

New Horizons



**The Future of Children, Youth,
and the Public Good**

Children's Studies Program and Center
Brooklyn College
of The City University of New York

A Visionary Agenda for our Children



In 1991, when together with colleagues I founded Children's Studies, the vision for this new interdisciplinary and interdepartmental field of study was based on the insight that children from birth to age eighteen represent in every society a distinct sociocultural class and generational cohort. This recognition set the agenda and mission for Children's Studies—to view children as whole human beings and to integrate knowledge from the disciplines in the humanities, social and biological sciences, medicine, and law which

focuses on specific aspects and propensities of children and childhood.

In Children's Studies the primary focus of analytic and empirical attention is comprehensive in scope. Children's Studies as a generalist discipline aims at bringing about integration and synthesis of existing research, thereby providing better opportunities for the shaping of public policies as they affect children and young people.

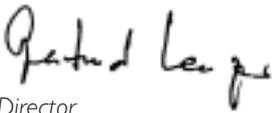
For, despite the lip service that is given to the importance of children "as our future," children, in their overall dependency upon adults, have no way of representing themselves. Children are not only minors, but they constitute, in fact, a social minority in our societies. Children's Studies aims

at representing children and their interests through synthesizing knowledge, research, and insights gained from different disciplines and in this manner helping to give children a voice. The work of the Brooklyn College Children's Studies



Program and Center addresses these issues and works on behalf of children and youth who can neither advocate for themselves nor have a voice. It is also for this reason that a human rights perspective—articulated in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) with its enlarged understanding of children and its evolving international jurisprudence—provides the overarching framework for Children's Studies.

Our publication, *New Horizons*, is intended to provide historical and current perspectives on the work of the Children's Studies Program and Center. I hope that this inaugural issue and subsequent issues of *New Horizons* will serve as a representative voice of children and young people and will disseminate the best insights that the many disciplines that contribute to this endeavor have to offer. By advancing research and knowledge about children and youth, Children's Studies hopes to promote—at the same time—the public good.



Director
Children's Studies Program and Center

New Beginnings...

In 1991 Brooklyn College became the founding institution of the interdisciplinary field of Children's Studies. To develop the field more widely in the United States, Dr. Gertrud Lenzer, the program director, also established the American Sociological Association Section on the Sociology of Children. Hailed as "pioneering" by the *New York Times*, the Brooklyn College program has been emulated at many universities and colleges both here and abroad since its inception. Brooklyn College and The

City University of New York have been the source of significant academic and scholarly programmatic innovations in higher education through this interdepartmental program, which brings together knowledge about children and youth from infancy through the age of legal majority as seen from the perspectives of the arts, humanities, social and natural sciences, medicine, and the law. A minor in Children's Studies was established in 1994 for all liberal arts majors. In 2001 a 30-credit interdisciplinary children's studies concentration for majors in early childhood education teacher and childhood education teacher programs was introduced in cooperation with the Brooklyn College School of Education. In addition, Children's Studies is available to students in the CUNY Baccalaureate Program as a major or minor.

The Children's Studies Center at Brooklyn College was established in 1997. The center concentrates on pedagogy, research, and public service to the community. Major activities of the Children's Studies Center are participation in local, national, and international research efforts on behalf of children and youth and assistance to governmental and advocacy agencies as well community-based organizations in their work on behalf of children and young people.

Milestones in Children's Studies...



The Children's Studies Program and Center has a record of groundbreaking and innovative leadership in child policy research and public service on behalf of children and youth. We continually create new methods for promoting awareness of child-related issues and for increasing knowledge about children and youth. In addition to our cutting-edge course work, we have made significant contributions in the areas of child policy research, bringing attention to diversity and children's justice issues, creating the Child Policy Forum of New York, establishing student researcher training, and instituting classroom enrichment through guest lectures and career exploration internships. Children's Studies enables our students to become future agents of change for the benefit of children and youth. This publication describes milestones in the progress of Children's Studies and casts a spotlight on our students and their success stories. We hope that this will inspire others to join our network of "Champions for Children."

