

Call for Papers
Princeton-Humboldt Partnership Program
International Conference at Princeton University, May 23-24, 2014

"Childhood - Between Material Culture and Cultural Representation"

The Conference **"Childhood - Between Material Culture and Cultural Representation"** (May 23-24, 2014, Princeton University, NJ, USA) seeks to bring junior and senior researchers from the humanities and social sciences together in an interdisciplinary discussion about the material and cultural conditions of knowledge about childhood in Europe and the USA since 1800.

Our point of entry is the material boom around childhood around 1900: the rise of the human sciences in the nineteenth century increasingly shifted the anthropological question of the nature of childhood from philosophical reflection to empirical scientific investigation. A multitude of new scientific disciplines, including pediatrics, child psychiatry, pedagogy, and ergonomics, participated in an experimental and psychophysical investigation of the child. Part and parcel of this endeavor was the development of an arsenal of new research technologies and analytic procedures: the efficiency and learning abilities of children were measured with new technological devices such as the *Ergograph* and the *Ästhesiometer*, the working of their minds analyzed by means of school essays, drawings and toy-usage, their physiological and psychological development assessed in laboratories and experimental settings, and their behavior disciplined by educational programs and ergonomically designed working environments.

This developing material culture focused on the "child" – comprising scientific, experimental and pedagogical instruments – was mirrored, multiplied and opposed in artistic, cultural and social discourses. Be it in the booming genre of "school-literature," reform pedagogical projects, or political agendas of *"Staatsbürgerliche Erziehung,"* knowledge of childhood figured center stage in the public sphere. The reform pedagogical movements thereby demonstrate that the empirical scientification of the child did not necessarily destroy its salvific idealization: the "liberation of the child" (Ellen Key) was both scientifically authorized and social-utopianly romanticized.

The rich interaction between scientific material culture and cultural representations of childhood around 1900 demands an approach to the history of childhood that pays close attention to the material conditions and medialization of knowledge. The conference "Childhood - Between Material Culture and Cultural Representation" seeks to accomplish this by bringing together scholars from the humanities and social sciences. It will pose the problem of the relationship between the knowledge of childhood that was produced in the social scientific laboratories and the developing discourse on childhood in literature, arts and politics.

While our point of entry is the material boom around childhood in the USA and Western Europe around 1900, we hope that our interdisciplinary perspective lends itself to an extension to other geographical areas and historical periods. More broadly, the conference intends to re-think the borders in between the material, the cultural, and the conceptual in the history of childhood.

Please find below a list of the planned panels and invited professors. We call for papers from graduate students and junior researchers that address the topic of any of the following panels:

Panel I. Small Things: Material Worlds of Childhood (Daniel Thomas Cook, Rutgers University)

Panel I focuses on the question of how new objects and social topographies have transformed both experience and meaning of childhood. Contributions may, for instance, investigate processes of commercialization and commodification of childhood, the rise of new pedagogical ideas, devices, and settings (from chair to toy to classroom), or aspects of the visual culture around childhood (family portraits, photos, film). How did “things” for children create a “childish” world and what norms, qualities and expectations shaped that world? Who defined and what generated biological, developmental, and pedagogical needs of children? What is the link between a changing material infrastructure of childhood and larger social and political transformations? And, importantly, how can material worlds of childhood be approached from different disciplinary perspectives?

Panel II. From Womb to Cradle: Science of the Unborn and the Infant (Caroline Arni, Basel University, to be confirmed)

Panel II focuses on the discovery and scientific exploration of the “prenatal” in the 19th and 20th century. It addresses the boundaries of both the definition of childhood and the meaning of material culture. How was, for instance, the idea of continuity from the unborn to the newborn to the child established, investigated and conceptualized - phylogenetically, ontogenetically, technologically, and biographically? And, what was the meaning of these investigations for both childhood and motherhood? In examining the unstable epistemic space between the pre- and the post-natal, the panel seeks to explore the shifting theoretical, bio-political, and practical boundaries for the establishment of a physical materiality of infancy.

III Psycho-Pathologies of Childhood (Sally Shuttleworth, Oxford University)

The insane child, the fearful child, the autistic child – scientification and medicalization of childhood went hand in hand. Panel III looks at medical, psychological, and psychiatric investigations of childhood, and their broader cultural meanings and repercussions. How did literary, visual, and medico-scientific explorations of the child’s mind and its presumed pathologies and disorders both echo and generate social, institutional, and cultural transformations? To what extent and in which way is the history of child psychiatry and pediatrics connected to a historical process of normalization? For instance, did, as Foucault claims, the pathologization and psychiatrization of childhood translate into the infantilization of adulthood? And, how did the material and the cultural interact in that process?

Panel IV. Paper Tools: Writing, Sketching and Drawing Childhood (Barbara Wittmann, IKKM Weimar)

Panel IV explores the space between symbolic production, experimental settings and modern knowledge of childhood. Around 1900, sciences, pedagogy and literature started to investigate, observe and regulate the child’s attempts to enter the symbolic order. Children’s writings and drawings became important tools for investigating the child’s mind, and research on linguistic pathologies (such as aphasia and dyslexia) and the illiterate child offered new perspectives on the old

question of the origins and nature of language. This scientific observation and exploration of the child itself was conducted with and led by complex inscription systems (F. Kittler) and specific paper tools. How did the use of these scriptive devices transform infantile activities into sources of knowledge? To what extent did the scientific use of paper tools with children shape and re-arrange predominant concepts of childhood, and how does this process relate to the history of subjectivity and the (childish) self? How did literature and art relate to children's (pre-)symbolic production of signs, and how did new knowledge about childhood shape contemporary aesthetic and poetological concepts?

Panel V. Childish Personhoods: Childhood and the History of the Self (William Gleason, Princeton University, to be confirmed)

Panel V addresses the question of how cultural codifications of childhood were related to notions of identity and the self. How were, for instance, new forms of selfhood and processes of socialization filtered, forged and advertised through conceptualizations and implementations of childish practices (playing, collecting, asking etc.), be it in novels and pamphlets, or in educational settings and on playgrounds? What role did race, gender, or social class play the generation of those concepts? To what extent did childishness become associated with qualities, practices and notions that are constitutional for the modern self-understanding of the human being?

Panel VI. Politics of Childhood (Davide Giuriato, München)

Whether in the romantic utopia of “childhood innocence”, in turn-of-the-century measures of public health, demographic development and hygiene, or in early twentieth century politics of race, nationhood, and civic education (staatsbürgerliche Erziehung), the child has increasingly been ideologized and used as a political instrument. Panel VI explores the links between concepts of childhood and (bio-)political formations in their material and medial manifestations. How do politics of childhood re-constitute experiences and conceptions of childhood? How were material environments forged or instrumentalized by politics? And, how were political dimensions of and ideas about childhood antagonized, processed and developed in literature and art?

The format of the conference will consist in pre-circulated drafts of papers, brief presentations (20min) with responses and subsequent discussions. Since we are considering publishing an edited volume of the conference, we ask you for original contributions. The Princeton-Humboldt Partnership Program will substantially contribute to travel (up to \$800) and accommodation expenses if necessary.

Please send an abstract (max. 300 words) of your intended paper and a brief CV to rietmann@princeton.edu or mareike.schildmann@hu-berlin.de until January 15, 2013. The language of the conference will be English.