where it is an arena for autonomous action—for freedom and fun. But leisure is also associated with well-being where these activities provide opportunities for developing competence, feeling competent and social recognition. Therefore, leisure and activities are a site of well-being where agency and competence stand in tension. Leisure can be both an opportunity to express individual autonomy by being free from adult social orders—an expression of children's lifeworlds separate from those of adults—as well as a means to seek social recognition and esteem from others, through displays of competence, an expression of how adulthood and childhood are mutually constitutive and adults and children develop agreement over what is socially valued intersubjectively.

Similarly to previous chapters, this chapter adopts a methodology of 'looking down' and 'looking up'. In the first part of the chapter, our attention focuses on the structural conditions that constitute childhood as a social and generational form. In the second part we explore children's practical and experiential knowledge, including identifying categories of understanding and practice that are not included in adultist understandings (Alanen 1998). Therefore, initially we examine the societal factors that structure children's leisure and activities. We argue that children's leisure activities reflect important sociological trends regarding standards and expectations associated with 'good parenting' and relatedly what attributes are desired in children, especially those attributes desired for their adulthood as represented by values such as self-responsibility and the development of children's talents. Transmission of important cultural and social attributes is reproduced not only through the education system but through the way children are also expected to use their leisure time. We argue that children's activities are an important site through which socially valued attributes and norms are expressed and also transmitted. In the second part of the chapter, where we examine children's understandings and experiences of their leisure as important to their well-being, we document the

everyday locations, practices and activities of leisure from children's experiences, to identify the social processes and practices that structure this experience. As noted, we show that both freedom and competence are significant to leisure when it contributes to experiences of well-being. The final part of the chapter is a summary of a children's standpoint on leisure, bringing together what we have learned from 'looking down' and 'looking up'.

Looking Down: Committing Children's Time

The way children use their time and the activities that they undertake are in most cases organised by social institutions to satisfy a variety of social and individual needs. Of those activities which structure children's time, the emphasis by policy-makers, educationalists and parents is on the importance of school and education for well-being outcomes for children. For example, schooling aims to prepare individuals to become economically productive but also to develop a sense of citizenship and personal growth (Adler 1982).

The omission of discussions of schooling from children's conceptualisation of well-being reflects the findings of research by Bessell with Mason (2014) on children and communities, where children also omitted school from their description of elements of community that they valued. Huebner et al. have identified how schooling pays little attention to children's subjective well-being (Huebner et al. 2013), commenting on the significance of this finding in relation to the important associations that have been found between children's school experiences and their more global life experiences and between children's subjective well-being and the outcomes for them of their schooling.

These comments are given some explanatory context by Mayall's (1994) contrast of the way the child is regarded in the home as a subject who participates in family life, while in the school the same child is a project, the object of hierarchical arrangements of authority. Here, Oldman's work is of particular significance in explaining the way children's positioning in the school may influence their experiences of well-being. Oldman comments that '[t]he self-capitalizing labour of children is structured so as to assist the reproduction of both industrial labour power (through differentiated schooling) and female domestic labour power … Children cannot democratize the conditions of their self-capitalization: they cannot organize their own growing-up' (Oldman 1994, pp. 165–166). As we explore below, leisure is also increasingly becoming a site for 'self-capitalisation' and a furthering of the 'child as project'.

The way children spend their 'free time' or 'leisure time' also tells us not only about children and how they use their time but about the social goals and values that are prioritised through leisure time activities. Common definitions of leisure include freedom, or spare time, provided by the cessation of work, both paid and domestic, a time over which an individual has control. Conventionally, children's leisure is seen as synonymous with play, which is widely accepted both as defining what is a

good childhood and as fundamental for childhood development. Play, as conceptualised normatively within the developmental framework, redefines leisure as play for a purpose, and this purpose is attaining developmental attributes. Almost all major psychological theories of childhood development stress the importance of play, whether it is the work of Karl Groos on play as adult imitation, of psychoanalysis with its emphasis on play as an arena for acting out psychoanalytic conflict, the work of George Herbert Mead who sees play as fundamental to understanding the self as constituted through social group membership or the theories of Lev Vygotsky who believes that play is a basic factor of learning through social and cultural interaction. Play is important, not only for understanding children but also for understanding societal reproduction.

What constitutes play and how children spend their time are, however, a contested arena, and the concept of leisure time has been introduced into this arena to distinguish between leisure and non-leisure. For example, Trilla and colleagues suggest that leisure, along with school and family, is one of the 'three fundamental contexts of childhood' (2014, p. 872).

The role of after-school and free-time activities has become increasingly important in this context. Involvement in organised leisure activities is common amongst children who live in advanced economies, and the range of these activities is becoming increasingly diverse, with the market in children's organised activities becoming ever more sophisticated and differentiated. For example, in a large study of children in Barcelona, Trilla and Rìos (2005) found that approximately three-quarters of children participated in extracurricular activities, and a sizeable minority participated in more than one activity.

Organised activities therefore constitute a major way in which institutions regulate children's consumption of time. The increasing importance of organised leisure for the way in which children spend their free time is bound up with significant demographic changes to the structure of the family over the course of the twentieth century. The decline in the number of children per household, increased female labour force participation, access to no-fault divorce and acceptance of a diversity of family structures has meant that family life has become increasingly democratised. The 'democratic family' is characterised by an easing of relationships within the immediate family, a relaxing of obligations to extended family, a greater ability for individual family members to assert their preferences and increasing acceptance of a diversity of family forms. These changes bring into focus the role children play in family life. Zelizer's (1994) landmark study of the changing 'value' of children, from economically useful to economically useless but emotionally priceless, suggests that it is fertile to consider what values children are expected to learn and exhibit in smaller and potentially more egalitarian family structures. Duane (cited in Alwin 2001), for instance, suggests that with fewer children parental investment in their children is highly focused. Parents are expected to spend greater amounts of time, emotional and financial resources on their children and specifically invest in their children's development as individuals.

These changes have important implications for children's time use within and outside the home. Trilla and colleagues (2014) suggest that these far-reaching

changes to family life have meant that the family has lost some of its function in relation to children's leisure. They argue that one of the roles the traditional bourgeois nuclear family played was as a 'leisure community' in which family members spent a significant part of their free time and undertook activities together. The family was therefore the most important leisure context for children. The progressive democratisation of family life has, according to Trilla and colleagues, also 'blurred the image of the family as a leisure community' (2014 pp. 879–880). With increasing attention on the emotional value of children and with parents being time poor, a range of educational and leisure institutions have come into existence, who have greater expertise in guiding leisure than most parents can provide. Increasingly, parents are less responsible for providing children's leisure and more responsible for organising and coordinating children's leisure. Out-of-home organised activities have therefore taken on increased importance as a site of socialisation. Children spend more time in organised activities, including after-school care, organised sports and lesson-based activities. The amount of 'free time' children have has decreased (Dunn et al. 2003). Zeiher (2011) has also observed a trend whereby scholarisation has spread into the lives of young children under school age and into older children's out-of-school time.

In the few studies that document changes in how children spend their time, the decline in children's free time is a common feature. Using nationally representative survey studies of families in the United States, Hofferth and Sandberg (2001a, b) document how children's time was spent in the late 1990s compared to the early 1980s. They show that children's time use has changed in important ways, with an increase in time spent in structured activities, such as school, daycare, sports and art activities, and a decline in unstructured activities, such as watching television, visiting or passive leisure. These changes were consistent for families whether mothers worked or not, suggesting that this trend has not only occurred as a functional response to demographic changes but also reflects shifts in what Hofferth and Sandberg describe as 'societal preferences' (Hofferth and Sandberg 2001a, p. 225). Similarly Gleave (2009), discussing children's time use in the United States, shows that children's free time has declined by more than 7 h per week from 1981 to 1997 and a further 2 h per week from 1997 to 2003, concluding that children have 9 h less free time than they did 25 years ago. These studies show that children's time has increasingly become more structured and governed.

These changes have led Arendell (2000) to suggest that a requirement of modern parenthood is to coordinate time to secure a 'modernised childhood' that involves a high degree of children's participation in organised activities. As Russell Hochschild (1989) has shown, these coordinating activities are often a burden upon women, who still have the main responsibility for coordinating household activities and performing domestic labour, while also being engaged in paid work. Coordinating these activities is a major task of parenthood, and the management of children's time is a central motif of modern parenting and a major source of parental anxiety.

The Role of Leisure in Promoting Social Goals: Activities and Social Well-Being

The changing structural and cultural configurations regarding the constitution of the family has meant that leisure activities outside the home have taken on increased importance. But what social preferences do such changes reflect? To understand this, we firstly need to discuss how children's leisure represents one means through which children are encouraged to take on certain social values. The way in which children's leisure is organised and parental preferences for which activities they want their children to participate in reflects the social role that leisure plays for children and the significance of leisure for children's well-being. This allows us to assess, from children's standpoints, how these social functions correspond with what children prioritise as important for their well-being.

From a sociological perspective, it is through processes of socialisation that value preferences are asserted, valorised and reproduced. While it is strongly contested as to what values should be transmitted through processes of socialisation, at any given point in time there are dominant social preferences in regard to socialisation practices and what values socialisation aim to reproduce. This is reflected in dominant approaches to things like education, law and the role of religion. However, the family is an important, and some argue primary, institution of socialisation and social reproduction. Hence, dominant social preferences are also reflected in dominant or hegemonic parenting ideology. Hegemonic parenting ideologies are usually represented in official discourses regarding parenting and often practised by the bourgeois 'middle-class' family. Alwin (2001) points out that choosing amongst the qualities desired in children requires parents to evaluate their parenting practices and children's behaviour against what he calls 'standards of desirability' (2001, p. 113). While this suggests overly rationalistic tendencies, Alwin points out that parental preferences for certain child behaviours in most instances reflect social preferences.

There is considerable empirical evidence to suggest that parenting styles in most minority world nations have changed considerably over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with a declining emphasis on values such as obedience and respect for authority and an increasing preference for developing autonomy, self-control and initiative in children (Alwin 2001; Mohler 1989; Reuband 1988; Tromsdorff 1983). Schaffer and colleagues refer to this as the development of 'parental modernity' (Schaefer 1987; Schaefer and Edgerton 1985). This shift, for example, manifests in Baumrind's (1966) famous conceptualisation of parenting style, in particular a transition from authoritarian parenting styles that emphasise unconditional obedience to strict rules to authoritative parenting styles that attempt to instil autonomy in children. Dunn and colleagues examined the implications of these changes for the choices middle-class families make in regard to after-school activities. In particular, they were interested in examining the transmission of parental values through organised activities given the increased burdens upon both men and women to balance work and care. They found that parents 'value the qualities

of responsibility, self-discipline, and respect in their children and work to instil these traits both at home and through various after-school activities' (Dunn et al. 2003, p. 1359). That is, parental choices over children's activities are in large part driven to reproduce certain developmental qualities amongst children, in particular, 'activities they perceive offer their children the opportunity to have fun, to be active, to discover and enhance special skills, and to develop self-esteem, commitment, social skills, teamwork, and helping behaviors' (Dunn et al. 2003, p. 1359).

It is in this context that Vincent and Ball (2007) argue that organised activities also function as 'reproduction strategies'. They suggest that the widespread preoccupation with organised activities for children is a relatively recent phenomenon that reflects a contemporary preoccupation with providing an enriched and stimulating childhood. This preoccupation goes well beyond the need to manage care responsibilities and has become a normal part of household activities and a normal expectation of childhood. A large commercial market has developed focusing on activities aimed at maximising child development. The aim of such marketing is to suggest to parents that if their children are not involved in such activities, then their children are missing out on developmental opportunities. It is unsurprising, then, that because parents view after-school activities as a means to promote the personal development of their children, the choice of activities is considered with some seriousness. In Dunn and colleagues' research, parents conveyed clear ideas about what they wanted their children to obtain from participation in after-school activities. Parents want their children to enjoy their time but also to be exposed to activities that allow children to discover their innate or unique talents and to be involved in activities that help children become competent adults. These desired attributes range from 'personal attributes, such as having a faith life, developing a sense of self-esteem and self-worth, and feeling loved, to interpersonal and social skills, such as knowing how to get along with a variety of people, respecting others, conflict resolution and working on a team' (Dunn et al. 2003, p. 1371). Similarly, Shannon (2006) found that parents and children alike focus on the functional aspects of leisure (leisure being restorative, leisure being a means to ends, leisure leading to personal benefit), as opposed to leisure being an opportunity for pleasure and enjoyment. This contrasts with the construction of leisure for adults, where discourses centre on pleasure and enjoyment.

These aspects can also be read as desirable social traits associated with being a unique but socially responsible self. Through organised activities, parents are encouraged to broaden their children's social perspectives and develop their talents. Vincent and Ball (2007) argue that '[T]hese activities can be understood as evidence of the planning ahead, the concern with the future that defines the approach of the middle classes to education' (p. 1072). Furthermore, they are a response to parental anxieties regarding 'making up the middle class child' (p. 1062). The purpose of such activities is to ensure that children's talents and abilities are developed and made the most of what Jordan et al. (1994, pp. 5–6) describe as the 'pursuit of self-making' and what Vincent and Ball describe as the making of the '"renaissance child" – a child with intellectual, creative and sporting skills and experience' (2007, p. 1071). These patterns reflect important social transformations, summarised by

Blatterer (2007) as occurring in the areas of intimacy, work and consumption, of which the former two are most relevant here. The transformation of intimacy has emphasised openness, negotiation and differentiation of forms of intimacy, which we have mentioned when discussing the democratisation of family life. Changes in the labour market also favour qualities of flexibility, risk-taking, mobility and adaptability. These values no longer prepare us for a life of settling down and stability, but of being able to embrace an uncertain future. What is required is a practical attitude where expectations beyond the present are downplayed.

This preparedness for flexibility makes sense in a context where full employment has lost its status as a consensus goal, precarious employment is common and time horizons have contracted. Under such conditions openness to change, risk-taking and short-termism are attributes that not only have an affinity with structural and cultural phenomena but become an internalised and normalised way of being in the world (Blatterer 2010, p. 72). In particular, the development of the self is connected to an acceptance of an open-ended future or at least an acceptance that one has proliferating options (see also Wyn and White 2000).

While Blatterer points out that these values provide criteria for being a successful adult, we can also generalise backwards in the life course and argue that the consecration of adaptability, flexibility and uniqueness is also evident in the choices parents make in terms of parenting style, the expectations they have of their children in terms of socialisation outcomes and, consequently, what parents consider to be appropriate activities for their children. Dunn et al. (2003) show that parents view the role of children's activities as a way to discern what their children are good at, to explore their abilities or to express what they perceive as their children's innate abilities. In so doing, parents view activities as a means for children to explore their unique abilities and as a mode of creative self-expression. This requires some degree of internalisation that one has unbounded possibilities. Consequently, skills needed to pursue whatever these unbounded possibilities might be—individual resolve, self-belief, internalised control, motivation and self-awareness—are to be encouraged in children. These are all qualities that are imperative to pursue one's unique life course, but they are also qualities that are valued human capital associated with an entrepreneurial spirit and dynamic consumerism.

Leisure time is also burdened with the responsibilities of developing these attributes. It is through leisure that aspects of personality that cannot be developed through school or work are nurtured. Karen Smith provides us with a framework through which we can understand leisure as being burdened with these tasks of self-development, via her use of the image of the 'Athenian' child as representing the responsible child who has autonomy and is a partner in the socialisation process. As Smith concludes, the 'Athenian' child 'represents a mode of governing childhood in which somewhat ironically, ideas about children's agency can be deployed in the kinds of instrumental future-oriented strategies that the image of the child as "competent social actor" was deployed to counter' (Smith 2011, p. 34).

Øksnes suggests that play becomes a means through which children become prepared for day-to-day activities and consequently takes on the characteristic of

'organized facilitation' (Øksnes 2008, p. 152). We see this explicitly in some early childhood research and practice that emphasises the importance of play in terms of 'school readiness', where the indicator of successful development is assessed in children's ability to adapt to the institutional demands of the school, in terms of behaviour, regulation of time, control of the body as well as educational competencies (Lester and Russell 2008, 2010; Lindsey and Mize 2000; Madsen et al. 2011; Marjanovic-Umek and Lesnik-Musek 2001; Vickerius and Sandberg 2006). But more generally leisure is characterised by authority structures. It is through leisure and participation in organised activities that we are expected to discover and assert our unique individuality and pursue our authentic self. However, this pursuit can be anxiety provoking and cause a sense of unboundedness. That is, there is no choice but to be an individual under conditions of modernity. We see this newer form of authority structure in children's increasing participation in organised activities.

Contested Leisure: The Diversity of Parenting Practices and Children's Use of Time

Thus far we have argued that processes of socialisation and the manner in which children spend their time are indicators of values encouraged in children and socially desirable values more generally (Hofferth and Sandberg 2001a). We have attempted to understand the importance of children's leisure in terms of its social role and have suggested that organised activities have become increasingly important in promoting social values, particularly within a broader context of what we have described as 'parental modernity', which we have suggested represent a dominant mode of parenting. However, alternative practices and values exist, and this is particularly so in societies characterised by economic divisions and cultural and ethnic diversity. However, dominant parenting practices have become naturalised and generalised despite being highly classed and cultured, and they act as a mode of distinction between class and cultural groups.

As we will discuss in Chap. 8, children 'embody' experiences of poverty and mediate problems that arise from lack of material and economic resources in their relationships with their parents, using a range of interpersonal coping strategies to manage their parents' expectations. Children will often avoid discussing their material needs, avoid conversations with their parents about the wealth of their friends' families, hide disappointment regarding their parents' consumption choices (e.g. the appropriateness of certain gifts) as well as actively contribute to household income through work. One important aspect of this is how class affects the sorts of activities children are able to participate in, a topic extensively examined by Lareau (2000) in her important study on class differences in children's daily activities. Lareau shows how social class cultivates skills in children through parenting style. Children's involvement in structured activities is a class-specific indicator of these dispositions.

Middle-class parents display a cultural logic towards parenting described by Lareau as 'concerted cultivation', where parenting is aimed at actively developing children's talents and skills. Children are enrolled in numerous age-specific organised activities to develop their talents. Lareau suggests that one of the implications of 'concerted cultivation' is that while there appears to be an emphasis on democratic parenting, 'adults controlled children's time and children's activities controlled adults' time' (Lareau 2000, p. 35). These activities come to dominate family life. They burden children with an expectation of performance, and they burden parents who have to coordinate children's participation in these activities and take children to and from these activities. Lareau also suggests that the emphasis on individual development and achievement encourages a sense of entitlement in children. Working-class families, Lareau suggests, adopt a strategy she describes as 'the accomplishment of natural growth'. This strategy emphasises the provision of material resources and clear moral guidance but is characterised by children organising their own time and pursuits. While children are expected to be obedient, parents rarely attempt to persuade their children to do certain activities or act in particular ways, and parents do not necessarily see their role as fostering their children's individual talents. Children from these families are less able to negotiate with their parents, but they have greater autonomy and consequently spend more time in child-initiated activities compared to children from middle-class families.

The implication of these class differences for children's agency is quite significant. While middle-class parents emphasise choice and deliberation in interactions with their children, parents nonetheless exert significant control over their children's time by enrolling them in a range of organised activities, which in turn control adult lives by creating hectic schedules that involve racing from one activity to another. In working-class families, although characterised by compliance in adult–child interactions, children are able to exercise significantly more agency. Who children spend time with, what activities they undertake, where these activities are undertaken and how often are largely child determined. Parents set the broad parameters of leisure and play only, although they put in place a number of strategies to deal with the evident dangers in their neighbourhoods, including limiting the range of activities children can undertake, using kinship networks to keep an 'eye on children' and 'chaperoning' children (Crouter and Head 2008). Consequently, in Lareau's analysis, working-class children are freer to engage in child-oriented activities and informal play.

Children and the Role of Leisure for Their Well-Being

Lareau's work sensitises us to a tension that exists in parental preoccupation with children's activities and children's expression of agency. Parents may be motivated to develop their children's capacity for self-discipline and independence, by encouraging their children to explore their interests through a set of acceptable activities. Children's involvement in activities may be loaded with parental expectations of

what they want their children to achieve from participating in such activities. These expectations may have very little to do with why children choose to engage in such activities, the purposes children identify for participating in such activities, children's experience of participating in such activities and the outcomes children identify from their participation in these activities. Parents may desire to promote autonomy in their children, but may go about doing so in quite controlling ways, as Karen Smith (2011) has suggested in her discussion of the model of the 'Athenian' child.

Our research illustrates that children discuss leisure in a way that is generally different from the social and developmental expectations we have thus far discussed as associated with leisure. Leisure is a site tasked with the development of certain values and attributes that are considered necessary for being a well-adjusted adult, as conceptualised in discourses that are both scientific and normative. In part, children may accept this adultist-derived social order where they see a role for leisure activities in contributing to their development. However, they also contribute a different discourse, one that contributes to a conceptualisation of well-being in hedonic terms as positive sensory experiences and in eudemonic terms as flourishing through sociability and recognition of competence. Additionally, leisure contributes to a sense of well-being as an activity that challenges institutional rules involving transgression and solidarity with their friends. Hence, while adults discuss leisure in terms of abstract concepts, children describe their leisure in terms of embodied experiences and material relations.

We explore these concepts of hedonism, eudemonia and transgression, as a means of experiencing well-being, in the next section of this chapter, where we shift from 'looking down' to 'looking up'. In thematising how children discuss the importance of leisure to their sense of well-being two main themes emerge from children's discussions. These are leisure as a sphere of freedom and leisure as a site for developing competence and gaining recognition. We explore different dimensions of freedom and competence as discussed by children as significant to well-being. This allows us to explore tensions between freedom and competence and construct a children's standpoint on leisure and well-being.

Leisure as Sphere of Freedom

Leisure as Fun

Children discuss their leisure activities, but especially free time and free play, as something essential to their sense of well-being. Free time was conceptualised by children as a marginal category—as time available to them left over after meeting school, self-care and family obligations. Yet not all 'free time' was discussed as being important to a sense of well-being. Some times had marked significance as being important, including free-time and leisure activities that were fun. Fun was used as a category to explain what it was about an activity that made it important for

well-being ('because it is fun'), how children go about doing activities so that such activities contribute to a sense of well-being ('you have to do it in a fun way') and why activities are chosen in the first place ('it is fun to do'). Similarly, in consultations with children and young people, the Western Australian Children's Commission found that children emphasised fun activities in discussing what was well-being (WA Children's Commission 2011). In highlighting the centrality of 'having fun' to well-being and its connection with activities, children are expressing a value in terms of hedonic concepts of subjective well-being.

In our research, when discussing what activities are fun, children described a vast array of activities, often with great animation, reflecting children's individual preferences and tastes, but common to all is that they involve free leisure, subject to few or no formal constraints. For example, Jackie describes a range of hobbies that make him 'feel good':

> I'm really good at dominos. I'm interested in hobbies, one of them is fishing. But I also bike riding, skateboarding. It really feels good.

Eve conjures up losing a sense of time because of the joy she experiences from rollerblading and ice-skating (something that also occurs in organised activities, which we discuss below), suggestive of an embodied and sensory experience of well-being (which we explore further in Chap. 9):

> And I actually like rollerblading. I'm a good rollerblader. But my favourite thing to do is ice-skating. I could, you know how you go in with a ticket and I'll do it for two hours. I could skate two hours like that. I could, I don't have to have a break. It is so fun. I love it.

Huggy also points to the sensations generated through bodily movement from playing sport, and additionally that sport facilitates time with friends and occasions during which sibling relationships are solidified through friendly competition:

> And every time I go there it is like with my friends, although sometimes like my sisters. We go to a basketball hoop and we play, you know, against each other, but my middle sister like helps me because my big sister is pretty good. So she helps me and we verse each other.' Cause I really like the sport.

> INTERVIEWER: Okay. What do you think you like about it, do you think?
> HUGGY: That I, that like when you get the ball you bounce it, and I like to jump off to the hoop like and sometimes when I can jump I hang off it like.

Tree describes the pleasure of playing 'hide and seek' with cousins and siblings on the family farm, oblivious to the attendant dangers of hiding in the farm machinery (which is of some concern to the interviewer), but also discusses the joy of playing with more 'modern' amusements. In so doing, Tree might also be suggesting how adult concerns about a 'lost childhood' may not be as relevant to children:

> INTERVIEWER: Tell me about your cousins. And why they are special people. Because you told me all about the things that they've got and the farm, and you like going down there because it is a farm?
> TREE: Well, I don't ride horses, my sister does. But we play tips and stuff there. Once I hid in the tractor and they never found me and my sister was hiding in the bobcat.
> INTERVIEWER: So you hid in the machines?
> TREE: Yeah—

> TREE: And also my other cousin um, got a PlayStation and stuff, and when we go over there sometimes we play PlayStation and sometimes we go to the park and they got, they got really good things to play. Once for his party we went onto a jumping castle and stuff and they hired a jumping castle and it was really fun. Like after the party we got to play on it too.

From these conversations about fun, and many others we had with children, we can discern certain traits of fun activities associated with well-being. These discussions often involved time spent with other children—that is, sociability between and amongst children—rather than time spent with adults; involved immediacy of pleasure, the activity is not fun if the pleasure is entirely deferred (although the pleasure associated with winning or developing competence can contribute to a sense of well-being in other ways, which we explore later in this chapter); and often, but not exclusively, involved activities taking place in informal settings. Ali summarises the tone of gaiety that characterises these discussions when she talks about what it means to 'be silly':

> INTERVIEWER: So is being silly like an important part of growing up?
> ALI: Yeah, I think you need to have fun.
> INTERVIEWER: Tell me about being silly? What sort of things do you do?
> ALI: Well, it is hard to explain. Well, you have like lots of laughs and, and just run around and be stupid.

Ryan and Deci (2001), citing Reis et al. (2000), emphasise the importance of sociability for eudemonic well-being when they find that people experienced greater relatedness when they felt understood, engaged in meaningful dialogue or had fun with others.

As we discussed in the first part of this chapter, adult discourses of children's leisure largely focus on the pedagogical and developmental aspects of leisure and often on institutionalised forms of activity. However, one dimension of the relationship between leisure and well-being that children emphasise is freedom from adult-defined strictures, expectations and institutional activities. The importance of friends and the physical, emotional and affective pleasure obtained from participating in activities are prioritised over and above the pedagogical and developmental benefits of the activity. Here, there is a stark contrast between children's emphasis on their experiences in the present and the focus of the adult discourses on children as becomings.

Well-being in the context of leisure extends beyond hedonic pleasure. It is especially about child-led activities that are informal and that can provide an escape from organised time, whether that is school time or organised family time. It is freedom from the adult-imposed aspects of their lives, particularly as experienced in social relations with other children. As Hutchby and Moran-Ellis (1998) also point out, autonomous children's spaces are social environments in which children utilise a range of personal and social resources as part of social interactions with other children that encompass a broad range of social situations. The value of these activities, and their contribution to a sense of well-being, is that they are not governed by commitments to prespecified tasks, or to learning outcomes, and may not be rationalised through time schedules. This sense of leisure as a sphere of freedom is

emphasised by Huggy who, in recalling her early childhood, reminisces about being free from the obligations and responsibilities of school and housework. Although occurring in an adult-organised early childcare centre, Huggy contrasts the freedom of play she experiences in the centre with having 'to do homework or jobs':

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Um, now I was wondering if you could pick for me one particular time in your life, it could either be like recently, or it might be a long time ago, when things were going really well for you.

HUGGY: I think when I was like really little. When I think I was like in preschool it was going like really well. Like I didn't have to do homework or jobs. And my mum would walk me to the preschool and I had my friends and got to do all the activities like drawing, playing in the sand, or sometimes they would blow up like a really big pool, like it was really big and we could all fit in. And we used to like play. And also on really hot days one of the childcare teachers they got the hose and they used to wet us. Like we used to wear swimming costumes and they wet us.

We are not suggesting that schoolwork and domestic duties are necessarily antithetical to children's well-being. Rather, free-time leisure contributes to a sense of well-being because it is free of the obligations and duties that characterise going to school, of more pedagogically oriented organised activities and household duties. In their discussions of their leisure, children are giving us some insight into their autonomous lifeworlds, independent of adults, including what the Opies (Opie and Opie 1969) describe as 'childlore' in their classic study of children's social interactions. While the children in our study did not discuss cultural practices of childhood, such as rhymes or games, that suggest an autonomously existing 'children's culture', they did emphasise the importance of free play that occurs as part of ordinary social relations with other children, in the backyard, playground, school or at home. In Goon's case, kicking the ball around with his brother is important to his well-being, especially because it is a routine part of his childhood:

INTERVIEWER: So tell me about the photos that you took of things important to your well-being. Ah, that is the park at the back. Okay, and who were you playing with that day?

GOON: [Describing the photo] My brother. That was me kicking the ball. We kick the ball around after school. And we are just out there having fun. Sometimes we play out there every morning. If we don't have that much stuff to do, we are just bored [so] we go outside—

INTERVIEWER: Yep, so it is something you can do and have fun?

GOON: Yeah.

While emphasising the importance of sociability in free activities, Prudence and Rosana also point to the pleasure from experiencing something new or something that is risky, an aspect of leisure we explore further in the next section:

INTERVIEWER: Okay, what about this photo [photo of a beach]? Why is this photo about well-being?

PRUDENCE: Yes, I think so because um, people can have a lot of fun on beaches and relax and yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Who would be there at the beach to make it really good?

PRUDENCE: Me and my friends.