Child Policy Research: A Children's Justice Initiative

The Children's Studies Program has developed a local, national, and international network of child-centered organizations and communities whose work and

interests lie within the framework of the human rights of children. Here are a few highlights of our work on the cause of justice for children:

Policy Symposium: "Children and the Law in New York" and Legislation for an Independent Office of the Child Advocate for New York

Our research and work involving child policy in New York reveal a need to address the many problems that confront predominantly minority children: one-third of the two million children in New York City live in poverty; many of them face homelessness and failure in school; many will also eventually be unemployed or involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

On March 11, 2004, the Children's Studies Center held a policy symposium, "Children and the Law in New York," funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Deputy Mayor for Policy Dennis M. Walcott discussed the issues noted above. The remarks of twenty-eight speakers—including members of the judiciary, the state legislature, child advocacy agencies, and child advocates from the states of Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island, along with others who are professionally concerned with children and childhood—revealed many other realities that these

Inaugural Child Policy Forum of New York: “The Right of Every Child”

Held on April 26, 2007



Panel, l to r: State Senator Kevin S. Parker; Bob Herz, Legislative Director for State Senator Martin J. Golden; Gertrud Lenzer, Director of the Children's Studies Center; Hon. Michael A. Corriero, Presiding Judge of Manhattan Youth Part, NYS Supreme

Court; State Assemblywoman Barbara M. Clark; State Assemblyman William Scarborough, Chair, Standing Committee on Children and Families; Betsy Gotbaum, Public Advocate, City of New York; State Assemblywoman Rhoda Jacobs.



L to r: Mark Woltman, Policy Research Associate, Office of the Public Advocate, the City of New York; Michael A. Corriero, Presiding Judge of Manhattan Youth Part, NYS Supreme Court; Joseph Suozzo, Esq. 1st Assistant Child Advocate, State of New Jersey; Gertrud Lenzer, Director of the Children's Studies Center; Erik S. Pitchal, J.D., Director, Fordham University Interdisciplinary Center for Family and Child Advocacy; State Assemblywoman Barbara M. Clark; Elizabeth P. Cooper, Supervising Attorney of the Fordham Urban Policy Clinic; Olga Tratsevitskaya, Children's Studies College

Assistant and student; Elise Goldberg, Coordinator, Children's Studies Program and Center; Loretta Chin, Research Coordinator, Children's Studies Program and Center; Professor Margaret-Ellen Pipe, Children's Studies and Psychology; and Jay Hershenson, Senior Vice-Chancellor for University Relations and Secretary of the Board of Trustees of The City University of New York.



State Assemblywoman Barbara M. Clark, sponsor of A00304c, legislation to establish the Office of the Child Advocate to ensure the protection and promotion of legal rights for youth in programs and facilities under the Office of Children's and Family Services, shown with State Senator Carl Kruger, Chair, Committee on Social Services, Children, and Families.

photos: Andre Beckles

children face within the compartmentalized systems of child supervision and administration in New York. The symposium provided a child-centered and human rights perspective on the major issues of child welfare, education, health and mental health, and children in the juvenile/criminal justice systems in New York. It directly resulted in the drafting and passage of legislation A06334 for an Office of the Child Advocate for New York in the New York State Assembly on June 20, 2005. This led to a unified bill in the New York State Assembly (A00304A) and New York State Senate (S4990A) on April 24, 2007. The bill most recently passed in the New York State Senate as S6298 on June 10, 2007. As of 2008, it exists as A00304c (Sponsor: Assemblywoman Barbara M. Clark) and S6298 (Sponsor: Senator Martin J. Golden). To view the proceedings and the legislation, please go to <http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/childrensstudies/symposium>.

