

## Childhood Studies

For most of the 20th century the majority of research on children proceeded from a developmental perspective. Children were seen as objects, as passive recipients of the actions of others. Children were looked at in terms of what they would become. Childhood was viewed as a stage on the way to adulthood. With this perspective, emphasis was placed on study of child rearing practices and children's ability to perform physical and mental tasks *as measured against adults*. Children's worlds and their views of the world went largely unexplored. Narrative accounts by children (for example, accounts of what it was like to grow up in a city, to have a chronic illness, to be accused of a crime, to work in a factory, to experience war) were more likely to be found in the work of journalists than in scholarly texts.

Within the last 30 years, and as a result of a general shift in the academic climate, children are being looked at in their own right. The view of the child has shifted. Children are now seen as active participants in their own worlds as well as in the worlds of others. It is understood that children are capable of interpreting the behavior of others and forging a line of action based on those interpretations.

## **Rutgers University Center for Children**

**September 25, 2003**

Group Discussion, *Introducing Ourselves and Our Work: Individual and Group Goals for the Series*

A welcome to the campus, the Center, and the series. Seminar participants will have an opportunity to describe their current research and to engage in spirited discussion about the field of childhood studies—strengths, limitations, challenges, and opportunities with attention to contributions their work makes to childhood studies. Participants will be asked to consider the pressing issues in the field and the contributions scholars can make to a richer understanding of children and childhood.

**October 23, 2003**

**Chris Boyatzis, Ph.D.** Associate Professor of Psychology, Bucknell University,  
*The Construction of Spiritual Meaning in Parent-Child Communication.*

The family is the primary locus of religious and spiritual development for the child. A neglected—but perhaps crucial—mechanism for such development is parent-child conversation about religious and spiritual issues. In this seminar, Dr. Boyatzis will describe his research on parent-child conversations about these issues, using two different approaches: a quantitative survey and a qualitative diary method. The data speak to the content and structure of parent-child communication about religion and spirituality. Dr. Boyatzis will employ perspectives from mainstream empirical social sciences, ethnographic and cross-cultural disciplines, and theology and scripture to examine different models of religious socialization. Throughout, Boyatzis will entertain the characterization of the child as an active participant—not a mere recipient—in the construction of spiritual meaning in the family.

**November 13, 2003**

**Kimberly A. Scott, Ed.D.** Assistant Professor of Sociology of Education, Hofstra University,  
*Because I Love You: African American and Latina Girls' Collectivism in a State-Operated District.*

During the 2001-2002 academic year, Dr. Scott became the sole researcher given access to the school district of Roosevelt, New York, a predominantly African American community that also represents one of the few places in which the New York State Education Department has intervened to exert local school control. Dr. Scott studied 66 sixth-grade African American and Latina girls, their parents, and teachers to examine how the girls made sense of their academic and social achievements in this unique setting. Inspired by Black Feminist Theory's concepts of intersectionality and standpoint, five themes emerged from the quantitative and qualitative data. Dr. Scott will concentrate on the theme of belongingness and how girls labeled at risk develop a sense of self-in-community in a highly politicized context.

**January 22, 2004**

**Maria Kefalas, Ph.D.** Assistant Professor of Sociology, Saint Joseph's University,  
*What Good Mothers Do: Low-Income White, African American, and Latina Mothers' Childrearing Strategies and Philosophies.*

Dr. Kefalas will describe the childrearing strategies and philosophies of low-income women raising children in high crime and high poverty inner-city communities. The presentation will emphasize women's accounts of what mothers "do" for children, how mothers protect children, the role of education, and what mothers hope and dream for their children. Dr. Kefalas will also discuss how mothers make sense of their children's missteps, specifically mothers' narrative accounts of how they parent when a child drops out of high school, uses drugs, commits a crime, or becomes a parent at an early age. Her presentation is based on analysis of in-depth, qualitative interviews with 180 single mothers ranging in ages from 14 to 55.

## and Childhood Studies Seminar Series

February 26, 2004

**Ellen Handler Spitz, Ph.D.** Honors College Professor of Visual Arts, University of Maryland, *Picture Books and the Inner Lives of Children.*

This seminar will explore ways in which classic picture books address themselves to perennial concerns of young children, expand their imaginative lives, enrich their aesthetic repertoire, present ethical dilemmas, offer strategies for coping with the exigencies of human life, all the while amusing and delighting their young audiences and initiating them into the realms of art and culture.

March 25, 2004

**Loretta Bass, Ph.D.** Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of Oklahoma, *Making Sense of Children's Labor and Childhood in Sub-Saharan Africa.*

How does children's work shape the definition of childhood? How does the meaning of childhood influence what is considered to be acceptable work for children? This presentation examines children's roles across several Sub-Saharan African countries and shows that the definition of 'childhood' is bound by culture, time, and level of economic development. Social structures such as gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and the rural-urban background also shape different ideas of about what is expected of a child in a particular culture. Using local rather than Western definitions of childhood in policies that aim to diminish child labor, Dr. Bass presents alternative frameworks to address the child labor problem in the developing world.

