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A Cultural History of "Readiness" in Early Childhood Care and Education: Are There Still Culturally Relevant, Ethical, and Imaginative Spaces for Learning Open for Young Children and Their Families?

Marianne N. Bloch and Koeun Kim

According to several recent national and international reports, improving children's "readiness" to enter kindergarten and first grade is now one of the most pressing issues around the globe just as in the US early childhood policy and practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; OECD, 2006). According to a recent UNICEF report, the term "school readiness" has been variously theorized and discussed in three dimensions: "children's readiness for school; schools' readiness for children; and the readiness of families and communities to help children make the transition to school" (UNICEF, 2012, p. 2). In this chapter, we use these international and national reports as a starting point to speak about how to think about the history of "readiness" for school. And, clearly, as we think globally, we must think about all the children who are not in school, too—where prenatal and postnatal nutrition and the health status of the mother and family are an important part of *readiness for life*. In addition, the growth of global inequalities and of poverty across and within nations reminds us that *readiness for school* is only one part of a very large and complex set of issues.

But with these points kept in mind, we turn our attention to a more limited set of issues that we have focused in this chapter. What is a history of readiness for school? What might such a history tell us? Are there important issues to be learned, or critical questions that still need to be asked? In this chapter, we look at these three points, with a special focus on a history of readiness for school for young children in the United States.

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What Is a History of Readiness for School? What Might Such a History Tell Us?

In the late 1980s, a small grant from the Spencer Foundation for an archival project eventually led to several chapters and articles related to "a" history of early childhood education and child care in the United States (e.g., Bloch, 1987, 1991). While we summarize a small amount from that project here, first we emphasize that the project resulted in "a history," not "the history" as the "doing" of historical research varies with the theoretical perspective(s) used, the perceived purposes and audience for research or writing, and the selections of "how" one both does and presents a history. In Bloch's (1987) study, many primary and secondary archival resources were used, but they were primarily limited to what were considered principal philosophical writings focused on ideas about young children's education and care, pedagogical curriculum texts, and descriptions of practices that occurred at schools from the seventeenth through the latter part of the twentieth century. In looking at the perceived "aims and effects of early education," it was possible to discern ways in which social factors or societal "structures" heavily influenced the cultural re/production of a gender, class, and racially differentiated system of early education and child care.

While we could say that this differentiation continues today, the point of this introduction to the chapter is to illustrate that *histories* vary. This is not a record of *the* history of early education and child care "as we all know it," but, instead, a focus on the importance of recognizing the many different ways in which historical research can be done, and its constructed nature. The sources used (e.g., curriculum texts, parent diaries, superintendent of school's records of meetings, or women's labor union meeting minutes) present different ways of examining and interpreting a history. The background of the writer and his or her particular research questions and approaches influence how "historical ideas" are researched and presented. The ways in which one intertwines contexts with events and so on all affect the narration of "history" and other complexities of the research and writing process.

In Bloch's (1987) chapter, "covering" three centuries in 40 pages, the emergence of different outside-of-the home programs for young children in the United States seemed especially important. It was not only the different schools and programs—from infant schools to day nurseries (day care), from kindergartens (which originally included two- to seven-year-olds in the nineteenth century) to nursery schools (now called *preschools*) and the age-segregated kindergartens for five-year-olds by the mid-twentieth century—but also the different views on why these different programs were developed, and for whom (individuals or groups) that were fascinating to read. It was in the intertwining of a critical theoretical framework, an examination of different contexts within historical moments, that class, gender, and racial differences in programming and provision emerged, as did a stratification by class, race, and gender in the beliefs expressed about children's need for different "schooling" and "child care" depending upon perceptions of family background and (family, but often mother's) character. It was in this analysis that one could easily see the division between early education and child care; in the United States, especially, child care was perpetually pathologized (mothers were expected to be at home with children and work part-time or not at all) and to be used as a last resort. Beliefs about the need to intervene in young children's (and their parents') lives to make them more "normal," or to assimilate them to/toward middle- and upper-class morality and conduct were prevalent.