Child Policy Forum of New York

Building upon the success of the policy symposium, the Children's Studies Center launched the highly successful Child Policy Forum of New York. With the support of a CUNY Diversity Projects Development Fund grant, the forum sponsored events in spring and

fall 2007 and will continue to present a series of forum events on child policy issues.

The inaugural event, "The Right of Every Child," was held on April 26, 2007. The forum provided a venue for bipartisan discussion of New York State child policies and pending legislation for an independent Office of the Child Advocate for New York by the legislators who have introduced the bills in the New York State Assembly and the New York State Senate, the respective chairs of the committees on children and families, and many elected officials who have voiced the need for such an office since the time of the original policy symposium in 2004.

The Campaign for United States Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (<http://childrightscampaign.org>) held a nationwide event on November 16, 2007. Meetings across the country focused on the basic protections that should be accorded to all children. In recognition of its commitment to human rights and justice for children, the Children's Studies Center was the only New York-based academic program invited to participate in this program, which was the second event sponsored by the Child Policy Forum.



photo: Arpi Pap

Second Child Policy Forum of New York: The Campaign for United States Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Held November 16, 2007

At lectern: Gertrud Lenzer, Director of the Children's Studies Center. Panel, l to r: Professor Angela Olivia Burton, CUNY

School of Law; Marty Scherr, campaign representative of UNICEF and the Campaign for United States Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; Meg Gardinier, Director, Education and Community Partnerships, United States Fund for UNICEF; and Dr. Victor Karunan, Chief, Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Programme Division, UNICEF Headquarters.

With widespread support and collaboration within Brooklyn College and The City University of New York, the Children's Studies Center brought together key representatives from UNICEF and the Campaign for United States Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for this event. Opening remarks were made by Professor Gertrud Lenzer, founder and director of the Children's Studies Center. Presentations were made by Professor Angela Olivia Burton, CUNY School of Law: "Law in the Service of the Needs of Our Children and Youth;" Olga Tratsevitskaya and Christina McClellan, student representatives from the Brooklyn

College Children First Club; Marty Scherr, a representative of the Campaign: "The United States and the CRC: Where We Are and How We Got Here;" Meg Gardinier, Director, Education and Community Partnerships, United States Fund for UNICEF: "The CRC and United States Civil Society: Challenges and Opportunities for Action;" and Dr. Victor Karunan, Chief, Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP), Division of Policy and Practice, UNICEF Headquarters: "CRC Eighteen Years On: Global Progress and Challenges Ahead!"

Student Researcher Training



Research by the Children's Studies Center has been sponsored by grants from the United States Department of Education, the National Institute of Justice, the Colgate-Palmolive Company, and the New York Community Trust/The Mark Family Fund. These grants have made possible the capacity to develop a student research training component within children's studies in such areas as early literacy, forensic interviewing of children, and independent research. Here are highlights of that research:

Effects of Interviews on Child Abuse Case Outcomes, 2006 to the Present

Children's Studies Professor Margaret-Ellen Pipe uses extensive National Institutes of Health databases in leading a team of student researchers investigating whether best-practice forensic interviews with child abuse victims influence case outcomes. A fellow of the Association of Psychological Science, Professor Pipe teaches students applied research methods and provides valuable research experiences for them.

Ready to Learn Partnership, 2005 to 2006

The U.S. Department of Education Ready to Learn Partnership (RTLTP) was established to support research studies evaluating the effectiveness of newly

developed and innovative early literacy materials, media products, and platforms created for children, parents, educators, early childhood caregivers, and service providers. The research aims to increase literacy skills in children aged two to eight. A particular focus of the research is to help children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds get a strong start as they enter school and to empower them to become lifelong learners who will have better chances to succeed.