ROSANA: But like you've got to be, you've got to be careful because like rocks most of the time have the green sloppy slippery stuff on it—

PRUDENCE: Algae—
INTERVIEWER: Does that make it more exciting though, that you might slip?
PRUDENCE: Yeah, and also when some rocks are directly down and the other goes directly up and you've got to like, you climb down and then you've got to climb up onto this higher rock. You have to make a path. Because it was fun and exciting and something new, something I'd never done before.

The importance of informal activities in the context of everyday social relations is also highlighted in children's discussions of banal and ordinary situations involving 'hanging out' with friends or family. What is emphasised by children is being able to be one's self, because one is comfortable within the intimate sphere. For example, Angel emphasises how one has to present a specific sense of self in public, which is different from being at home. Angel's discussion of 'being at home is the best' is indicative of what many children told us about the importance of the private sphere:

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is a really okay day?
ANGEL: Staying in the house and playing with the family.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, and being at home is fine. What about going out. Is that important?
ANGEL: No, being at home is the best.
INTERVIEWER: What is it about being at home that is really special to you?
ANGEL: You can do lots of stuff, but when you are in public places you have to like respect everyone.

Christensen (2002) has also highlighted the importance of ordinariness in examining children's perceptions of what constitutes quality time in families. She suggests that one of the qualities children enjoy about spending time with parents is 'simply being and doing things together in a routine manner' (pp. 81–82). This includes routine practices around meals and watching television, times that serve to bring family members together. We found this valuing of ordinariness in being together was applied not only to time spent with families but more broadly, strongly suggesting that well-being springs from the ordinary because it is often free from the burdens and expectations of active performance. This resonates with Goffman's (1959) discussion of the presentation of the self in everyday life; the significance of the banal and 'hanging out' suggests the importance of not needing to control or present a highly performative self for family and friends, which is a more explicit requirement in the public sphere. 'Hanging out at home' has the important psychological function of creating a protected space for the individual, because, in Goffman's terms, there is clear agreement as to the expectations of interaction between the interaction partners (other family members or close friends), which allows not only coherent definition of the social situation but also a self-assuredness about one's presentation of self. This sense of self-assuredness, of being able to 'be one's self', of not having to prove yourself to others or, as Angel puts it, 'respect everyone', is, as we discussed in Chap. 5, one dimension of a sense of ontological security and, as we discussed in Chap. 6, important to a coherent sense of self.

Leisure, Autonomy and Institutions

We have described how children associate activities with well-being when it involves fun and free time with other children (and also adults) beyond adult-defined domains. We can understand this freedom as a negative freedom from duties and obligations associated with being a child, in particular from school with its attendant obligations to learn and family with attendant obligations to undertake domestic work and from the routines that are required to organise school and family life. In this sense, free-time leisure is also freedom from the expectations represented by a rationalised lifeworld to meet schedules and curricularised assessments. This is particularly evident in the importance of idleness and 'hanging out' to children's sense of well-being.

However, leisure was also associated with well-being where freedom was expressed in a more positive sense, a 'freedom to' rather than a 'freedom from', and that was in terms of the importance of autonomy to do activities, rather than being free from obligations. Children connected a sense of well-being with leisure when leisure was voluntary and when it provided a sense of autonomy and capacity for autonomous decision-making, for instance, deciding who to play with and what activities to do. This also includes choice as to whether to participate in an activity or not. The informality of the activity could contribute to this, being more likely to be spontaneous and child-led than organised activities. These qualities, of being spontaneous and child-led, were often identified by children as being important to making an activity fun. Trilla and colleagues (2014) differentiate this kind of use of time from time where children make a commitment to an external authority or organisation, regardless of whether that commitment is independently made, imposed by others or made jointly with others. The former, they suggest, is genuine free time.

We see this autonomy manifested in various examples children used to discuss what was important to their well-being. Ali's evident pleasure in playing in the adventure playground is in part because it is designed to facilitate autonomous decision-making and discovery:

> INTERVIEWER: I've just watched you running [around] all these different activities in this adventure playground. And when you sit back and look at this adventure playground, what do you reckon they've done right about the way they've built this for kids?
>
> ALI: They've made it like a maze and you can run around, get lost and then find your way back. And everywhere you go there is always something like to jump off or swing and stuff like that. So it is sort of like discovery.
>
> INTERVIEWER: And you just did that on your own. Can you enjoy this on your own or do you need friends here?
>
> ALI: You can enjoy it on your own, but you can also have friends here.

For Prudence, looking after her horse requires her to be responsible, and this responsibility provides the circumstances in which she can express her agency:

> Well, the horse I do heaps more things with. Like I ride him and I like one time he tried to push me over, and like I give him baths and stuff and he shakes on me. That is good on hot days. I get wet. Um, and yeah you can just do heaps more with him.

For Angel, part of the pleasure of sport is how playing with friends increases her competence (more on this later) and also provides opportunities to plan and strategise with others about what to do next:

INTERVIEWER: In the last interview you said playing with friends and sports was good, and I think you said that it was really important because you are with your friends. It doesn't really matter what sport you are playing or whether you are good at it you are with your friends. Is that still true for you?

ANGEL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Okay. Do you want to say anything more about sports. What is good about sports when you are with your friends?

ANGEL: Mmm, 'cause um, pretend that, pretend my team is like losing and then my friends come and support me to get better. So you talk, you work out ways you are going to win together and support each other.

We can discern from children's responses that autonomy in this context has at least two important dimensions. Children emphasised the importance of being able to choose what activity they want to be involved in. In particular, this requires free time not dedicated to school, school-related activities or structured leisure activities, where choice is constrained for children and the activities children are involved in are for the most part determined by others. This is something we discussed in the previous section. Additionally, children expressed the importance of being able to have some autonomy over the way the activity is undertaken—the how of the activity. This suggests that organised activities have no guarantee of being a fun activity, partly because the parameters of involvement are often not determined by children but by, for example, their parents or instructors. Where an activity is organised and facilitated through an institution, even though it may be fun, part of the child's time has to be managed by that institution. This is quite different from activities where the child has autonomy to decide how to use their time or whether to carry out an activity.

We are not suggesting that children premise their sense of well-being on an idealised sense of autonomy. As we have discussed in previous chapters, children's agency is enacted intersubjectively with others, through engagement with the possibilities presented by natural and physical environments, and depends on material goods to which children have access. However, children emphasised the importance of being able to have some control over their leisure interactions with other children, what we have discussed in Chap. 4 as autonomy. For Ali, autonomy is about discovery, which can be an opportunity to discover independently or with friends. For Prudence, it is about developing a relationship with her horse and through that process being able to do more with her horse. For Angel, it is about the emotional terrain of support involved with working out how to win together with friends. All these examples indicate both freedom and sociability, characterised by complex negotiations around conflict, control and inclusion, which children often are able to successfully negotiate without the intervention or mediation of adults.

Our findings in relation to leisure confirm the importance of autonomous social interactions amongst children to their sense of well-being. It is when adult-organised activities facilitate or allow for self-directed and autonomous leisure that children

indicate these activities can be experienced as fun. For example, Angel discusses the importance of structured choices in doing music and art subjects:

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And when you said you liked art and music is that because you are good at them or just because you find they are fun?
ANGEL:' Cause it is fun. You get some choices and you are involved a lot in doing things in those subjects. So you can still have fun in music and art even if you are not good at them.
INTERVIEWER: How can you make music fun?
ANGEL: Um, sometimes the teacher can turn the music [on] and me and my friends sing songs and we get to talk.

For Huggie, the school excursion represents the highlight of the school year because it is a day devoted to games and play, organised by the school:

INTERVIEWER: What things make you feel really good?
HUGGIE: Um, when I go on excursions. Like at the end of the year all of the whole school will go. Like the teachers choose. And she will do a whole excursion for us to do.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, so that is like a whole day out? So what did you do last year?
HUGGIE: Um, we went to this park and they had like all activities set. Like we had Austag [a version of football] to do. That is where you rip the tags off the side of the people.

Ali identifies another way in which structured activities, whether involving holiday club activities or a school excursion, facilitate a sense of well-being. In Ali's case, his holiday club is important to his well-being because it allows him to learn something new, to experience things he has never experienced before and make new friends:

During the holidays we went to Fiji and had a really good time. We went snorkelling and parasailing and we got to see all the Fijian people and the Fijian dance and their culture and had lots of fun. And went to different islands.

INTERVIEWER: Oh. Wonderful. And so what was the very most important part for you?
ALI: Um, when we got to see all the Fijian people and our resort was very nice. They had a Kids Club. And we got to go there, and they take you boogie boarding and surfing and stuff.
INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. Like what was it about the Kids Club that you liked?
ALI: Well, I met a girl named Paris from New Zealand. And um, and now we are pen pals and we write to each other all the time.

In these discussions, children are indicating that institutionalised and structured activities do have the potential for facilitating children's autonomy. Organised activities can involve free-time leisure that provides a counterpoint to the normal institutionalised priorities of, for example, school. Some organisations have the objective of providing leisure experiences to children, whereas for others, such as schools where children spend much of their time, time and space can be devoted to free time and play or organised by children themselves. For example, the Øksnes (2008) study of Norwegian children's perceptions of their leisure time within after-school daycare centres explored how children create spaces of freedom and fun within rule-bound organisations. Øksnes shows that children escape from 'the official institutionalised life' through time with friends and through co-opting organised activities for their own purposes. The same activity may be experienced as either tedious or fun, depending on the child's level of mastery over the activity and

whether social interactions involved with the activity facilitate some degree of autonomy to undertake the activity.

There is a trend in policy documents to sentimentalise 'child spaces' and 'nature' as a way of providing opportunities for unstructured play (e.g. Louv 2005). While these spaces are important and some children in our research referred to these spaces as relevant to their well-being, children also discussed other environments as facilitating a sense of well-being. Organised environments can be adapted to create opportunities for leisure, and many urban geographers have documented how children adapt social environments for purposes for which they were not intended. For example, markets and shops can become a playing field, hideout or place of adventure. Spaces specifically designed for children's leisure can similarly be adapted for unintended purposes, so that materially and symbolically children transform these structured environments into environments that become places for informal meetings and activities with friends. For example, football training can be a time when friends come together to socialise, or dance lessons can be used to trade cards or toys. This suggests that rather than being a strict separation between children's autonomous spaces and adult-directed children's spaces, organised activities can be the site of both, where children engage in their own practices within the bounds of organisationally defined rules. Participation in the organised activity requires that children meet institutionalised demands. However, in many instances, especially those involving groups of children, these spaces can also be adapted for free interactions with other children. This leads us to another important dimension of well-being, and that is well-being associated with transgression.

Transgression: Well-Being as Rule Breaking

Leisure is associated with well-being when it involves fun and freedom from adult-organised time—what we can consider as activities occurring in children's autonomous lifeworlds, where institutionalised activities are centred on facilitating free time and also where children adapt institutionalised spaces for their own purposes. A special case of the latter situation—of playing with the institutional rules—was indicated in children's discussions as being important to well-being. This involved activities providing opportunities for transgression or rule breaking.

Significant adults, and especially parents, are responsible at an interpersonal level for providing guidance to children as to what is and what is not appropriate behaviour. Rules prescribe what kind of social conduct is rewarded and proscribe which behaviours are errant. At an organisational level, institutional rules facilitate and constrain behaviour by defining what is and what is not appropriate conduct for participating in an activity. The rules that define activities are also important in defining participants as institutional actors. Berry Mayall (1994) articulates this when she describes how institutions—in the case of her research, schools—construct the child as a project for the adult work of education, with attendant institutional knowledge and rules. Children are thereby constructed and treated according

to the extent that they engage in the institutional discourses and practices associated with schooling and education. As we have noted, while many structured activities are not defined specifically around education, they do have a pedagogic function around the creation of the self. Therefore, a similar set of expectations around what is and what is not appropriate behaviour is also required for the conduct of many of these activities.

However, rules of conduct also define behaviours that exist outside the rules, and thus rules provide opportunities for exercising autonomy through rule breaking. Some children expressed a sense of well-being when they intentionally behaved outside prescribed rules or contravened what were considered the norms for behaviour within a social field. There was a sense of exhilaration and defiance in discussions of these acts, confirmed by the reactions elicited by their behaviour: in the case of other children, mainly approval and praise, and of adults, usually reproach. Children described how well-being can be experienced in transgressing rules designed to create environments that are stable, predictable and less dangerous for adults and children. For example, Goon describes the pleasure from not following condoned rules of play:

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. What was the best part of the day? [Discussing a school camp activity involving 'putt-putt' golf]

GOON: There was on the course this water one, and like somebody kept hitting it in the water. Then they did it hard and it went into the bush or something. And it got lost. So it was a bit of fun.

Superman shows how it is important for him to find opportunities to break the rules:

SUPERMAN: Yeah, they try and make us behave, but we really usually find ways um, like we had a babysitter last night and we were kicking the ball and playing soccer through the house while Dad was gone.

And Spiderman indicates that breaking the rules is important even when it is unobserved, asserting his autonomy as being of value in itself:

SPIDERMAN: Normally, I run into that other house near the garage.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and they don't mind that?

SPIDERMAN: No. They don't see, they don't hear.

INTERVIEWER: Ahh. Okay. So you are going down the driveway? Okay. So was that the first time you had a go on a skateboard?

SPIDERMAN: Yeah—

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Was it good fun?

SPIDERMAN: Yeah, good. Like when you hit the side you go like to the left. Crash into that, it will go the other side. That is how I control to not like hit the garage and all that. Normally, I crash onto these flowers. I have to go left again quickly before I go into the garage.

Jackie, in discussing a 'well-being time', provides an example of condoned transgression and thus the importance of arenas where this can happen:

I thought of something that was a well-being time. When we were up at Foster [we] went to a circus and like the bumper cars. It was really good fun, and the boy like he smashed into us and then we were going to pay him back, but this girl that was sitting next to me and like I tried riding really fast and he was in front of me and I can't reach him and crashed into the flagpole. So nearly fell out so and then I just felt good like laughing because of this payback.

Children, while having knowledge of and being subject to institutional knowledge and practices, 'bend the rules' to create opportunities for fun and autonomy. In some situations this may also be a form of direct resistance to rules. For example, Danby and Baker (1998) show how preschool children use two strategies to manage conflicts, one in which they comply with the teacher's attempts to resolve conflict and another used amongst themselves to manage conflict independent of the teacher. Sacks (1992) also points out that part of the ability to transgress 'successfully' is the ability to use rules strategically, to confront adult imposition of rules with another set of rules to counterpose the adult application of rules. The rules are appropriated by children, which in turn may create new opportunities for fun and enjoyment. A football game can turn into a game of chasing if someone picks up the ball, or it can alternatively ruin the game. Therefore, the structures and organisation of formal activities present opportunities for children to transgress and pursue their own agendas.

Children, in these discussions, are contesting authoritative adult prescriptions of how to behave. They are also indicating experiencing a sense of well-being where playful behaviour involves freedom from rules or adaption of rules to allow new forms of play. As Øksnes points out, this creates two related environments, the official environment of the structured activity and the unofficial environment of transgression and rule breaking, associated with playfulness (2008, p. 157). Øksnes notes that what children may be resisting through transgression is not so much the rules themselves, but an attempt 'to create children, institutionalise them, freeze them in 'normal' patterns and thus attempt to limit their creativity and chronic urge to explore' (p. 157). This relationship between institutional structures and cracks in institutional structures has also been commented on by Jenks (2003), who argues that the fact that children's lives are subject to high levels of regulation creates both the need and ample opportunities to disobey. Such disobedience does not act as a denial of the institutional strictures and regulations, rather it creates an alternative plane of acting beyond that accepted by regulations.

Through the use of enforceable rules that structure leisure time, environments are created that are stable for adults, where the content of the leisure activity is defined and to some extent predictable. For both adults and children alike, this makes the environment and the content of the activity more predictable and less dangerous—rules provide risk management. However, the experience of risk was often what children identified as making the experience fun and associated with a sense of well-being. For example, Goon talks about the thrill associated with going fast on his skateboard:

> Um, well the good times are when I see that sometimes some roads are like good. And you can like speed on them.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you can go fast.
> GOON: Yeah, there is a hill and you can go fast there. And it is a good road too.
> INTERVIEWER: A good road?
> GOON: It is flat. It is kind of like built. Yeah.
> INTERVIEWER: Okay, so how does that make you feel?
> GOON: Happy. You can go fast.

Ali explicitly links scary with fun when she discusses her favourite parts of the adventure playground:

> INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay. Cool. And what else do you notice that they've done here that is important for you to have fun?
> ALI: I like the little thing where you push on it and it swings real high and it makes it look like you are about to fall off. And I like the tyre swing.
> INTERVIEWER: So what is it about the tyre swing?
> ALI: It is about doing some things that are a bit scary—
> INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Can scary be unsafe?
> ALI: No, not always. Scary can be fun as well.

We also see in Goon and Ali's thrill about the risk associated with their activities a relationship between leisure, risk and pleasure. This relationship, explored by Dunning and Elias (1986), is especially relevant to understanding why transgression is associated with well-being. They argue that recreational leisure often involves some level of personal risk, which sets these activities apart from the routine and rationalised aspects of people's lives. Leisure is often characterised by being able to relax or ridicule the rules that govern non-leisure life. We see this playing with the rules at its most radical in extreme sports, but the playing and ridiculing of the ordinary rules of everyday life define what it is for children to transgress the rules of institutional activities. Dunning and Elias suggest that 'antagonistic feelings such as pleasure and fear … are inseparable parts of a process of recreational enjoyment' (1986, p. 135). Therefore fear, or the fear and anguish associated with risk-taking, is intrinsic to the excitement and pleasure experienced from the leisure activity. Dunning and Elias go on to state:

> 'This is the reason why different types of excitement play a central role in recreational activities. And only in this way is it possible to understand the "de-routinizing" function of leisure. Routines entail a high degree of security. Unless we expose ourselves to a little insecurity, to having something more or less at stake, the routines we have embodied in us will never loosen, we will never be able to rid ourselves of them, even temporarily, and the function of recreational activities will be lost'. (Dunning and Elias 1986, pp. 134–135)

We see how children can find in the context of leisure the opportunities to challenge adult-protective attitudes and develop their sense of self and capabilities for autonomous behaviour. As highlighted in Chap. 5, this is important to their well-being.

Elaborate systems have been developed to safeguard against personal and social liability that may result from excessive risk-taking, which include formal systems of risk management and insurance. However, social norms and how such norms set standards and expectations for individual behaviour are also risk management strategies aimed at governing the self, with the ultimate aim that individuals attenuate their behaviour to meet the requirements of a rationalised life. Teaching children to manage their behaviour by understanding their limits, taking responsibility by understanding that their behaviour has consequences and developing self-control are important pedagogical objectives of schooling and organised leisure activities. Yet, as Dunning and Elias (1986) argue, both the formal systems of risk management and normative expectations for self-control are intertwined with the need to make fun of the rules. Adults who are responsible for children's education, leisure

and safety are required to understand ‘rule breaking’ through a framework of risks (and the legal consequences thereof), danger (and the health consequences thereof) and chaos (and the moral consequences thereof) and therefore control the parameters of activities closely. However, risk, danger and chaos are also elements that link transgression to a sense of well-being in the context of leisure activities.

Leisure as Site for Developing Competence and Gaining Recognition

We have explored one dimension of the relationship between leisure and well-being, and that is where leisure is a sphere of freedom. We have identified different dimensions of this freedom: freedom can involve fun and free time with other children beyond adult-defined domains; freedom can mean freedom from burdens and expectations through hanging out with family and friends in the intimate sphere (and thus freedom from public expectations); freedom can be that which arises within institutionalised spaces where children adapt the resources such spaces offer for their own activities; and freedom can involve playing with rules, what we have discussed as transgression.

Children also emphasised how activities provide opportunities for obtaining social esteem, pride and self-worth through accomplishing something as a result of their participation in the activity. Many children discussed how they valued opportunities to develop skills and the associated feelings of self-worth when their achievements were given recognition, either formally or informally. This could occur through achieving a benchmark in learning, for instance, learning a new piece on the piano, or achieving some sort of sporting prowess. This sense of well-being could occur in a competitive environment, for example, team sports, where feelings of competence are associated with approbation by others and victory; but it could also be associated with an internalised sense of achievement, a reflexive psychological state of self-worth from doing something well. In both cases the importance and symbolic value of social acceptance are evident.

The development and expression of competencies, or more specifically here, feeling competent, is situated within concrete social contexts that enable and constrain both the type of competencies developed and the way these competencies are expressed (Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 1998). Much of the new childhood studies has promoted a ‘competence agenda’ in which, through careful empirical and theoretical work, the competence of children in a range of social situations and relations is documented and advocated. This work has done much to dispel dominant constructions of children as incompetent or competent only within certain parameters. Much of this work illustrates that children already practice social competence and in so doing also attempts to reconstruct what social competence is. This redefinition of competence and assertion of children as competent social actors is relevant as shown by the discussion in this chapter, in Chaps. 4 and 5 and elsewhere in this book.

Children discussed how they negotiate complex social relationships, assert their agency in a range of everyday situations, negotiate the boundaries of safety and intersubjectively constitute a sense of self.

However, children's discussions of feeling competent in the context of activities and well-being not only include practising social competence as part of everyday interactions, they also include developing new skills and having these new skills recognised by others. Developing and attaining competencies, feeling competent as well as practising social competence are all important to children and important to their sense of well-being. Here we are not interrogating whether children are competent or not. We assume that children possess complex social competencies. Rather, children's discussions here and elsewhere in this book emphasise the importance of feeling competent, developing competence and having that competence recognised.

Self-Reflexive and Internalised Competence

Children discussed how mastering a certain skill or task was often experienced as a deep sense of internal satisfaction, well-being in eudemonic terms, as a sense of flourishing. The experience of well-being produced by being able to do something for the first time included picking up the knack of doing something and developing and refining existing skills. This sense of internal satisfaction can occur even where the achievement falls short of socially accepted norms for displaying competence. As one participant stated: '… you have to practise to be good at something. So the more I practise, the better I'll become'. Ali gained a general sense of feeling confident through achieving something:

INTERVIEWER: When have you felt really confident?
ALI: You feel confident when you try doing something and you've achieved it and you feel confident that you can do it again and again. And I think it is good to feel confident.
INTERVIEWER: Is there anything you particularly feel confident about?
ALI: Um, not really. I think confidence just comes when you, when you feel, like, when you know. You will know it.

For Rosana, learning new tricks in the pool on her own provided this feeling:

INTERVIEWER: So is that because you like sport or you want to spend time with the people next door, sort of, or the other friends?
ROSANA: That and just to play with myself on weekends and that, and learn to do tricks and things in the pool.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, so really developing your skills?
ROSANA: Yeah.

Prudence experienced internal satisfaction through the unfolding and deepening of a larger repertoire of skills, which makes riding her horse 'like an adventure or a surprise':

INTERVIEWER: And what are the other bits that I've missed, because I'm really trying to understand how you develop a really close attachment with your horse, Leo.

PRUDENCE: I think that the other thing is that I, I can just ride him. It is really fun 'cause like he's really strong but not heavy. It is exciting because he gives you challenges and you are learning things with him. Every lesson he does something different.

INTERVIEWER: So each week you are not sure what you are going to learn and what is going to happen?

PRUDENCE: Yeah. It is a bit like an adventure or a surprise and teaching me stuff about new things and about doing fun things together.

Children's discussions of an internalised sense of well-being through activities reflects an experience of wanting to undertake the activity because the activity has purpose in and of itself, even if the activity has external or utilitarian outcomes. In these discussions children do not necessarily see themselves, as Barrie Thorne (1993) points out in her research, as being socialised or developed, which is the dominant conceptual frame that many adults use to understand children's activities. Rather, the internalised sense of well-being is, as Trilla and colleagues (2014) describe, autotelic, experienced as something of value in and of itself. As Trilla and colleagues explain, being good at running can result in being fitter. This outcome, of being fitter, can be important because of the outcomes associated with being better at running, such as being a more competitive runner or a physically healthier person. However, in an autotelic sense, running can be enjoyed because of its physicality, the way it makes one's legs and arms feel, that it brings a sense of calm or focus and because over time you can run further. For example, Apex loves the Impressionists not only because in engaging with the their work he has developed his capacity as an artist but also because of the aesthetic wonder he experiences from studying Impressionist art:

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about this. You've sort of done a different style here of illustration. A wonderful, beautiful vase of flowers.

APEX: What happened on this day was that I was reading this art book. I read a lot of books. And I was reading the Impressionists and yeah and then I got the shades and stuff.

INTERVIEWER: That is cool. So what do you think of the Impressionists?

APEX: They are cool. They make you think, the colours are blended but they are not. See. These colours are not blended at all. You can see it looks like glass or something. That is crazy. Just the art. You know. So I'm doing a couple of these.

Dizzy may never be able to emulate his feats at pool again, but his pleasure in beating his older cousin comes not only from winning the game but also from being able to display competence, which is also a pleasant surprise to himself:

> Except I was feeling proud of myself because we played pool and I played against my cousin and she is like heaps older than me and um, and I won and I was really proud 'cause I was getting them all in and I got very excited.

Many of these instances of developing competence involve practical achievements that occur in everyday interactions, as part of ordinary peer group interactions, or with adults, in the context of day-to-day practices. As practical achievements, they are something that children come to possess, rather than competencies that are bestowed upon them by others. As such, they are often outside the scope of structured activities, where achievements are subject to pedagogic criteria and the achievement of competence is codified and subject to passing some kind of formal

assessment. They are activities that accord with the eudemonic sense of well-being as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), who found in one study that when a group of teenagers' energies were focused on a challenging task, their moods became more positive. His founding work in the area of positive psychology highlighted the extent to which happiness comes from stretching one's body or mind to achieve this experience of happiness. This work has been further developed in terms of discussion of intrinsic motivation and well-being in the work of Deci and Ryan on self-determination theory (e.g. 2000).

Trilla and colleagues (2014) emphasise the pedagogic opportunities that arise in unstructured leisure and free time. They contrast 'free-time situations' with schooling and suggest that schools traditionally isolate themselves from the surrounding social environment to focus on the tasks of teaching, whereas free-time educational opportunities arise from active participation in the natural, social, urban and cultural environments. Free time can therefore be time in which knowledge and skills can be developed.

However, to colonise free time explicitly for the purposes of education means converting free time into education. If activities are unpleasant, boring or tedious, they are not really experienced as leisure nor do they contribute to a sense of well-being, at least not in the context of children's activities. This finding is similar to those of Øksnes (2008), who points out that activities, even those traditionally associated with leisure, may become 'boring' if the child finds it difficult to do the activity and consequently feels incompetent or if the child feels compelled to undertake the activity. When children tell us that things that are fun do not necessarily exclude things that require physical or psychological effort, they support Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) thesis of the importance to individuals of stretching their mind or body in achieving a sense of well-being. For example, Yellow indicates that, because of its autotelic nature, using both her mind and body to create new dance moves is more like play and fun than learning as it happens in school:

> Um, I want to do dancing and like this bridge is going to be opened. It is going to be big and we are going to be dancing in front of it. And we are going to miss out on class.
>
> INTERVIEWER: And missing out on classes is good, too, is it? Why is missing out on classes good?
> YELLOW: Um, because we get to dance and have fun instead of um, learning.
> INTERVIEWER: Did you have to learn the dance?
> YELLOW: Yep.
> INTERVIEWER: Is that learning or isn't that really learning?
> YELLOW: It is not really learning. Um, because learning is like telling you something that you didn't know and um, teaching you stuff and dancing is um, like it is just like playing but you are dancing.

This experience of well-being through activity in and of itself is quite different from undertaking leisure as an expression of one's status or capability. Thorstein Veblen presents a most extreme example of leisure as a form of ostentatious expression of wealth and power in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). However, while beyond the scope of this chapter, we agree with other scholars working in the new childhood studies tradition that the opportunity to develop these competencies and further to

express them in social interaction is largely subject to the material and cultural resources available to children. It is also subject to children having the opportunities in which their competence can be expressed. Apex's love of the Impressionists can only be constituted and enacted if she has access to material resources, such as paint and canvass, cultural resources such as books on Impressionism and social resources such as dialogue partners, in which she can safely express her competence as a painter and her passion for Impressionism. These three factors—material, cultural and social resources and opportunities—may influence children's ability to both actualise a capability and express an internalised sense of autotelic well-being as part of social interactions.

Social Recognition

As well as the internalised or autotelic sense of satisfaction of having achieved something or mastered a new skill, displays of competence can contribute to a sense of well-being when they result in social recognition from others, again in accord with theories of well-being that identify the importance of relatedness (e.g. Deci and Ryan 2000).

Children's discussions indicate that this recognition can be experienced in institutional form (such as institutionally granted awards or qualifications), as is the case with Eve winning a medal for doing gym:

> INTERVIEWER: Can you think of other times when you've felt really, really happy?
> EVE: Well, when I was doing, when I was little I won a medal, well I got a medal from doing gym and that was something that I felt really happy.

For Queensland, from winning a stamp collection colouring competition:

> Um, it is a stamp collection um folder and I've collected lots of stamps. I counted it and I think it's 43 stamps and um, every three months you get um, you get um, like um, stamp magazines. And in one of them … also they give you um, um, a competition draw like um, it is a thing and you just colour it in and um, the best 20 drawings will win a prize and I won a prize in it.