Yet even more important—for this chapter, perhaps—were the variations in perceptions about what young children needed to learn or develop, or could learn to be ready for life and/or later schooling that became so important and interesting. In that 1987 article, it seemed clear that, across time, social habits, social-emotional skills, language skills, intellectual or problem-solving or cognitive skills (labels varied with time), physical (fine and large motor) skills, and moral skills and attitudes were important. How they were phrased, and which children were expected to learn which types of skills, nonetheless, depended, in that research, on whether they were perceived as destined for poverty or a working-class life, or were supposed to be given an opportunity, or *expected* to succeed at a level equal to others from wealthier homes. Whether skills were considered "academic," "cognitive," or "intellectual," young children were thought to be ready to learn at various ages, and, also, by some, according to interests.

Nonetheless, in the majority of the archival writings reviewed, it was children's social and moral conduct and behavior, their ability to play, and to learn proper physical and moral habits, language, and social

behavior/conduct through play with others that appeared most impor-
tant in most school programs; it was also clear that learning to follow
orders, to be quiet and obedient, played an increasingly important role in
teachers' and other educators' perspectives by the end of the nineteenth
century. In the Bloch (1987) analysis, this was because many programs
outside the home were developed and targeted for poorer children.

In others' studies (e.g., Beatty, 1995;Polakow, 1993, 2007; Rose,
2010; Weber, 1969), authors/researchers were able to focus on more
detailed and varied perspectives, as well as use different theoreti-
cal and personal frameworks. Each offers a continued examination
of social/emotional, language and literacy, intellectual, academic or
cognitive development, physical skills, and morality as aspects of chil-
dren's behavior to which teachers and caregivers were to attend to
help children "get ready" or make the transition to *school*.

With the growth of expectations for children going to school, and
staying in school, expectations for preparing children for certain types
of life behavior and success in school also grew. Through awareness of
what children might learn, and how programs could affect children
differentially from early ages, came greater expectations for prenatal,
infant-toddler, and preschool programs that, when *high quality*, were
perceived to have positive benefits for young children (see Dahlberg,
Moss, & Pence, 2007, with reference to critique of the term "high
quality"). Yet, in policies and programs, perceived aims and effects
of diverse early childhood programs have remained tied to certain
constructions of groups as "lacking" in relation to others more likely
to succeed in school and life. Child care programs have remained a
poorly subsidized and regulated program for children whose parents
work outside the home; preschool readiness programs, often still with
a half-day program, have continued to be the focus of readiness for
school efforts, with family involvement and interventions with parents
as a secondary but important focus to help children become *ready*.

But ready for what? As Graue's (1993) book *Ready for What?
Constructing Meanings of Readiness for Kindergarten* illustrated, fam-
ilies, communities, and schools may differ in the ways in which they
interpret and enact a sense of what "being ready" for school means
for individuals and groups. Her study of the cultural meaning mak-
ing of readiness in three neighborhoods and schools in one city in the
United States reminded many that *readiness* is a culturally, as well as
historically, constructed concept. Others have drawn from cross-na-
tional frameworks to examine the ways in which ideas vary by national
or cultural context (Bloch, Holmlund, Moqvist, & Popkewitz, 2003,
Michel & Mahon, 2002; Popkewitz, 2005; Wollins, 2000). Given the

many research studies we could draw on, however, we want to focus on the work of Joe Tobin and his collaborators (Tobin, Hsueh, & Karasawa, 2013; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989) in which both cross-national and a short historical (1980s–2010s) window were used to shed light on the ways in which both cultural belief systems and historical/social patterns interact allowing for variations in perceptions about what young children should learn in preschools to get them ready for school or a successful life. Cultural-historical "frameworks" that value multiple contexts and framings to examine a history of perspectives can be very useful to understanding, again, the very complex ways in which history can be told or the multiple and complex ways in which it might be understood. From these limited research studies, we show the importance of theoretical framing in the telling of "a" history, as well as the ways in which history must be seen as complex, not as a "truth," but as constructed through the lens of theory, methods, authors' own perspectives, archives or artifacts used and their analysis, and the broader purposes, values, and ethical and activist engagements of the narrators of "histories"; we also show that these too are nested within power/knowledge relations in and across societies.

