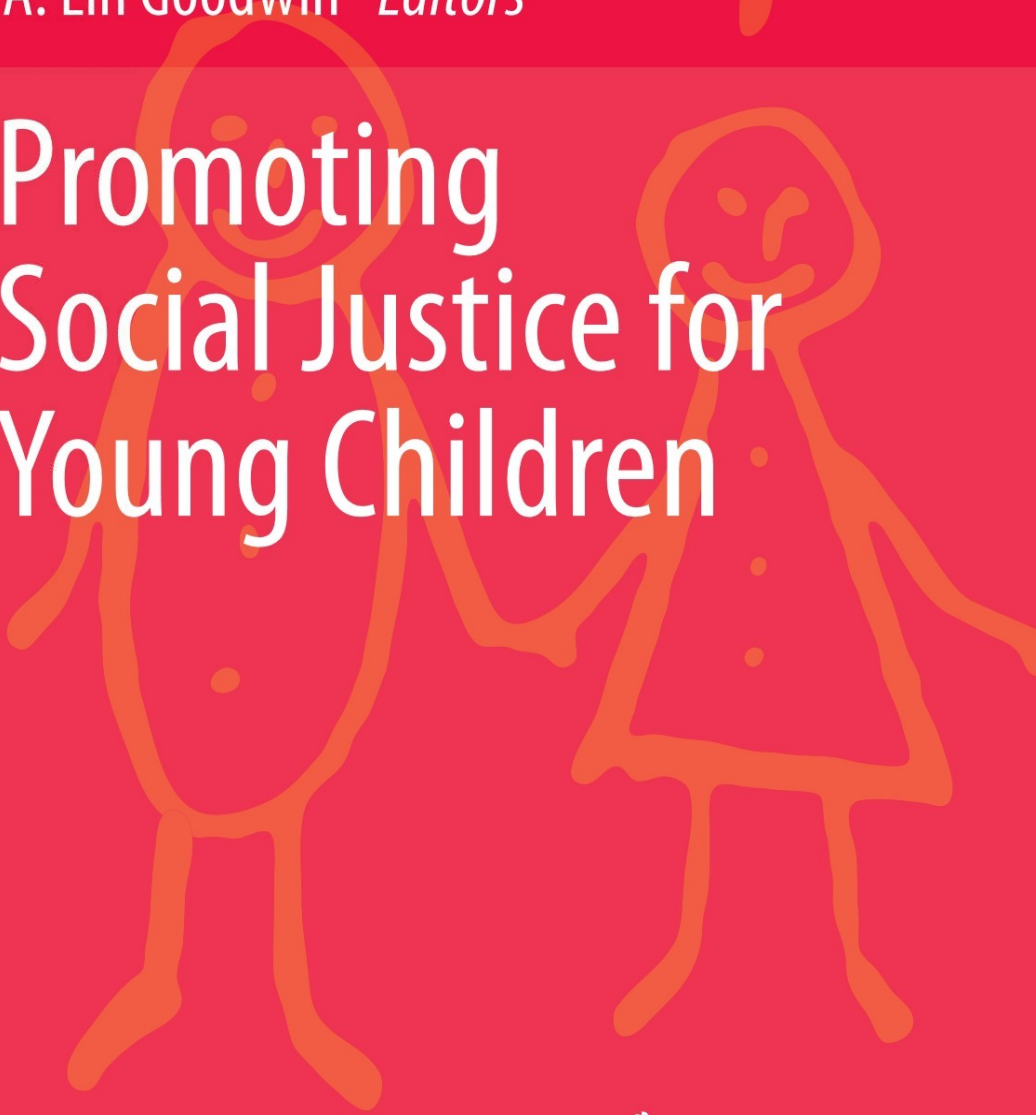
Educating the Young Child 3
Advances in Theory and Research, Implications for Practice