> INTERVIEWER: And what did you like about doing this stamp collection and winning the prize and everything. What were the good parts for you?
> QUEENSLAND: Well um, the first good part was winning prizes and the second part was like um, when you collect stamps that stamp I think it is good because like some stamps might be very common but after maybe when um, I'm 50 years old or something, I'm 9 years old now but if it is like, like lots of years, lots of after lots of years like, like when I'm 50 then um, really common stamps now might be rare.

For Goon, recognition came from getting a trophy because of his involvement in public speaking:

> INTERVIEWER: [Discussing photos associated with well-being] And what else did we have? Let's have a look. What is this one?
> GOON: This was another one. Another type of public speaking.
> INTERVIEWER: Oh, was it. You look like you are getting a trophy or something.

GOON: Yep. I think that was that one there. One on the top left [showing trophy in cabinet].

INTERVIEWER: Ah, the one at the back with the red and black, ah the lectern with the microphone. The Young Directors Club. Oh. Okay. So tell me what was that time? What is the Young Directors Club?

GOON: A place where like you have to practise. Yeah, we go there to practise and yeah, practise and then come back.

This social recognition is also valued when it takes the form of displays of affection and pride from people who are important to the child, as in Tree's case where she could experience the joy of a significant victory with her teammates:

TREE: Yeah, and then the next thing we were playing soccer against Marist Park and we won nine nil. I scored five goals.

INTERVIEWER: Wow.

TREE: And it made me feel excited because we never won that big before. So it was good. Except last year when we made it to the semifinals of State. When we played Carlingford Redbacks in our like pool for our like club thing, we beat them 11 nil.

INTERVIEWER: And did that make you feel just as excited?

TREE: Yeah.

Achievement of status in accordance with positively valued prescriptions depends on social recognition (Blatterer 2010, p. 66). In terms of children's activities, this occurs through the recognition of competence as the mastery of certain skills associated with or attributed to the activity. What children emphasise is that these esteem claims rely on recognition of competence from others, with feelings of self-worth resulting from experiences of positive recognition. Part of this social recognition involves processes of supported learning, in the Vygotskian sense, where children are challenged to extend their competencies with the support of someone in a teaching role (Vygotsky 1978). Guidance and support permit the child to develop competencies at their own pace and on their own terms, and progressively the level of support is gradually withdrawn until the child is able to perform the task independently. Through the process of participating in the activities, with supportive instructors, increased competence and mastery are developed, which is the basis for the child being able to autonomously undertake the tasks. This can lead to a sense of increased mastery and of enhanced enjoyment consistent with well-being as defined by the Capability Approach. This is illustrated in a discussion with Angel about piano lessons:

INTERVIEWER: Piano lessons, and that makes you happy?

ANGEL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What is it about piano and music that is important?

ANGEL:' Cause other people teach you and then you can teach other people. Some people like music and you can make them happy.

INTERVIEWER: You can play to them. And teach, who do you teach?

ANGEL: No one yet, but maybe I'll be a musician. [Piano lessons] give me a chance to learn something that I might be able to use later.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, and would you use that as a job?

ANGEL: Yes—

INTERVIEWER: As a job, okay. How would that be good? How could that make your life better?

ANGEL: Earn money by teaching.

In this context, supportive adults are those who provide guidance and allow the child to display and develop their competencies on their own terms. This assumes that children are competent and also that increasing competence unfolds over time through practice. For example, some children discussed the importance of supportive adults in helping them learn new things and 'develop'. The other aspect of the development of competence emphasised by children is learning by doing, which as Trilla and colleagues (2014) emphasise is a consequence of learning in more informal 'free-time' settings. This is because learning follows from undertaking the activity in these contexts. The doing of the activity itself determines the skills and knowledge acquired, whether that involves honing one's accuracy through playing pool or being more athletic by doing spins in the water. They contrast this with more formal pedagogic practices in schools, where learning outcomes and programs are predetermined, and thus learning processes and activities are designed to achieve these predetermined learning outcomes.

While developmental models of childhood competence construct children as moving from incompetence to competence, associated with the move from childhood to adulthood, children describe how they develop competencies in desirable ways through the provision of opportunities and resources, including support. However, unlike the socialisation paradigm, what is evident in children's descriptions is that the attainment of desired competencies is structured by the activities of children themselves, not only through structured programs but in the course of their everyday interactions with other children and adults across multiple social contexts. Queensland's discussion of learning how to ride a bicycle is illustrative of this:

> And um, the main thing in Dubbo was the Western Plains Zoo. We went there. And then when we got there we did the morning walk and then we rented a bike on my own. But like the last time I rode my bike um, it had, like four wheels. Like two, like the two main wheels were on and then on the back wheel there were two other wheels [added] on to make it balanced. And then when we went to Dubbo there were no like four wheel bikes. There were only like um, two wheels. The two main wheels. And then um, when I found out I could ride on two wheels I was really happy. And um, we rode our bikes around the zoo.

What is important for Huggie in the fun associated with learning how to fish is not only the instrumental outcomes of catching fish or the pedagogic outcomes of becoming more proficient at fishing, which are both important; she valued the experiential aspects of being out on the water in a 'lonely and quiet place' and in particular doing this with her father:

> INTERVIEWER: Can you tell me about that time [that was important to a sense of well-being]?
> HUGGIE: Well, I was fishing with my dad and we caught lots of fish there and we got wet. And it is sort of like lonely and a quiet place, with not many people. There was just me and my dad.
> INTERVIEWER: Okay, so what was it that was good about that?
> HUGGIE: Like, I don't know, just my dad is like helping me and it was fun.

Both George Herbert Mead and Axel Honneth, in their own ways, illustrate that the symbolic value of social acceptance, obtaining respect and recognition, firstly from

significant others and later social groups, are as basic needs as the satisfaction of biological needs. In these discussions, children are perhaps providing concrete situations in which the importance of these processes of social recognition is enacted.

A Child Standpoint on Leisure and Well-Being

The child standpoint on activities and leisure, as constructed in this chapter, identifies that leisure activities contribute to children's sense of well-being in at least two distinct ways that appear to stand in tension. Leisure is associated with well-being where it provides opportunities for both negative and positive freedom and where leisure facilitates the development of competence as mastery or social action and through which an internalised sense of self-worth or socially recognised self-esteem is obtained.

Children value leisure as a sphere of freedom. This freedom has different dimensions. Freedom can involve fun and free time with other children beyond adult-defined domains. In this sense, freedom is a negative freedom. It involves freedom from adult-determined activities and organisation and opportunities to spend time with other children. Freedom from organised activities allows children to generate their own leisure, with other children. In this sense, leisure is associated with well-being where it involves children's autonomous lifeworlds, which are particularly valued by children as important to their sense of well-being. This negative freedom is also manifested as the pleasure associated with 'downtime' or 'hanging out' with family and friends in the intimate sphere. This dimension of freedom involves freedom from expectations of public life and the performance of identity associated with public life and also freedom from the responsibilities of domestic work at home, which as we have discussed in Chap. 6 is significant to well-being in contributing to a sense of being a 'good' or 'moral' person.

A related dimension of freedom is the freedom to choose which activities to undertake and contribute to determining how the activity is conducted—that is, freedom over the what and how of activities. This more positive sense of freedom is not only an expression of autonomy from rules and expectations, it is also an expression of agency by being able to assert preferences over how to spend time and with whom. Leisure activities create the possibilities for autonomous children's spaces where children have fun. They create enjoyable sensory experiences through child-led activities, which both purposefully transgress the rules of the activity (i.e. acting up) and also are free from such rules ('free play'). In this sense, children's leisure activities contribute to their sense of agency. We see this expressed in children asserting their preferences for what activities to do, including organised activities, where children adapt the resources that institutionalised spaces offer for their own activities, and in freedom from playing with rules, what we have discussed as transgression. The importance of transgression also indicates the relationship between leisure, risk and pleasure and the role of activities in providing relief from the routinised and rationalised aspects of children's lives.

We have shown that much of what children value through their leisure and activities is independent from the adult arena of action, including structured activities that adults organise for children. As Øksnes (2008) points out, children require 'space or zones for concrete freedom with real opportunities for transgression. This means that there are moments that children can call their own time and which they themselves experience' (p. 161). While we would not go so far as to say that children's well-being in this area is an expression of autonomy from adult-defined and controlled institutional contexts, we can identify that many of the experiences associated with well-being involve spending time with other children free from adult mediation or in activities that bend the rules that adults impose. In emphasising the value of activities in and of themselves—as autotelic—experiences of well-being are concrete, based in positive relationships with children and adults, experienced as part of particular places and times and are highly affective and embodied. Something is fun if it involves enjoyable experiences with others and involves enjoyable bodily sensations and feelings. Fun activities have less to do with abstract ideas about attributes that children should ideally develop through their leisure activities.

Children also described how activities in which they achieve are important to them because they contribute to experiences of competence. This experience of competence can be significant in and of itself and/or because it results in children being given recognition and being appreciated for displaying competence. Competence, when significant in itself, is, the children tell us, about a positive sense of self, knowing in yourself that you are good at something—competent. Children expressed feelings of internalised gratification from doing well or from learning a new skill, from bettering a time or conquering a difficult task. Relatedly, children also obtained a sense of well-being when participation in leisure activities resulted from recognition by others of their displays of competence. When competence is about approbation by others, experiences of competence can be associated with concrete results, for example, an award, but this is not necessarily the case. Other cases are most typically family and peers, but can also be other important adults, including teachers. In this sense, forms of recognition contribute to a feeling of a positive sense of self.

Our description of competence and well-being indicates different ways of viewing competence, specifically competence as mastery and competence as social action. Several of the examples raised by children involve competence as mastering some type of activity area or set of tasks. Many childhood sociologists have disparaged this type of competence—competence as mastery—because it is associated with developmental outcomes and psychological concepts of mastery. Yet competence as mastery can be an important basis for feeling a positive sense of self and obtaining social esteem, both of which children identify as important to their sense of well-being. However, we found that competence can also be conceived of as a sense of achievement over the tasks that arise in everyday social circumstances. This type of competence, which has more frequently been the empirical subject of new childhood studies, sees competence as the ability to manage material and cultural resources in everyday interactions and to engage in appropriate behaviours with other children or adults. We can conceive this sense of competence as social

action. Hence, in children's discussions of competence, as it is important to well-being, competence is multifaceted and includes the learning of skills that contribute to development. It also includes the display of skills and attributes in everyday contexts and social interactions. Further, competence can be felt as something experienced as an individual property of the child. For example, knowing that you have achieved something does not require that you need to display this capability. The competence is a property of the individual. However, in other contexts competence has to be displayed in social interaction. That is, it cannot be separated from the context in which it is enacted because it requires interaction with others to be displayed and requires the social and physical resources that are part of the social interaction. In these circumstances children use resources that exist in the social context as opportunities to attain and display their competence.

Children's discussion of leisure therefore provides quite different discourses regarding leisure than those provided by adults. Adult discourses reflect broader social processes regarding transformations in the labour market and the development of the unique self. Children's perspectives tell us something about the social constitution of childhood, by emphasising how their activities contribute to their sense of well-being. By emphasising fun, sociability and transgression, children are resisting adult discourses that emphasise the development of sociability and autonomy as an adult attribute. Children are exhibiting these sorts of attributes through their leisure, but in their own way rather than through a reified concept of adulthood envisaged in developmentally based activities and programs. While the need for recognition of competences seems to be about developing socially valued competencies and attributes, from children's perspectives the development of competence is largely about feelings of internalised achievement that have more to do with positive feelings about self and social recognition that has to do with feeling secure in relationships and obtaining social esteem. And so they are not about the development of specific attributes.

However, at the core of children's accounts of the relationship between activities and their sense of well-being is a negotiation between what appears to be a contradiction. This contradiction is between activities as facilitating freedom from constraints, in the form of fun, and activities as also being the source of social integration through recognition and specifically recognition of being competent at an activity. Leisure and activities are therefore a site of well-being where agency and competence stand in tension—leisure is both a means for the individual to make themselves through processes of individualisation as well as a means to seek social recognition and esteem from others through displays of competence.

Aspects of the child standpoint on leisure constructed here accord with conceptualisations of well-being as hedonistic, as in sensory experiences of fun. Interwoven with this conceptualisation of the child standpoint are conceptualisations of well-being as eudemonic, contributing to experiences of agency and/or feelings of security; ultimately they align with eudemonic conceptualisations where they contribute to experiences of the self as flourishing.

Chapter 8
Money, Markets and Moral Identity: Exploring Children's Understandings and Experiences of Economic Well-Being

This chapter explores children's economic well-being. In the first part of this chapter, we 'look down' in order to show how transformations in the family—from a producing and consuming unit to a consuming unit—have contributed to the apparent marginalisation of children from economic processes. This marginalisation is evident in social, cultural and economic practices that construct childhood and children in terms of their emotional and sentimental value, the remoteness or invisibility of children in economic theorising and in the relegation of children to what are considered appropriate economic spheres—as having future value as contributors to economic productivity or as costs that are incurred by families. We then chart how researchers informed by new childhood studies approaches have more recently attempted to reclaim children as economic actors, by focusing on children's contributions as producers, consumers and distributors. Studies of children's paid and unpaid work, of children's experiences of poverty or as consumers, all share an emphasis on showing how children are not only passive objects of economic processes but are economic agents—adapting, contributing and choosing.

While this research has contributed to documenting children's contributions to economic life, more mainstream research has been valuable in providing powerful justifications for social policy that provides financial support to families. However, underlying both broad approaches are a common set of assumptions that are especially significant in understanding children's experiences of well-being and which remain largely unreflected upon within the literature on children's interactions with economic practices and institutions. These assumptions reflect questions about whether the relationship between market and society is constitutive or destructive and thus whether children's engagement with the market economy is as innocents or protagonists. We outline these positions and introduce some conceptual tools that we found useful in understanding what children told us about what is important to their experiences of economic well-being.

This provides the basis for us to 'look up' from children's perspectives about what is important to their sense of well-being. We explore two broad themes that we

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discern as significant from children's discussion: how children's economic well-being is deeply embedded in the economic well-being of their families and can be understood as being about the use of direct and indirect resources to attain a material standard of living; and how children's economic well-being is reliant upon children being autonomous economic agents in terms of being autonomous producers and consumers. In contributing to both of these themes, children emphasise the importance of economic practices as providing opportunities for enacting moral practices, expressing one's moral identity and solidifying or testing important social relationships. In discussing these themes, we explore the implications of children's experiences of economic well-being for understanding the relationship between market and society as it is relevant for the structure of childhood and children's well-being.

Looking Down: Transformations in the Relationship Between Family and Market and the Marginalisation of Children as Economic Actors

If we consider the family as an 'economically productive unit', it has undergone fundamental change as part of transformations in capitalist production. Classical versions of economic development in Western societies trace how modes of 'family capitalism' have been in decline as the range of spheres of life organised through the market has broadened. According to these accounts, pre-industrial households, which functioned as the basic economic unit for the production of goods and services, were displaced through processes of industrialisation and the introduction of the factory system and its associated division of labour. These processes necessitated the transfer of production to specialist sites away from the efforts of individual families—the factory and the workplace (Maynard 1985; Silva and Thistle 2009).

This separation of work and home was fundamental in the construction of what is now considered the standard form of work, sharply dividing public and private spheres (Davidoff 1995; Edgell 2006; Edwards and Wajcman 2005; Hall 1992; Pahl 1984; Polanyi 1944; Nicholson 1995). As work and family became temporally and spatially separate, work came to mean paid employment and people who worked unpaid at home were no longer considered workers. Family life became associated with personal fulfilment where women had particular responsibility for domestic well-being. Consequently, the public sphere was defined as the site of economically productive industrial labour and as a specifically male domain, while the private domestic sphere came to be seen as noneconomic—the site of family activities assigned to women. One legacy of this focus on male industrial labour is that work and employment are seen as synonymous. Another manifestation is the attribution of negative outcomes for children's well-being—whether they be mental health issues, substance abuse or other behavioural problems—to parental and especially

maternal employment (Garey and Arendell 2001; McDonnell 1998; Terry 1998; Thurer 1993). While this heated debate often captures the public imagination around parental responsibility and children's development, it overlooks the very important question of the effects of parental job quality on parents and the affects that bad jobs have on households.

Paralleling the decline of the family as a producing unit, cultural expectations around the economic value of children, at least in developed economies, also shifted, from children as economic contributors to children as economic dependants (Zelizer 1985, 2002). In the past, children were looked upon as a source of labour to the family, both inside and outside the home. Over the course of the twentieth century, the position of children in the family economy has changed fundamentally. Adult males secured privileged access to the formal labour market, welfare state provision was expanded reducing the need for children to work, and compulsory education was legislated for, largely to develop the human capital necessary for a labour market requiring increasingly specialised knowledge. By the end of the twentieth century, it appeared that children and young people had lost much of their role as contributors to the family economy. Employment came to be seen as an alternative role for young people (de Regt 2004). It is now assumed that children's main contribution to the family economy is to do household chores (Gager et al. 2009). Furthermore, this contribution is now primarily viewed as having a pedagogical function, rather than making a material contribution to the household. As Blair (1992) puts it, parental concerns about socialisation are the primary reason to use children in the home as a labour source, rather than to relieve parents.

According to this script children are constructed as being marginal to economic process, and this marginalisation is also reflected in the absence of children within both mainstream and heterodox economic theory. Despite Levison's (2000) seminal analysis of children's invisibility in economic theory and her call to see children as economic agents, within economic analysis children largely remain absent. This is especially poignant given that the neoliberal subject, regardless of age, is assumed to exhibit a certain kind of agency, with the use of that agency being to maximise his or her individual utility by pursuing individual preferences. It appears that any conceptualisation of child agency excludes them from individualised utility maximising agency, presumably because they are deemed not to possess the requisite rationality to determine what their preferences are. Instead, children's preferences are determined by the preferences of their family, in what is referred to as the family utility function (Apps and Rees 1996; Becker 1993; Bourguignon and Chiappori 1992; Chiappori and Browning 1998; Samuelson 1956). This depiction of children as lacking economic agency is coupled with an assumption that children are remote from economic processes. As Zelizer (2002) points out, children's economic practices as producers, consumers and distributors have been maintained as invisible, with the effect that childhood and economic life are separate spheres.

The closeting away of childhood from economic life has underpinned quite strong normative assumptions of childhood as a protected space. Economic life is associated with adult responsibilities—to work, to exchange goods, to distribute

resources to others, to pay taxes and to make choices over scarce resources. For children to engage in these kinds of economic responsibilities would be to somehow corrupt the sanctity of childhood. As Levison (2000) points out, the family utility function is not only an expression within economic theorising that children are unable to exercise economic agency, it is also a normative statement that children should be protected from the harsh realities of adult economic life. For example, while economists are largely uninterested in children's contributions towards economic production, the effects of children's engagement in economic practices has been the source of much debate for a very long time (Zelizer 1985), illuminating moral concerns about the corruption of childhood as a protected sphere. We see these concerns in debates about the educational, moral and social impacts of both parental and children's own work on children, whether consumption practices have transformed childhood itself, making children into ultra-consumers, the costs and benefits of pocket money and whether it should be an entitlement or a reward. These debates reflect deep anxieties about the effect of monetisation not only on children but on the protection of a certain idea of the private sphere from the market, a point we return to later.

While orthodox economic understandings generally construct children as remote from economic processes, children's economic activities have nonetheless excited academic attention, usually outside of economics. These studies can be differentiated between those that take a largely adultcentric view of children's relationship with the economy and recognise children in terms of 'appropriate economic spheres' and those that examine children's own economic practices, informed by the new childhood studies tradition. In terms of the former (adultcentric) research, one of the key and significant developments has been to construct children as recipients of care and by extension, with older people, as part of the 'dependency burden'. This is used as an indicator of the amount of time, energy and money the working-age population must devote to nonworkers and thus the tax burden that the nonworking population represents. More recently, concerns about the ageing of the population, especially working-age populations, in most advanced economies have shifted this discourse slightly, with governments introducing policy mechanisms to increase fertility rates (as well as policy measures aimed at the opposite end of the age spectrum, such as increasing the retirement age and increasing conditionality for the aged pension). For example, tax credits and offsets for families with young children, cash transfers for children with families and childcare subsidies to assist families with the costs of raising children are mechanisms that support families, increase female labour force participation and can be effective in transferring income and resources to children and their families.

However, these mechanisms also emphasise that children have economic value, not in and of themselves as children but because they represent the future tax base required to pay for a significantly older and dependent population (Kohli forthcoming). Early years' research provides a similar kind of justification for quality childcare and early intervention and prevention policies in child welfare. Developmental psychologists have captured the attention of policymakers by showing that expenditure on quality childcare and family support services is an investment not a cost,

reaped in terms of more productive adults and less welfare dependency (Council of Australian Governments 2009; Lynch 2004). While the early years' experts are undoubtedly concerned about the quality of children's lives, in these discussions about the cost of children and their future value, we see how intergenerational distributions of wealth to children and neoliberalism make strange bedfellows. A similar argument can be made in terms of the human capital function of education.

One of the strong arguments for tax credits, childcare rebates and income transfers to families with children is the construction of children as being a cost to households. As Bradbury (2014) summarises: 'The additional costs of children include expenditures on the goods that children consume ("direct" costs), lost parental earnings due to the need to spend time caring for children ("indirect" costs), and other more general time costs such as lost leisure time' (p. 1483). This work focuses on the 'welfare level' of parents before and after having children, attempting to quantify the level of additional resources parents would be required to obtain, whether through income transfers or otherwise, to maintain their living standards if no child existed in the household. The welfare of parents is focused upon in these constructions because it is parents who bear the costs, not children. As we discuss later in this chapter, children also emphasise the importance of indirect access to resources. Nonetheless, the emphasis on children as costs to households contributes to their marginalisation as economic actors.

We can also see this marginalisation in the emphasis in much child poverty research on the negative effects of poverty on children's developmental outcomes. There is abundant evidence that children growing up in lower-income households do less well than their peers on a range of outcomes (Cooper and Stewart 2013). These debates have been extended to include the gamut of measures of poverty, with associations between social exclusion or material deprivation in childhood being shown to have significant negative consequences for individuals in both the short and long term (Main and Bessemer 2014). As such, child poverty has long been a concern of social policy, and there have been explicit attempts to alleviate child poverty. Moreover, these policies are increasingly being justified in terms of their cost-effectiveness at both the individual and social level, as a way of preventing the society-wide costs associated with future adult unemployment and welfare dependence that have been linked with child poverty. These arguments have also been used to defend income supports to families, as income supports for adults have increasingly come under attack across many of the advanced economies. Yet, this research fails to differentiate between children's experiences of poverty and household experiences of poverty (Main and Bessemer 2014). As Skattebol (2011) points out in her assessment of the child poverty literature, households are usually the unit of analysis and adult levels of income used as a proxy measure for the welfare of children. This provides important data on the proportion of families living in poverty, and studies of household coping practices provide significant insights into the strategies that families use to manage low income (Kober 2008; Taylor and Fraser 2003). However, as Main and Bessemer (2014) point out, the use of household income to measure child income is based on many assumptions that make such a methodology problematic, not least that analyses of adult levels of income are

used as a proxy for children's experiences, without reference to or inclusion of the children themselves.

Reclaiming Children as Economic Actors

We can see in the construction of children as part of the dependency burden, as costs to households, as economically vulnerable or as economically valuable in terms of their capacity to contribute to the tax base (therefore not only as costs but also as investments) that children and their practices are seen as quite remote from economic life. The emphasis in these constructions is increasingly on the net returns on children's future as economically productive adults, and children's own experiences are less important. Childhood sociologists have questioned these depictions of children and the economy as being highly partial (Mayall 1996; Morrow 1992, 1996; Punch 2003; Solberg 1997). Sociologists of childhood have countered these constructions by documenting children's own economic practices and experiences of economic life, showing that children engage in a diverse range of economic relations. As Zelizer (2002) points out, children have remained consumers, producers and distributors, although the symbolic meaning of these economic practices has changed over time reflecting different structural and social configurations including changes in adult–child relations.

In terms of children's production, a significant body of research has documented children's paid and unpaid work (Bessell 2009; Boyden et al. 1998; Faulstich Orellana 2001; Frederiksen 1999; Hobbs et al. 2007; Hungerland et al. 2007; Lavalette 1994; Leonard 2004; Morrow 1996, 2010; Solberg 2001; Song 1997; Valenzuela 1999). These studies challenge the model of children's dependency to show that children actively contribute to the economic resources of the family, whether directly or indirectly, by offsetting costs otherwise borne by parents. This is not only through paid work; studies of children's contributions to domestic labour have also shown that children are not merely care burdens but undertake a range of household tasks (Brannen 1995; Kibria 1993; Morrow 1996; Solberg 1990; Valenzuela 1999). Children's contributions of paid and unpaid work illustrate that family life is characterised as much by reciprocity between parents and children as it is by dependence.

Children's strategies of adaptation and reciprocity have also been emphasised in the literature that examines children's experiences of poverty. These studies frequently document children's experience of not having basic needs met and the stigma and exclusion they experience from their everyday experiences of economic disadvantage. These studies also document the strategies children adopt to try and manage their situation and to assist their families. Children know much about their family's economic situation, despite their parents' attempts to hide the situation and try to deal with their situation by, for example, diminishing their expectations, avoiding situations where money might be an issue and seeking employment to be able to purchase goods for themselves, their friends and family (Backett-Milburn

et al. 2003; Daly and Leonard 2002; Middleton et al. (1994); Ridge 2007; Skattebol 2011; Sutton et al. 2007; Wager et al. 2007; Walker et al. 2008—in Skattebol). We will discuss some of these strategies, as evident in our data, later in the chapter.

This literature has also influenced the study of child poverty more generally. Child-focused measures of child poverty have been developed that acknowledge children's experiences as individuals, but are nonetheless embedded within families' experiences of economic disadvantage. Definitions of poverty have also broadened, reflecting the ongoing debates around the relationship between, for example, poverty, capability and social exclusion, thus conceptualising economic disadvantage as more than income poverty. This has included an increased focus on well-being (Main and Bessemer 2014).

The other area in which children's economic agency has been emphasised is in research on children's experiences as consumers. According to Zelizer (2002), we have much more documentation on children as consumers, as compared to their economic activity as producers or distributors, because of concerns regarding the political, developmental and moral effects of consumption on children (Zelizer 2002). According to Cook (2009), the considerable effort that has gone into securing the child market by advertisers and marketers reflects a significant shift in the cultural understanding of childhood. Cook argues that in order for children to be conceptualised as a direct and significant market, there is a need, at least by those who market goods, to recognise that children have desires and choices, even if these desires and choices are mediated by parents. The rise of market research involving children is, according to Cook, a sign that children should be treated as competent and knowledgeable consumers. For Cook, this suggests a moral recognition of the personhood of children. For others, however, it is a sign of the increasing commodification of needs. These debates centre on contrasting ideas of the sanctity of children–whether children should be protected from the sphere of the market or whether children's capacity to consume is merely a means to express agential capacity and construct self-identity. We consider these competing views of the relationship between childhood and the morality of the market next.

Morality and the Market: Children as Economic Innocents and Protagonists

Thus far we have outlined efforts that have documented children as economic agents as a counter to the broader literature that either marginalises children and childhood as separate from economic life or that views children only in terms of adultcentric concerns. However, there is another critical dimension that runs across these broad positions regarding the relationship between children and economy, which is of a more general concern, and this is whether markets are constructed as being positive or destructive of civil society, culture and the lifeworld. These competing views of the relationship between market and society represent extreme

ideal types but are important to consider because they frame normative attitudes about the role that markets can and should play in social life, including that of children, which, as we will discuss below, are also evident in children's discussions of their material well-being. The role of children is central in these discussions. Zelizer (1985) suggests that the sentimentalisation of childhood, initially realised in an ideology of domesticity amongst upper- and middle-class families in the early to mid-nineteenth century, became a more general phenomenon, so that between the 1880s and 1930s the social and economic value of children underwent a dramatic transformation from being seen as economically useful to emotionally priceless. Zelizer argues that this created a new cultural understanding of childhood, where children were seen to be morally incompatible with commercial interests and markets. In our discussion thus far, we have canvassed a range of positions which represent both this sacralisation of childhood and its counterpoint, whether it be in terms of marginalising children from the sphere of the economy either as a result of neglect or in the name of protecting 'childhood' or in the view that children benefit from engagement in economic life as producers, distributors or consumers or whether it is expressed in the ambivalence of child poverty research that both celebrates and laments the capacity of children, but also the requirement that they adapt to economic adversity.

Drawing upon the work of Albert Hirschman, Fourcade and Healy (2007) summarise three prevailing views about the relationship between market and society, two of which are particularly useful for our analysis—the 'doux commerce' and 'autodestruction' views of the market. 'Doux commerce' constructions suggest that the market creates bonds, especially between strangers, through the exchange of goods and services. Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) discuss that in this view the market provides a shared intersubjective orientation: firstly through exchange, as individuals act in concert through the process of buying and selling, and secondly through a common identification of objects of desire (goods). On this basis, free markets allow people to pursue the satisfaction of their needs, whatever they may be, with individuals being best placed to make their own decisions, at least on economic matters including matters of taste. Moreover, markets are seen as promoting important virtues that are the basis for social harmony such as integrity, trustworthiness, enterprise, respect, modesty and responsibility (McCloskey 2006), a range of virtues that are often used to justify the benefits of, for example, work for children. On this reading, well-being is associated with happiness when individuals are free to pursue the satisfaction of their needs and desires on the market (Frey and Stutzer 2001). Consumer sovereignty serves as a powerful justification for neoliberalism, and we can see a convergence between 'doux commerce' views of the market, liberal constructions of agency and arguments for the positive relationship between participation in economic life and children's expressions of agency or positive child development.