In the sentiments and detailing above, we have provided multiple research studies of different histories of early education and child care that have been done, and attempted to emphasize the importance of viewing history as constructed, not as "the truth." In several examples above, an intellectual history of early educational programs is given—marked by the ideas that the present is informed by the past, that history is linear—moving from past to present with some continuity, and that some contextual factors may influence or even be causally related to what people or groups think and/or do. In the next section, we turn toward a more postmodern historical methodology, known as *cultural history*, and attempt to use present-day reasoning as a way to interrogate history in terms of how we come to reason now, as well as in the past—but without an assumption of linear development, or an ability to determine cause. First we explain briefly what we mean by "cultural history," and then move to some examples and analyses to illustrate what this approach might add to our analysis of readiness for school.

What Is Cultural History in Relation to a More Traditional History? Global and Local, Nonlinear, Noncausal

As suggested above, in many of the accounts of historical presentations on early education, we look at a linear conception of time and

a notion of context (space, culture, historical happenings) "causing" certain events to happen or policies or programs to emerge. Thus, as one example, we link Friedrich Froebel's philosophy and experimentation with the emergence of what is known as "kindergarten" today in the United States, but we often fail to understand that Froebelian kindergartens emerged in Germany during a time of philosophical and political turmoil, and that his ideas, while not well received in Germany, became very influential in different ways in many countries of the world during the latter half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century in many cases (see Wollins, 2000).

Similarly, John Dewey's ideas traveled within the United States in the early twentieth century, but became influential in various ways and at different times outside the United States (Popkewitz, 2008). The ways different *discourses (ideas, language, knowledge systems, and reasoning)* travel and enter into different spaces is an important part of the cultural historical approach, which we can see as influential through the means we spread ideas of the importance of preschool education for readiness for school, notions of what constitutes a "quality" program, and the various ways in which we shift our policies and our words in relation to the spread and influence of ideas (Bloch et al., 2003; Bloch, Kennedy, Lightfoot, & Weyenberg, 2006). A cultural historical approach sees history as contingent upon particular events in a context at a moment. History is not seen as linear, or caused by a particular event, but rather a way of reasoning that relates to different ways of understanding the relations between knowledge, power, and social change (also see Popkewitz, Franklin, & Pereyra, 2001, p. ix–x).

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A Cultural History of Readiness Begins with Present Ways of Reasoning

Drawing on the notions expressed above related to a "cultural history" of readiness, we begin with a recent study of head start programs in the United States done by Koeun Kim in her recently completed dissertation (Kim, 2014). We present data from interviews done within four head start programs, and within classrooms for four-year-olds who were attending "Four K" or kindergarten for four-year-olds in 2011–2012. The interviews and the analysis and interpretation by Kim (2014) allow us to see, and then discuss, current discursive reasoning and material practices and effects related to constructions of "readiness" in one context. Subsequently, we discuss what Kagan (2013) and Moss (2013) recently discussed as "schoolification" and

"Readiness," and draw on Graue's (1993, 2006) suggestion that "readiness" is a socially constructed discourse that takes on meaning when one looks closely at a cultural community and also societal expectations related to "Readiness for What?" We also briefly look at the notions of culturally relevant pedagogy (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1995) or "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992), and finally Dahlberg's (2013) critique of readiness, development, and current assessment discourses in terms of children (and families) as "competent," (not "lacking"), "rich in knowledge," and learning as an ethical opening to ideas and the "other." These other ways illustrate that reasoning about *readiness* in "present reasoning systems" vary and need interrogation and critique as well as a need to reconceptualize and open ourselves to other ways of thinking and acting. The cultural historical approach allows us to interrogate present-day reasoning by assuming and illustrating how such reasoning is characteristic of particular places and moments, rather than a modern linear narrative of "scientific discovery, progress, and truth."

change to
1994

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MNB: retain example; not hypothesis

AQ: Retain example here or change to "Hypothesis"? If the latter is preferred, please indicate places where it has to be changed likewise in the text also.