Beatrice S. Fennimore
A. Lin Goodwin *Editors*

Promoting Social Justice for Young Children



Springer

Promoting Social Justice for Young Children

EDUCATING THE YOUNG CHILD

VOLUME 3

This academic and scholarly book series will focus on the education and development of young children from infancy through eight years of age. The series will provide a synthesis of current theory and research on trends, issues, controversies, and challenges in the early childhood field and examine implications for practice. One hallmark of the series will be comprehensive reviews of research on a variety of topics with particular relevance for early childhood educators worldwide. The mission of the series is to enrich and enlarge early childhood educators' knowledge, enhance their professional development, and reassert the importance of early childhood education to the international community. The audience for the series includes college students, teachers of young children, college and university faculty, and professionals from fields other than education who are unified by their commitment to the care and education of young children. In many ways, the proposed series is an outgrowth of the success of *Early Childhood Education Journal* which has grown from a quarterly magazine to a respected and international professional journal that is published six times a year.

Beatrice S. Fennimore • A. Lin Goodwin
Editors

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Dedicated to the memory of my parents George Henry Schneller and Marjorie Cooney Schneller.

B.S.F.

Dedicated to the memory of my maternal grandmother Huang Gwan Mei.

A.L.G.

Preface

In 2009, it was my great honor to be named an "Equity Champion" by the Educational Equity Center of the Academy for Educational Development. I recall, in preparing my remarks for the gathering to celebrate this award, that I struggled with the term "equity" as a way to describe the work that people do, because it needs to be done, to create a just society and enact social justice. What is equity? What is the meaning of this word? What does it mean to achieve equity? I frequently discuss this term with my husband Peter and with friends. Yet, I cannot fully describe it nor translate it into just one word, as we do in English, for my mother in Colombia. I always have to use examples and tell many stories about certain actions or decisions; I describe it as way of thinking, of feeling, and of behaving. But if that is the case, then how does one grow into or learn this way of thinking and behaving? How did I learn these feelings? Why am I—and most members of my immediate and adopted family, as well as my closest colleagues and friends—so intolerant of inequity and exclusion—and how did we get that way? In preparing this preface, I was brought again to reflect on these questions, to ponder again deeply the meaning of equity and social justice.

In terms of equity in education—I believe that it holds (or should hold) a special meaning for all of us in this profession. We are in the education profession because we all choose/chose to do this equity work in one form or another. For some of us, equity and social justice are about excellent education, maximum opportunity for the largest and most possibly diverse group of learners. It is about preparation for having choices in life, access to work, housing, health, or the right to vote. It is also about participation, representation, and inclusion in important decisions and endeavors. It is about gender, about physical and mental health, about religion or language, and about freedom to choose our partners and life styles. Ultimately, I define equity and social justice as the infusion of whatever it takes to make things right and to make things fair, at a given time, in a particular place, and for the greater good.

Still, I realize the shortcomings or limitations of language for describing what a community of compassionate people needs to know, be, and act upon to make, to do, the right thing. Yet, in this collection of wisdom and knowledge from colleagues who have dedicated their life's work to minding the children and all that

surrounds them or affects them in education and social policy, there are many ways of articulating, envisioning, and enacting social justice. Readers will either personally connect or intellectually identify with some of the perspectives offered by these authors; all will definitely find scholarly angles and definitions they had not considered before as a part of what they need to know to advance a just society.

Each section of the book is a point of entry for individuals with different passions and expertise, but each point of entry calls for compassion. Compassion is the prerequisite and foundation for appreciating and finding one's place of action in one or more of the perspectives presented in this volume. Why is compassion a requirement? Because in the absence of compassion, it often becomes too easy to rationalize ways to avoid what must be done, to turn away, or expect solutions to come from others. Compassion motivates us to act. We know it when we feel it or summon it at a random moment. It may be contained within a brief moment of recognition that someone needs our help and we are moved to intercede just because it is the right thing to do. But for educators, compassion cannot simply be collections of random moments. Compassion needs to be built into our policies, programs, and assessments. Informed compassion will help us question punitive teaching and policies, recognize oppression, and, when something seems dangerous or harmful, compassion will compel us to try to step in and stop it. These I believe are the imperatives behind this book.