Funding from RTLTP was awarded to the Children's Studies Center, as coprincipal investigators, in October 2005. As a university partner in the first year of the grant, Brooklyn College selected sixteen students to become researchers as a part of a campuswide recruitment campaign. The students were trained and completed a Collaborative Institutional Review Board (IRB) Training Initiative certificate course administered by The City University of New York for Human Subjects Research Computer Based Training. The students were then employed through the grant and assigned to conduct research with more than twenty preschool and kindergarten educators as a part of the first pilot formative study. They traveled throughout the New York City metropolitan area community to meet with educators onsite at their schools and to conduct a



Professor Margaret-Ellen Pipe, Children's Studies and Psychology (far right) and Askia Egashira, Children's Studies adjunct faculty (second from right). Shown with high school students from P.A.R.T. (Participatory Action Research Team) from Benjamin Banneker Academy for Community Development, in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn. The students are working collaboratively in Professor Pipe's Applied Research in Children's Studies course. They have recently completed a project entitled "Through the Wire: Attitudes and Responses to Metal Detectors

and Scanners in New York City Public High Schools," and have created a video of this project.

closing questionnaire survey regarding educational materials that were used with the children in each classroom during the previous two weeks.

Follow-up focus groups and data collected from the student researchers helped appreciably to contribute to the development of educational

materials (currently being sold in Target) and media, such as the currently airing children's show called *Word World*. For a clip of the show and the latest information, see the Ready to Learn Partnership website: <http://www.rtlp.org>.

From the Classroom to the Workplace and Community



Classroom Guest Lectures

Our students are afforded a world class education through a unique program that incorporates a holistic approach to their educational experiences. We provide connections to the community through guest speakers who come to visit them at our forums, classrooms, and events, and by placing them in child-centered professional settings where they may gain experiential knowledge and apply what they have learned to situations outside the College.

Our guests have included the Hon. Michael A. Corriero, then Judge of the New York State Court of Claims, who sat by designation in the New York City Supreme Court and was presiding Judge of Manhattan's Youth Part; Julie Farber, Director of Policy at Children's Rights; the Hon. Bryanne Hamill, Brooklyn Family Court; Dr. Victor Karunan, Chief, Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP), Division of Policy and Practice, UNICEF Headquarters; the Hon. Esther Morgenstern, Justice of the Integrated Domestic Violence Court; James E. Sailer, Director of Corporate Affairs at the Population Council; and the Hon. Helene E. Weinstein, a member of the New York State Assembly. Guest lecturers have inspired our students and have created connections for student success. Many students view these speakers as role models who

have brought about profound changes in their thinking about prospective careers.

Career Exploration Internships

The career exploration internship course is designed to help students learn about careers in child- and youth-related fields and organizations in professional settings, including the media, the court system, advocacy centers, child welfare and public health organizations, NGOs, legislative offices, and more. Students have had life-changing experiences through the internship opportunity combined with classes in the Children's Studies Program. The knowledge gained has helped students to see their work with children and youth in a new light, and they often speak of the influence the Children's Studies Program has had on their career choices.

Children First Club

Children's Studies students, inspired by their classroom and cocurricular children's studies activities, formed the Children First Club. They have been involved in many child-focused activities, both independently and in conjunction with the Children's Studies Center. They have created their own blog site (<http://www.childrenfirstclub.blogspot.com>), been active in the community, and have been invited to speak at campuswide events.

Alumni Spotlight



Children's Studies alumni have been accepted to prestigious graduate schools in education, law, medicine, and social work, to name a few, and have gone on to successful and rewarding careers. Here are a few of their stories.

Josephine Greco-Maione, '03,
CUNY Baccalaureate, major in
Children's Studies;
she has worked for
seventeen years at
St. Mary, Mother of
Jesus/St. Frances
Cabrini Academy.

Working with the children at her school, Josephine gathered 3,000 signatures in support of the establishment of an independent Office of the Child Advocate for New York. Public support resulted in the drafting of legislation for such an office in the New York State Senate by Senator Martin J. Golden. In addition, she arranged to donate a large mural by her students that is now on display in the Children's Studies Center.

