

Lone, J.M. (2021). *Seen and not heard: why children voices matter*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.

review: *seen and not heard: why children's voices matter*

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As in her seminal book *The Philosophical Child* (2012), in her current book *Seen and Not Heard* (2021) Jana Mohr Lone makes an outstanding contribution to our understanding of children's voices and why they matter so much.

The book opens with an important question: "How might society benefit if children were widely recognized as independent thinkers, capable clearly, and contributing in valuable ways to our world?" The focus is on elementary school-age children, ages five to twelve, and the ways they remain "seen and not heard" (p. 10).

In the first chapter, Mohr Lone examines how ageism and the ways our unexamined beliefs about children impede our ability to hear what they have to say. The chapter describes a dual discourse that is conducted towards children: on the one hand, an appreciation for young life full of joy and, on the other hand, and more central in the attitude of adults, condescension.

The second chapter examines the nature of childhood and its differences from adulthood. The chapter gives voice to children, their rich imaginations, and their abilities to consider more creative possibilities. Mohr Lone, who has conducted thousands of conversations with young children on various topics, enriches our understanding of their versatile abilities by quoting fascinating conversations with children. These discussions allow us an intimate knowledge of their world, their way of thinking, and especially their intellectual depth.

The third chapter focuses on the theme of friendship. Mohr Lone discusses philosophical questions related to friendship with children and gives us an inside look at how they perceive and think about these issues. In the fourth chapter,

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discussions with children expand to political issues, such as fairness and whether life is fair, race and gender, and climate change. Mohr Lone showcases children's ideas about these issues and their understanding of social dynamics. Children show social sensitivity when given the opportunity to discuss and philosophize around issues like poverty and social justice (Kizel, 2015). Chapters 5 and 6 involve the meaning of happiness and questions about death. Topics such as the fear of death and whether death makes life more meaningful are examined here carefully. I found myself excited by the children's profound and vital words and ideas, especially as someone who has researched young people who run memorial websites about their family members (Kizel, 2014).

The concluding chapter explores the art of listening to children and what it means to listen. Mohr Lone also gives us tools to improve our ability to listen to children while expressing faith - which is part of her long-standing project - in the importance of dialogue between children and adults.

This book demonstrates well that recent decades have witnessed the emergence of two dramatic processes within psychology and philosophy. Philosophy, having almost completely disregarded children for most of its two-thousand-year history, has recently begun to recognize children's thinking processes and the ways children can contribute to philosophy – led primarily by the proponents and practitioners of Philosophy for/with Children (P4C/PwC). The centuries-long narrow scientific perception of children's cognitive abilities, according to which young people "do not know" and "are not capable," is now giving way to a new understanding of the ways in which infants and young children know and comprehend (Lucas et al., 2013; Walker & Gopnik, et al., 2015; Bridgers et al., 2016; Gopnik et al., 2015).

Challenging the view that children are irrational, egocentric, and unprincipled, psychologists and neuroscientists are now arguing that young people learn, imagine, identify, and experience far more than anyone ever envisaged. Three- and four- year-olds evince signs of structural thinking, five- and six-year-olds further differentiating between structural and non-structural thinking

(Vasilyeva et al., 2018). Counterintuitively, pre-schoolers perform better than school-aged children in the physical domain – the latter in turn performing better than adolescents and adults. As they grow older, learners are less flexible. Rather than adopting initially unfamiliar hypotheses consistent with new evidence, they prefer familiar hypotheses that are less consistent with the evidence (Gopnik et al., 2017).

Young children are more plastic than older children concerning some social categories, such as race, also being less rigid in explaining behavior. The evidence further suggests that they make weaker assumptions about causal structure. Young children are, thus, less likely to have strong expectations regarding social categories than older children and adults – therefore also being more willing to entertain a variety of possibilities.

Mohr Lone's remarkable book corresponds with recent philosophical studies that observe that young children naturally ask intriguing, fecund questions about themselves, their world, and the universe on a par with the most significant philosophical thinkers. As the development of Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Philosophy with Children (PwC) programs, over the past 50 years demonstrate, from the age of four onwards, children can engage in critical, creative, and caring thinking in philosophical communities of inquiry. These communities provide them with an opportunity to discuss important philosophical questions, according to a method 60 countries have employed for over half a century. This practice also enable them to deal with the uncertainty that prevails today, primarily due to their capacity to entertain diverse options and embrace multiple perspectives.

The type of thinking children employ is essential for Mohr Lone, a great advocate for adults' understanding of children's thinking. In its in-depth chapters, her book demonstrates that children can formulate innovative principles that lead to original ideas and solutions that can be used, in my opinion, on a national or international level to respond to questions that are generally only addressed by adults, scientists, academics, and technology experts.

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