CRITICAL CULTURAL STUDIES OF CHILDHOOD

RETHINKING READINESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Implications for Policy and Practice

EDITED BY JEANNE MARIE IORIO AND WILL PARNELL

Critical Cultural Studies of Childhood

Series Editors:
Marianne N. Bloch and Beth Blue Swadener

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

Single-authored as well as edited volumes focusing on critical studies of childhood from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives are included in the series. A particular focus is in a reimagining and critical reflection on policy and practice in early childhood, primary, and elementary education. The series intends to open up new spaces for reconceptualizing theories and traditions of research, policies, cultural reasonings, and practices at all of these levels, in the United States, as well as comparatively.

The Child in the World/The World in the Child: Education and the Configuration of a Universal, Modern, and Globalized Childhood
Edited by Marianne N. Bloch, Devorah Kennedy, Theodora Lightfoot, and Dar Weyenberg; Foreword by Thomas S. Popkewitz

Beyond Pedagogies of Exclusion in Diverse Childhood Contexts: Transnational Challenges
Edited by Soula Mitakidou, Evangelia Tressou, Beth Blue Swadener, and Carl A. Grant

"Race" and Early Childhood Education: An International Approach to Identity, Politics, and Pedagogy
Edited by Glenda Mac Naughton and Karina Davis

Governing Childhood into the 21st Century: Biopolitical Technologies of Childhood Management and Education
By Majia Holmer Nadesan

Developmentalism in Early Childhood and Middle Grades Education: Critical Conversations on Readiness and Responsiveness
Edited by Kyunghwa Lee and Mark D. Vagle

New Approaches to Early Child Development: Rules, Rituals, and Realities
Edited by Hillel Goelman, Jayne Pivik, and Martin Guhn

Comparative Early Childhood Education Services: International Perspectives
Edited by Judith Duncan and Sarah Te One

Early Childhood Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: History, Pedagogy, and Liberation
By Jenny Ritchie and Mere Skerrett

Early Childhood in Postcolonial Australia: Children's Contested Identities
By Prasanna Srinivasan

Rethinking Readiness in Early Childhood Education: Implications for Policy and Practice
Edited By Jeanne Marie Iorio and Will Parnell

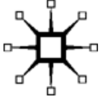
Rethinking Readiness in Early Childhood Education

Implications for Policy and Practice

Edited by

Jeanne Marie Iorio
and
Will Parnell

palgrave
macmillan



RETHINKING READINESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
Copyright © Jeanne Marie Iorio and Will Parnell, 2015.

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2015 978-1-137-48511-3

All rights reserved.

First published in 2015 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-50359-9 ISBN 978-1-137-48512-0 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137485120

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress.

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Newgen Knowledge Works (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: February 2015

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

For Lucia Kai,

For Dylan, Connor, and Ellie and their futures

and

For all of the children who contributed in these stories

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

List of Illustrations ix

Foreword *Ready or Not: Learning and Living* xi
William C. Ayers

Series Editors' Preface xvii
Beth Blue Swadener and Marianne N. Bloch

1 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? 1
Marianne N. Bloch and Koeun Kim

2 Ready for School? Lessons from a Sociohistorical Investigation into Mechanisms of Preparation and Classification of Children for Primary School from 1911 to 1979 19
Joanne Lehrer and Robert Bastien

3 Something Isn't Right: Deconstructing Readiness with Parents, Teachers, and Children 33
Lacey Peters, Karen Ortiz, and Beth Blue Swadener

4 The Early Development Instrument: A Bioecological View of School Readiness 49
Lynn E. Cohen and Dana E. Friedman

5 "Daddy, Look at the Video I Made on My iPad!": Reconceptualizing "Readiness" in the Digital Age 65
Linda Laidlaw, Joanne O'Mara, and Suzanna Wong

6 Cracking the Walls of the Education Matrix: Are you Ready to Educate Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students? 77
Tonia R. Durden

7 "Are You My Dawg?": Socially and Politically Marginalized Children Desiring to Be Seen and Valued by Their Teachers 93
Sheri Leafgren