The 'autodestruction' position holds that markets undermine social and personal relations. According to this view, 'Capitalism plays on a debased competitive instinct, inherent to human nature, and pushes individuals, even those with little money, to consume wastefully as a means to acquire honor and reputability'

(Fourcade and Healy 2007, p. 291). Under this view, the moral value of relationships becomes debased to reflect a 'commodified nightmare' as markets reduce social and moral orientations to narrow self-interest. Thus consumption is characterised by wastefulness and social rivalry, aesthetic value becomes degraded as taste becomes synonymous with wealth, and increasingly personal identity becomes determined not by how one acts but by what one owns. Freedom becomes the freedom to purchase, and diversity becomes the diversity of available commodities. On this reading, a sense of well-being is also degraded if it is intimately linked with what one consumes and the status gains from the commodities one has, crowding out other aspects of human experience that might constitute a sense of well-being. Classic expressions of this position of the corrupting effects of capitalism are Polanyi (1944), who outlined the transformation of social life that accompanied the rise of industrial capitalism; Habermas (1985), who outlined the potential colonising effects of the market over the lifeworld; and Adorno and Horkheimer (1944), who argued that capitalism is characterised by an industrial production of culture that undermines critical thinking, an argument taken up by Fredric Jameson (1991) in his analysis of the cultural logic of late capitalism. We clearly see the autodestruction position in concerns regarding the corrupting effects of markets on children and childhood, whether that be as a result of structural dysfunction (e.g. economic disadvantage) or the moral implications of being too immersed in markets (e.g. children as avaricious consumers).

Many economic sociologists and anthropologists have argued that the market is neither a force for moral virtue nor an irresistible force that lays waste to non-market spheres by commodifying social relations. While both the autodestruction and doux commerce positions hold a strict distinction between market and non-market spheres, the relationship between the two is far murkier, with market transactions routinely reliant upon 'non-market' forms of justification. Market exchanges are often transformed into social relations as exchanges are personalised or solidarities developed over time. For example, the work of Appadurai (1986) and Zelizer (1988) shows the interrelating and shifting moral boundaries between market and non-market spheres and that commodification is both resisted and also reliant upon the moral and cultural efforts of social actors. And, as we shall see, this is also manifested in what children consider as important to their material sense of well-being.

Looking Up: Understanding Children's Economic Activity and Well-Being

Elements of the two ideal types presented above underlie much of the literature on children and the economy, whether that be from the more traditional adultcentric literature or literature that attempts to reclaim children's economic agency or that explicitly takes a child-centred stance. The work of economic sociologists and anthropologists has suggested instead that markets are characterised by rich and

complex social interactions and relationships and provide an important set of sensitising concepts from which we can construct a children's standpoint on their economic well-being, from what children tell us.

In the next section of the chapter, we discuss how children's economic well-being is deeply embedded in the economic well-being of their families. From an analysis of children's discussions of their material well-being, we argue that Main and Bessemer's (2014) material standard of living framework is useful in understanding what children emphasise as important to their well-being. This framework stresses the relationship between income and the direct and indirect resources available to children. Thus the emphasis is on the use of resources rather than the level of income itself that families have at their disposal, although the two are highly related. Income represents an input usually provided by parents. However, income may not necessarily translate into resources that are directed to children. Material living standards provide a concept that focuses on how income is used within the family to meet the needs of its members. This concept therefore accounts not only for the level of income a household may have but other factors that translate this income into living standards, including negotiations that occur between family members regarding the use of resources. This takes into account how income is distributed and used within households and thus does not assume an equal distribution of wealth within households. This is especially useful, as children, in discussing their material well-being, point out how they mediate economic dimensions of life, for example, in assuming parental provision of what they need or in adopting strategies to moderate and compensate for their family's economic disadvantage. This framework is also important because it emphasises the relative nature of standard of living and the significance of lifestyle relative to social norms. This is reflected in the importance children place on understanding their own class identity and themselves as moral actors in moderating economic dimensions of family life.

In the latter part of the chapter, we shift from looking at children's material well-being as part of families to discussing children as autonomous economic agents in terms of being autonomous producers and consumers (Zelizer 2002). We examine how children are actively engaged in economic production and consumption and in what ways these activities, representing social as well as economic relations, are significant to children's well-being. We show that different kinds of productive activities are linked with different kinds of money, each having a different moral and social value. In terms of consumption, we show that a sense of well-being linked with goods is often based in reciprocity and acts to deepen social relationships. It is these kinds of exchange that are identified by children as important to their well-being. For both production and consumption, we show that economic agency, as either a producer or consumer, has the capacity to challenge prevailing generational orders.

Children's Standard of Living

Children were acutely aware that their well-being in economic terms was largely determined by their parents' income and indicated that this was significant for their experiences of overall well-being.

Children saw themselves as part of the distribution of resources within the household or, as Zelizer (2007) states, part of a family circuit of the distribution of income and goods. While, as we will discuss further below, children's individual disposable income had a special significance and moral meaning to children, overwhelmingly economic well-being was defined in terms of familial rather than individual ownership of economic resources. Later in this chapter we have examples of children talking about the importance of having their own money, and children taking responsibility for parents under conditions of deprivation. However, Chub, a 10-year-old, like many of the children in this study, does not hesitate to state that parents will provide for his needs:

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Now is money that you spend an issue for a boy at your age?
CHUB: No.
INTERVIEWER: No. Nothing that you need money for?
CHUB: No. Only the parents need money.
INTERVIEWER: Okay, and why do the parents need money?
CHUB: To supply the food and education. They pay money for me to educate. Um, they feed me and they let me play nearly anything I want.

This familialisation is inverted in Beckham's case, as he discusses the difficulties his father is having after his parents separated:

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So you enjoyed doing activities together [with his father]. What were some of those activities?
BECKHAM: Went out playing soccer. Going to the snow, going to Wonderland. And [pause] he would help me do my homework.
INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay. So they were important things to you. Can he do those things now that he is living closer or now that he is not living in the family?
BECKHAM: He can't really because he has to work more time.' Cause when he was living here my mum and him shared money, and now that he doesn't live with us he has less money.
INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah, it certainly does cost more to run two houses, doesn't it? … Mmm, is the money part hard for children?
BECKHAM: Yes, sometimes.

This understanding of economic well-being resonates with Main and Bessemer's conception of material living standards and its utility in understanding children's experiences of well-being. They define children's material living standards 'as the access children have to resources which they can use, directly or indirectly, to achieve a lifestyle that is in accordance with the social norms of people at their life stage living within their society' (2014, p. 1449).

Firstly, this definition emphasises the use of resources, rather than level of income, and thus accounts for the intra-familial distribution of resources. This acknowledges the importance of what Main and Bessemer describe as the direct and indirect use of resources within the household. If a child has their own money or a

good, such as a school book, they can use it directly. But more often children are reliant upon their parents for access to these resources. Given the lack of personal income that children have, they rely on whether their carers have sufficient income to provide those resources and, further, the conversion of this income into the resources children need. Therefore, both the level of household income and the conversion of that income into indirect and direct resources are important to children's well-being. We see evidence of this in Chub stressing not the amount of income his parents have but 'food and education' and in Beckham discussing the difficulty of spending time doing activities with his father given his father's additional accommodation expenses.

Children are illustrating awareness that they are the beneficiaries of an internal distribution of goods. Whether this distribution is sufficient or not—that is, whether it is just—is a related but separate matter. However, a common theme was that through this internal distribution of income parents signify to children that they care, and this signification is constructed in terms of a moral obligation on the part of their parents. From children's standpoints, this is also communicated via discussions of money being a scarce resource and that they are the beneficiaries of this scarce resource. In the following quote, Ali is quite explicit in recognising parental sacrifice:

INTERVIEWER: And what I'm hearing you say is that if your parents split up and they've got to look after children and that kind of thing, that makes it a lot harder to do that. Is that right?

ALI: Yeah, they seem to, seem to spend, because most parents spent most of their money on their children and then themselves. And um, and so that kind of puts them back so that they can't get, have other things to do.

Beady and Sarah acknowledge that parents are essential in facilitating children's social inclusion, through the provision of indirect resources so as to achieve a desired standard of living:

BEADY: Drive us around and like take us to sport and take us to the movies, take us shopping. Give us money to spend.

SARAH: Yeah. And just like, think about what we need as well as what they need in life.

Perhaps because of this awareness that they are beneficiaries of a scarce resource, we also see evidence, in this theme perhaps more than in any other, of strong expressions of obligation and aspirational discourses on the part of children towards their parents. This is most frequently expressed in long-term reciprocity towards parents, for example, in children's desire to do well at school or to get a good job in the future so they will be able to care for their own children in ways similar to their own experiences of being cared for materially:

SARAH: Um, I think it starts like from the very beginning of having um, the money, financials, that kind of status. I think, um, ah, very [much] from the very beginning having to realize that you have to provide for another somebody—

BEADY: Life—

SARAH: Another life.

BEADY: Like the future for your kids. Like put enough money away when you pass on, leave it to your kids and the kids can use it and make stuff and add it to theirs and—

SARAH: I know I've got, you know, goals as far as saving with money and things like that. And I've got a goal, I suppose, to do my best in my exams and that—
BEADY: And like do well.

Education was often referred to as the key to getting a good job, rather than other explanations such as good luck, hard work or entrepreneurial zeal, suggesting children's awareness of the importance of credentials to employment outcomes. For example:

ALI: Like you need to go to like TAFE and get an education and then you can go out, find jobs. Then you will get some money and then have a good life.

The importance of 'getting a good job' and doing well is not only an expression of wanting to reciprocate to parents through meeting intergenerational expectations; it is also an expression of social reproduction of class identity in everyday life. This brings us to the second important dimension of Main and Bessemer's definition of material standard of living—its relative dimension—that children have resources, whether directly or indirectly, 'to achieve a lifestyle that is in accordance with the social norms of people at their life stage living within their society' (2014, p. 1449). We discuss this dimension in the next section.

Direct and Indirect Resources, Practices of Distinction and Children's Class Identity

While the debates regarding absolute versus relative poverty continue to be played out in other arenas, this definition focuses our attention on another dimension that children raised as important to their sense of well-being, and that is consciousness of the relationship between household income, resources available to children and children's awareness of their class position. Several participants defined their own well-being as relative to the material well-being of others. For example, some children expressed awareness of others' poverty and were emotionally distressed by this. Leaf discusses how upsetting it is to see people who 'haven't got shoes and stuff like that':

It's where the people live that, that don't have very much money live here, but it is very upsetting because you see people walk around and they haven't got shoes and stuff like that. And it is just very upsetting.

In other cases, children's awareness of their own class position manifested in certain desires. In response to the interviewer asking what she would like for her well-being, Rosana indicated her desire for a swimming pool:

Um, that we would have a swimming pool and that we would have somebody come over and like practically every day in summer and swim in the pool. Like if we had a swimming pool I would practically spend my life in the swimming pool.

INTERVIEWER: Ah, so you would, you miss not having a swimming pool?
ROSANA: Yeah.

What is notable about Rosana's wish for a swimming pool is not just that it is based on a wish to assert a status position. Rather, her material desires are to facilitate other aspects of well-being, in this case those associated with sociality. Having a swimming pool means that your friends come over all the time. Rosana is thus acknowledging a link between material wealth and not necessarily a sense of well-being per se, but material wealth and facilitating opportunities to experience well-being.

Some children displayed a sense of guilt about their relative affluence. An awareness of class advantage raised dilemmas around having money and being cognisant of others' difficulties. Ali provides an important instance of the acting out of class identity, as it relates to parents' occupational status and income. Ali clearly identifies her own material advantages due to her father being a business owner:

> Well, um, well my dad seemed to have his own business so it seems that he had a lot of money so that I could like, go shopping and stuff like that where people that don't have a lot of money can't go shopping and buy a whole heap of stuff. And I think money is a lot to do with it but, but everyone gets, people get bagged out when they don't have money.

However, Ali's sense of her own privilege and her empathy for those who are less privileged than her own family also reflects a different class heritage. In the following quote, Ali discusses the choices her grandfather, a former professional rugby league player, makes regarding his expression of class position:

> Yeah and um, they either got to choose from like a really, really nice house or that and Pop didn't feel like it was fair to people who didn't have much money, so he said that they would live there and show that it doesn't matter who you are and that.

Pop's expression of class loyalty as a limit to personal aspiration appears to have made an important impression on Ali, but from the transcript Ali's parents' own response to this was unclear. However, these experiences are often part of a family's shared identity and are potentially important in developing class identification.

One aspect of the identification of class position was an awareness of the importance of educational capital to class position and its role in class reproduction. The role of education in social class reproduction has been well documented and theorised (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Connell 1977). What is notable is that several of the children in our study were also acutely aware of the role that schooling plays in the reproduction of inequalities in terms of the defunding of some school sectors and the reputation of different schools. For some participants, being sent to a private school was seen as an act of parental sacrifice, but also a statement of relative class position. In the following discussion about paying for a private school education, Ali's father can pay to send Ali and her brother to a school where 'rich kids go':

> ALI: Um, at [Catholic private school] you have to pay a lot of money to go there, and well my dad pays for it because my mum lives with my nan and …
>
> INTERVIEWER: Yep—
>
> ALI: My dad pays for it and my brother goes to a Catholic school as well, and not many people that don't have much money go to this school but there are a couple.

Ali was also aware that going to this school would give her advantages in the future in terms of work opportunities. In a continuation of the previous discussion, Ali identifies how cultural capital (the reputation of the school you attend) is converted into economic capital (advantages in the labour market):

INTERVIEWER: Is the education better there?
ALI: No, I don't really see the difference. But when someone looks at your resume and it says that you've been in a private school and your parents have been paying lots of money for you to go there, it kind of says that, yeah.

CB, in contrast, clearly laments how services in her school have been degraded:

INTERVIEWER: Have they got good facilities at your new school?
CB: A little bit.
INTERVIEWER: And what are good facilities? What would you really like them to have? All the money and you could just fix up this school?
CB: A basketball court … Better resources for work—
INTERVIEWER: For work. I thought we were only going to fix up the playground. We are going to get better resources for work, too, are we?
CB: Yeah, because sometimes like pens, pencils, they break easily. The pens and the bag hooks break off easily and stuff.

If we are to take Ali's exposition of the relationship between educational experience and class identity seriously, something which has also been theorised at length by educational sociologists, then CB's request for a basketball court and adequate basic provisions for studying may suggest something more than a request for an improvement in facilities. It might also suggest that the quality of one's school signals to children their relative class position and thus is important in contributing to their class identity. Going to a school that cannot afford basic facilities clearly signals a different class position for CB than that critiqued by Ali.

These dimensions of class-based identity work were clearly evident amongst the children in our study who were experiencing poverty or social exclusion. Several studies have outlined how parents with limited income often prioritise spending on their own children so that children have a decent standard of living. Often income-poor parents will make an effort to provide goods for their children to meet the standards of their more economically advantaged peers and will proportionately spend a far greater amount of their income on their children relative to more economically advantaged families (Ridge 2002; Kempson et al. 1994; Middleton et al. 1997). We also have well-documented cases of the opposite, where parents prioritise their own needs over the needs of their children (Main and Bradshaw 2012).

In Chap. 7 we explored the increasing imperative of middle- and upper-class families to curricularise children's time in pursuit of the attainment of children's 'unique self'. Clearly this investment in children's time is evidence of Zelizer's (1985) priceless child. A similar sentiment is expressed when middle- and upper-class parents justify children's paid employment on the basis of children's moral education rather than the contribution children's paid work makes to household income. We see a counterpoint to these identity practices amongst children who experience economic disadvantage, in the range of strategies they adopted to deal with the poverty their households experienced. These strategies were discussed as

important to children's well-being because they were expressions of moral agency through which children were emotionally and practically taking care of people important to them. Bobbie provides an example of these strategies. Like other children in her circumstance, Bobbie was very aware of the poverty of her household, the impact of this poverty on her mother, a single parent, and the efforts her mother made to try and protect Bobbie and her younger brother from experiencing poverty. We see in Bobbie's example that children also make a significant effort to protect their parents from the emotional and social impacts of poverty—strategies that reflect a more immediate form of reciprocity arising from the concrete experiences of economic disadvantage. As Ridge (2002) points out, these strategies include self-denial, moderation of needs and self-exclusion from activities.

In Bobbie's case, these strategies included understanding the need to go without because of the needs of her family—in this case not getting a particular present and celebrating her birthday despite her desires, as evident in her happiness when she was in fact able to celebrate her birthday, possibly an indication of her mother's own covert strategies to protect Bobbie:

> BOBBIE: [Pause] um, probably around my birthday, because I was asking Mum can I get a yellow watch for my birthday. And she is like, oh no, I can't really afford that at the moment 'cause like she has to pay her car off and something was wrong with it, and then my birthday came around and we weren't going to do anything for it because money wise and things we couldn't really afford it. But then it was like two nights before or something and my mum got in some cheque or something and oh, we are going to do something for your birthday. And I was like, can we do something and have a whole heap of family and that come over? And I got that yellow watch. Yahoo and I'm so happy.

In these situations we also see a complication of the model of material standard of living discussed earlier, where children rely on the indirect transfer of resources from parents to children. Where there is not enough money to go around, this relationship is characterised by greater levels of reciprocity enacted in more immediate trade-offs, direct contributions and self-denial of goods on the part of children. While children contribute direct payments to household income (something we discuss later in this chapter), these reciprocal arrangements are also organised in other ways, including prioritising the needs of others within the family so that limited resources can be given to, for example, younger siblings:

> BOBBIE: Um, well. Well, for example if at Christmas, like now and my mum is a bit tight for money so she can't go out and buy everything that she wants, like everything my mother wants, I said to her um, 'cause my brother is younger and he is still growing up, I said get his presents first and get mine later because I've seen through it. I know what it is all about and everything. He is growing up and he believes in the whole Santa thing and everything.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so Santa has to come to him.
>
> BOBBIE: Yeah, and she is like well like that is not really fair to you, and I'm like but yeah I get things throughout the year as well. And I go um, when you get money she takes me out shopping and then gets me new clothes or something if I need them, and whereas he goes over to his dad's and he gets like everything for Christmas, and oh my god, he got a bike for a 5 year old when he was like two.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, okay, how would you make that situation better?
BOBBIE: I would, maybe I could help my mum with Christmas, but money wise help her out. Basically get some things for other people and that.

In Bobbie's case, and others similar to hers, we see instances of what Zelizer (2002) describes as children acting as distributors, by transferring value both directly (as in quid pro quo exchanges) and otherwise. In deferring their own material needs being met, children are also facilitating the economic transfer of resources within their own household, for instance, by freeing up the use of resources for other purposes. Rather than obtaining indirect resources themselves, via negotiations with their parents, they transfer these resources back to parents (e.g. fixing the car) or other family members (purchase of the younger sibling's Christmas presents). In these negotiations, children are a party to organizing the conditions of economic distribution and transfers within their household—to others and potentially for a promise that one's generosity may be repaid in the future (Mauss 1966). Negotiations around resource distribution also, therefore, contribute to the ongoing task of solidifying social relationships within the family, manifested as acts of kindness, empathy and sacrifice. Zelizer also points out that while these transfers generally begin within children's own households, we find evidence of these practices with friends, peers at schools and outside organisations from quite young ages.

Despite these acts of reciprocity and compensation being significant to a sense of well-being, we can also discern the hidden injuries of class (Sennett and Cobb 1972) sustained by children as a result of their economic disadvantage. A complex range of factors generates the shame associated with economic disadvantage. This includes an inability to attain a material standard of living in accordance with one's peers. The experience of identifying oneself and being categorised as having 'less than' (Jenkins 2000) fundamentally shapes an individual's sense of self and identity, in this case of class identity. For instance, the sense of injustice that Bobbie feels because her mother has to struggle, even though her brother's father can afford expensive gifts for her brother, reminds us of how the moral grammar of class injustice is played out in everyday interactions. Or in the instance below, the reminder of one's relative class position compared to one's neighbours:

BOBBIE: And um every year I have always wanted Christmas lights, but Mum goes can't afford them this year because they put money onto bills. And I said but Mum, I want Christmas lights, and Mum goes she saw people across the road were putting some up and [they said to her] you have to get some, come on you have to get some. And they talked her into it. Yahoo, we have Christmas lights, yeah.

Ridge (2007) outlines the stigmatising discourses associated with poor families. These discourses are, for instance, advocated most forcefully in cultural explanations of poverty advanced by influential sociologists such as Charles Murray (1984). Ridge outlines how these discourses not only individualise responsibility for poverty but construct people who decide to have children in conditions of poverty as irresponsible. Main and Bessemer (2014) suggest these stigmatising discourses provide an important context for interpreting children's discussions about poverty and economic disadvantage. For instance, Skattebol (2011) suggests that children's proclivity to emphasise that their parents are adequate providers, despite clear

evidence that they are going without, could be interpreted as resistance to those individualising discourses that hold parents responsible. Not only do these discourses provide a moral context within which children, like Bobbie, might feel shame, they also provide a set of discourses that are challenged by children through their own moral dispositions and practices in dealing with their own and their families' poverty. Discourses that frame parents as irresponsible are countered by practices of empathy and understanding shown by children.

Children Enacting Economic Agency in Autonomous Spheres

In the previous section, through the use of the material standard of living framework advanced by Main and Bessemer (2014), we have shown that children's material well-being is highly reliant upon indirect access to resources. Household income matters, but being able to access those resources is significant and especially important in the construction of class identities. For children who are economically disadvantaged, we find strategies of everyday reciprocity enacted by children that contribute to their sense of moral agency. Additionally and more generally, we see expressions of long-term reciprocity by children in response to the provision by their parents of resources, which is seen as a moral duty on the part of parents but also as an expression of care. These expressions of longer-term intergenerational reciprocity (getting a good job, looking after one's own children) were also important to a sense of well-being, enacted as expressions of being a moral individual.

Debates regarding children's role in the economy have emphasised the importance of distinguishing between seeing children within and as separate from families in terms of economic issues, for example, in terms of examining household as opposed to child poverty. Our findings thus far suggest that a more subtle distinction is necessary. As shown in the previous section, children act as economic agents within their families, and the nature of this agency is deeply embedded and configured by the situation of their households. Additionally, in an analysis of children's actions as economic agents as producers and consumers in autonomous spheres beyond the family, for example, at work and school, we see the importance of family resources in configuring children's economic agency. We turn to this next.

Children as Producers: Paid and Unpaid Work

In Chap. 3 we discussed the importance of caring labour as an example of an expression of well-being. Being cared about and also being cared for through the doing of domestic work were seen by children as expressions of affection on the part of adults who were tasked with the primary responsibility of care. Caring about and caring for others in the family are also ways in which children contribute to the circuit of caring within the family. For many children, the practical tasks of caring

are also linked with the caring feelings they have for their family. While being 'cared about', in the sense of being nurtured and emotionally supported, they are also returning that care, often in meeting their domestic work obligations. Children are therefore engaging in reciprocal relationships of care. Domestic labour can also be the site of intense negotiation and conflict; however, these negotiations represent more than transactions over opportunity costs associated with time committed to household work. They also represent ways to embed or contest bonds between family members. That is, doing housework is not only about cleaning the house (as opposed to doing something else that one would prefer to be doing); it is also an expression of one's place within the family—an expression of family solidarity. Other researchers have also documented the importance of children's domestic work as contributing to maintaining social relationships within the household (Brines 1994; Greenstein 2000; Hochschild 1989; Hochschild 1999). As discussed in Chap. 4, however, the belief that children should be required to undertake unpaid work at home while being excluded from paid work in the formal economy is one way in which inequalities in adult–child relationships are maintained.

While domestic work is seen in terms of its capacity to circulate economies of care within the household, paid work is not generally seen in these terms. Rather, the work of social psychologists, such as Bruno Frey (1997), examines the relationship between extrinsic motivation (like pay) and intrinsic motivation (doing the work because of the nature of the work per se). The concern is whether extrinsic motivations crowd out intrinsic drives, a question that has been central to paid care debates (Folbre and Nelson 2000). It is well established that children still participate in a range of work activities on the formal labour market, on the informal economy or in economically productive activities with other children, for example, in running stalls or in bartering arrangements between children. Children also engage in a diverse range of forms of distribution of economic resources with other children at school, in organised leisure activities, with other children in playgrounds and with friends. These modes of exchange and distribution often reflect ways of maintaining or creating solidarities with other children, for example, by trading desired goods (see Cook 2001; Katriel 1987; Webley 1996). The ability to distribute, barter and exchange appears to be an enduring and important dimension of children's well-being, and these diverse productive relations within and outside the household indicate children's productive competence.

While paid employment was not usually raised by the younger participants in our study, it was an important theme amongst many of our older participants. In general, these participants expressed the importance of work as being critical to their well-being in a number of ways. Bobbie provides an example summarising the relationship between paid employment and well-being. In the following transcript, Bobbie indicates that she was motivated to work so that she would be able to engage in patterns of consumption similar to her more affluent peers:

> Well, I used to always go to Mum, can I have some money to go to the movies or something with my friends? And it was like, well if you do this for me like sort of like chores, you can have some money, but I don't want to do it so, um … A week later, she goes, she was talking about money again. And she goes, well if you want some extra money go and get yourself

> a job. And I'm like, you are joking me, aren't you? She is like, no I'm dead serious. And I went, I had a job and you told me I couldn't do it. [Laughter] If you want extra money go and get yourself a job. I'll never ever forget that. … I still help Mum out and she gives me some money to do what I want, but she never just brought me up with if you want money you can get it. I always had to work for it.

Like the respondents in other studies that document the advantages of paid work to children experiencing economic disadvantage, we can see in Bobbie's discussion that having a paid job provides not only economic security but a degree of autonomy. This autonomy is evidenced in children's discussions of the earmarking of money that they earn from their paid work, which relies on, and supports, systems of moral classification of different kinds of money (Fourcade and Healy 2007; Zelizer 1994). Viviana Zelizer has examined the social meaning of money most fully. She points out that neoclassical theories view money as a universal and neutral medium of exchange, providing a form of equivalence that allows the exchange of nonequivalent goods. For example, we cannot accurately determine how many apples a chair is worth unless we transform the value of each into a monetary amount. However, Zelizer argues that this theory of equivalence crucially overlooks the social meaning that people invest in money, to the extent that there is not a single form of money but different kinds of money that are differentiated according to their social and moral value. Phrases such as 'dirty money', 'blood money' or 'hard-earned money' are indicators of these social distinctions. Furthermore, Zelizer also argues that monetary exchange has a crucial role in defining the substance of social relationships.

To pay someone, give someone a gift or make a claim to an entitlement signal quite different kinds of social relations. For instance, part of the importance of earning your own money is that it proffers opportunities for children to reshape 'money into its supposedly most alien form: a sentimental gift, expressing care and affection' (Zelizer 1996, pp. 484–485). Beady taking her mother to the theatre provides an opportunity for her to signal the importance of intimate ties within the household, in this case specifically the relationship with her mother:

> That was really cool because I had my own money I was able to take. Mum really wanted to go [to see the stage show] the *Lion King*, so I took her down for her birthday to see the *Lion King*. And she loved that. So that was really fun.

Rather than corrupting social relationships, the provision of money to parents, either directly or through gifts, is a 'circuit of exchange' that signals the moral and social importance of family members to each other (Collins 2000; Zelizer 2005). While paid work may or may not be an avenue for moral improvement (e.g. learning the value of money, being organised and so on), the children in this study indicate that paid work is important to child well-being because it provides a socially recognised mode of agency and, as Fourcade and Healy point out, plays a 'powerful moralizing role in practice by defining categories of worth and, through variation in the form and timing of payments, signaling the kind of transaction taking place' (2007, p. 301).

Zelizer points out that these distinctions matter to people. For example, using a gift system of payment to compensate people for their paid work usually represents an act of injustice (remedied by law) and contravenes the impersonal dimension of working relationships. Similarly, to pay for care within the family is usually seen as violating the deeply intimate aspects of family life. In the case of children, we also see important differentiations in the social status and valuing of different kinds of money. These different valuations are deeply interwoven with the moral status of individuals and the purposes to which different kinds of money can be used.

Specifically we found a differentiation between money earned by children through their own effort, whether through paid employment or domestic work, and money provided as an allowance, which we can label unearned money. Earned money is seen as more morally valuable and facilitates economic agency. It is money that children can spend in whatever way they please, as opposed to money that necessarily needs to be saved, spent for practical purposes, gifted or shared with others. In the following quotes, Bobbie and Beady discuss their views of friends who see money as an entitlement:

> BOBBIE: Like I've got a friend and if she wants money she will just get it and she's got no responsibilities for money. So she just says 'So I'll just ask my dad' and I'm like 'Well, I feel really bad when I do that'. And she [friend's mother] says 'What do you want for dinner?', 'Oh, I don't know, whatever', 'Well, we'll get takeaway'. Why, why can't you just, you know, find something there in the house because that is what I would do. Because if you get takeaway it's expensive and I feel really bad and I'm like well 'Do you want the money for it?', because I am eating it sort of too and they are like 'No, no, no, no'. Yeah. … And she doesn't care about money or anything. She is just like well, I want money, give me money.