Example 1: Is He/She Ready For School? Emotions and Feelings as a Site for Pedagogical Intervention

Kim's (2014) dissertation took place in four Head Start programs that served children from low-income backgrounds in one city and one state in the United States. In her research, she interviewed teachers, co-teachers, and directors of programs, and reviewed many head start policy documents, assessment tools, and artifacts used by teachers to assess children's readiness for kindergarten. Her research questions focused on how "school" is constructed by teachers, within one type of program (Head Start) and, to a certain extent, by policy makers and children in the United States today.

Kim shows that current US national, state, and local efforts to reform early childhood education and care make it a top priority for programs *to get children ready for kindergarten*. For example, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 mandates that after December 9, 2011, all head start programs establish appropriate school readiness goals in multiple domains of child development and early learning, assess children's progression toward these goals at two different levels (e.g., individual child level and at the program level), analyze, use, and report those assessment data, and understand that failure to assess or report data will lead to open competition for funding in the next funding cycle. In terms of "school readiness," the focus is predominantly on children's school readiness as measurable

age- and stage- specific behaviors, skills, and knowledge that children possess and demonstrate:

> School readiness goals articulate the program's expectations of children's status and progress across the five essential domains of child development and early learning that will improve children's readiness for kindergarten. Goals are broad statements that articulate the highest developmental achievement children should attain as a result of Early Head Start and Head Start services. Agencies outline the steps of progression toward these goals through a developmental sequence of age- and stage-appropriate behaviors, skills, and knowledge that children birth-to-five need to acquire to accomplish each broad goal. (Office of Head Start, 2014, para. 3)

Koeun adding

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When asked about their work, most of the teachers in a this study (Kim, 2014) of Head Start programs expressed their passion and strong commitment for "getting children ready for school." They described their job as "getting children ready to start school," "getting them ready for public school experience," or getting them ready for "whatever school experience they need" to be successful in kindergarten or first grade. Teachers endeavored to create in their classrooms the meaning of school by which children come to experience and understand how the institution of the school functions and at the same time learn to become a *school student*. The key to the process of (pre)schooling children and the "making" of school students in Head Start sites is, according to Kim's research, the construction of school space that is physically and discursively separable from children's home and community.

Here, Kim's (2014) research tries to emphasize the aspect of "school," the meaning of school they try to create in their sites in helping children become ready for being a school student. In this process, the focus is on the teachers' commitment to getting children behaviorally and emotionally ready for school. Further, this research illustrates how perceived social-emotional needs of Head Start children makes children's emotions and feelings as a site for pedagogical intervention by reframing those "needs" to "competence or skills" that they possess and demonstrate.

Most of the teachers in Head Start programs focus on social and emotional goals of individual children, particularly in the beginning of each academic year. Generally, beginning with social and emotional goals would seem to be a reasonable pedagogical choice because "this is their first time ever being in any type of (pre)school setting" (Kim, 2014, p. 86) and they need adjustment to a new environment.

Teachers believe fostering children's social and emotional well-being has long been considered a primary goal of early childhood education and care. What gives special meaning to teachers' commitment to promoting social and emotional development of Head Start children are class- and race-based social distinctions about Head Start children, families, and communities.

In order to briefly illustrate this last point, Kim (2014) found that teachers emphasize the provision of emotionally safe school environments that Head Start children are rarely perceived to have at their homes. Head Start children are typically represented as members of certain population groups such as children from low-income families and/or children of color that teachers associate with particular probabilistic characteristics ("at risk," "not ready," "will have trouble unless," "lacking or deficient"). Domestic or other "violence" in households or communities is assumed and made natural by teachers as the general characteristics of Head Start families and their neighborhoods/local community settings that are believed to make a child emotionally insecure.