8 Rethinking the Discourse of Readiness in Preschool 109
Lorraine Falchi and Jennifer Weiss Friedman

9 Transition to School: Times of Opportunity, Expectation, Aspiration, and Entitlement 123
Sue Dockett and Bob Perry

10 "Who They Are and What They Have to Say Matters . . . ": How an Emergent Preschool Experience Shapes Children's Navigation of Kindergarten 141
Susan L. Recchia and Dana Frantz Bentley

11 Puffins, Butterflies, and Clouds in the Preschool: The Importance of Wonder 165
Heather J. Pinedo-Burns

12 Juan, Melina, and Friends: Guides for Reconceptualizing Readiness 179
Elizabeth P. Quintero

13 Inserting Postmodern Epistemological Perspectives into Discourse on Readiness: Privileging Assets, Capacity Building, and Diversity to Increase Equity 191
Julie Nicholson, Michelle Grant-Groves, Anne Bauer, and Ristyn Woolley

14 Reimagining Possible Worlds for Young Children 209
Will Parnell and Jeanne Marie Iorio

Notes on Contributors 217

Index 227

Illustrations

Figures

1.1 Social-emotional objectives in Teaching Strategies Gold 11
4.1 Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory 53
4.2 Mapping school readiness 60
9.1 Example from child's journal 1 128
9.2 Example from child's journal 2 129
9.3 Max's expectations of school 132

Tables

9.1 From the transition to school: position statement 127
10.1 Participant characteristics 148

This page intentionally left blank

Foreword

Ready or Not: Learning and Living

William C. Ayers

After hours and hours of pain and labor—36 hours to be precise—our first child was born in the bedroom of our fifth-floor walk-up. Zayd burst into our world, triumphantly and noisily, to universal joy, and, quickly swaddled, was placed in his mother's arms. Exhausted and exhilarated, ecstatic and awed, Bernardine put the newborn to her breast—she had reflected on this moment for months, listened to the advice of peers and elders, read books and articles, and joined La Leche League—and began to teach our baby to nurse. Was he ready? Was she? She held Zayd's head and guided his mouth, and he pushed back a bit, readjusted, and began to tell her things about nursing she apparently had not gotten from books or friends. And he was only a few minutes old! She paid rapt attention, and together they negotiated the moment, Bernardine teaching him how to nurse, and, yes, Zayd teaching her how nursing works best as well. The first dialogue had begun, each participant a conscientious student, and each an engaged, committed teacher. This is profoundly human and powerful learning—innate, natural, self-directed, authentic, discursive, vital, multidimensional, and ongoing. So it begins.

Learning and living—they are each a half of an inseparable whole; they are in fact *one* in a critical sense. To live is to learn; to learn is to live. Both baby and mother are driven by an essential desire for life—so simple and yet so utterly profound—and no other motivation is necessary. The learning they are each experiencing and sharing between themselves is situated fundamentally in trust, respect, and care. This is primal. Trust means that the learner—each of them in this instance—is confident in the expectation that the other is reliable

and responsible, and that the developing faith in the other and in oneself is steady. The mother day by day is gaining self-assurance in her own capability, and the baby is becoming more secure as well, increasingly certain of being heard and understood. They are each supporting the other in respecting and trusting one another and oneself. The belief that they can know or discover their own deepest needs becomes self-fulfilling and begins to accelerate, leading rapidly onward—they listen more carefully to each other as well as to their own minds, bodies, spirits, and emotions as critical guides to future learning.

Rethinking Readiness in Early Childhood Education offers a theoretical framework and a practical guide toward reconceptualizing readiness. The smart researchers and brilliant educators gathered here by Jeanne Marie Iorio and Will Parnell come at the question of readiness from every angle and from a range of interests and experiences. The result is a text that will be of incalculable value in the discussions shaping early childhood education and policy today.