Bobbie is expressing some degree of discomfort with the sense of reciprocity that arises as part of the gift exchange involved in eating 'takeaway' at her friend's house, so much so that she offers payment for her meal. Her own discomfort and her judgment of her friend's claims to entitlement indicate how money acts to convey a normative orientation for what is right to ask for and what is not. From a child standpoint, this is notable because Bobbie is also suggesting that children are responsible actors in negotiating money, despite children being largely dependent upon others for resources. Bobbie's discussion of her friend's entitlement can be linked with Sarah's description of the satisfaction she feels from being able to save her own money:

> Yeah, you get satisfaction in being able to save your own money and I've been like, I started saving with all my pays and stuff and saving for a car and even though it is a long way off yet, but it helps give you goals. Helps you sort of lead into a direction you want to be in.

Ali describes the freedom she feels from being able to shop with her own money:

> Having your own money, yeah. … Yeah, because we can go shopping and we can get what we want, and you don't have your parents around going oh that is so yuck.

A prevailing adultcentric view is that it is largely up to adults to arbitrate the claims children make for money and for adults to bring a sense of reasonableness to children's claims. However, Bobbie, Sarah and Ali in quite different ways are

problematising this view by emphasising that children are also responsible for negotiating economic transactions. Bobbie is highlighting the importance of being able to negotiate with adults over money. Sarah is stressing the virtues and feelings of satisfaction associated with being able to save her own money, while Ali is describing the pleasure of unfettered consumption because she can spend her own money in her own way.

This suggests that part of the moral value of earned money, from a child standpoint, is that it contributes to altering relationships of dependence between adults and children by providing a degree of autonomy to children, whether that be expressed as consumerism or some other form of economic action, such as choosing to save money. Ali provides an example of being free to spend her own money, but Bobbie and Sarah provide examples of different kinds of economic action that children engage in. Because Bobbie earns money, she can offer to contribute to paying for the meal. By earning money, Sarah can choose to save. To signal that one is capable of making a contribution or saving for the future is seen as a sign of exhibiting economic competence, grounded in a degree of economic autonomy. This expression of competence is bound up in discourses of economic independence that have been used not only to reinforce social ties (e.g. through gift exchanges) but also to blame the poor (e.g. being imprudent and irresponsible with money). In the context of adult–child relations, however, the value of earned money is significant as a way of signifying the competence of children as being able to engage in complex economic transactions as responsible actors.

By treating earned and unearned money as different currencies, different meanings are given to different exchanges (Zelizer 1996), in this case signalling whether a claim to family money is seen as an entitlement (unearned money) or as facilitating economic autonomy (in the case of earned money). Thus an economic exchange could have a multiplicity of meanings, reflecting dependence upon or independence from adults. In the context of unearned money, we can see the potential for significant conflicts between parents and children over the amount allocated, legitimate uses and regulation of this money. In the case of earned money, the act of earning is linked with a greater capacity to use the money how the child wants. We have evidence of the conditionality of unearned money in debates around children's allowances and pocket money. These debates have taken place in social scientific research, parenting manuals and popular magazines for decades, with advice advocating either the importance of compensating children for chores (and thus as a tool for economic socialisation) or separating the link between household chores and allowances (and thus payment representing a gift or entitlement). These debates have been spirited and revolve around what is most appropriate for children's development (Brannen 1995). As Zelizer points out, 'since parents are not standard employers, negotiating suitable payment systems turns into a delicate and highly contested issue. At issue is not merely a wage bargain but a definition of proper relations between parents and their offspring. … whether compensation, gift, or entitlement, allowances are subject to continual bargaining between parents and children' (Zelizer 2002, p. 382).

The significance of the distinction between earned and unearned money is best understood not only in the capacity of individual children to express their autonomy but also as signifying the context of the social practices, shared understandings and symbolic meanings that define adult–child relations. After all, a child with a large allowance may have significant scope in how they expend their money. Conditional on further empirical research, children who earn their own money may be perceived as exhibiting a different degree of responsibility than other children and may as a result of their experiences attain a different sense of their own competence. Importantly, the issue of the possible association between responsibility and competence with earning money only arises because of the construction of childhood as a period of dependence.

Beady's comment regarding spending money on her mother (see above) reflects our discussion in Chap. 3 of the significance for children's well-being of giving to family members, as part of an ethic of care. It is also evidence that children do not only engage in acts of consumerism; they also assert moral agency through the medium of money, which inverts relationships of dependence that generally characterise parent–child relationships. However, it matters whether the money is gifted or earned. While the act of gift giving would still be evident, its social meaning would be quite different had, for example, Beady's grandmother given the money to Beady to organise the tickets. Because Beady paid for the tickets with money she had earned, it becomes a dignified act of kindness and expression of love between mother and daughter, which would not be as resonant had the money for the tickets been provided by someone else. Money, as Zelizer argues, is 'meaningful, deeply subjective, nonfungible currency, closely regulated by social conventions' (1996, p. 485). We would add that part of its character is determined through intergenerational relations.

We do not want to suggest that gift exchanges are unproblematic. As many feminist scholars have pointed out, the classification of certain exchanges within the intimate sphere as gifts has been used to devalue care work as a 'labour of love' (Folbre and Nelson 2000). Ultimately, the classification of exchanges of goods as either commodities or gifts can provide an avenue for exploitation and use of power over others, and thus, as Fourcade and Healy (2007) suggest, the moral worth of gift exchange as opposed to commodity exchange remains an open and empirical question. Nonetheless, the capacity of children to offer gifts to adults can, in the case of the examples provided here, both solidify the value of important relationships and invert usual relations of dependence between adults and children. This is especially significant given, as we discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, the importance of indirect resources to children's standard of living and material well-being.

Children as Consumers

As we discussed in the first part of this chapter, the 'autodestruction' and 'doux commerce' constructions of capitalism usefully set out competing frameworks for understanding the relationship between the market and lifeworld. These views are often implicit in discussions of children and the economy, but are particularly salient in debates around children and consumption. These debates, which revolve around the value of, or corrupting effects of, consumerism on children and children's well-being, also signify broader debates about the relationship between economy and society.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, access to indirect resources is significant to children's well-being. Furthermore, as we will explain below when discussing children's experiences of poverty and children's perceptions of poverty, having possessions matters to a certain degree. We have instances of children discussing spending their money in a variety of ways, including on entertainment, social activities with friends, purchase of fashion goods as well as on personal items and necessities. However, amongst our participants, there was a limit to the degree that consumption of commodities constituted a sense of well-being and a limit to which the feelings of desire associated with consumption constituted a sense of well-being. For Jackie, a sense of well-being is associated with the novelty and adventure that can be part of purchasing new things. The discussion below reveals a certain excitement and sensuous element associated with purchasing goods:

> INTERVIEWER: Okay. Now the other thing you talked about are things that you owned, yeah. Stuff that you own, right? And like you said that you never went down to the shops, and it was a bit like an adventure for you.
> JACKIE: Yeah, it is a bit like a mystery.
> INTERVIEWER: Right, so is going to the shops being like an adventure sometimes?
> JACKIE: Sometimes adventure, but I like the things that I see. The things that I don't know but the new things like I've never seen, those things. … and see all the toys. Yeah.

While Jackie gives a sense of new toys being objects of desire, it is the associated elements of discovery, rather than the actual purchase itself, that is emphasised by Jackie and our other participants as associated with a sense of well-being. Jackie goes on to discuss the importance of taking care of purchases:

> INTERVIEWER: And how about the things that you own. Right? What is important about the stuff you own, is it just about owning it, or what is it about the stuff that you own that you like?
> JACKIE: It is not about owning it, but it is taking care of it.

For Bella, the act of purchase is an exercise in diligent consumer choice:

> Yeah, I want to buy a digital camera and I always look in the [consumer information] magazine to see which one is the best. So I found a good one. I just have got to get enough money.

Certainly these discussions centre on children's standard of living as it relates to their disposable income. As Cook (2009) suggests, despite children and their carers being the subject of persistent marketing, consumption is also a social process by which children are able to assert their subjectivity. And for children and adults alike,

it does so in the creation of patterns or lifestyles. Yet, these patterns of consumption are less all-constructing of children's subjectivity than either advocates or those concerned with children's consumption suggest. Where consumption is discussed in relation to well-being, rarely does the discussion focus on individual acquisition. Instead, children's discussions centre on the social ties with family members or peers that use of commodities assists in establishing, confirming or assessing the quality of. These discussions emphasise the emotional and nonmonetary value of goods. Jackie talks about how sharing toys with friends can provide an indicator of the value of friendships:

INTERVIEWER: Does owning stuff, does that help you make friends? Do kids want to come and play with you because you own stuff?
JACKIE: Well, some friends like toys and they want to just come around, but after a few months they didn't even want to like play with you. So you would know next time to not show your toys to them, so they don't even come to your house because after a few months they are not, they are not going to like play with their own things. But you are [going to play with your own things].
INTERVIEWER: Right, so they only come because they are interested at first and then they are not really interested after a while.

For Joh Jon, getting presents is exciting; but another dimension to the experience of receiving gifts is the bond it creates with family members:

INTERVIEWER: Obviously at the moment the thing that is most important is Christmas. Is that right?
JOH JON: Yeah.
INTERVIEWER: So what is so good about Christmas?
JOH JON: That you get lots of presents—
INTERVIEWER: You get a lot of presents.
JOH JON: And your whole family, we unwrap them together.

In Jackie and Joh Jon's experiences, we see a mixture of social meanings that flow from the use of commodities: the pleasure of receiving and sharing and the pain associated with realising that friendships based on things may not be true friendships. Rather than commodities either colonising social relations or being the source of happiness, we see instead that commodities are one aspect of differentiated social relations. For Joh Jon, there is a joy in receiving gifts and sharing that experience with important people. The act of gift giving is an expression of the solidification of affection and love. That consumption and ownership of goods were not a dominant aspect of well-being identified by children supports Folbre and Nelson's argument that 'the fact that we engage in exchange does not prove that we are insatiable materialists' (2000, p. 131). Much of children's desire for goods is not driven only by motives associated with well-being defined in hedonistic terms or the desire to obtain more. This is a point made by Chin (2001), in her study of African-American children's consumer culture, that children's autonomous spending is characterised by two notable features: practicality and generosity—moral attributes not normally associated with commodification. Ridge (2002), in her foundational study of children's experiences of poverty, makes a similar point on how children spend their money in ways oriented to family needs. She found that these children used pocket

money to sustain and organise important social relationships, either with peers or within the family.

Another important dimension of the relationship between consumption and well-being in children's discussions is that consumption can be an expression of agency, in being able to make their own choices as to which shops to go to and what to consume. We saw earlier how earned money is important to well-being in that it disrupts and has the potential to invert relations of dependence between adults and children. Similarly, we found that children's capacity to assert economic agency is valued because being able to spend one's own money provides a sphere of autonomy beyond the control of parents. This is somewhat different from the neoliberal idea of spending to pursue happiness or Cook's (2009) thesis that the construction of children as having passions recognises the agential capacity to be involved in the commercial world, to be able to assert wants and desires in the sphere of the market. What is interesting is that what could be conceived as the neoliberal idea of individual utility is a reflection not of the neutral role that is purported to money within these economic theories but rather the specific social meaning of money that is worked for and possessed for one's self. This is evident in the way Beady describes how she can do what she wants with the money she earns and saves for herself:

> BEADY: Oh you ask if you can do stuff and your parents go, oh you can't buy that with my money. But it is not their money you are spending, it is your own. And I bought a guitar and I also got like a $700 guitar, and like I bought, oh yep, my own guitar. Oh yeah.

As we discussed in Chap. 4, control over economic resources was identified as one of the structural features of intergenerational relations that denies children a capacity to assert agency. The valuing of agency per se adds another element to the ongoing discussion around the relationship between consumption and identity. As discussed earlier in this chapter, important divides exist between economists and economic sociologists on this matter. Economists argue that markets provide the means for the production of a variety of consumer goods from which individuals can choose. Choice in this context is desired to the extent that it allows people to meet their utility in their own way. However, sociologists emphasise that homo economicus fails to take into account that consumption choices act to construct fine distinctions and status markers (Bourdieu 1984), for example, displays of conspicuous consumption are not only about meeting one's hedonistic needs, they are also designed to demonstrate wealth so as to impress others (Veblen 1899).

Amongst our children we found that the act of consumption may be significant because it is an expression of economic agency per se. While economists emphasise the utilitarian outcomes of choice and economic sociologists emphasise taste as a status marker, children emphasise how the ability to act as an economic agent may in itself be a marker of status and a source of recognition, in addition to what one actually does consume and how. In children's discussions of the moral value of different kinds of money—earned money as opposed to gifted money—we can discern that children position themselves vis-à-vis other children not only through their lifestyles but through their status as agents, whether that be as independent producers

or consumers. Therefore it is not only *what* one buys but that one *can* buy that is significant.

There was another sense in which commodities were important to children, and this is where artefacts take on a special emotional significance. Here again we see that certain commodities or artefacts are important to well-being because they are a signifier of some important moment, relationship or investment of feeling. While not negating the pleasure that can come from purchasing new things, sometimes the small things are 'more real', representing something genuine and authentic:

> INTERVIEWER: What are the things that make you happy when you talk about the high technology things? The things that you need an income for to buy?
> BEADY: Internet. Computers—
> SARAH: Yeah, shopping and going to the movies and buying things. Buying things that aren't necessarily needed.
> INTERVIEWER: And so these are things that are um, they are different to what you were saying like before about the special doll or the pink elephant?
> SARAH: These are yeah, that is sort of like a different kind of thing. I mean I think maybe those kinds of things of having something special from when you were little, I mean I have a teddy bear that was given to my mum when she was little. So it is over 50 years old. … I don't think I'd have any toys left probably for my children and by the time my children have children they probably wouldn't have that sort of special bondness with like things that are close to you. … No there is not, there is not the, there is not those simple joys anymore.

These artefacts were sometimes contrasted with items associated with disposable consumerism. The following discussion between Sarah and Beady contrasting simple pleasures with pressure to consume and be cool summarises these issues poignantly:

> SARAH: If you want to do something, it has to be high for people to say well, this is something good. And like being in school, having the latest clothes. If you don't have the latest clothes, you are not accepted. But if you have a good personality like in the old days you would be accepted. I just think things, with technology and so on it is sort of taking away [from what] I think [are] the important things. Some of the smaller important things in life and replacing them with money and that kind of stuff.
> INTERVIEWER Those small things? What do you think it is about them that makes them different?
> BEADY: They are more real.
> SARAH: Yeah. They have more meaning to you. Like a mobile phone you can just, its, its …
> BEADY: If it breaks, you can get another one.
> SARAH: It is not a personal meaningful thing, whereas a doll is something that will probably, most probably last for a long time. And um, I just think those kinds of things that they are things that can be treasured more. Whereas I mean a mobile phone it breaks, you throw it out, you get a new one. Whereas with a doll, if it breaks you probably would try to fix it and keep it—
> BEADY: Yeah, you feel like something special or something in your heart. Like oh, I didn't want that to break. With a mobile phone you go, oh well that was a good phone so I'll just get a better one. … It is not as close to you.

Some goods, because they have an intrinsic character, cannot be easily bought or sold. While capitalist markets have only one way of valuing goods, through price, many goods, especially those that become important to a sense of well-being, are

valued and valuable in ways that price cannot capture. Children's discussions of the importance of these artefacts contribute to the critique of the position that markets are the best way to discover and satisfy the latent wants of individuals and that want, satisfaction and happiness are synonymous. Not only is the relationship between affluence, choice and happiness complicated (Easterbrook 2004; Frey and Stutzer 2001; Schwartz 2005), as we have explored in other chapters, happiness is only one dimension of well-being. Within this context it is understandable that consumption is not a dominant theme in children's discussions of well-being.

Lack of Money and Social Exclusion

In an earlier section of this chapter, we described some of the strategies children adopt to deal with household poverty. That section illustrated that children are acutely aware of household economic disadvantage and use a variety of strategies to try and ameliorate the lack of resources within their household. However, children are also exposed to economic interactions with their peers, for example, at school, in friendship relationships and in their interactions with the broader community. In this section we shift the focus away from what strategies children use to help manage household level economic disadvantage to children's experiences of economic disadvantage and the social exclusion they experience as a result. As well as instances of children's own experience of economic disadvantage, we also include children's discussions of their observations of other children's economic disadvantage.

School is the context in which children experience economic disadvantage as acutely problematic. At one level, this is to be expected. Schools are a public site where children congregate and interact over extended periods of time. It is a site of intense social interaction between children where, as we have noted, economic transactions take place as part of a range of social and cultural practices that collectively constitute one sphere of children's cultural lifeworlds. As part of these cultural practices, schools provide a site for negotiating identity, building solidarity with others and establishing difference from others. These processes have been usefully outlined by Richard Jenkins (2000) as involving *identification*, which is the process by which we understand ourselves, and *categorisation*, which is the process by which we understand and label those who are different from us. These processes are always related. Jenkins argues that at both the individual and group levels defining 'us' requires that others are contrasted to 'us', whether positively or negatively. Processes through which we externally categorise others cannot but both be premised upon and affect our own self-understanding. This in turn may provide a defence against external categorisation or through which we take on external definitions as internal self-understandings. Diana discusses this process of categorisation and identification by drawing parallels between the experience of shame associated with being poor and experiences of racism:

> Not, I don't know, a different kind of racism. Like not exactly countries, but about money. Like there are different stages, like there is different countries and there is also like brown skin, white skin. That is not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about like rich and poor.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Ah, like stigma. Mmm, mmm. So is racism about having money and not having money?
>
> DIANA: Mmm. Not just. Could be like skin. It could be money. … If you are poor and you've got no money.

Access to economic resources is a powerful source of identification and categorisation. Not only do these resources structure our own class-based identity (which we discussed briefly in the context of household standard of living), it is through assessing others' ownership and use of material resources that we categorise others and over time build a picture of class differences. From our data, we found two processes through which schools provide a site for class-based categorisations and distinctions between children to occur. By providing an important location for children's autonomous cultural and social practices, schools provide a site in which children encounter and experience class practices or class habitus, which differs from their own. In this confrontation, other children can be defined as different from oneself and, for children with fewer economic resources, often 'lesser than' and inferior. Additionally, schools provide the institutional mechanisms for class-based differences to be experienced more formally. Instances of such experiences included some children being unable to participate in school activities or acquire the materials required for different subjects. We see instances of the former in Ali's discussion of how children without money 'get bagged out'—'Yeah, they do. Some kids at school get bagged out because they haven't got much money'—and in Bobbie's description of children who are 'put down' because they are wearing school uniforms handed down to them from older siblings:

> Um, like some families haven't got enough money to buy their children new clothes for them, so they are always getting handed down clothes from their older siblings and then those younger kids are going to be like, well I never get anything new, and they are going to feel like left out of things. And then they will get put down at school just from what I've seen. They get put down at school. And that makes them in themselves not as good.

In Chub's description of children missing out on going on a school excursion, we see how the institutionalised requirements of school participation can mark out children who have resources and those who do not:

> For the excursion, they didn't get their money in on time. So that meant that they missed out. But everybody else got to go.

Some children, by virtue of 'not having enough money', were the source of ridicule and harassment, and as Bobbie describes, this can result in children internalising shame about their own poverty. Similar experiences of bullying, harassment, feeling isolated and shame at school have been found in other studies of children's experiences of poverty. Tess Ridge (2002) highlighted how the cost of acquiring material for school examinations and activities was prohibitive for some children and their families. Both Ridge (2002) and Skattebol (2011) documented how children often actively opt out of activities that they know their families cannot afford, for

example, by intentionally not choosing subjects that are more expensive or not taking home permission notes for excursions that are expensive.

While not as evident in our study, sustaining friendships is also an area in which class-based differences manifest, as the practicalities associated with the financial costs of maintaining friendships are more difficult for children who have less money. Bob discusses the trade-off between 'transport costs' and 'participation costs' when going out with friends:

INTERVIEWER: Mmm. Okay. Um, and I think the other thing that I was thinking, does money affect what we get to do?

BOBBIE: Um, yes.

INTERVIEWER: Does it ever mean that we miss out on things or—

BOBBIE: For sure, because like if you don't, if you can't afford to go somewhere, then you are not going to be able to do that like. One of my friends is moving to London in 2 weeks. So on the weekend we are all going, her college friends and people that can are all going to Cronulla Beach, and we are all just going to hang out there and stuff for the day and just say goodbye and all that sort of stuff. Instead of having a big party, we are just going to go there. I'm so not going to walk to Cronulla. So I would rather have the money to go buy a train ticket and then when you get to Cronulla you are going to be thirsty and you are going to want a drink. And I don't want to drink salt water, so I am going to want to get a drink and if you don't have any money—

INTERVIEWER: Then you can't do things like that.

BOBBIE: Yeah, what is the point in going, sort of thing. Like you can take a drink and food from home, but it's the whole point of going.

As Ridge points out, the financial costs associated with participating in social events can leave children feeling on the periphery of many of the experiences their peers take for granted. This is especially significant given the importance to children's well-being of their connections with and social status amongst their peers. As Middleton et al. (1997) suggest, a range of social markers, such as clothes and leisure choices, are important to facilitate group identification and thus to make and sustain friendships. Having the right clothes and being able to participate in the right kind of leisure are critical signifiers of belonging and representations of social status. This is not only something significant to children; as Bourdieu (1984) and Veblen (1899) have clearly demonstrated, taste and lifestyle choices are central social processes through which all social actors position themselves vis-à-vis others, something that we need to remind ourselves of when we decry the consumerism of children.

Our capacity to choose and in particular the way we choose to express ourselves through our tastes mark us out as belonging to certain groups and not others. Therefore, the expression of taste is bound up with the possibility of rejection from those with whom we wish to associate, as our expression of taste is oriented towards a hope for recognition from others. It is therefore unsurprising that children who experience economic disadvantage have a degree of anxiety about maintaining their social status, given the difference they experience as a result of being poor. As Skattebol (2011) points out, children incorporate these constraints into their sense of identity and subjectivity. This is manifested in adaptive practices and preferences, such as going without or using creative strategies to attain economic resources. However, it also shapes their identities in ways that diminish both their sense of

capacity and their well-being. This is one way to avoid disappointment and the stigma of having to go without, but it also diminishes children's expectations and sense of possibilities. As Skattebol writes, '[E]xperiences of "missing out, doing without and opting out" layer and shape a young person's sense of who they are and what they can do. Learning to moderate consumption is a common childhood experience, but some respondents clearly moderated their consumption of (what many would perceive as) core socialization experiences. … Where young people do not have the economic resources to participate fully, they are under pressure to narrow their aspirations, habits and orientations'. (2011, p. 533)

A Child Standpoint on Economic Well-Being

Children's well-being is deeply embedded in the economic well-being of their families. Although income matters, it is the use of direct and indirect resources by and for children that is important to children's sense of economic well-being. The concept of 'material living standards' provides a useful way to frame children's standpoint on their economic well-being, because it accounts for the level of income a household has at its disposal, how that income is used and the negotiations that occur between family members to convert income into indirect and direct resources important to children's well-being. From the child standpoint as articulated in this chapter, the conversion of income into resources and the internal distribution within families of resources to children respond to an expectation for, and signify an expression of, care on the part of adult carers towards them. Interwoven with these expectations and expressions of care is the importance for children of reciprocating care to their parents by, for example, doing well at school or getting a good job. Children's use of agency in contributing to reciprocal child–parent relations on resource matters is important to children's experiences of well-being.

Within this standpoint issues of reciprocity are also significant to the reproduction of class-based identity, which can be conceptualised as the expression of status, through practices of distinction from others, based upon access to direct and indirect resources. These distinctions are made not only through expressions of taste but through schooling and are expressed, for example, in terms of 'having more', in terms of desire for something one does not have or as empathy for those who have less. For children who are experiencing economic disadvantage, their relative class position is experienced acutely in the strategies these children employ to deal with the poverty their households experience. For example, while many children express the importance of getting a good job as a way to reciprocate to their parents (in the long term), for those children experiencing economic disadvantage, expressions of more immediate reciprocity are sought to assist parents manage the day-to-day. Those children who cannot engage in these acts of reciprocity, whether more immediate or long term, for reasons of economic disadvantage, can experience this inability as injurious to a sense of self.

The child standpoint makes clear the importance to well-being of active engagement in economic production and consumption and in activities, representing social as well as economic relations. Paid work is important to children's well-being in a number of ways. It provides opportunity to engage in cultural practices valued by children and their peers, and it also provides economic autonomy. This is particularly significant in the distinction between earned and unearned money and the marking of each as having distinct moral and social meaning. Paid work provides a socially recognised mode of agency, and the money earned through paid work can be used according to children's discretion. This includes the provision of gifts to important family members, significant because such gifting both indicates the importance of these relationships to children and can invert relations of dependence between adults and children. Children's ability to earn, to save, to gift and to spend not only signifies that they have economic agency; it is a sign of competency in engaging in a diverse range of economic practices.

From the child standpoint, it is the elements associated with consumption, rather than consumption per se, that are important to children's sense of well-being. In particular, consumption contributes to a sense of well-being where it establishes, confirms or is used to assess the quality of social ties with family members or peers. Consumption is also important when it provides an opportunity for economic autonomy from parents and adult carers. Further, having economic autonomy per se, rather than the purchase itself, is significant to a sense of well-being. Moreover, artefacts that have a special emotional or sentimental significance seem to be especially valued. Possessing these artefacts and taking care of them is valued more highly for the contribution it makes to well-being than are disposable goods, even those with a high monetary value.

In this close interaction between material well-being and sense of self, the child standpoint challenges the dominant paradigms on economic well-being, in particular where this focus in on happiness as well-being, in two important ways. Firstly, economic exchange is not a morally neutral practice but is characterised by moral meaning. As Fourcade and Healy (2007) point out, we consciously attempt to naturalise economic behaviours and rules that are not natural but are moral and social. Economists attempt to naturalise these behaviours through use of economic concepts such as efficiency or productivity. Children, however, seem to naturalise their expectations and understandings in terms of moral and relational language, such as parental duty in the case of Chub or parental obligation in the case of Beckham. Secondly, children's material well-being is experienced as essentially social, as deeply intertwined with those of their families and the adults who look after them. Within this social frame, children actively mediate and contribute to the economic dimensions of family life. While we see this most clearly in the experiences of children who are economically disadvantaged, we also see this more generally in children's continued negotiations within their families to obtain resources, in ways both reflective of their dependence upon their parents and that accord with children's understanding of their own class identity. Moreover, for children, economic agency as producers and consumers occurs in the context of family. Where it occurs in

nonfamily spheres, the way children as agents use their money is framed in relation to important others in their life, including family members.

In summary, the child standpoint challenges a strict distinction between market and non-market spheres. It does this by mixing 'market' and 'non-market' rationales in attitudes to family standard of living and children's own practices as economic agents. Where the child standpoint places moral values on the exercise of agency in attitudes to commodities and acquisition of commodities, it defines well-being in a profoundly social way.

Chapter 9
Children's Health and Well-Being

Introduction

Children's health has been a site for establishing normative expectations as to what constitutes appropriate parenting and childhood behaviours. Currently, these normative expectations are conveyed through two dominant discourses—healthism and developmentalism. These expectations have attracted significant critique and have been the subject of ongoing debate as to their sociological implications. However, the intention of this chapter is to explore children's understandings of health in relation to these normative expectations about health. In particular we examine what children consider to be important to their health and to what extent children are agents in their own health promotion.

In developing indicators of child well-being 'beyond welfare' (Ben-Arieh 2000), indicator research has attempted to develop a conceptual space for 'health' indicators. Indeed, indicators of child health and well-being have frequently conflated well-being to dimensions of physical and mental health. While mention is made in some of this literature of children's perspectives, input from children in this area is rare.

In this chapter, we show that when children discuss their health they invoke discourses similar to what is associated with 'healthy lifestyles', which share many of the features of what Crawford (1980) describes as 'healthism', that is, the prioritisation of pursuing healthy lifestyle practices as the primary focus for defining and achieving well-being. These discourses have come to dominate discussions about child health and well-being. However, children problematise healthism by calling upon more broad-ranging discourses in regard to their health. Because of the conflation between healthy lifestyle practices and well-being, children become ideological vessels for furthering healthism. Children's bodies become the site of anxieties around social concerns regarding the health of populations. The actual health of children can, therefore, become subordinated through these discourses, thus

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reproducing one mode of the structural indifference towards childhood and children (Qvortrup 2009).

The main argument presented in this chapter is that children mediate between conventional healthism practices and a broader range of health practices. We show that children's understandings of health, as experienced as a dimension of their sense of well-being, share some features but largely contrast with the dominant discourses of healthism and developmentalism. We show that healthism and developmental health discourses conflate 'well-being' with health, but that children locate health as one dimension within a wider sense of well-being that prioritises agency, security and a positive sense of self. Healthism and developmental health discourses view parenting as the primary arbiter of children's health, but children view their health as premised on a broader set of relationships. While healthism encourages choice within the market as the means to create healthy lifestyles, children envisage their health as located in multiple social sites embedded within civil society. Healthism and developmental health discourses promote a particular view of the body as signifying health; children emphasise the body as functional and as sense experiencing. And, finally while healthism emphasises individual responsibility, it advances a limited view of children's agency, relying on parents as the agents for promoting children's health. However, children discuss deploying their agency in order to be healthy, but acknowledge that their agency is intersubjectively constituted through important relationships.

