

Learning from the margins: Early childhood imaginaries, "normal science," and the case for a radical reconceptualisation of research and practice ^[1]

Bloch, M., Swadener, B. B., & Cannella, G. S. (2014). *Reconceptualizing early childhood care and education: Critical questions, new imaginaries and social activism: a reader*. New York: Peter Lang.

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AVAILABILITY

- [Full chapter in PDF](#) ^[2]

Related:

- [Research webpage of Mathias Urban](#) ^[3] (many full-text papers available)
- [News article: "Call for rethink to education systems which marginalise children"](#) ^[4]

Excerpt from the chapter:

Policy discourses that frame "the sum total of the social reaction to the fact of ontogenetic postnatal development" as Siegfried Bernfeld (1925, 1973) referred to education, reflect a fundamental dilemma: that education inevitably addresses both the child and the society, leading to often contradictory aims, aspirations, and in consequence, practices. European Union policy references to early childhood education and care, since the early 1990s, have reflected these contradictions. The recent EU strategic framework, "Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth" (European Commission, 2010) provides a bleak analysis of the situation the EU finds itself in at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. Without explicitly mentioning it, the description of the economic, social, demographic, and environmental crises facing Europe in a global context resembles the "complex intersolidarity of problems, antagonisms, crises, uncontrolled processes, and the general crisis of the planet" that Edgar Morin identifies in his 1999 manifesto for the new millennium (Morin & Kern, 1999). The need to "resolve" those crises is the underlying narrative in this framework, and a key role is given to early childhood education and care in a set of policy measures to "put Europe back on track" (European Commission, 2010). Starting from what appears to be a paradigm shift in recent EU policies towards young children, the chapter asks what are the imagined and projected (European?) childhoods, who is the child who emerges from this discourse? At the centre of the interrogation lies a critical enquiry into a mainstream research-policy-practice complex that, the chapter argues, shows the characteristics of what Thomas Kuhn (1962) refers to as "normal science." Whose questions are seen as relevant in this relationship? Who benefits, who speaks, and who is silenced?

Making the case for a radical paradigm shift, the chapter aims at identifying and questioning the narratives that are employed to justify policies and practices focusing on young children and on early childhood education and care in particular. The questioning, the chapter argues, opens a space for possible and necessary counter-discourses, re-narrativisation, democratic experimentation (Moss & Urban, 2010), and "untested feasibility" (Freire, 2007).

Related link: [Nursery World: "Call for rethink to education systems which marginalise children"](#) ^[4]

Region: International ^[5]

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https://www.academia.edu/7211092/Learning_from_the_Margins_Early_Childhood_Imaginaries_Normal_Science_and_the_Case_for_a_Radical_Reconceptualisation_of_Research_and_Practice

[3] <http://dcu.academia.edu/MathiasUrban>

[4] <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/call-for-rethink-to-education-systems-which-marginalise-children>

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