Its audience should be anyone who feels that the challenge of difficult times renders us powerless to make the just decisions that affect other people in general and vulnerable people in particular. Yet, we are not powerless but sometimes have difficulty finding our way to positive action. The voices in this book speak of positive action and of hopefulness. As a whole, the book exemplifies foundations of education and a demonstration of the complex ecologies that must be considered to best meet the needs, find the strengths, and act on behalf of children, families, and the caregivers and schools educating vulnerable children placed in our care.

New York City Dr. Maritza B. Macdonald

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About the Contributors

Jessica Bacon Doctoral Student, Syracuse University. Jessica Bacon received her master's from the Department of Cultural Foundations of Education at Syracuse University with a concentration in disability studies. Her research interests include inclusive education, self-advocacy, transition, and post-secondary education for adults with developmental disabilities, and the effects of high stakes testing and accountability systems on special education.

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Beatrice S. Fennimore Professor of Education, Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Beatrice S. Fennimore is a teacher educator who began her career teaching young children in New York City. She is the author of multiple books, chapters, and articles in the areas of social policy, equity in public schooling, child advocacy, social justice, urban education, and multicultural education. Dr. Fennimore's current research interests are in the areas of human rights and social justice as the foundations of teacher education in a democratic society. She has been an active participant in public school equity initiatives and has also served as an Adjunct Professor at Teachers College, Columbia University for over 20 years.

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Celia Genishi Professor of Education, Chairperson of the Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Celia Genishi has authored and coauthored many books, articles, and chapters about children's language, classroom observation and research, and assessment. A former preschool and high school Spanish teacher and formerly on the faculty of the University of Texas at Austin and The Ohio State University, Dr. Genishi is a recipient of the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Committee on the Status of Minorities in Education of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the Advocate for Justice Award, from the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE). She was recently named an AERA Fellow for her exceptional contribution to research and scholarship.

A. Lin Goodwin Professor of Education and Associate Dean for Teacher Education, Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. A. Lin Goodwin is the author of numerous publications on the connections between teachers' identities and their development; between multicultural understandings and curriculum enactments; and on the issues facing Asian and Asian American teachers and students in U.S. schools. Her most recent articles examine the professionalization of teaching and the influence of globalization on the knowledge domains for teacher preparation. Dr. Goodwin has worked with educators throughout Europe and Asia around issues of diversity, educational equity, assessment, and teacher education. She is a recipient of the Distinguished Scholar Award from the Committee on the Status of Minorities in Education of the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

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Diane E. Levin Professor of Education, Wheelock College. Dr. Diane Levin leads a service-learning program at Wheelock College on the reconciliation process underway in schools in Northern Ireland. The author of eight books and numerous other publications, she is an internationally recognized expert on how sexualization and violence in media and commercial culture affect children and the wider society. Dr. Levin's most recent book focuses on the new sexualized childhood and what parents can do to protect their children. She is a cofounder of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood (www.commercialfreechildhood.org) and Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment (www.truceteachers.org).

Maritza B. Macdonald Senior Director of Education and Policy at the American Museum of Natural History, Adjunct Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University and Lehman College (CUNY), New York City. A teacher of teachers, in particular, new and experienced teachers of science and the humanities, Dr. Maritza Macdonald's career path has been marked by a continuous search for equity through pedagogy that is driven by the needs and strengths of students and teachers. In her dissertation "An Urban Teacher's Quest for an Equity Pedagogy", she examined teacher knowledge possessed by excellent teachers and found, as with all strong teachers, they knew content, students, how to teach content, and why their knowledge was important. But what differentiated them from other excellent teachers was their boundless belief in the potential of education, and in their deep commitment to be the teachers who would work with students to achieve both their educational potential and happiness. From Migrant camps, to Head Start, schools, colleges, universities, and now the Museum, Maritza has found many colleagues who share these beliefs, and she considers herself a very happy museum teacher now.