Let's fast-forward a dozen years before circling back: in her autobiography, *Under my skin*, Doris Lessing (1995) provides a view of what she discovered when unleashed to be a youngster who is learning, stretching, sometimes failing but regularly being supported as she participates in her family and her larger community. By the age of 12, Lessing notes, she knew:

> how to set a hen, look after chickens and rabbits, worm dogs and cats, pan for gold, take samples from reefs, cook, sew, use the milk separator and churn butter, go down a mine shaft in a bucket, make cream cheese and ginger beer, paint stenciled patterns on materials, make papier mache, walk on stilts . . . , drive the car, shoot pigeons and guineafowl for the pot, preserve eggs—and a lot else . . . That is real happiness, a child's happiness: being enabled to do and to make, above all to know you are contributing to the family, you are valuable and valued. (p. 103)

To do and to make, to know you are valuable and valued: here is where teaching is set into motion; here is where the essential building blocks for a lifetime of productive learning are secured; here is where education toward freedom, autonomy, as well as social responsibility, begins to take hold. Thrust into life, was this daughter of Africa ready for the going world racing forward all around her? And was her farm and family and South Africa ready for her?

In Lessing we become aware of learning as an unpredictable and volatile energy force propelled from within and intent on exploration

and growth, unhooked from convention or any linear expectations whatsoever. We notice a central paradox: teaching is most difficult precisely because it requires teachers to let go, to get out of the way and to *let learn*. This is the first of the many contradictions and paradoxes—qualities to understand and work with rather than features to fear or to flee from—that characterize teaching and learning from start to finish, from top to bottom, from beginning to end. Daunting as they may seem at times, contradictions are indispensable in any project of real learning.

Look at a new toddler negotiating her apartment or a nearby park or the beach—all five senses are fully engaged, every discovery considered and touched and smelled and—oops!—into the mouth for a taste! Is she ready for this? And soon she is imagining stories and inventing words, putting her hand prints on everything, sorting and building, drawing on paper or painting at the easel if the materials are at hand, that is, if the adults are ready for her. Did they put red, yellow, and blue paint at the easel so that one day she can exclaim to her surprise: "Look! Red and blue makes purple!"? This is different from knowing what primary and secondary colors are; this is constructing a world. Are teachers ready to create the dense and layered environment that will elicit discovery and surprise, construction and rethinking? Every child comes to school a question mark and an exclamation point—her work after all is the assembling not only of a life but of an entire world.

Every school, every classroom, and every teacher must choose whether to support and aid in that construction, whether to help unbolt the vitality of the world, or to hide and repress it. Diving into that energy is not exactly smooth but it is learning—letting go, yielding, being here now, and stepping onto shaky ground not knowing what the result might be. Every school and each teacher must decide whether—and then *how*, in the hard-edged spaces we often inhabit—to keep the questions and the passions alive—creating environments for exploration, for doing and making, for experimenting and hypothesizing and failing and succeeding—or to hammer the children into shape so that they leave her classroom, no longer as vital question marks or exclamation points, but as dull periods.

Schooling based on the insight that learning is for all intents and purposes living would move us away from an obsessive focus on externally developed or teacher-directed approaches, and would foreground the foundational qualities that promote trust and confidence, curiosity and imagination, self-direction and internal motivation. After all, without any bribes or stars or grades whatsoever, most

children most of the time learn to nurse and to eat, then to babble and talk, creep and crawl and walk, and to engage in a thousand other complex skills and undertakings. Long before we arrive at the schoolhouse door we are motivated by enthusiasms that spring from within, the deep innate human yearning to learn and to live. There is no valid reason—if constant growth and permanent development are our goals—that school should throw all of this away in favor of a regime of external and distant stimulations. Educators can choose to build on what is already there—in natural abundance.

When we respect a child or a student and support her or him in the work of unfolding what is within and creating a unique and specific identity, the signals of what to do and how to respond come from specific encounters with unique persons—complex, culturally informed, dynamic, ambiguous, twisty, and wiggly—and not some disembodied, one-size-fits-all rule or principle. This reality inspires an ethic of care and a sense of reverence and awe in teachers.

Each of us is the one and only who will ever walk the earth, each lives life in unique ways. Teachers who acknowledge this evident fact build flexibility and openness into the work, allowing for authentic curiosity, deep creativity, and wild diversity to hatch and flourish. The project then becomes to unleash the human mind and spirit rather than to search for techniques that will cast us as circumscribed predictors of what cannot be predicted, or authorities who enforce obedience and conformity to top-down directives.

