



The Children's Table: Childhood Studies and the Humanities

Anna M. Duane

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Like the occupants of the children's table at a family dinner, scholars working in childhood studies can seem sidelined from the "adult" labor of humanities scholarship. *The Children's Table* brings together scholars from architecture, philosophy, law, and literary and cultural criticism to provide an overview of the innovative work being done in childhood studies—a transcript of what is being said at the children's table. Together, these scholars argue for rethinking the academic seating arrangement in a way that acknowledges the centrality of childhood to the work of the humanities.

The figure we now recognize as a child was created in tandem with forms of modernity that the Enlightenment generated and that the humanities are now working to rethink. Thus the growth of childhood studies allows for new approaches to some of the most important and provocative issues in humanities scholarship: the viability of the social contract, the definition of agency, the performance of identity, and the construction of gender, sexuality, and race. Because defining childhood is a means of defining and distributing power and obligation, studying childhood requires a radically altered approach to what constitutes knowledge about the human subject.

The diverse essays in *The Children's Table* share a unifying premise: to include the child in any field of study realigns the shape of that field, changing the terms of inquiry and forcing a different set of questions. Taken as a whole, the essays argue that, at this key moment in the state of the humanities, rethinking the child is both necessary and revolutionary.

Contributors: Annette Ruth Appell, Sophie Bell, Robin Bernstein, Sarah Chinn, Lesley Ginsberg, Lucia Hodgson, Susan Honeyman, Roy Kozlovsky, James Marten, Karen Sánchez-Eppler, Carol Singley, Lynne Vallone, John Wall.

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