Celia Oyler Associate Professor of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Celia Oyler directs the Elementary Inclusive Education Program in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Teachers College. She received her Ph.D. in curriculum from the University of Illinois-Chicago. Before becoming a university professor, Dr. Oyler worked as a special education teacher for 15 years in public schools in Chicago, Vermont, and Connecticut. Her research and teaching center on issues of democratic schooling, multilevel inclusive curriculum design,

and anti-racist and critical multicultural teaching. Dr. Oyler's most recent publication is on classroom pedagogies for action and advocacy.

Valerie Polakow Professor of Educational Psychology and Early Childhood, Eastern Michigan University. Dr. Polakow has written extensively about women and children in poverty, homelessness, welfare, access to postsecondary education, and family and child care policies in national and international contexts. She is the author of seven books, the latest of which is an urgent call to action to address child poverty and the child care crisis in the nation. Her current research involves a cross-national study of poverty and children's rights. Dr. Polakow was a Fulbright scholar in Denmark and the recipient of the Distinguished Faculty Award for scholarship at Eastern Michigan University.

Paula G. Purnell Artist, Musician, and Adjunct Professor, Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Paula G. Purnell is an award-winning musician, specializing in historical and regional folk music. She is the cofounder of Sense of Place Learning, a partner affiliate of the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, dedicated to raising the awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of the unique ecology, history, heritage, and artistic works intrinsic to specific locales through hands-on, interdisciplinary educational programs and materials.

Xue Lan Rong Professor of Education, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Dr. Xue Lan Rong's research focuses on culture, race/ethnicity and education, and the impacts of immigration on K-12 students' schooling experiences and achievements. A prolific scholar and researcher, Dr. Rong's publications have appeared in major educational and sociological journals. She is also first author or coauthor of four books. Her most recent book, with coauthor J. Preissle, comprehensively outlines the demographic data, content knowledge, and culturally relevant strategies educators need to educate immigrant students in the twenty-first century.

Lindsey Russo State University of New York at New Paltz, Curriculum Consultant: Blue School, New York City. Dr. Russo is currently an assistant professor at SUNY New Paltz teaching courses in early childhood education. She received her doctoral degree from Teachers College, Columbia University. The Blue School, where she advises on the curriculum and conducts research, is a lab school for children from age 2 through second grade. Its mission is to place social/emotional learning, creativity and play at the center of child-directed, inquiry-based, and integrated curricula. Dr. Russo's research interests include the role of play in early childhood education, its relationship to learning within a climate of increased academic expectations and accountability in early childhood classrooms, the formation and role of peer culture in the classroom, and early childhood teacher education.

Mariana Souto-Manning Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education, Teachers College, Columbia University. Dr. Mariana Souto-Manning examines the sociocultural and historical foundations of early schooling, language development, and literacy practices from a critical perspective, studying how children, families, and teachers from diverse backgrounds shape and are shaped by discursive practices.

The author of multiple books and articles, her recent publications have focused on the role of culture circles and drama in supporting the multicultural understandings and practices of teachers. Dr. Souto-Manning was awarded the National Conference on Research in Language and Literacy Early Career Award in 2009, and the 2010 *Early Career Research Award* from *Kappa Delta Pi/AERA Division K (Teaching and Teacher Education)*.

Joshua Sparrow, MD Assistant Professor in Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, Director of Special Initiatives, Brazelton Touchpoints Center, Children's Hospital, Boston. Dr. Joshua Sparrow, in his role of Director of Special Initiatives at the Brazelton Touchpoints Center, consults on professional lifelong learning, cultural adaptations of child development and family support programs, and aligning systems of care with community strengths and priorities. He has worked with the Harlem Children's Zone, American Indian Early Head Start Programs, UNICEF, among other organizations, and has authored numerous scholarly papers and lectured extensively nationally and internationally on related topics. He has coauthored eight books with Dr. T. Berry Brazelton and also writes a weekly New York Times Syndicate column called "Families Today."