Learning is at the core of our human experience and central to our relations with one another. In those first moments of existence we see the becoming and unbecoming, the push and pull, the mixed and received messages that characterize all forms of learning through the entire span of our lives. Learning is idiosyncratic, more unpredictable than predictable.

In her novel *The golden notebook*, Doris Lessing (2008) offers a compelling image of education as it is:

> It may be that there is no other way of educating people. Possibly, but I don't believe it. In the meantime it would be a help at least to describe things properly, to call things by their right names. Ideally, what should be said to every child, repeatedly, throughout his or her school life is something like this:
>
> "You are in the process of being indoctrinated. We have not yet evolved a system of education that is not a system of indoctrination. We are sorry, but it is the best we can do. What you are being taught here is an amalgam of current prejudice and the choices of this particular culture. The slightest look at history will show how impermanent

> these must be. You are being taught by people who have been able to accommodate themselves to a regime of thought laid down by their predecessors. It is a self-perpetuating system. Those of you who are more robust and individual than others, will be encouraged to leave and find ways of educating yourself—educating your own judgment. Those that stay must remember, always and all the time, that they are being moulded and patterned to fit into the narrow and particular needs of this particular society." (p. xxii)

But we know we can do so much better. And *Rethinking Readiness in Early Childhood Education* can be an essential companion and a thoughtful guide in those efforts.

References

Lessing, D. (2008). *The golden notebook*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Lessing, D. (1995). *Under my skin: Volume one of my autobiography, to 1949.* New York: Harper Perennial.

This page intentionally left blank

Series Editors' Preface

Beth Blue Swadener and Marianne N. Bloch

We are delighted to welcome this timely volume to the Critical Cultural Studies of Childhood Studies series, after actively recruiting it for the series. "Readiness," and its various social, cultural, political, and economic constructions, remains one of the most critical arenas in the fields of early childhood education, childhood studies, and policy studies. Pervasive assumptions about school readiness drive policy, federal, and state programs and funding, assessment, and standards discourse, and work with children and families. In the words of the co-editors, this volume uses "research and theory to disrupt limited ideas of readiness in order to rethink readiness that includes the voice of the children, teachers, and families."

Jeanne Marie Iorio and Will Parnell bring together a powerful collection of essays and research studies that help the reader understand the complexities, contradictions, and nuances of readiness discourse and related intervention policies in order to rethink and reconceptualize this central construct to the field. Offering alternatives to the narrowing early childhood curriculum, impositional assumptions about parents and families, and creating space for debate, it is our hope that this book gains wide use in teacher education, critical advocacy, and early childhood research. Its reframing of assumptions of children (parents and communities) as being versus becoming competent and full human beings, and as capable participants in portraying their own experiences and ways of learning is a welcome perspective in the still "risk-ridden" discourse of readiness (Heydon & Iannacci, 2008; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995).

The Critical Cultural Studies of Childhood series was established through Palgrave Macmillan Press to interrogate just such taken-for-granted notions as readiness for school, testing, and, especially, constructions of communities, teachers, caregivers, children,

and families as "known" and assessable through preconceived notions or tests that have, often, been based on a lack of knowledge about the children's thoughts and actions, or the diverse funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) that communities and even the youngest children bring with them into larger programs, such as preschools and schools. In an era (the past few decades especially) filled with increasing calls for accountability, standardization, and testing of even the youngest children, and at a moment when assessments and standards are narrowing the very idea of what children are able to do, learn, and think about, this book brings powerful new questions and possibilities to current practice and policy.

References

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (2005). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities and classrooms.* New York: Routledge.

Heydon, R., & Iannacci, L. (2008). *Early childhood curricula and the de-patholgizing of childhood*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Swadener, B. B., & Lubeck, S. (1995). *Children and families "at promise": Deconstructing the discourse of risk*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

CHAPTER 1

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 on 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.

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 important 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 theoretical 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 children'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, families, 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 making 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-national 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 research studies 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, 2005). 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 (see also Foucault, 1980; Popkewitz, Franklin, & Pereyra, 2001, p. ix–x).

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