The chapter proceeds by initially outlining the key features of the dominant discourses in understanding children's health—healthism and developmental health frameworks. We outline the key features of these two frameworks and how they conceptualise children's health and well-being. We then proceed to present children's understandings of health—highlighting the influence of healthism discourses within children's understandings but also how broader ideas of well-being are central to what children consider as important to their health, especially in relation to eating and physical exercise. Themes salient in healthism and developmental health discourses are then compared with those in children's understandings of health. In particular we discuss the importance of eating and physical activity for children's sense of well-being. As with other dimensions and domains described in this book, children's understandings of health show that children often prioritise aspects of well-being which are different from dominant understandings of health. Further, children are neither passive agents of discourses and practices nor are they liberal subjects. Rather, children's conceptualisations of health reflect a socially situated subjectivity and agency. We conclude this chapter by suggesting that a children's standpoint on health provides important clues as to the limits of dominant health frameworks.

Dominant Frameworks I: Healthism and Well-Being

In Chap. 1, we discussed the dominance of developmental understandings of well-being. We have shown that while such developmentally oriented understandings of well-being have captured debates about children's well-being, children's own understandings, in our research, are often quite different and present an alternative conception of well-being. In regard to health, developmental concerns are also central, and we can extend this to health as being about children's survival. Health at its most essential is concerned with individual survival and the conditions for thriving physically and mentally. Such concerns are still central for the majority of the world's children. Two of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals are specifically about improving child and maternal health (United Nations 2013), and the OECD (2009) similarly focuses on baseline measures of child health, which it uses for comparative assessment of child well-being across OECD nations.

A different health emphasis can nonetheless be discerned for children in developed economies when we consider developments in health policy and practices from a historical perspective. The emergence of biomedical sciences, epidemiology and developmental psychology in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries emphasised conditions under which children not only survive but also flourish. The expanded use of medical technologies and advances in public health meant that maternal and infant survival was no longer the baseline for child well-being. Rather, these advances created a space in which the 'new' psychological sciences could delineate markers of healthy child development. Not only was appropriate child development the object of scrutiny and the measure of successful health, these developments also provided a scientific rationale for social reforms aimed at improving maternal and child health.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, we have seen a shift in the character of these practices, with the increasing importance of what Crawford (1980) has described as 'healthism'. Crawford defines healthism as 'the preoccupation with personal health as the primary … focus for the definition and achievement of well-being' (1980, p. 368). While still retaining medical notions, healthism sees illness not only as physical but also as an emotional and mental phenomenon. The term was initially used to describe holistic health and self-care movements; however, the tenets of healthism have become more generalised as lifestyle practices. Partly in response to changes in the nature of morbidity and mortality, from acute to chronic conditions (Nettleton 2006, p. 10), healthism focuses on lifestyle and prevention rather than treatment and cure and consequently that healthcare is primarily the responsibility of individuals rather than achieved through the ministrations of health professionals. Proponents of healthism find their high point in salutogenic models of health promotion as developed by Aaron Antonovsky (1996).

While promoting a less medicalised concept of health than biomedical discourses, aetiological factors beyond individual behaviour do not feature prominently within healthism (Blaxter 1997; Crawford 1980). Rather, particular health practices and consumption are promoted. Individuals are seen as responsible for maintaining their health through exercising 'choice' over an increasing number of 'health options' (Henderson and Petersen 2002; Murphy 2003). Health outcomes are linked to individual choices, and poor health, then, is a result of inadequate knowledge or irresponsible health decisions (Jackson 2010). Health, therefore, is a matter of lifestyle.

It is in this context that several critics have illustrated that much of the discussion regarding children's health takes the tone of a moral panic, with poor child health posed as a failure of parental responsibility (Bell et al. 2009; Gard and Wright 2005; Maher et al. 2010; Margarey et al. 2001; Pike and Kelly 2014). Health policy and healthy lifestyle campaigns tap into deep sources of parental anxiety and concern about children's health, in a similar way to child protection policy as described in Chap. 5. These anxieties evoke powerful responses of obligation and responsibility to children's experiences of pain and illness and are translated into concerns about whether children are eating the right foods, exercising enough or are overweight or underweight. The primary focus is on the adequacy of parental practices for maintaining children's health, and from this vantage we can see that health advice—as delivered by health professionals, through health pedagogy and the popular media—exists to rectify the potentially health-threatening behaviours of parents (Evans et al. 2011). In particular, it is mothers who are held responsible for the health of their children, reinforcing frames of maternal responsibility, despite changing gender patterns regarding work and care (Keenan and Stapleton 2010; Lewis 2001; Maher et al. 2010; Pike and Colquhon 2010). Moreover, particular groups of parents are constructed as neglectful—poor or working-class families, women from certain ethnic or racial groups and single parents.

Beyond the actual harm associated with, for example, childhood obesity or parental smoking, the normative and moral framing of these issues also illustrates concerns about the future as opposed to concern for actual children. For example, childhood obesity has attracted concern from national and international policymakers that is not only about children's health but also the long-term social health burdens resulting from chronic lifestyle-related diseases developed in childhood (see, e.g. WHO 2004; 2012). Such programmes are premised on the belief that, as children and their parents obtain more knowledge about health, this will translate into health-promoting behaviours and habits that children will carry into adulthood (Pearson et al. 2012; Wright and Burrows 2004). However, epidemiological trends suggest that the prevalence of several childhood-related morbidities, including overweight and obesity, is increasing in all countries where there is available data (de Onis et al. 2010; Wang and Lobstein 2006). Health education programmes, therefore, appear to be struggling to effect change in the face of a complex set of factors driving this trend.

At a more micro level, this individualising also ignores how individual resources are socially constituted and that where healthcare is deinstitutionalised, households

need to turn to the market to meet the health needs of its members (Crossley 2004; Nettleton and Bunton 1995; Probyn 2010; Warin et al. 2008). In so doing these discourses ignore how patterns of consumption are associated with class position. For example, it is most likely that middle-class families possess the types of cultural capital that can exploit the choice practices promoted by healthism. This is despite the fact that exercising, dieting and giving up smoking are also most likely to be undertaken by those who have the time and resources to devote to maintaining their health (Blaxter 1997; Probyn 2010).

Additionally, a particular understanding of the relationship between the body and health is promoted by healthism. Because healthism emphasises physical activity as the 'primary predictor of health' (Wright and Burrows 2004, p. 215), certain body shapes, weights and sizes are seen as denoting an individual's attitudes towards health. This in turn promotes certain conceptions of the body as normal and healthy, reinforced through a consistent set of messages about good health that are promoted through other sources, such as popular film and television (Wright and Burrows 2004).

Responsibility and Agency in Healthism

From the discussion thus far, because of the emphasis on individual responsibility for health, it could be argued that a logical implication of healthism is that children should exercise agency over their health choices. For instance, the emphasis on individual behaviours and lifestyles suggests that children have a role to play in being active and healthy. However, healthism constructs children as having quite limited agency. Children are instead the subject of health knowledge, acted upon through day-to-day health practices governed by their parents (Bell at al. Bell et al. 2009). For example, children are generally not responsible for the purchase and preparation of meals, for arranging family activities, for organising health examinations, for their own immunisation and so on. And it is assumed that children only have a limited understanding of health knowledge and can contribute in only a very limited way to decision-making about health practices. Evans et al. (2011) point out, at most, children are envisaged as having certain roles to play: as transmitters of health information learnt at school to home; as challengers of parental authority about health practices, for example, contesting parental authority at mealtimes; or as asserting 'pester power' to negatively influence parental decisions, such as purchasing fast food or sweets (Backett-Milburn 2000; Colls and Evans 2008; Horton and Kraftl 2010; Warin et al. 2008). These depictions of children as transmitters of knowledge, as antagonists or as irresponsible all assume a limited personhood that does not correspond with the rational subject responsible for their own health. The limited agency ascribed to children also reproduces the importance of 'child health' as being a vehicle for promoting the population health agenda, and thus creating normative pressures on parent–child relations.

Yet the extent to which children assert agency over their health has been extensively demonstrated in a range of studies involving children about their health and illness (Alderson 1998; Backett and Alexander 1991; Backett-Milburn et al. 2003; Burrows et al. 2009; Clavering and McLaughlin 2010; Lewis and Porter 2004; Macdonald et al. 2005; Mayall 1993, 1998; Place 2000; Rail 2004; Wise 2002). These studies provide numerous examples of the ways that children assert agency regarding their health, especially in everyday practices and relationships at home, school and through leisure activities (Hörschelmann and Colls 2010; Prout 2000), who occupy a complex set of roles in interactions and negotiations about the meanings of health and health practices, involving interactions with adults, both at home and school, and with other children. For example, Burrows and Wright (2004), in interviewing primary school-aged children, found that children emphasised a broad definition of health that encompasses multiple dimensions of well-being (which we have explored in Chaps. 3, 4 and 6). They found that children define a 'healthy person' as a moral subject and 'health' as interconnecting mental, social, spiritual and environmental dimensions.

However, as Alan Prout (2000) notes, this research on children's expressions of health agency also carries the risks of conflating agency to being a simple assertion of individual choice. As we discuss in Chap. 3, autonomy and agency are distinct concepts, especially as related to children's well-being. While healthism underestimates the role that children play in their own health, studies emphasising children's agency perhaps underestimate the intersubjective basis of children's health. The conceptualisation of agency within these studies tends to replace the child as passive subject of social processes (acted upon but not acting), with the child as responsible liberal subject who is free from attachments and material limits, including the limits posed by one's body. This not only ascribes a type of subjectivity to children that health sociologists have criticised, it places responsibility upon children for their own health in a manner that does not adequately account for intergenerational relations, with the unintended effect of posing parents (especially mothers) and children as antagonists (Ruddick 2007a, b).

Hence, within healthism discourses, we have identified several tenets that are worth investigating from children's perspectives. These include that health is an outcome of rational decisions, and therefore health outcomes can be associated with individual choices about, for example, consumption and level of physical activity. Within market economies, this essentially means that health is reliant upon individual choices within the market, in pursuit of the healthy lifestyle. Further, parenting practices are the primary determinant of children's health, and because it is parents, and not children, who are conceived as rational liberal subjects, healthism ascribes a limited agency to children. Moreover, healthism promotes a particular view of bodies as signifiers of health (the body as slim and strong).

But are these tenets evident in children's discussions of health? Are children's priorities when discussing health similar to those within healthism discourses, and to what extent and in which ways do children enact agency over health practices?

However, before we explore these questions, we will canvass the other dominant framework for understanding children's health, that of developmental health.

Dominant Frameworks II: Developmental Health and Well-Being

Developmental health remains central to how well-being is conceptualised in child well-being indicator frameworks and in public policy promoting children's well-being. Although there has been increasing recognition that health and well-being are not entirely the same, within developmental health frameworks health and well-being are understood as complementary concepts (Moore and Oberklaid 2014). These frameworks have a number of important features. Children's health (and well-being) is seen as developing within an ecological context (Bronfenbrenner 2001). Processes of biological embedding are significant to children's health, with early physical and social experiences influencing long-term physiological and neurological development (Hertzman 1999). More recently, biological embedding has been extended to include gene–environment interactions that attempt to link early experiences with 'gene expression', referred to as 'ecobiodevelopmental' models of well-being (Siegel et al. 2012). It is not surprising, therefore, that there is an emphasis on the early years of a child's life as providing the basis of long-term learning, behaviour and health outcomes (Shonkoff et al. 2012). Experiences adverse to well-being, usually conceptualised as 'conditions in adult life', such as obesity, heart disease, mental health problems, criminality and violence (Moore and Oberklaid 2014), include a range of circumstances in the prenatal and postnatal period, from maternal exposure to toxic chemicals to parenting style to lack of access to healthcare services. What is important is the cumulative exposure to these adverse factors over time, with exposure to more adverse experiences increasing the likelihood of poor development and well-being outcomes.

What is notable is that well-being is included as part of a broadened definition of health, which, as we have noted, is also a central feature of healthism. At the same time, these frameworks differentiate between 'health and well-being outcomes' and their antecedents, so that there is an explicit causative relationship between health behaviours (often which have another underlying set of aetiological factors) and well-being outcomes, which are usually developmentally focused. For example, indicators of physical health, such as overweight and obesity, are associated with well-being, understood as the development of certain functional capabilities. However, in similar adult research that explores the link between happiness and health, the relationship between well-being and its antecedents is either reversed or the associative relationships seen as complex. For example, Steptoe et al. (2005) found that when exploring the link between affective states and health outcomes amongst adults, happiness was associated with a range of positive health indicators, such as lower blood pressure, heart rate and stress. However, the relationship

between 'well-being' and 'health' is either considered as associative ('happier people are also healthier people') or well-being is seen as underlying health outcomes ('happiness causes health').

While asserting significant influence over child health policy, these developmental health models constitute childhood in a very specific way. They are, despite their focus on children, what several sociologists of childhood have described as 'adultist'. The focus on developmental health outcomes emphasises deficits and problem behaviours in children. While it would be inaccurate to suggest that these frameworks are not concerned with children, they are certainly concerned with the effects of childhood experiences for the development of quite particular types of adult outcomes, so much so that children are measured against standards of what are a quite limited and highly normative view of what constitutes positive adulthood. Further, while acknowledging the importance of social factors, the fixity of the measures overlooks how the indicators themselves are socially contingent. The significance of this is that such measures are therefore limited in understanding what else may be of value to children in terms of their health. As we have shown throughout this book, there are likely to be differences in what children and adults attribute to their health-related well-being, which we explore further below.

However, as Moore and Oberklaid (2014) point out, this research shows that mind and body are deeply interconnected, and how we feel has embodied consequences. Further, by taking an explicitly ecological approach, these frameworks emphasise how children's social environments have an influence on health, albeit conceived as children's brain functioning and their capacity as adults, as opposed to their experiences of well-being. Later in the chapter we also explore the connection between emotional and embodied states, but from children's perspectives. We can note here, however, that children also emphasise the link between bodily states and well-being, but not quite in the way conceptualised in developmental health frameworks.

Children's Understandings of Health: Mediating Between Discourses

In discussing health, it is apparent that children are mediating between different health discourses and in so doing mediating between important adults, such as teachers, parents and marketers, and their competing ideas about what is healthy and what is not. This finding has some resonance with Berry Mayall's (1996) work on children, health and the maintenance of social order where children suggested that maintenance of a reasonably comfortable bodily life (viewed through a broad health perspective) was more negotiable at home than at school. Children displayed knowledge about health consistent with broad guidelines associated with healthy behaviour. They talked in particular about eating the right type of foods and the importance of exercise. In discussing health, many of the participants chose

photographs of fruit and vegetables or drew pictures of children being active, to describe well-being. Often the importance and efficacy of health-related behaviours were described in terms of identifiable signs associated with bodily appearance, as Deezee suggests in discussing the importance of swimming:

DEEZEE: Swimming, I'm pretty good at swimming, actually. It is the sport that I really enjoy and it is one that I am very good at. Because I want to have a pretty good body figure, yeah. And, my physical health is important to me as well as my mental health.
INTERVIEWER: So being successful in looking after your body and your mind, is it being successful or just being healthy? What is important?
DEEZEE: I think it is more healthy.

This knowledge of what is healthy included awareness of behaviours adverse to health, like avoiding foods high in saturated fats and sugars and the dangers of sedentary lifestyles. As Rosana describes, these foods should often be avoided 'otherwise, like, you wouldn't be very healthy. If you like kept eating unhealthy food'. However, in discussing the balance between healthy and unhealthy practices, several children identified forces that promoted unhealthy practices, such as fast-food campaigns targeted at children. As Sarah and Beady demonstrate, in a typical discussion, parents and children are often confronted with conflicting messages within the public sphere regarding health that they are required to mediate:

SARAH: We are encouraged to eat a lot more healthy, but they go and advertize unhealthy products and stuff. I just think that it's like everything working in reverse. Like it is one step forward, two steps back kind of thing. 'Cause they say one thing, but then other people end up doing another and it just, it doesn't, something needs to be done to make everything balanced.
BEADY: It is like one ad like saying do not smoke, eat healthy, exercise. And then the next ad is for a big block of chocolate or a Macca's hamburger.

Sarah and Beady point out that health is a fraught issue, a site where children are exposed to contradictory messages from powerful interests. As well as negotiating between healthism and broader conceptions of health-related well-being discourses, children indicate that they have to mediate between what is promoted as healthy in health promotion and by adults concerned with their health and what is marketed as 'cool' and 'fun'. We can understand this as reflecting a tension between eudemonic and hedonic approaches to well-being, as highlighted in Chaps. 1 and 3. As Probyn (2010) points out, health discussions within the public sphere are saturated with messages about what is good and bad for us. Health messages play a central role in school curriculum, and children can in fact be hyperaware of health practices. Yet these messages may have little resonance with children's desires and the practices of their peers and families. As Backett-Milburn (2000) suggests, the uncertainty about how health should be achieved means that the achievement of health is 'a complex and ongoing social accomplishment' (p. 82). This was evidenced here where children frequently discussed how difficult it is to mediate between healthy and unhealthy practices. It is understandable that, given the overwhelming choices available to children and their parents, decisions about health practices can be a source of anxiety for children and parents. Children, and their parents, are loaded with the responsibility of making 'right choices'

between these contradictions. Children are positioned between competing adult interests, as articulated in the conflict between healthism and marketing strategies. The extent to which they are expected to mediate between the two is in contrast to how they are positioned as having limited agency in healthism discourses and also as consumers in marketing strategies.

Perhaps then it is unsurprising that everyday relationships were prioritised in children's discussions of health. Very rarely did children discuss health professionals, and where they did, this was usually as part of discussing illness. Illness was by and large relegated to a minor point of discussion. Whether this was because illness was considered unimportant or whether illness was not considered relevant to a discussion of well-being is unclear. It appears that children are giving priority to a salutogenic understanding of health over pathogenic concepts. For instance Jake, who discussed the need for more doctors in poor countries as being important for their well-being, did not consider the need for more doctors as being important for his well-being, in making a distinction between his own health needs and the survival needs of children in majority world countries:

> INTERVIEWER: [Leading from a discussion regarding 'children in Africa'] So what sorts of things would be important for their well-being, do you think?
>
> JAKE: Peace. And [pause] maybe more doctors. Because most of the families die of a disease or something.

The lack of discussion of medical professionals is a notable finding, especially given the manner in which medical professionals create frames through which the body is understood. As Prout (2000) points out, medical discourse and practices construct bodies as passive, something to be 'acted upon, regulated, disciplined and determined' and of course also cured and remedied. Christensen (2000) describes this construction as the somatic conception of the body, seeing the body as something that can be diagnosed at a point in time and can thus be objectified, interrogated technologically and subjected to clinical intervention (Christensen 2000). That this construction of health and the body did not feature significantly in children's discussions suggests that children understand and experience their bodies and health as something quite different; we return to this in a moment.

Children emphasised that parents, mothers in the case of our research, as with Mayall's (1996) research, were primarily responsible for health. Mayall refers to an alliance between mothers and children (both boys and girls) on health issues. There was an explicit expectation that parents will actively ensure that children are healthy. For example, Sarah describes appreciation for her mother's efforts to set new ground rules around diet:

> My Mum tries very hard for us. She is just starting to really concentrate on eating healthy. So she will only buy healthy things now. So we've got to really, now for me chocolates are being more like a treat to me. They are becoming more like a treat, not—

In these discussions, healthcare revolved around the characteristics of parent–child relationships, rather than specific health practices. Stable and responsive relationships with parents were important, because these relationships provided consistent

and nurturing interactions within which the provision of appropriate care was taken for granted by children. Overt dependence on parents was especially important where children felt unwell. It was in circumstances where children experienced illness where children's conceptualisations of health emphasised the importance of parents and family context. The following two extracts are typical examples of the importance of parental care. Illie emphasises how parental instruction to eat well makes him feel safe, and Porscha suggests that knowing someone is there to care for you when you are unwell is important to well-being:

INTERVIEWER: [Referring to a photo of fruit and vegetables] This one, the one about the food, number 6. What about this one?

ILLIE: I picked it because it makes me feel safe, because you get to eat healthy food and like my parents tell me to eat healthy food so I keep healthy. And I listen to them and I eat healthy food and it makes me feel safe.

INTERVIEWER: Another thing you were telling me that has to do with well-being is about being healthy and not being sick.

PORSCHA: Like having someone there to give you medicine to help you. Maybe if you have medicine in the fridge, your parents give you some.

What we can discern from these general discussions about health thus far is that children know about what is healthy in ways consistent with dominant frameworks of healthism and developmental health, but in a general way. However, as we have discussed earlier, many children raised how health is a contested issue in the public sphere and that children have to mediate conflicting messages between what is healthy and what is desirable, which can be a source of anxiety. These anxieties about health are often negotiated between parents and children at home, often by developing a set of 'reasonable habits', which represent a compromise between 'healthy practices' and 'unhealthy wants'. These themes are also played out in one of the two major themes that children discussed about health, eating.

Eating as a Source of Functional and Emotional Well-Being

Eating was a major theme in children's discussions. As suggested previously, children discussed healthy eating, distinguishing between healthy and unhealthy foods. In these discussions, children sometimes employed somatic descriptions of the body, describing the body in a diagnostic or clinical manner. We saw some semblance of this when children discussed how particular types of food and exercise were associated with 'good' health outcomes. Fruit and vegetables, cereals and dairy products were all referred to as being healthy. Junk foods, fatty foods and those containing significant amounts of refined sugars were to be avoided.

However, these discussions were only ever of a general nature. Rarely were the specifics of health practices (e.g. how much food, the regularity of exercise) referred to, how healthy lifestyles were practically implemented in their day-to-day lives, nor the effects such practices might have on specific aspects of health. For example,

Angel, Bobbie and Apex all identify the links between healthy eating and healthy outcomes, but their descriptions suggest quite general knowledge about the effect of healthy eating on the body. Healthy eating is described in instrumental terms, but within this instrumental conceptualisation, healthy eating meant different things to individual children:

For Angel it meant strengthening her body:
INTERVIEWER: What is it about food that you like?
ANGEL: Cereal, 'cause when you have breakfast it gives you strength in your body.

For Apex it was about his ability to think—in the present:
APEX: Yeah and food. Food helps you do that [focus]. You take, you drink a litre of Coke in the morning and you won't focus. You know. Yeah.

While children expressed general knowledge about 'what people should do' to stay healthy, they also expressed more nuanced understandings of health when they discussed their everyday health practices. Of great significance to children when discussing food was what could be described as 'food as facilitator', where food has an instrumental value. Eating well was important for servicing the body so that it can meet functional requirements. Children discussed how food was essential for everyday social functioning, and healthy food was associated with effective social functioning. This is indicated in some of the quotes above, where Angel talks about 'strength in your body' and Apex talks about 'focus'.

In these discussions, children described food as important for undertaking the daily activities of being a child. Food was fuel, and many children made references to 'energy'. Again, this theme was discussed in terms of both positive and negative practices; healthy eating allows you to function well and unhealthy eating results in poor functioning:

INTERVIEWER: Ah, you said food helps you live and it feeds you and makes your body healthy. Ah, what is it like to be healthy?
ANGEL: You can do lots of stuff. Um, and when you might get tired, no, when you like do something you don't get tired.

Prudence explicitly links functioning with energy, one precondition of which is healthy eating:

INTERVIEWER: You talked about energy a couple of times. What do you think, what does energy mean to you?
PRUDENCE: Um, it means that you can do stuff. Like when you go to the doctor you need to have energy and you know that energy is an important thing. Like if you don't have energy, you can't do running or horse riding and stuff. So you've got the energy to do the things you want to do.

Discourses regarding growing up well, which are central to healthism and developmental health, were, therefore, not as evident in children's discussions. However, some children did emphasise the importance of developmental health. For Bobbie it meant not getting obese—this was in terms of becoming or the person she and her friends were growing to be:

This one [pointing at a photo of a variety of fruit and vegetables] because it is like healthy eating and you are not eating junk food and things. Then you won't get things and stuff. …

> Um, 'cause a few of my friends are a bit overweight … but when you try to talk to them and say well maybe you are eating the wrong things they take it to heart and they don't look at what they are eating as sort of what they are growing up to be, sort of thing.

However, for many of the children, the value of healthy eating was that it allowed them to undertake everyday activities optimally. This included aspects of identity work associated with presentations of the self and the 'acceptable body'. For Nearly Ten, not having a healthy body can mark one out as a source of ridicule. He emphasises the importance of the healthy body in feeling happy:

> INTERVIEWER: So are happy and healthy linked together? To be happy, you have to be healthy?
> NEARLY TEN: Um, when you are healthy you feel more happier. I mean like when you are not healthy, I don't know, sometimes you feel, I don't know, like you don't feel well, because you get teased around and all that.

When asked to explain this further, Nearly Ten's response indicates that the healthy body is important to children in terms of sociability:

> INTERVIEWER: Mmm, so yeah, so if you are overweight or not healthy, you might be teased?
> NEARLY TEN: Yeah, because people um, sometimes judge you about your looks and if um, you're fat, then I don't know if anybody will be your friend.
> INTERVIEWER: Mmm, okay, and what is that like when people don't want to be your friends?
> NEARLY TEN: That is pretty lonely. And upsetting.

Nearly Ten relates being overweight with the affective aspects of well-being. Eating is directly linked with acceptance by others and self-acceptance. The complex affective relationship between eating and well-being is also evident in some children's discussions about eating and self-care, involving a range of experiences including comfort, reflection, escape, a sense of managing anxiety and feeling 'normal'. As opposed to an active body, these discussions evoked images of the body in a more passive state (see also Horton and Kraftl 2010 who discuss children's bedtime practices and routines). In the following quote, the participant is discussing a bodily and cognitive experience suggestive of ontological security, of having a sense of belonging to the world by being present to the experience of eating. As we discussed in Chap. 5, this sense of ontological security is associated with strong emotional experiences of belonging and trust.

> INTERVIEWER: You said, food can be comforting. What do you mean by that?
> PRUDENCE: Like sometimes [pause] you can [pause], you are all worried about stuff and everything and when you eat you are concentrating on that and you just forget about everything else and it makes things seem normal and everything, like everything doesn't seem as hard.
> INTERVIEWER: Okay, so after you've done that, what difference does that make?
> PRUDENCE: Well, it makes it easier to stop thinking about it and worrying about it and worried about what you are going to do. … One time I had a fight with one of my friends, … and I felt really weird about it so when I got home I just ate. It felt very comforting after I ate.

Through these discussions we can therefore discern another critical dimension in the relationship between food and well-being, that of the sense of feeling secure.

This again emphasises the importance of emotional states to a sense of overall well-being, which we explored in Chap. 3. This sense of ontological security is critical in being able to engage in social practices, with their attendant risks and hazards, with a firm sense of self (Laing 1965). These benefits also seem to go beyond those typically emphasised within healthism. While children discuss some of their health practices in ways similar to healthism, eating well is also important not just because it promotes 'proper health' but because it makes you feel secure, good about yourself, and promotes a sense of autonomy by giving you 'energy' to do things.

From 'Health' to 'Well-Being': Physical Activities and 'Doing Health'

So far we have described how children exhibit knowledge of healthy behaviours in a general way but discuss health in a more specific manner when describing concrete practices associated with experiences of well-being. Specifically, food was important both because of its instrumental value ('food as facilitator') and because eating can provide a sense of ontological security. This suggests that children commonly discussed their health with reference to broader understandings of well-being, such as agency and a sense of security. We also see this reference to broader concepts of well-being in the other major health-related theme discussed by children, physical activities, where health is associated with a sense of freedom, transgression and recognition of competence.

The most recurrent theme in children's discussions of health was the healthy body associated with some form of activity. For children, the healthy body was an active body. We have seen the importance of this already in children's discussion of food, but this was also demonstrated in children's discussions of physical activities. Children valued physical activities when such activities made possible a sense of freedom from organised time, including school and organised family time. These situations represent the 'practical enactments' of knowledge about health. That is, they are the everyday contexts in which children practice healthy behaviours and in so doing translate their knowledge about health into 'doing health'.

We have seen that when discussing 'food as a facilitator', children identify the health benefits of being active. However, the emotional and relational dimensions associated with physical activity and exercise were especially important in children's discussions of physical activity. This is an important point of difference from the dominant health frameworks. Healthism and developmental health frameworks emphasise how physical activity per se is associated with well-being. In healthism discourses, physical exercise *is* an expression of a healthy lifestyle. In developmental health literature, the level of moderate to rigorous physical activity *is a protective factor* against childhood health morbidities and future negative health outcomes. However, in children's discussions, these health-specific dimensions were intertwined with the social and emotional value of physical activities. Physical activity

per se was not associated with well-being, but what these activities *facilitate* is associated with well-being. This includes, as Prudence points out, the expression of emotions through movement or, as Apex discusses, an ability to concentrate:

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so just playing with others and doing it for fun.
PRUDENCE: Expressing feelings. Yeah, sometimes when you are playing sports or something you are expressing your feelings through movement.
INTERVIEWER: Yep. Tell me about these a bit more. About exercising.
APEX: 'Cause your health is like, helps adjust your mind to something. You can focus and concentrate on what you are doing. You don't have to worry about it much. If you are not healthy, like you can't concentrate or nothing and it affects your studies and other parts of life.
INTERVIEWER: Tell me about it?
APEX: You've got friends and relationships with friends and relationships with family. Um, and then there is physical sort of health, which is exercise and food, and they are all interrelated. They all go together. So the food comes back to health. Like I said before, it is all interconnected … So if you don't exercise, go out, you don't make friends. If you are not making friends, you are bored.

Apex also clearly links exercise with sociability. This was quite typical of children's discussions of exercise and fitness. Children associate exercise with well-being when exercise facilitates sociable interactions with other children and is thus part of children's leisure activities, whether through autonomous play or structured activities. As Valentine (2010) points out, it is in interactions with other children that children learn how to differentiate their body from other children and to express a sense of individuality and group membership. Exercise can therefore be associated with well-being, when it is linked with fun, esteem and opportunities to make new friends or spend time with friends.