Judith Van Hoorn Professor Emerita, University of the Pacific. Dr. Van Hoorn worked for many years in programs serving young children and their families. Her research and writing focus on early childhood development and on adolescents' sociopolitical identity formation. She is coauthor of several books on topics such as play as central to curriculum and adolescent development in the context of rapid social change. She is a past president of the Society for the Study of Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Division 48 of the American Psychological Association.

Chapter 1
The Continuing Struggle for Social Justice for Children

Beatrice S. Fennimore

When I was around the age of seven, a visitor to my home gave me a book of short stories as a holiday gift. That night, before falling asleep in bed, I read the first story called *The Little Match Girl.* A poor, pathetic little girl, cold and freezing with no coat and bare feet on a wintry street, was trying to sell matches for money so her cruel father would not beat her when she returned home. Although she had been on the street for the entire day, not one person had purchased a match. Desperate and dying from the cold, too terrified to go home, she began to light the matches one by one to experience some semblance of warmth. Each match brought comforting visions of food and happiness and light; finally, a match burned so brightly that a vision of her beloved deceased grandmother came and swept her up and away in a loving embrace. The next morning, the body of the little girl lay frozen on the ground as people walked by.

How, I wondered sadly that night, could people have been so cruel? Why wouldn't they buy even one match? Why didn't someone save her? Over a half of a century later, I continue to ask myself the same kind of questions as millions of American children suffer and even die from social neglect in one of the richest and most powerful nations in the world. How and why do we continue to walk past these children—in homeless shelters, in juvenile detention centers, in adult prisons, in multiple foster placements, in segregated and impoverished communities, on dangerous street corners in a crossfire of drugs and violence, in underfunded schools characterized by hopelessness—why aren't we so alarmed at this betrayal of the American dream and fundamental human rights that we rise in a new revolution against the forces that allow such misery and wasted human potential to exist?

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Child Justice as an American Dilemma

Imagine children like the fictional little match girl fortunate enough to be born in a nation in which all children are entitled to high-quality child care, medical care, and nutrition maintenance programs. In spite of their desperate family circumstances, the children would be ensured of protections and services providing opportunities for safe and healthy development. In the absence of such entitlements, citizens do not seem to know quite what to do when they encounter children like the little match girl who suffer greatly. This uncertainty can lead to a host of misinformed or misdirected rationalizations. Why buy a match when it would do so little good for the well-being of this child? Why help this child when we are only supporting a lazy and abusive father? Is it our fault that the poor little child is out on the street without clothing or food? After all, we work and take care of our own families—we can't take care of everyone!

When I speak to groups of citizens about the needs of children in America, I frequently encounter comments quite similar to those above. I begin my presentations by asking who in the audience believes that all children in America should have enough to eat. Every hand appears to be raised. I continue in this line of questioning regarding home, safety, health care, and a high-quality education—all hands continue to be raised. Then I say, "If an unmarried teenager in a major city has two children and is living in extreme poverty, is it the responsibility of our society to be sure that all the above needs are met?" At that point, the concern previously shown for children unravels. "I support my own family, why should I support the families of irresponsible people?" "That teenager will just keep having babies and expect handouts instead of working." I listen silently for a few minutes. Then, I tell my audience that I am very glad we have not wasted a great deal of our time together talking in idealistic platitudes about what children *ought* to have. Since it can be easily demonstrated that many American children *do not have* access to essential resources, the dialog should focus instead on the need for a comprehensive paradigm shift on the way we think about child entitlements. Rather than consider government support of children and families to be "handouts," we in America might begin to envision basic entitlements for child care, health, and safety to be an irreducible national moral imperative. Within the shelter of such protections for all our children, we could begin to aggressively address the causes of poverty, joblessness, and other significant problems rooted more in the organization of a society than the presumed failings of individuals.

What Must America Do?

A nation grounded in liberty and justice for all—one that claims to stand as a model of democracy for the world—is a nation with the responsibility to articulate what is right and just for all its children. The alternative is to avoid democratic commitments by pretending that there is an even playing field where none exists; by attrib-

uting false blame to struggling parents who desperately want to help their families but cannot raise them out of poverty, and by withholding fundamental resources necessary for child survival and healthy development with specious rationalizations based on greed, prejudice, or false political premises.