> Oh, God, it (my special education background) helps a ton because we have so many children with undiagnosed special needs. (There are) behavioral issues and different problems because of what's going on in their houses. Now, we have so many kids that their parents have been in jail or they've seen violence, or witness violence, there's so much going on in the lives of our kids....(There are) real severe behavioral needs. (Kim, 2014, p. 80)

It is also believed that Head Start families lack a predictable structure in family routines that help children feel safe and secure:

> (Children should be) able to have some structure and routines and work with other children and adults in a classroom setting…(At home) where our children come from, sometimes they don't know if they're going to eat one day or where they're going to sleep one day because families are always moving or they might not have enough money for food. So they don't have structure (at home). They don't have a (home) where they can feel safe. (Kim, 2014, pp. 87–88)

In the construction of universal norms about patterns of living or lifestyle conducive to emotional stability and security, Head Start children are considered as having more social-emotional "needs" as they are, in teachers' words, from "low-income" "high risk" "difficult" or "high need" families.

The emotionally safe school environment that the Head Start teachers endeavor to create is characterized by its emphasis on a predictable

sequence of events known as the daily classroom routine and related activities. Classroom routine in a highly ritualized and predictable form is believed to provide children with a sense of control over the events of the day and help them "feel comfortable and safe in this environment" (Kim, 2014, p. 89). However, what seemingly brings about a control over the sequence of daily events actually works to control children themselves. Children become subject to temporal regulation imposed upon their body by which they are required to manage and organize themselves within the day. Managing and organizing the day is aimed at cultivating children's rule-governed behaviors and correct psychological attitudes that are considered not to be found in their current home environment. Once taught the routine, children are then expected to monitor and regulate themselves on their own in order to fit in the classroom. If they do not, it is not considered a problem with the curriculum and instruction but Kim's (2014) research and analysis of teacher interviews suggests it becomes a problem of the child. Thus, school time becomes a key governing tool that aims to regulate children's inner thoughts, emotions, feelings as well as their bodies through what Foucault (1998) has called "technologies of the self" (p. 18).

Thus, the perceived unmet needs of Head Start children are turned into a personal, psychological problem of individual or deficient personal traits possessed by individual Head Start children to be fixed that otherwise would hinder their learning in other areas. In this way, Head Start children appear to be different from and in opposition to "others" by what is believed to be the very nature of Head Start children themselves. The ascribed *natural characteristics*, however, are effects of perceived class- and race-based social and cultural distinctions and discourses. Head Start programs and teachers that fail to govern themselves and others through these ways of reasoning, who choose to resist or defy regulation, are punished. Discipline and punishment, here, are perceived as real material effects within a society of knowledge that has both disciplinary and controlling *power*.

Furthermore, the needs of children for emotional stability or security are reframed as competence or skills in a developmental hierarchy that children should possess and demonstrate by themselves. Children's competence or skill to control their emotions and regulate themselves becomes a target for pedagogical intervention.

Predetermined, future social-emotional developmental goals that "children should attain as a result of Early Head Start and Head Start services" are broken down into smaller, temporal segments so that management of children's future is made possible by "detailed control and a regular intervention (of children) in each moment of
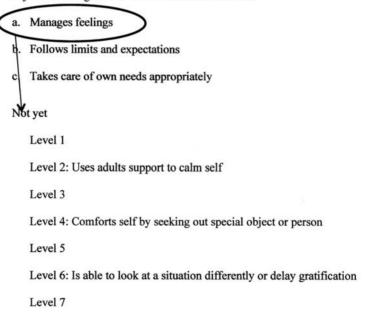
(present) time" (Foucault, 1977, p. 160). As a side note, these goals are derived from State Early Learning Standards, Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework, and/or the Creative Curriculum assessment tool: Teaching Strategies Gold that Head Start programs in this study adopt to use. Thus, each social-emotional goal/objective is divided into several dimensions where subsets of social-emotional skills, knowledge, and behaviors are further isolated. Furthermore, indicators of development and learning eventually break down children's skill, knowledge, or behaviors into basic elements and arrange those from the simplest to most complex. In this way, social-emotional development is framed "as more 'componential'"— able to be stably indexed and communicated pedagogically (Yaden, Rowe, & MacGillivray, 1999). It is through this segmentation that social-emotional development or readiness is brought into "an intelligible field with identifiable limits" (Rose, 1996, p. 70). As an illustration of the above, one set of goals and objectives used by Head Start teachers in Kim's (2014) study is presented in figure 1.1.