The discussion of physical activities as part of routine social interactions with other children is also quite different from how health education campaigns attempt to promote exercise, as something that an individual 'should make time for', 'fit in' or something that one does as part of a health routine—for example, going to the gym or going for a run or for a walk on their own. These types of discussions might be typical ways that adults talk about the need to do 'more exercise'. For instance, Backett-Milburn, in her analysis of the construction of the healthy body in middle-class families, shows how adults have to self-consciously maintain their bodies, through intentional organising 'to do exercise' (Backett-Milburn 2000). But what is evident from children's discussions is that exercise (at least that associated with a sense of well-being), because it is part of their routine social interactions, often occurs spontaneously and thus often as a 'natural consequence of their ways of living' (Backett-Milburn 2000, p. 87). For example, the above discussions involving Angel, Apex and Prudence indicate 'doing exercise' as part of normal daily practices, rather than something that has to be developed as a routine.

This is important to emphasise because public health programmes often attempt to enforce routines for exercise without sufficient attention to the dimensions of sociability and spontaneity that are central to children's discussions. Schools, for instance, are an important social site that enforces a certain discipline over children's

bodies and explicitly so through physical education curricula and lessons. Rather than enforcing children to undertake physical activity, children's discussions suggest instead that it would be better to create environments within which children can freely associate with each other and through which there may be opportunities to do physical activities as part of being sociable. What may be more consequential in facilitating children's well-being, therefore, is creating opportunities through which children can associate autonomously; we explored this in our discussion of children's leisure in Chap. 7.

While these opportunities occur in children's autonomous spaces, it was also apparent that such opportunities arise in institutional and structured spaces, such as after-school care and organised sports. For example, Stella, in discussing playing competitive netball, emphasises a feeling of pride through displays of competence and winning, something we also emphasised in Chap. 7:

> One of the good things about playing netball is that you get to meet new people. So you get to meet friends outside of school and people you play against. And um, also that it is good because you can feel really proud like when you do well at it. And if you win especially.
>
> INTERVIEWER: Um, are there other things that are important about netball?
>
> STELLA: You are fit. You get fit and you get enough exercise.

These discussions of physical activities are replete with images of the performing body, the body in motion and the body imbued with sensory experience. This conception of the body has been described by Christensen (2000) as being that of the incarnate body, of how the body relates functionally to its surroundings and engages in social interaction. Rather than emphasising the body as something that can be diagnostically assessed, the incarnate body is the body as 'lived subjectivity' related to context, time and space (Christensen 2000, p. 46). Children's discussions of health and the healthy body often focused on the context of their own actions and abilities and on functioning in social contexts and physical environments. This is quite different to describing health in terms of diagnostic signs, such as muscle mass or the absence of illness, or particular body types. Therefore, physical activity is important to and associated with well-being where it facilitates certain affective states: autonomy, a sense of freedom through bodily movement, opportunities for fun and sociability, opportunities for obtaining social esteem and self-worth and as we discussed in Chap. 7, opportunities for transgression.

Discussion: The Limits of Healthism Discourses

From children's discussions we can discern understandings and practices that are consistent with healthism discourses. For example, children's views about eating and exercise were generally consistent with healthism. Eating the right types and amount of food and regular exercise were seen as key to health. We might expect children to be well versed in these health behaviours if we were to specifically ask them about health. However, these views arose spontaneously as part of discussions

Table 9.1 Comparing healthism discourses with children's understandings of health

	Dominant health frameworks	Children's understandings
The health–well-being nexus	Health is the primary source of well-being.	Health is one dimension of well-being and is most meaningful when associated with agency, security and a positive sense of self. Specifically:
		Eating as a means to facilitate engagement in daily life practices and in providing a sense of comfort.
		Physical activities associated with sociability and fun, a sense of freedom, transgression and recognition of competence.
Children as health agents	Limited view of children's agency: as transmitters of knowledge adversaries or as asserting pester power. Emphasis on autonomy (as liberal choice) rather than agency (as situated action).	Children as agents, but agency embedded and intersubjective.
Responsibility and the sites of health practice	Parents are the primary arbiter of children's health. Clear hierarchy between parents and children. Professional knowledge remains authoritative.	Health practices are negotiated intersubjectively with parents, but parents are important in establishing parameters of health practices. Professional knowledge is associated with illness, not health.
	Focus on individual choice within the market as the avenue for healthy lifestyles. Centred on relationship between the private sphere and the market.	Multiple sites for health practices, including institutions and children's autonomous spaces, within civil society. Embedded in relationships but also a result of interaction with built and natural environments and material objects and artefacts.
The healthy body	Particular types of body signify health (slim and muscular) and associated life practices.	Emphasises functionality of body: as active, as a source of internal contentment and as sensuous. Both 'embodied' and associated with feeling states.

about well-being. This suggests that these health practices feature in children's day-to-day experiences and contribute to a sense of well-being.

However, apart from these few similarities, children view health in quite different ways suggested by both dominant health discourses. We can discern four key areas of difference: the relationship between health and well-being; how children's agency is understood; responsibility for health and the sites of health practice; and how the healthy body is conceptualised. These differences are summarised in Table 9.1.

These differences suggest some important implications for how we view the relationship between health and children's sense of well-being and, consequently, how

children are conceived as social subjects within policy aimed at promoting children's health and the way that healthism discourses in particular are received, mediated and practised as actual health-related behaviours by children.

The Health–Well-Being Nexus

We have established that healthism discourses tend to reduce well-being to a set of values and practices that promote healthy living. For developmental health and well-being frameworks, health and well-being are often seen as congruent. However, children's discussion of health reverses this relationship, with health as one dimension of a broader experience of well-being. Health is seen as one factor that contributes to a complex and multidimensional experience of well-being. More specifically, health practices were especially important to children when associated with a sense of feeling safe, experiencing a positive sense of self and expressing agency. 'Health practices' significant to children were those in which they experienced some or all of these factors.

Feelings of security and safety were emphasised where children discussed how health is embedded in stable loving relationships and in discussions of the importance of parents and carers in framing day-to-day health practices. This was associated not only with practices for maintaining the body but also experiencing ontological security, especially through meals. Physical activities contributed to a sense of well-being where they provided opportunities for sociability and fun, the ability to express emotions through movement and, as we discussed in Chap. 7, an opportunity to obtain social esteem through achievements that garner positive recognition, either in the form of everyday expressions of approval or more ritualised forms of recognition such as winning awards. Therefore, while healthism emphasises individual lifestyle practices, in contrast children's discussion of health emphasises that health is experienced as part of ongoing, but specific, social interactions, relationships and contexts, including important episodes and events in which children are actively and reflexively engaged.

Children as Health Agents

The relational constitution of health is especially important in children's experiences of agency in relation to health practices. While dominant frameworks attribute limited forms of agency to children, emphasising autonomy as liberal choice rather than agency, as situated action, we see from children's discussions that agency is expressed in various health-related behaviours and activities: when children discuss food as a facilitator to engage in daily life practices, of the body in motion and a sense of well-being through positive sensory experiences, of opportunities for transgression and in describing freedom through activities—these all indicate how healthy practices are

also expressions of agency. These expressions of agency are not so much about asserting 'choice' (i.e. as a rational liberal subject), but are embedded in daily life practices that may be taken for granted by children. These are quite different expressions of agency than those promoted in healthism discourses, of children being moral arbiters of healthy discourses or, by contrast, asserting agency by being resistant to healthy practices. Undoubtedly such behaviours occur, but they are not those behaviours that children associate with their well-being.

Instead what we find is that even where children engage in health practices that are different to those of their parents, children nonetheless assume the existence of health rules that are set by their parents and in fact often seek out such rules (Backett-Milburn 2000). Children emphasised that parents established the parameters for health, through concrete measures such as buying healthy food. In so doing, there is at least implicit recognition by children that guidance and supervision over health by adults is important to well-being and that at least some rules around healthcare are taken for granted, even if children may disagree with such rules. We have also discussed the importance of intergenerational relations to children's sense of agency, safety and positive sense of self. As we have noted, family dispositions characterised by warm, nurturing relationships were associated with environments where basic provisions such as food and shelter were assumed and in which discussions around health practices could be negotiated. We can further conclude, then, that a sense of agency is premised on stable, secure relationships with others and especially trusted adults, who can provide a secure context for acting. Children's focus on functional health indicates that health is experienced as part of processes, actions, events and relationships with others and environments. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to say that children's agency can best be understood as 'performing health' separate from 'adult' contexts (Christensen 2000). Rather, health practices are constituted through ongoing intersubjective relations with other important and trusted people, facilitated by the possibilities provided by material objects, whether that be the natural or built environment, artefacts or goods for personal consumption, specifically in this case, food.

A further conclusion we can draw from this is that health, as embedded and intersubjective, is situated within structurally determined opportunities available to different groups of children (e.g. access to leisure resources, the quality of built environments or the range and variety of toys are likely to reflect class-based differences and opportunities). Therefore, the opportunity to express forms of agency that are 'health-promoting' is likely to be highly correlated with children's class position. We get some indication of this from data on children's physical activities. For example, the NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (Hardy et al. 2010), which surveyed the health behaviours of over 8000 children aged between 5 and 16 years of age, has shown that the prevalence of undertaking moderate to vigorous physical activity is lower amongst students from lower and middle socioeconomic status areas. Further, some studies have found that neighbourhood resources and environment contribute to differences in children's level of physical activity (Brodersen et al. 2007; Gordon-Larsen et al. 2006).

Responsibility and the Sites of Health Practice

This leads to our next point, pertaining to how responsibility for health is understood. As noted earlier, healthism discourses perpetuate an ideology of the 'responsible parent', envisaged as having present responsibility for children's health but also, especially in developmental health frameworks, responsibility for the health of future adults. Making the 'right choices now' becomes imperative, as it is considered that current practices set lifelong patterns of behaviour that determine future adult health outcomes. Therefore, how adults exercise choice in the market is of particular importance within healthism discourses, for the health of both children and the next generation of adults. Anxieties about creating the 'right start' for children to grow into healthy, responsible adults reflect one of an array of insecurities that fundamentally shape experiences of parenting. As we have noted in previous chapters, these uncertainties reflect important social developments in 'modern societies'. These social processes naturalise relationships of dependence between children and adults, and they require parents to attempt to bring within their sphere of influence a range of factors that elude their control, including that of the future health of their children.

Children's discussions of health emphasise quite a different relationship between current activities and future health. Children actively mediate between conflicts that arise between healthism and food marketing, which can represent different expectations of how children should act in terms of their health. As we have discussed, these different expectations also represent different conceptualisations of well-being, the eudemonic and hedonic. In mediating between the two, we see how children are positioned to act as responsible health agents. Children also appear to prioritise present experiences as important to their sense of well-being. While discussions of the future were common, they were quite unlike health discourses that emphasise the long-term benefits from healthy practices. Much of what children associated with health were immediately identifiable signs of healthy appearance. These included physical, emotional and psychological signs, such as energy levels and emotional states generated from eating well and bodily movement, and the concrete functional outcomes of healthy practices, such as being able to focus and to be able to engage in physical activities competently. There was less emphasis on the long-term potential outcomes of health practices, such as prevention of ill health. Yet, many of the health experiences associated with a present sense of well-being are also likely to be preconditions for healthy development, for example, eating to have energy is also likely to involve eating healthily. The point to emphasise, however, is that children's experiences of 'present' well-being, while possibly connected to future outcomes, have their own value. This deeper expression of agency is often lost in broader discussions of children's health.

Additionally, children's discussions of health emphasised both intergenerational and intragenerational relationships. That is, health practices occur in social spaces involving adults and children as well as in those that we could consider as 'children's own'. Further, the sites of health practice were not only in the private sphere but

included children's autonomous spaces within civil society. Intergenerationally, we see how responsibility for food production and everyday care occurs through relationships with parents and carers (Evans 2005). These health relationships have been well documented in other research and indicate how health is negotiated with 'other-aged' subjects that reflect and reproduce what Leena Alanen (2001) describes as 'generationing', the social processes that demarcate certain individuals as children and others as adults. This suggests that family provides a primary orientation in regard to attitudes towards eating and exercising.

Yet we can also discern that, while adults are powerful arbiters of children's health, children also discuss the importance of intragenerational relationships. Relationships with peers were central to health practices associated with physical activity and recognition. These often occur outside the home, in children's autonomous play or in institutionalised spaces for children. Therefore, children also draw upon their own social contexts to develop their own conceptions of what is healthy or not. Relationships with peers can have a profound impact on the way care provided by parents is received and practised by children. It is quite likely that in relationships with peers children test their health-related practices as being the same or different from others and in so doing develop social competence and self-concept, both of which are essential to a sense of well-being. For example, relationships with peers can be the source of subverting food practices encouraged by parents. Food can be a way to achieve group membership, a basis for expressing 'uniqueness' or a basis upon which difference is used to alienate and exclude.

The Healthy Body

An illustration of this identity work can be seen in how children discuss bodies. Within healthism discourses, bodies are considered in highly normative ways, with body shape and size signifying health status as well as a person's health practices. Children's discussions of health also emphasised a connection between eating the right foods and exercising and desirable or undesirable body types. But what was more often emphasised was the body's functional capacity and the body imbued with sensation.

Both of these aspects, function and sensation, were important to children's sense of well-being. The functional body is a socially competent body that is capable of engaging in everyday social practices (see also Valentine 2010). But in discussing the body in action, a healthy body is a body imbued with sensation, which, from children's perspectives, is also associated with certain internal states such as feeling calm or worthy. These were perhaps closer to states of pleasure, where a physical act, such as eating enjoyable food, could lead both to a bodily experience of pleasure and a psychological condition of contentment. Hence, children's discussions of health practices, while embodied, are also about affect and emotion. The psychic and the physical are highly related, integrated through the same set of practices, rather than being distinct.

A Child Standpoint on Health

Discursive, or representational, social forces are one component through which children understand and experience their health (see also Hörschelmann and Colls 2010). However, while some elements of children's standpoint on their health-related well-being conform to the social ordering of health of the discourses of healthism and developmental health frameworks, other elements contest it. Firstly, while the healthism discourse conflates 'well-being' with health, children locate health as one dimension within a wider sense of well-being that prioritises agency, security and a positive sense of self. The children's standpoint on health constructed from our research findings is framed by the dominant health discourses adapted in ways which make sense of their everyday health practices. Secondly, the child standpoint asserts that the contribution of health to their well-being is more than survival in the present and good physical and emotional health in the future. It has to do with emotions and relationships; it is about happiness, fun and sociability in the present.

In their emphasis on well-being as a holistic concept, the child standpoint in this narrative is reflective of the salutogenic in contrast with the pathogenic approach to health. In part, the limits of dominant health frameworks can be understood because they are premised on a notion of self-responsibility that sets standards of moral practice that can alienate individuals. The need to constantly take responsibility for one's behaviour, a drive to self-improvement, the emphasis on individual choice and that poor health is a consequence of individual failings can leave little room for practices that are associated with pleasure, fun and a sense of well-being. Material aspects of health practices are also critical to children's sense of health-related well-being. These material aspects can be understood as embodied practices that are in continual interaction with others, environments and non-human artefacts. In particular, the material aspects of health are evident in the shared intersubjective dispositions regarding health that are negotiated between children and adults and between children. Crucially, this is where children describe themselves as taking an active role in their own health.

Part IV
Conclusions from a Child Standpoint

Chapter 10
Findings and Conclusions on Well-Being from the Unique Vantage Point of Children

Achieving a Composite Standpoint

The composite standpoint in this chapter is derived from integrating the key themes in the earlier chapters. As indicated in the introductory chapter, the process of integrating findings from preceding chapters is like putting together the patches of a quilt. In putting together this metaphorical quilt, we can firstly discern distinct patterns highlighting the multifaceted nature of child well-being. Secondly, we can discern a totality, a design, which is holistic and is gained by putting together an overview, a sum of the parts.

Two sets of interrelated findings are presented in this concluding chapter. The first set of findings is derived from our use of qualitative methods, as they inform us on the multifaceted nature of child well-being. They provide what Gasper, in discussing the value of 'rich qualitative descriptions', refers to as 'indispensible complements to economists' abstraction' (Gasper 2004). Where the qualitative descriptions embedded in the narratives in this book, in informing us on the domains and dimensions of well-being, either complement or provide alternative concepts to those inherent in contemporary child well-being indicators, they form the core components of indicator concepts presented at the end of this chapter. These indicator concepts are derived from our reconstruction of what children described as being important to their well-being.

In this first of the two sets of findings discussed in this chapter, we draw out the salience of well-being as emotional and relational. In doing so, we suggest that expressions and feelings of well-being have social functions: as indicating a sense of social integration and group belonging and as a means for children to express themselves as moral, purposeful and authentic. Thus the importance of 'horizontal relationships' between adults and children is underlined.

Our second set of findings, the total picture of the metaphorical quilt, takes its fundamental character from the way our research was informed by standpoint theory. This total or composite design, as derived from our findings, not only

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complements the contemporary economistic discourse but also challenges it. Our findings pose challenges in requiring us to reconsider what well-being means to children. The understanding of child well-being that emerges in the form of a child standpoint on well-being resembles the original use of standpoint theory (to construct a women's standpoint) in that it is 'about challenging, from the position of the marginal, silenced and subjected, the conceptual practices of power, the "view from above"' (Cockburn 2015, p. 341). Through the use of standpoint theory, we illustrate how understandings of well-being are socially situated, and in so doing, we emphasise relevant structural factors that account for different conceptions of well-being, particularly that of intergenerational relations. By foregrounding the importance of intergenerational relations to children's well-being, we have also highlighted how children take up a marginalised position in these relations. Consequently, children may be socially situated in ways that make them aware of aspects of well-being that those who are not marginalised (adults) are not in a position to know. As a consequence of developing a structural analysis of children's well-being, we have been firstly obliged to start from the everyday social practices of children. Secondly, we have been able to analytically reconstruct a representation of children's understandings and experiences of well-being—and what such understandings and experiences tell us about generational and social orders.

The resultant standpoint is comprised of the three conclusions discussed in this chapter as they, separately and together, challenge the dominant 'view from above' and inform our construction of indicator concepts. The first conclusion is that a child standpoint on well-being, while in some respects similar to what has been conceptually framed as well-being by traditional approaches, differs from them in that it is overwhelmingly about the sociality of well-being (both in its intersubjective character and as embedded in broader social relations) and meaning in life, with children emphasising purpose as well as pleasure.

The second conclusion is that child well-being stands in tension with the emphasis on child well-*becoming*, which predominates in conventional, and what we argue are adult-centric, conceptions of child well-being, and overrides the significance of child well-*being* in the present. We show that in understanding the relationship between well-being and well-becoming we must distinguish between three concepts of well-being: well-being in the present; well-being as associated with children's own aspirations, imaginings and definitions of their future; and adult-defined well-being for children.

The third conclusion points to the way that this tension between different concepts of well-being and well-becoming reflects the generational structuring of adult–child relations and intragenerational relations amongst children. We show the significance of a structural indifference towards children that manifests in childhood as a minority social position. However, we also indicate that certain dimensions of well-being emerge because childhood also represents a distinct social category and social position which provides opportunities for children's 'autonomous lifeworlds'. Additionally, our reconstruction of children's standpoint of well-being shows instances of children's practices of resistance to adult authority and thus childhood as representing a location of resistance to adulthood. Our analysis therefore

illustrates that inter- and intragenerational relationships are characterised by potentials for both well-being and for oppression (or ill-being) of children. These three conclusions are discussed in the following sections of this chapter, while in the final section we consider the significance of these findings for the construction of child well-being indicators and policy.

Well-Being as Social and Relational

The construction of a composite child standpoint from the children's narratives fits at times with each of what Deci and Ryan (2008) identify as contrasting perspectives on well-being—the hedonic and the eudemonic (Chap. 1). At other times, the child standpoint prompts us to look beyond both these perspectives, in identifying the complexity of emotions and the salience of intersubjective and inter- and intragenerational relations that underpin experiences of well-being—the significance of both child–adult and child–child relationships for children's experiences of well-being.

Children describe how they value happiness and hedonic well-being, where their narratives define well-being as connoting fun, as in, for example, enjoyable times spent with people important to them. Hedonic pleasure is a particular focus of children's narratives when describing activities that are important to experiences of well-being in their present lives, as well as in activities that impact on the senses, such as eating and dancing (Chap. 7). We also see the importance of hedonic well-being in children's discussion of health, where they prioritise the body as being functional and as sense-experiencing. In highlighting fun, sense-seeking and pleasure, children are foregrounding embodied dimensions of well-being (Chap. 9).

The idea of a happy or hedonistic childhood fits well with the Appolonian ideal of childhood, as a period of innocence and happiness. While the importance of experiencing happiness is part of the children's narrative presented in Chap. 3, the emphasis within the same narrative is on the way happiness intermingles with other feelings, so that experiences of sadness and adversity are also part of well-being. This has parallels with eudemonic conceptualisations of flourishing and well-being—more particularly with Eastern traditions of eudemonia, where suffering and adversity are understood as having significance for well-being. In particular, we found that, for children, the concept of well-being encompasses feelings and experiences beyond happiness and pleasant feelings. As described by children, well-being can also be experienced as an interweaving of complex emotions—such as joy with frustration or sadness with happiness—that are invested in and reflect the significance of certain relationships and life events. These integrative emotional experiences are often overlooked in hedonic concepts of well-being.

The contextualisation by children of experiences of sadness and adversity, as well as happiness, within social relations (e.g. in Chaps. 3 and 4) suggests that whether or not what may be labelled as 'negative' feelings and experiences can be incorporated into an overall experience of well-being is very dependent on the

relationships children have with others. When children refer to aspects of relationships that contribute to well-being, it is usually within the frame of horizontal relations between adults and children, where opportunities for children to exercise reciprocity, agency and negotiation contribute to experiences of trust (in others, oneself and one's environment), respect (for one's feelings and ideas) and inclusiveness (facilitating agency in private and public spaces).

These three elements of horizontal relations—of emotions being expressed in relationships of reciprocity, of agency and of negotiation—reflect the importance for children of feeling socially integrated and of group ties for well-being. An important theme evident throughout the findings presented in this book is how emotional expressions give recognition to the importance of group membership and of sociality more generally. Where children express sadness or joy as associated with well-being, it is often as a reaffirmation and expression of the importance of close social ties, such as with family and friends, and thus is confirming of important social bonds. Where once group ties and social solidarities were expressed in a range of ritual expressions in both public and private, these emotional expressions are now more generally reserved for the private sphere. However, in Chap. 6, we explored some exceptions to this, as in emotional ties to larger group identities such as activity clubs and cultural groups. Hence emotional expressions associated with well-being also signal oneself as a worthy individual and reaffirm group belonging and solidarities.

Such practices are described in narratives in this research, around, for example, caring activities (Chaps. 3, 4 and 5), resource distribution (Chap. 8) and health (Chaps. 8 and 9). In these chapters, we demonstrated how important aspects of well-being, including those traditionally conceived as liberal expressions of individuality, can also be interpreted as expressions of affective solidarity. As well as being about self-determination, children's agency is about making a difference within relational contexts. Children's economic well-being is deeply embedded in the economic well-being of their families. However, children's autonomous economic practices are also associated with a sense of well-being where they provide opportunities for expressing moral solidarity. Children's discussions of health, which in adult discourse are increasingly focused on self-management and individual (meaning in this case parental) responsibility, instead focus on health enacted within a broad set of social relationships and sites within civil society, including the natural and built environments. A particularly salient expression of well-being as social integration, based in certain forms of intersubjective understandings, revolves around children's discussions of safety. In discussing what is important to their well-being, children place high priority on feeling protected, physically and ontologically, within their home, but nonetheless problematise how feeling safe is confused with vulnerability. All these examples indicate how expressions of well-being are an expression of and help solidify important group identities.

Furthermore, as described in Chap. 6, relational well-being is central to concepts of the moral self, the purposeful self and the authentic self, as reconstructed from children's discussions regarding the relationship between well-being and self/iden-

tity. Children derive meaning from relationships where they can exercise their agency as virtuous or 'good' persons and experience their lives as meaningful. Virtue is characterised by being a 'good' child for parents, responding in caring or kind ways to them and other adults and children. This includes demonstrating a general concern for humanity and the environment. Virtue is also demonstrated in children's explicit discussions of moral attributes that they find worthy in others and in themselves, which from our research include treating others with fairness, being open to other's ideas, being helpful and being cooperative and enacting these in abstract situations (e.g. being helpful to other children who are not within a child's friendship group). Children's discussions of the 'good' person challenge the traditional developmental paradigms on morality, such as that of Kohlberg (e.g. 1968), having more in common with morality as defined in feminist care ethics. As we have emphasised, these constructions of self, that underpin a sense of well-being, are reliant upon emotional interdependencies and developing a sense of a life's meaning. As such, they transcend accounts of well-being that emphasise individual pleasure and focus only on the present.

In summary, these three elements—horizontal relations, social integration and constructs of the self as moral, purposeful and authentic—allow for integrative emotional states (e.g. happiness and sadness, pleasure and hardship) to be experienced as a sense of well-being and also distinguish these emotional experiences from 'negative' emotions, such as terror, distress, disrespect and humiliation.

The emphasis by children on the social, as described above, challenges contemporary research and policy on child well-being in that it calls into question quantitative approaches that are based in utilitarianism. Quantitative approaches, where they individualise and aggregate, fail to take account of relational aspects and are therefore unable to provide an adequate understanding of social well-being. While the relational and social solidarities are implicit in children's discussions of well-being, their experiences of well-being are both vulnerable and contested when we analyse conceptions of well-being through a structural lens. This brings us to our second set of findings.

Children as 'Being' and 'Becoming': Tensions in Concepts of Well-Being

The child standpoint constructed in this book asserts that children know what it is to experience happiness and well-being in the present, not just as an outcome of life strategies (Chap. 3). This major finding challenges the assertion by Aristotle, which is an underlying assumption in developmental and outcome-based well-being research, that children are unable to experience well-being because they have not experienced a 'complete life'. Nevertheless, this assumption does in fact appear to frame children's well-being experiences. For, while children can experience and value well-being in the present, their narratives also indicate that they understand

that their child status implies expectations that they delay experiences of well-being in the present until the future when they become adult.

Children distinguish between practices that enable them to experience well-being in their present, practices which are strategies that contribute to their well-being in the future—those that involve a projection of one's self into an imagined future and adulthood and practices that reflect the agenda of important adults in structuring children's time in the present to prioritise future outcomes (which in general prioritise developmental outcomes). This third, adult-defined orientation towards well-being has partial convergences with the first two and is often in conflict with both, especially practices of well-being in the present. The tension between these three practices of well-being are evident at the level of interpersonal relationships, especially between children and important adults, namely, those tasked with children's overall care (parents and carers) and those who are explicitly tasked with the development of children's human capital (teachers). For example, children are aware that limitations placed on their 'leisure', with the effect of reducing their potential for experiencing well-being in the present, are a result of pressures on parents to structure children's 'leisure' time in preparation for them becoming adults. However, children also associate a sense of well-being with leisure activities that are critical for developing capabilities, in part because developing mastery in certain areas may support children's own ideas of a possible future they wish to pursue (Chap. 7).

Relational factors are crucial in the extent to which children accept adult actions postponing their experiences of well-being to their futures or resent and resist them (e.g. Chap. 4). Children value adult actions that contribute to their future well-being when they are experienced as expressions of caring and understood as being enacted towards what adults consider to be in these children's best interests. However, children resent and may resist adult behaviours, which are justified on the basis of their future well-being, when they consider them unfair and enacted more in the interests of adults than of children as beings (Chaps. 4 and 5). Furthermore, we found instances of children autonomously attempting to construct a desired future for themselves. For example, through developing and pursuing their own interests through leisure (Chap. 7) or work (Chap. 8), children are developing capabilities that may provide a sense of esteem and self-worth in the moment but also involve pursuing a desired outcome, such as developing certain skills or obtaining work experience. Children's practices of moral agency are also, similarly, expressions of being recognised as a good person in the present and an ongoing process of moral identity formation (Chap. 6).

The contrasts between well-being in the present, well-being as pursuing a desired future and adult-determined well-being are evident when we compare the understandings of well-being prioritised by children with those prioritised in prevailing popular, scientific and policy discourses. These have been systematically described in Parts II and III of this book through our methodology of looking down (describing dominant adult-centric concepts of well-being) and looking up (concepts of well-being constructed from children's standpoint). The comparison of these different concepts, or frames, of well-being represents an attempt to theorise adult–child

relations through comparing domains and dimensions of well-being prioritised by children with those prioritised in dominant discourses, which also inform children's own understandings of well-being. That is, in describing what a child standpoint would look like, we have attempted to 'explicate the worlds that children know as insiders', a project common to child-centred research more generally but also to 'link children's lives with the normal organisation of social relations' (Alanen 2005, p. 43).

The differences between the adult discourse and the children's standpoint can be traced in our various chapters. In Chap. 4, in our discussion of children's agency, we found that while dominant discourses emphasise children's participation in formal decision-making, children also emphasise practices of agency in everyday circumstances. In our discussion of safety (Chap. 5), we found, on the one hand, that dominant frameworks emphasise child protection, transformed into discourses of risk. In consequence, protection has become equated with a retreat into the private sphere and risk-averse childhoods. On the other hand children's discussions of safety revolved around ontological insecurity, trust and negotiated engagement with risk, while also emphasising how structural inconsiderateness towards children limits their autonomy, especially in the public sphere. In our discussion of the self (Chap. 6), we showed that while dominant discourses emphasise the realisation and construction of identity through clear developmental stages, with identity resolution being a marker of adulthood, children emphasise the self as moral, purposeful and authentic. Furthermore, the self is a relational self realised in concrete social contexts through expressions of affective, reflective and conventional solidarities.

