



Standardized Childhood: The Political and Cultural Struggle over Early Education

Bruce Fuller, Margaret Bridges, Seeta Pai

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A array of childcare and preschool options blossomed in the 1970s as the feminist movement spurred mothers into careers and community organizations nurtured new programs. Now a small circle of activists aims to bring more order to childhood, seeking to create a more standard, state-run preschool system. For young children already facing the rigors of play dates and harried parents juggling the strains of work and family, government is moving in to standardize childhood.

Sociologist Bruce Fuller traveled the country to understand the ideologies of childhood and the raw political forces at play. He details how progressives earnestly seek to extend the rigors of public schooling down into the lives of very young children. Fuller then illuminates the stiff resistance from those who hold less trust in government solutions and more faith in nonprofits and local groups in contributing to the upbringing of young children.

The call for universal preschool is a new front in the culture wars, raising sharp questions about American families, cultural diversity, and the appropriate role of the state in the lives of our young children.

Standardized Childhood shows why the universal preschool movement is attracting such robust support—and strident opposition—nationwide.

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