Objective 1- Regulates own emotions and behaviors

a. Manages feelings

b. Follows limits and expectations

c. Takes care of own needs appropriately

Not yet

Level 1

Level 2: Uses adults support to calm self

Level 3

Level 4: Comforts self by seeking out special object or person

Level 5

Level 6: Is able to look at a situation differently or delay gratification

Level 7

Level 8: Controls strong emotions in an appropriate manner most of the time

Figure 1.1   Social-emotional objectives in Teaching Strategies Gold

In the above example, Kim's (2014) research illustrates several head start teachers' constructions of the "ready" and "not yet ready" child in four-year-old (Head Start) kindergartens in the United States. These examples point to the importance of assessments, the continued discourse of "deficit" or "the lacking child, family, community," and the continued reliance on "child development skills, goals, and objectives" as important and unquestioned, and as scientifically observable and measurable.

Example 2: Schoolification is Imperfect but Difficult to Change

Kagan's (2013) chapter in which she is asked to speak on ways in which preschools and primary schools (what book editor Peter Moss [2013] terms Compulsory School Education or CSE in the book) might come together in the United States. Kagan states,

Some have called for *vertical* continuity that is supporting children as they make transitions from the home to the center to school. There have also been efforts to establish continuity among the many institutions that serve children at the same time. Such so-called *horizontal* continuity (Kagan, 1991; Zigler and Kagan, 1982) attempts to create linkages among health, education, parenting, and protective services, as well as other supportive institutions and settings. (Kagan, 2013, p. 134)

Yes, but as quote ...might be added?

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Then she discusses three approaches put forward in Moss's introductory chapter by stating that Moss perceives "the readiness approach which contends that learning is hierarchical and that the primary function of ECE is to ready youngsters for the experience of schooling" (Moss, 2013, p. 137) as dominant in the United States. Further, "He (Moss)...suggests that it has strongly contributed to the 'schoolification' of ECE" (ibid.). Kagan (2013) illustrates the structural issues with each of the three approaches suggested in the volume, concluding that the history and stability of CSE (public schools) historically pushes down on ECE—making "schoolification = readiness for school" (CSE) the most common default. She also focuses on some strategies to make schoolification more of a process involving shifts in structures, beliefs, funding, training, and toward an equal partnership where the developmental goals and methods of ECE and the culture and values and pedagogical strategies of CSE or primary schools find a "meeting place."

Example 3: Readiness for What? Are the Schools "Ready?"

Sorry, should be 1994 for Ladson-Billings

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While Graue's and Ladson-Billing's well-known books (*Ready for What*, 1993; and *The Dreamkeepers*, 2004) were published almost at the same time, one focused on kindergarten (or public school readiness) from the preschool perspective while the other focused on teachers' strategies for including what she termed "culturally relevant teaching" at the school level. Graue interviewed parents' as well as teachers' views of readiness, and found there were distinct cultural beliefs about readiness within different parent groups, and within teacher groups within schools, making her call readiness *a social and cultural construction* that differed across situations and contexts. While some parents and schools were prepared and open to diverse children, languages, and cultural differences in children and families, and their parents, others clearly drew on a more class, race, and cultural assimilation approach.

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1994, not 2004

In Ladson-Billings's (2004) work, as well as in the "funds of knowledge" traditions espoused by Luis Moll and colleagues (Moll et al., 1992), the emphasis was clearly on the rich knowledge base children brought to school with them that schools and teachers should acknowledge pedagogically and philosophically, reversing the logic of cultural assimilation (to language, knowledge) of the school. These and other research projects focused on the logic of practice in schools, finding the historical push toward a "standard" school and "standardized" child (Bloch et al., 2006) to have socially/culturally, politically, and economically unjust consequences for children. The call for *readiness by schools and teachers* to appreciate the knowledge base of children and families, and reframe the curriculum, is expressed in calls for a social justice approach in schools, including at the preschool level. This would include attention to inequalities in a broader society that relate to a continuing belief in children (parents and communities) as "lacking," "deficient," or "at risk" of failure. Rather, this work points toward a more socially just model, in which schools welcome the diversity of cultural knowledge, languages, and practices diverse groups of families bring to schools.