Whereas leisure (Chap. 7) has increasingly been seen as a means for educational development, children value leisure as a sphere in which they can experience freedom from everyday rules. Where leisure facilitates the development of capabilities, this is especially associated with a sense of well-being when it results in feelings of self-worth or provides a basis for social esteem. Dominant discourses of economic well-being (Chap. 8) have viewed children as marginal from economic activities, as a 'dependency burden', or they have focused on child poverty; children's discussions of economic well-being similarly prioritise a household standard of living but focus on intra-household distribution of resources. Their discussion also highlights practices of economic agency, emphasising the close interconnection between economic practices and moral identity. Finally, while dominant health discourses (Chap. 9) emphasise healthism and developmental health, children also discuss their health as embedded in other dimensions of well-being, as negotiated intersubjectively with trusted adults, and refer to the healthy body as sensuous and functional.

To a significant extent, concepts of well-being emphasised in dominant discourses prioritise developmental outcomes and an adult-oriented agenda that promotes a highly normative idea of well-being. Children's conceptions of well-being, while sharing some elements of these dominant discourses, also represent alternative frames and understandings of well-being. Children appear to resolve tensions around their experiences in the present as beings, and adults focus on them as becomings, through taking on the becoming discourse, by looking forward to

adulthood as a time when they believe they will acquire the privilege of independence and power that will enable them to experience greater well-being than possible in their present lives (Chap. 4). Problematic for children are adult protective practices, even those associated with caring, that limit opportunities for children to exercise capabilities that they believe will increase rather than diminish their vulnerability in their immediate futures (Chap. 5). While this indicates the importance of adult framings to children's experiences of well-being, we found of greater significance expressions, meanings and understandings that resisted/countered these adultist framings. This suggests that there are limits to the extent that dominant discourses and policy configurations determine children's understandings and experiences of well-being. Rather, these discourses provide frames for children's thinking about well-being. However, children do not simply adopt these frames; they co-opt and adapt elements of them, in combination with others, to inform and make sense of everyday practices associated with a sense of well-being.

While at the micro-relational level children in their narratives describe tensions around experiencing well-being, which are attributable to the emphasis put on them as becoming persons, we find a mirroring of these tensions at the macro-level when, as researchers, we 'look down' at various dimensions of children lives. At the macro-level, children's lives, as beings, are circumscribed by policies directed at economic goals and at maintaining the status quo—the social order. For example, the goals served by a conflation of concepts of health with well-being can work against children's well-being in their presents. This can occur where a policy emphasis on maintaining the body and developing the mind, as part of strategies for children to become healthy adults (thus reducing future adult healthcare costs), can jeopardise children's social and emotional well-being in the present (Chap. 8). Similarly, the emphasis at the level of economic well-being on children as future contributors to economic productivity, and as costs to families, ignores the significance of children as economic actors to their well-being in the present, as well as the way children's well-being is affected by social exclusion due to economic disadvantage (Chap. 9).

The child social indicators movement has, since the early work of Brim (1975a, b), drawn attention to the way in which the emphasis in Western society on the future, rather than the present, is manifest in attitudes to children that treat them as 'becomings' rather than 'beings'. For this reason, Brim (1975a) argued, as have others more recently (e.g. Ben-Arieh and Frønes 2011, Bradshaw 2015), for the importance of indicators that focus on children's subjective states. However, based on our research findings, we consider that we need to do more than focus on children's subjective states. As Brim also argued forcefully, we consider it necessary to take into 'consideration [the impact] of macro-structural forces – of economic influences, of historical determinants, of cultural values, of sociological trends, and of political science factors' on children (Brim 1975b, p. 518). It is here, as implicitly acknowledged by Brim, that we need to confront the politics of childhood by making a decision, based on Qvortrup's (2014) description of the alternatives available, as to 'whether we are, on the one hand, primarily interested in social *policy* for the individual child with an eye to his or her well-being later in life (well-becoming,

so-called) and perhaps even more the health of the social fabric as a whole, or whether, on the other hand, our main focus will be a *politics* for childhood as a pervasive social category, that is, while children are still children' (2014, p. 689. Emphasis in original). If we are concerned for the well-being of children as beings rather than, or as well as, children as well-becoming adults, then our approach must be guided by structural analysis and social change at the macro-level, with the focus of this analysis being on the value of childhood within the social order.

Structural Relations Between Childhood and Adulthood

Connections between children's experiences of well-being at the micro level and at the sociopolitical level are particularly clear in children's narratives on relationships. Our analytical reconstruction of these relationships (in developing a child standpoint) highlights the importance of intergenerational relations as a structural feature of societies that can help us understand dimensions of well-being. Throughout this book, we have described how intergenerational relations are intertwined at two mutually reinforcing levels—the interpersonal and the social/institutional. These processes shape individual adults' and children's experiences, which in turn further reproduce or redefine attributes associated with 'adulthood' and 'childhood'. Conceptions of well-being are therefore configured within a broad set of social interactions, including dominant discourses of well-being that are mediated through children's relations with significant people, artefacts and environments. In understanding children's well-being, therefore, we must also attend to the network of relationships, resources and physical environments that children engage with, in their everyday lives.

Our reconstruction of a child standpoint on well-being has attempted through structural analysis to provide some insights into three significant processes: generationing, as an analytical device to understand how childhood and adulthood are mutually constituted; generational interactions; and how childhood is experienced by children. Qvortrup (2014) notes the unpopularity of structural research on childhood. It means deviating from what he refers to as the 'easier path'. For example, in the instance of violence to children, the easier path means linking it with shortcomings or psychopathology of individual adults. This path is in contrast to conceptualising, violence to children as a feature of the way adult–child relations, specifically age patriarchy (Hood-Williams 1990) or paternalism (Qvortrup 2014), position children in the home and public forums as dependent on and therefore vulnerable to adults' greater power. The structural approach adopted in our research, in attempting to construct a child standpoint, points to three dimensions of intergenerational relations—childhood as a minority social position, childhood as an autonomous social space and childhood as a form of social resistance.

Childhood as a Minority Social Position

In understanding childhood as being a minority social position in terms of generational relations, our analysis brings into focus those elements of intergenerational relations where children experience harassment, exclusion, denial and neglect by adults. By likening the subjugation of children to that of other ‘minority groups’ (e.g. Mayall 2002, John 1996a, b, Qvortrup 2014), it is argued that the interests and autonomy of adults as the more powerful group are privileged over the interests of children. Children in their narratives (especially Chaps. 5 and 6) describe how their dependency on adults for the meeting of their needs, through provision of resources and emotional and protective care in their daily lives, can be experienced as oppression and abuse, in situations where they lack power to negotiate and influence the behaviour of adults. Hood-Williams (1990) has highlighted how age patriarchy is at the core of family functioning, whereby children are in a chain of command that demands their subservience to the taken-for-granted control and wishes of adults. In this context, while the child-centred family may increasingly be a reality, as reflected in children’s descriptions of parents’ care and concern for them and in their provision of opportunities for choice, it is nevertheless, as children indicate, parental will which prevails when conflict between interests surfaces (Chaps. 4 and 5). The ways in which children can feel their well-being undermined by inequalities of power is clearly spelt out by children in their discussions about the adult being the ‘boss’ of children. Further, their autonomy and opportunities to actualise their capabilities are circumscribed by their position as children—until they too are in the position of ‘boss’ (Chaps. 4 and 5).

Additionally, children indicate how parents actually and potentially use their superior physical, social and/or economic power to restrict children’s practices of negotiation and to coerce their subordination to parents’ interests, whether this is in, for example, the use of household resources or the solutions parents implement to deal with marital discord at the time of divorce (Chaps. 4, 5 and 9).

Structural inequalities in adult–child relations are particularly evident in children’s narratives where they describe their experiences of well-being in public spaces. At the core of what children experience as exclusion from public places is the paradox whereby ‘[w]e treat children with unprecedented solicitude and indulgence, yet at the same time impose on them a kind of generational apartheid’ (Gillis 2003, pp. 161–2). This is a result of the way that ‘the modern social fabric … the modern economy and infrastructure have not been built up with children or childhood in mind; planning has not *considered* childhood; it has practically been *indifferent* to childhood and its children’ (Qvortrup 2014, p. 670. Emphasis in original). While some social policies on public places provide, for example, special child-friendly places, such as playgrounds and themed events, at the same time the indifference to children in other spaces not defined as ‘child-centred’ results in exclusionary urban practices that can have the effect of marginalising children and restricting their participation in public arenas. In the public arena, children’s autonomy and opportunities to experience well-being in the present are thwarted where they experience intimidation and exclusion, as, for example, in uncomfortable

ventures into urban areas with busy traffic and unfriendly physical landscapes (Chap. 5).

The generational positioning of children means that any significant collective organising of children against adults remains a moot possibility, as Qvortrup (2014) points out. However, the child standpoint constructed in this book draws attention to the ways children engage in processes defined by adult authority, which are nonetheless important to their well-being. One of the more powerful expressions of these processes is in children's discussions of agency.

Childhood as an Autonomous Social Space

While children are subject to adult authority in most spheres of their lives, children also illustrate how, rather than there being a clear distinction between adult and child capabilities, they do exercise capabilities to achieve certain outcomes, thus illustrating their capacity as social actors. In expressions of agency, we see how biological and social capabilities interact, mediated by specific social contexts, whether that be in formal decision-making processes (structured according to institutional rules, most usually within the school) or in the private sphere as dialogue partners in negotiations that arise as part of everyday interactions (and the significance of important adults in facilitating 'opportunity structures' in everyday situations—Chap. 4). These interactions illustrate the importance of the embodied nature of childhood not only as a source of vulnerability for children but also as providing a basis upon which negotiations around the exercise of agency occur, with physical changes potentially signalling a basis upon which children and adults renegotiate the boundaries of children's autonomy (see also Mayall 2015).

We also see examples of more supportive interactions between adults and children in the recognition of children's mastery of new skills, which provide an important source of social recognition, especially from significant adults (Chap. 7); in children's domestic labour, which is used to consolidate family solidarities and invert normal adult–child relationships (e.g. where children provide care to parents and siblings); and in certain types of consumption activities where children use their money to pay for adults and in so doing also consolidate social ties with family members (Chaps. 3, 5 and 8). Another example is provided by children's standpoint on health, which, although framed by dominant health discourses, is adapted in ways that are more meaningful to children so as to make sense of their everyday health practices (Chap. 9).

Other dimensions of well-being emphasise how childhood is experienced by children as a set of social interactions, with other children, independent from adults. This aspect of our reconstruction of a children's standpoint on well-being focuses on micro-social interactions amongst children, of 'children's worlds' structured by children's own understandings of their social worlds which are not necessarily transparent to adults. For example, through leisure activities, children experience a sense of well-being as freedom from adult-determined activities and organisation. These activities with other children provide an autonomous social space for children,

within which adult influence is absent or limited (Chap. 7). This is also evident in some of children's consumption practices, which have value not because of what is purchased but because it involves an activity that does not include adults and is an assertion of lifestyle preferences that can only be understood between peers, often as a way of drawing boundaries against adults (Chap. 8). This is also evident in children's health practices involving play activities with other children, as important 'health behaviour'. Furthermore, friendship groups provide a context in which health-related understandings are communicated, tested and adapted and thus a way in which children develop their own understandings of what is healthy (Chap. 9). In this context of child–child relations as a social space that excludes adults, it is easy to understand the traditional lack of discussion of the importance of child friendships in developmental literature and child welfare policy —unless it is on the negative potential of 'peer' influence in producing what adults label as problematic or delinquent children. This becomes even more understandable in those instances where aspects of well-being are associated with resistance to adults.

Childhood as a Form of Social Resistance

While some aspects of well-being show how childhood is subjugated to adulthood or indicate how well-being is associated with children's autonomous social practices, other aspects of well-being indicate how childhood practices represent a resistance to adult-imposed authority and rules. These aspects highlight that it is through attempting to resist or reject adult-oriented rules and practices that experiences of autonomy can be created. Our discussion of the subversion and adaptation of health practices amongst peers is an example of this. We also see this resistance for instance in children adapting institutionalised spaces (e.g. at school) for their own purposes and in rule-breaking, where children intentionally transgress adult authority to experience a sense of exhilaration and to obtain social esteem from other children (Chap. 7). Additionally, we see this resistance in children's attempts to alter relationships of dependence by spending money they earn on consumer goods. Spending money in this way represents a way for children to express their individual identities aesthetically, often in ways contrary to the preferences of important adults in children's lives. Paid work also provides a socially recognised mode of agency and expression of economic capability, and therefore a claim to a valued moral position in being able to act independently. In so doing, children may challenge adult authority that attempts to redefine their status.

These three structural configurations—that is, of structural indifference towards childhood (childhood as a minority social position), of childhood lifeworlds (childhood as an autonomous social space) and of childhood and adulthood in conflict (childhood as a space of resistance)—indicate how children's well-being is constituted through intergenerational social processes. Examining children's experiences of well-being reveals some of the characteristics of specific social, cultural and political institutions and processes that constitute childhood. The alternative configurations explored in this book of the paradox of indulgence of children in

horizontal relations and marginalisation of them in vertical relations has significance for children's well-being. The children's narratives inform us on how their experiences of this paradox can contribute to tensions that undermine a sense of trust and stability of self, in a world where risk confronts their everyday activities and their position in the broader social and global world. Our discussions in Chaps. 4 and 5 graphically depict how generational relations can contribute to children's existential insecurities, so that they feel 'lost' and 'not heard', not just individually but as a 'generation'.

The Challenges for Developing Indicators and Policy on Child Well-Being That Is Responsive to the Interests of Children

On the basis of the two sets of interrelated findings, explored in this chapter, we identify that, if child well-being measures and policies are to adequately respond to children's interests, they need to take into account the crucial significance, in constructing a multifaceted understanding of child well-being, of the emotional and relational and of the extent to which structural factors contribute to children's well-being and to obstacles to this well-being. Given these findings, we support the argument of Dixon and Nussbaum (2012) of the inadequacy of advocacy of rights and interests for children as detailed in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, in so far as the Convention is based on a social contract model posed by liberal theory. The assumptions in this model, that parties subject to rights are 'free, equal, and independent' agents, fails children because of children's 'unusual vulnerability and powerlessness' (2012, p. 593).

Alternative approaches to children's rights need to be developed to take account of the social positioning of children vis-à-vis adults within intergenerational relations. One such approach is the Capability Approach, which has attracted significant attention (e.g. Peleg 2013, Ben-Arieh and Frønes 2011, Clark and Eisenhuth 2010). Dixon and Nussbaum (2012) argue that this approach to well-being has weight because 'the very idea of capability is an idea of substantive opportunity, and [because] the Capability Approach imagines human beings as striving individuals who need a supportive context in order to become capable of a range of choices of functioning' (p. 571). The Capability Approach provides 'a frame for a theory of justice for young people' that enables a focus on their current well-being, at the same time as acknowledging issues associated with 'intergenerational reproduction of social inequality' (Clark and Eisenhuth 2010, p. 72). Theories of justice that derive from recognition-theoretical approaches (Honneth 1995, 2014) argue that questions of justice must be approached as being at the nexus between social institutions (as the basis for enacting freedom) and individual and group recognition (in the form of love, rights and solidarity). Alternatively, those which highlight the political potentials of communicative rationality (Habermas 1987) envision the justice potential of intersubjective communication between interlocutors (including

between adults and children) within the political public sphere, as the basis upon which children's needs as children and as political actors can be met. All three of these approaches, the Capabilities Approach, recognition-theoretic approaches and those that emphasise the political potentials of communicative rationality, are examples that represent a potential for reconfiguring structural inequalities between adults and children. They do this by providing a basis to illuminate and safeguard against the inequalities of power between adults and children and by recognising that some adults also bear a responsibility to be participants in political action that is child-oriented.

The discussion of these alternative approaches also highlights the difficulties of developing indicators that take into account the complexity of the relationship between well-being, justice and normativity. Firstly, complexity is fundamental to our findings where they show that contradiction is a normal part of children's lives and sense of well-being, something that they negotiate on a daily basis and that is mediated through their relationships with others. Perhaps the biggest contradiction negotiated by children is that posed by the distinction between them as being and becoming.

Secondly, most accounts of well-being do not sufficiently account for cultural differences between and within specific child populations. Nor is our attempt in this book sufficient in this respect. Questions of normativity and cultural contingency apply to the notion of well-being generally and are also central to research on child well-being (Andresen and Betz 2014, Camfield 2013, Fegter and Richter 2014). Thus, the development of concepts of well-being and well-being indicators requires a more explicit clarification of the culturally specific and normative value orientations that underlie what is considered well-being (see Fegter et al. 2010, Hunner-Kreisel and Bohne forthcoming). While we argue from our research that there will be commonalities in domains and dimensions derived from child well-being research based on child standpoint theory, in that they will reflect children's generational positioning within the social order, our research has been situated in a particular historical, cultural and social context. Research has shown that the relevance of specific indicators to children's daily life varies considerably across local and cultural contexts (see Müderrisoğlu et al. 2013, Baltatescu 2009, Casas et al. 2014, Dias and Bastos 2014, Newland et al. 2014). The extent to which such variations are typical in research which examines well-being from children's perspectives across multiple, national and local contexts is currently being explored in a major multinational study in which Fattore and Mason are lead researchers along with Andresen, Fegter and Hunner-Kreisel (Fattore et al. 2015).

While we consider that the overall conclusions of our research, as they relate to the total design of the metaphorical quilt, are significant for well-being research and policy outside of considerations of normativity, we do urge caution in treating our 'list' of indicator concepts (akin to sensitising concepts—see below)—that is, the specifics of the application of our findings—in a normative fashion. The importance

of our list resides in the fact that it represents one attempt to convert the significant themes developed from a child standpoint, in a summary form relevant to policy implementation. Especially significant here is the understanding this summary brings to the well-being discourse of the significance, from a child standpoint, of intergenerational relations between adulthood and childhood, and the salience of the social structuring of an individual sense of well-being in terms of opportunities for children, as children living lives in the present. In concluding this chapter, we argue that the indicator concepts that follow are significant within the cultural context in which the research took place and that in tandem with our detailed conclusions they provide a road map for advancing children's well-being until such time as data collected cross-culturally and perhaps longitudinally enables refinements of our findings—refinements which will need to occur in an ongoing way, both in terms of place and of time.

Conclusion Appendix: Well-Being Indicator Concepts

This table provides some indicator concepts upon which child well-being indicators can be developed, drawn from the reconstruction of children's standpoint on well-being presented in this book. We have organised these according to the prominent domains and dimensions of well-being, which comprise and are presented as separate chapters in this book.

Within each of these domains and dimensions, we have further categorised the indicator concepts according to key themes that emerge from our analysis of the domains and dimensions. This organisation therefore provides a framework for conceptualising areas of children's experiences, which are prioritised in our reconstruction of children's understandings and experiences of well-being.

The indicator concepts do not represent operational indicators but are a conceptualisation of the key themes that emerge within our reconstruction of children's standpoint. We use the term 'indicator concepts' in the spirit of 'sensitising concepts' as envisioned by Herbert Blumer (1953) in his discussion of social theory. Rather than providing definitive measures, the indicator concepts provide some general guidance in developing more specific, concrete indicators. They are suggestions of what an indicator should be measuring, rather than a prescription of exactly what to measure. Therefore they lack operational attributes, which can only be developed as relevant to specific temporal and cultural contexts in which these indicator concepts might be applied. As Blumer wrote, they 'merely suggest directions along which to look' rather than providing 'prescriptions of what to see' (Blumer 1953, p. 7). However, read together these indicator concepts present an alternative framework and conceptualisation of well-being, from children's perspectives (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1 Indicator concepts—children's well-being

Domain/Dimension	Theme	Sensitising concepts
Agency	*Agency as self-determination*	Children have the opportunity to engage in decision-making about day-to-day interactions important to the child or in which the child is involved
		Children have opportunities to influence, organise, coordinate and control aspects of their everyday life
		Children have opportunities to express opinions in public discussion and in formal decision-making in which children have an interest and have these opinions given due regard
	Agency as making a difference within relational contexts	Extent to which significant adult–child relationships are characterised by respectful engagement, which provide a basis for negotiating everyday decisions
		Opportunities are available for children to exercise individual capabilities as relevant to everyday contexts
		Children have opportunities to develop individual capabilities in everyday contexts, as an expression of becoming competent
	Intergenerational determinants of agentic well-being	Degree of inequality in institutional status and power between adults and children (labour force participation, access to financial resources, scholarisation)
		Degree to which social environments facilitate children's ability to exercise individual capabilities
		Degree to which social environments facilitate and provide support for children to develop individual capabilities
Security/Safety	*Ontological security*	Degree to which children experience a sense of ontological security, based on trust in and dependence upon those tasked with their care
		Children have opportunities to access physical environments that facilitate a sense of freedom and enjoyment
		Degree to which local environments are experienced by children with a fear-free disposition and sense of inclusion

(continued)

Table 10.1 (continued)

Domain/Dimension	Theme	Sensitising concepts
	Safety at home	Degree to which children experience home as a place where they feel safe
		Degree to which care relationships within the home are experienced as safe
		Degree to which the physical features of the home facilitate a sense of safety
		Children have personal spaces within the home that foster a sense of security
	Safe public spaces	Degree to which public environments facilitate opportunities for children's autonomous exploration, including those defined as child-specific and those that are not
		Degree to which public environments provide opportunities for children to congregate to undertake autonomous activities
		Children have opportunities to negotiate with their carers the boundaries of 'safety', to reflect children's changing needs to engage in different and multiple social environments
		Children have the opportunities to deal with risks as encountered in everyday situations, in a supported manner
Self and identity	*Moral self*	Children have opportunities to develop their capabilities as moral agents, as part of the process of developing their sense of being a 'moral self'
		Degree to which children are supported in the moral dilemmas they encounter, including an ability to learn by doing and learning through mistakes
	Purposeful self	Degree to which children are supported in developing a sense of purpose that links self-identity with a sense of an imagined future
		Degree to which children experience life as having meaning and purpose
	The authentic self	Children develop a sense of self in which they recognise their own uniqueness and capabilities as worthy and a source of esteem

(continued)

Table 10.1 (continued)

Domain/Dimension	Theme	Sensitising concepts
	Families as sites of dialogue, affective solidarity	Degree to which families are experienced as a site of trust and intimacy in which children feel their self-identity is given recognition
		Degree to which families provide a site in which negotiations around children's changes in self-identity can occur in a fear-free manner
		Degree to which children engage in 'other-oriented activities' in the family that are associated with a sense of affective solidarity/feelings of belonging
	Friends, mutual acceptance and belonging	Children have some close friendships in which they experience a sense of intimacy and closeness, in which they can trust to share their inner thoughts and feelings
		Children have some friendships in which they experience a sense of belonging and in which they can gain validation of their sense of self
	Cultural identity and abstract values associated with well-being	Degree to which children have opportunities to connect with larger social and cultural group identifications
	The private self	Children have opportunities for time alone for self-reflection
Leisure	*Leisure as providing opportunities for negative and positive freedom*	Degree to which children have opportunities to spend time with other children, free from adult-determined activities, to generate their own leisure activities
		Degree to which children have opportunities for 'down-time' to spend with family and friends, characterised by a sense of freedom from expectations of public life, and the performance of identities associated with public life
		Degree to which organised leisure activities provide opportunities for children to experience freedom to choose which activities to undertake and contribute to determining how the activity is conducted—that is, freedom over the what and how of activities
		Leisure activities, whether organised or not, provide opportunities for enjoyable sensory experiences

(continued)

Table 10.1 (continued)

Domain/Dimension	Theme	Sensitising concepts
	Leisure facilitates the development of competence as mastery	Children have opportunities for involvement in activities to develop capabilities they wish to gain
		Children have opportunities to develop capabilities that provide a sense of mastery and skill development
Economic well-being	*Material standard of living: equitable distribution and availability of direct and indirect resources*	Households have an adequate level of income to meet the economic needs of its family members
		Degree to which children equitably benefit from the distribution of direct and indirect resources within their households
		Children have opportunities to negotiate with other family members for access to direct and indirect resources within the household
	Children as economic agents	Children have opportunities to engage in paid work, so as to provide opportunities to participate in valued cultural practices
		Children have opportunities to earn money that facilitates their own autonomous use (to save, to gift and to spend) so as to be able to signify their economic and moral agency
		Children have opportunities to engage in consumption activities that provide opportunities to establish and consolidate social ties with family members and friends
Health	*Health as a dimension of well-being associated with agency, security and a positive sense of self*	Children have the nutritional intake that allows them to engage purposively with daily activities
		Children experience a set of nurturing relationships with carers who take responsibility for children's health (e.g. by developing a set of 'reasonable habits' around health)
		Eating is experienced as something that can provide a feeling of comfort/security

(continued)

Table 10.1 (continued)

Domain/Dimension	Theme	Sensitising concepts
	Health as a site for exercising agency	Children have opportunities to negotiate everyday health practices with adult carers
		Children have opportunities to access physical environments that allow them to engage in everyday health practices, especially those associated with positive sensory experiences. For example, environments within which children can freely associate with each other and through which there may be opportunities to do physical activities as part of being sociable
		Children engage in physical activities and health practices that facilitate a sense of well-being, including affective and cognitive states associated with a sense of well-being
	Depictions of the healthy body	Degree to which public depictions of the healthy body are those associated with a diverse set of individual capabilities, especially activities associated with contentment and fun

Appendix: Participants: Pseudonym List

Below is the list of 89 of the 126 participants whose voices are explicitly represented in the text. The other children who were not quoted nonetheless influenced our overall analysis. The ages given here are the ages of the children at the time of the first interview.

Pseudonym	Gender and age	Pseudonym	Gender and age
Ali	(Female, 13 years)	Goon	(Male, 11 years)
Amber	(Female, 9 years)	Hayley	(Female, 11 years)
Angel	(Female, 10 years)	Heart	(Female, 12 years)
Anon. (with Ren)—Stimpy	(Female, 15 years)	Huggy	(Female, 12 years)
Anon (with Watermelon)	(Female, 8 years)	Illie	(Male, 14 years)
Apex	(Male, 12 years)	Jackie	(Male, 11 years)
Beady	(Female, 14 years)	Jake	(Male, 12 years)
Beckham	(Male, 10 years)	Jessica	(Female, 15 years)
Bella	(Female, 9 years)	Joh Jon	(Male, 11 years)
Bobbie	(Female, 15 years)	Jon	(Male, 11 years)
CB	(Female, 11 years)	Katie	(Female, 14 years)
Chub	(Male, 10 years)	Kitty	(Female, 9 years)
Daniel	(Male, 10 years)	Leaf	(Female, 9 years)
Deezee	(Male, 14 years)	Legolas	(Male, 11 years)
Denny	(Male 11 years)	Longstocking	(Female, 14 years)
Diana	(Female, 10 years)	Luke	(Male, 12 years)
Dizzy	(Male, 14 years)	Martha	(Female, 14 years)
Dolphin Blue	(Female, 10 years)	Mic	(Female, 11 years)
Dolphin Green	(Female, 10 years)	Micro	(Female, 11 years)
Donald Duck	(Female, 9 years)	Mon	(Female, 11 years)
Esme	(Female, 10 years)	Music Lover	(Female, 10 years)
Eve	(Female, 12 years)	Nearly Ten	(Male, 9 years)

(continued)

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Pseudonym	Gender and age	Pseudonym	Gender and age
Nikita	(Female, 14 years)	Rosana	(Female, 10 years)
Ocean	(Female, 10 years)	Sarah	(Female, 13 years)
Participant A	(Female, 11 years)	Sophia	(Female, 10 years)
Participant D	(Male, 11 years)	Spiderman	(Male, 12 years)
Participant E	(Male, 12 years)	Sponge	(Male, 11 years)
Participant H	(Male 12 years)	Starlight	(Female, 10 years)
Participant I	(Male, 10 years)	Stella	(Female, 12 years)
Participant J	(Female, 8 years)	Stitch	(Female, 10 years)
Participant M	(Female, 14 years)	Strawberry	(Female, 12 years)
Participant So	(Male, 11 years)	Superman	(Male, 12 years)
Participants 1 and 2 (Chaps. 2 and 5)	(Female, 13 years) (Female, 13 years)	Tien	(Female, 10 years)
Participants (Ch. 3)	(Male, 13 years)	Tree	(Female, 9 years)
	(Female, 13 years)	Tulee	(Male, 9 years)
	(Male, 10 years)	Tweetie	(Female, 14 years)
	(Female, 13 years)	Unspecified (with Tweetie)—Amanda	(Female, 14 years)
	(Female, 13 years)	Cookie Monster	(Male, 14 years)
Pippi	(Female, 14 years)	Fred	(Female, 14 years)
Pipsqueak	(Female, 10 years)	Rita	(Female, 13 years)
Porscha	(Female, 9 years)	Violet	(Male, 10 years)
Prudence	(Female, 10 years)	Watermelon	(Female, 8 years)
Queensland	(Male, 9 years)	Yellow	(Female, 10 years)
Ren	(Female, 14 years)	521S	(Male, 10 years)

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