To what should every child in America be entitled regardless of parental circumstances? Until our nation's leaders and concerned citizens create a public answer to that question, many will continue to oppose and resent child entitlements as "handouts" for adults who are presumed to be lacking in moral value, personal competence, and willingness to work. In resentment of the parents, we justify the inexcusable suffering of the children.

Certainly, parents must be held responsible to care for their children to the greatest possible degree. However, it is also the responsibility of a society to create the context in which parents can reasonably expect to gain employment adequate enough to care for their families, in which childcare makes that employment possible, in which children can grow up healthy and whole enough to become competent parents in the future, and in which children whose parents' personal or economic struggles are overwhelmingly severe will be protected by a threshold of social care under which no child in the nation will ever be permitted to fall (Howe 1994).

A Window of Opportunity for Social Justice

Now that a recent severe economic downturn has affected many Americans who have worked all their lives only to lose their jobs, homes, medical insurance, and retirement benefits, a window of opportunity may be opened. Those who have done what they believed was right only to find themselves betrayed by the greed and dishonesty of those in power may be more willing to examine the false assumptions about meritocracy in this country (we all have an equal chance and if you work hard enough you are rewarded). Indeed, it should be clear by now that anyone, no matter how hard they have worked, can experience severe hardship created by unanticipated losses. When that happens, they need help—just as American banks and businesses have needed bailouts. Perhaps we can now have more compassion as a nation for those whose poverty was so extreme or who faced discrimination that was so disabling that they really never had a fair chance at gaining cultural capital in the first place. Indeed, perhaps empathy and understanding for all who try to raise families in difficult economic circumstances might guide us to a better future.

Establishing Rights to Strengthen Social Justice

Without a consensus on what constitutes justice for children, many arguments against using social justice as a child-based concern arise. Certainly, this was clear in the recent decision of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

(NCATE) to eliminate social justice language from its documents (Wasley 2006). The challenge to NCATE's inclusion of the concept of social justice in teacher education accreditation materials came from groups claiming that social justice was a liberal and coercive term that could silence the political views and first amendment rights of students in education. I would argue that the challenge to the words *social justice* and the subsequent removal of those words from NCATE documents would have been highly unlikely in a nation with clearly articulated child entitlements. Once there is a consensus on the rights of child citizens, the continued protection of those rights can be argued to transcend government and current partisan politics (Ensalaco 2006). This would make social justice *everyone's* concern, over and above their rights to free speech and personal political points of view.

Building a New Consensus on the Rights of Children

Kenji Yoshino, the Chief Justice Earl Warren Professor of Constitutional Law at New York University, encourages those concerned with group rights to move toward a focus on universal rights of persons (Yoshino 2007). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) provide critical structures for those who seek greater protection of children in America. In a stronger context of rights and entitlements, the concept of social justice can be both simplified and strengthened as a politically empowered sense of fairness focused on those who have the least and those whose rights and entitlements are being ignored or violated (Rawls 1970, 2001). America is now the only nation in the world that has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I would argue that this should be a matter of national concern and discourse. Hopefully, with the help of many advocates across professional and citizen groups, Americans can agree on child entitlements—thus preparing to take action and reduce child suffering while strengthening the present and future of this nation for all its people.

Organization of This Volume

Each of the authors in this book explores an issue or problem related to the promotion of social justice for children. We encouraged all the authors, many of whom are educators, to speak to a wide audience of readers who are professionally and personally concerned about children. It is important, we think, to reach across professions and citizen interests to support a stronger national dialog about children and social justice in America. Each author has viewed the selected topic through the lens of establishing the problem in its current form relating to young children, providing a conceptual background to the problem, proposing perspectives or solutions, and providing some vision for the future. While each chapter has a different focus, all the chapters are linked by recognition of harm to children and commitment to an America in which children can thrive and develop to their full potential.