Example 4: The Ethics of an Open Meeting Space, and the Conception of the "Non-lacking Child"

Dahlberg has introduced critiques of the notion of "quality programs" (Dahlberg et al., 2007), and suggested we focus on an ethics of an

encounter where children, families, and community are all considered competent and rich in knowledge. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) state:

> In both countries, major government programmes of early intervention (Head Start in the USA, Sure Start in the UK), targeted at poor families or areas, are seen as means to reduce poverty and its attendant ills. The rationale for public investment...is the expectation of a demonstrable and calculable return...The implicit assumption is that poverty and related social ills derive from individual failures—of children and/or parents—which interventions through preschools can rectify. These programmes avoid the need to question the "new capitalism" under which material inequality has thrived...This technical approach is...diversionary. It focuses attention on parents and children, whilst distracting attention from the power relations that create poverty and inequality in the first place. Technology depoliticizes profoundly important social and economic issues, while...Neoliberalism enhances instrumental rationality and technical practices in another way. (p. 41–42)

Dahlberg and Moss contrast the above with the centrality of participation to the Reggio Emilia approach where advisors, staff, children, parents, and others hold developmental and scientific truths at bay, and interrogate what is seen elsewhere as natural, normal, and inevitable. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) call for "an exercise in critical thinking and agonistic pluralism, where conflict and dissensus, passion and alterity are not only tolerated but welcomed" (p. 157). The ethics of an encounter, or of listening to the "other" as a competent, thinking, participatory, and valuable citizen would or could open up what is now taken as *scientifically grounded truth* about childhood, their development or readiness, what they can and cannot do, and what their communities can and cannot do.

ARE THERE IMPORTANT ISSUES TO BE LEARNED, OR CRITICAL QUESTIONS THAT STILL NEED TO BE ASKED? INTERROGATING PRESENT WAYS OF REASONING ABOUT READINESS FOR SCHOOL IN EARLY EDUCATION

The examples from the previous section were presented as ways to see "cultural systems of reasoning." With the hindsight of several historical papers, two of which used a cultural history framework (Bloch & Popkewitz, 2000; Popkewitz & Bloch, 2001) as well as an excellent

paper by Fendler (2001) on "developmentalism," we can point toward some of the historically situated discourses that are embedded in reasoning today. These *include* the following, but are not inclusive of or excluding those recognized by the readers, nor those left out from or those from our examples. These include the following, but are not inclusive of many others recognized by the readers, or others (for two examples, see Swadener, Lundy, Habashi, & Blanchet-Cohen [2013] on children's rights discourses; and Taylor [2014] on nature/childhood discourses).

- A Discourse of Objectivity, Progress, and Scientific and Empirical Methodology to establish Truth, and Achieve Progress for Individuals, Groups, and Nations
- Discourses of Cost-Benefit Analyses that predict that certain ways of acting will fabricate a better future for children (read this low-income or "other children) and society.
- Discourses of Scientific Empiricism, Developmentality and Child Development "Knowledge" as a Base for Assessments, Regulation, and Discipline
- Discourses of "Schools" and what is not "School"
- Discourses of "Normality/Abnormality," Inclusion/Exclusion, "Others": Communities and families that are Ready for School; Those that require governing through intervention to fabricate what is considered Normal Children, Families, and Schools
- The construction of a truth about the "Lacking, At Risk, Deficient" Child, Family or Community rather than a construction of "the Competent, Knowledgeable, and Rich Child, Family and Community"

What are our values for young children and our responsibilities toward them and others, after all? As responsible citizens, are we able to participate in ethical encounters while listening to "others" and assuming neither children, families, nor communities are "lacking" and in need of intervention? How can we move toward more democratically constructed "learning spaces" that interrogate what is taken as truth, while co-constructing respectful and just places for learning? Historically and in our present-day reasoning, we can see that new practices are emerging from interrogation of present and past reasoning systems. This volume is a beginning in doing this in the area of "readiness." We must continue to interrogate present and past reasoning and interrogate taken-for-granted truths that work against the majority of the world's children.

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