April 22, 2004

**Ellen Fennick, Ph.D.** Assistant Professor of Education, Widener University Center for Education, *After-School Programs and Children and Youth with Disabilities: Issues for Future Research.*

As children and youth with disabilities participate in the same school experiences as children without disabilities, questions arise about inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in after-school care programs. Increasing numbers of employed parents need after-school programs for their school-age children, but little information is available about such programs, or about the participation of children and youth with disabilities. A survey of childcare programs presents a base for evaluating the extent of available care and for seeking further information about programming and participation.

May 13, 2004

Series Wrap Up, *Where Do We Go From Here: Directions for Future Study*

Participants consider directions for future research in childhood studies and how that work might be best accomplished.



**The Seminar Series:**  
*An Integral Part of the Rutgers University  
Center for Children and Childhood Studies*

**R**utgers University's Center for Children and Childhood Studies is pleased to announce the 2nd annual seminar series and fellowship program: **Rethinking Childhood in the Twenty-First Century**. The seminar series brings together scholars from a variety of disciplines working in the area of childhood studies to discuss their work and directions for future research.

Participants meet once a month beginning Fall 2003 on the Rutgers University Camden Campus. A stimulating discussion will follow each presentation.

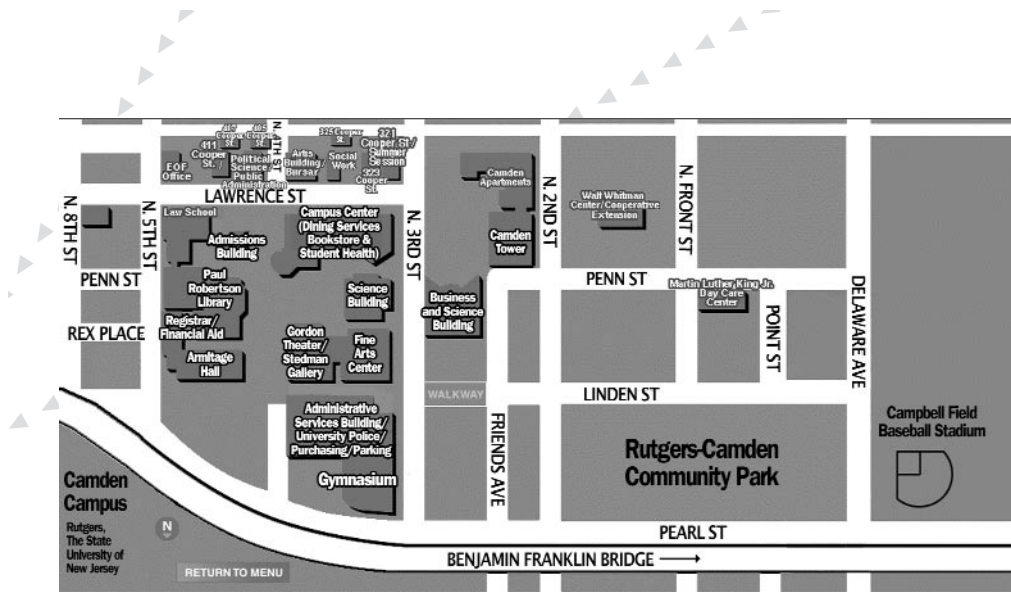
In an effort to foster research and dialogue among senior and junior scholars in childhood studies we offer junior and senior fellowships. Fellows receive an honorarium in consideration for their presentation and attendance at each session.

The **Center for Children and Childhood Studies** promotes understanding, enrichment and the recognition of the significance of the experiences of childhood through:

- ▶ Support of interdisciplinary inquiry into the lives of children in the city of Camden, US and abroad;
- ▶ Development and evaluation of service and outreach programs for children;
- ▶ Dissemination of knowledge to those directly responsible for ministering to children's needs and to those formulating policies affecting their lives and futures;
- ▶ Development of innovative and interdisciplinary courses, research and service internships that equip university students and the public to make informed decisions concerning children and youth.

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Funding for this project has been generously provided by Margaret Marsh, Dean of Rutgers University CCAS, and the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies.



Seminars will be held in the Law School, 217 N. 5th Street, 6th Floor Faculty Lounge.

***Seminars will be held 4:30-6:30  
on the Rutgers-Camden Campus.***

For more information about the seminar series or the  
Center for Children and Childhood Studies,  
call (856) 225-6741.

Visit our web site <http://children.camden.rutgers.edu>,  
or contact Myra Bluebond-Langner, Distinguished  
Professor of Anthropology and Director of the  
Rutgers University Center for Children and  
Childhood Studies at  
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Rutgers University  
Center for Children and Childhood Studies

*Presents the*

**2003-2004 Seminar Series**

**Rethinking**  

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**Childhood**  

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**Twenty-First**  

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**Century**

A monthly seminar series for scholars and  
professionals working in the area of childhood studies