"In 2003, when the other moderators of the K.E.Y. honors program at the academy and I were

looking for a suitable project to work on with our students, I suggested teaching them about the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. We began by discussing human rights in general and then the rights of children. The courses that I took on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and the history of human rights in the Children's Studies

Program had a direct impact on this work. The students debated the whole idea of children's rights—believe me, those discussions were very lively! The children's natural creativity led them to find a way to express what they had learned, and they created a mural.

Under the guidance of our art teacher, several of the students with strong artistic skills did the drawings and the others added color. The students also created display boards to outline the basic themes of the Convention and to illustrate the need for child advocacy. They prepared an assembly program to educate their fellow students.



photo: Claudia Mandlik

“Dr. Lenzer helped us to develop the theme with the children, and they, in turn, were very impressed with her. She visited the school to speak to the students and then attended our assembly in which the students encouraged their peers to collect signatures for the establishment of the Office of Child Advocate.

“The Children’s Studies Program made me aware of the plight of children around the world as well in our own country. I often find myself having to advocate for services for my students. I understand how important it is for them to be given the right interventions. The way we treat our youngsters will eventually affect all of us.”



photo: Claudia Mandlik

Olga Tratskevitskaya, '08, B.A. in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, minor in Children’s Studies.

As a member of the Children’s Studies Program, Olga participated as a student researcher in the U.S. Department of Education Ready to Learn Partnership, where she gained valuable training and experience. She has also participated in the Children’s

Studies career exploration internship, through which she worked in Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum’s office. As a result of research conducted there, she is credited in four policy research publications of the Office of the Public Advocate that are focused on children and youth-related issues.

Olga helped found and was the president of the Brooklyn College

Children First Club and has represented the club at several events to speak on behalf of children and youth. Here is what she had to say about one such event and about Children’s Studies in general:

“The Children First Club, in collaboration with the Children’s Studies Program and Center, the CUNY School of Law, and

UNICEF, held the second event of the Child Policy Forum of New York as part of nationwide meetings under the auspices of The Campaign for the U.S. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. During the event, I spoke about current issues that affect adolescents every day and the types of student involvement necessary to help them survive their struggles.

“The Children’s Studies Program allowed me to gain a better understanding of children and youth as individuals. In the past, I judged children’s actions based only on my own experience. With a better perspective on the varied backgrounds of children and the issues that children face each day, I am more careful in my judgments.”

Natalie Williams, ’99, B.A. in Psychology, minor in Children’s Studies; M.S.Ed. in School Psychology. Codirector of the Garden House School, a private school in Manhattan.

“The Children’s Studies Program proved to be an inspiration. In particular, a class assignment to keep a journal of childhood experiences had a lasting effect on me. It enabled me to reflect on my relationships with my family and on the impact my early experiences had on my life. My work in this course also led Professor Lenzer to refer me to the Garden House School for a position as an assistant teacher. I was hired for the position and also began work on my master’s degree in

Education at Brooklyn College. In June 2002 I graduated from the School Psychology Program and obtained my permanent teaching certification as an early childhood education teacher.

“I moved up the career ladder faster than I ever expected and became codirector of the school after three years on the job. Following my first year as codirector, I spent three weeks at the school in London where I observed the

school’s philosophy in practice. It was at that time that my colleague and I wrote the curriculum. We were able to bring the vision of the original school back to America. We now have an enrollment of two hundred students, ages 2½ to 6 years old. This spring I will complete my sixth year as

codirector of the school.

“In addition, I currently serve on the board of the Independent Schools Admissions Association of Greater New York (ISAAGNY). I have also served as a parent volunteer on the Community District Education Council (CDEC).

“The Children’s Studies Program led me to a career in education that has brought me great fulfillment.”



photo: Claudia Mandlik

Grateful Acknowledgement

to all of our Champions for Children



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The Honorable Bryanne Hamill

Kings County Family Court
Brooklyn, New York

Dr. Victor Karunan

Chief, Adolescent Development and
Participation (ADAP)
Division of Policy and Practice
UNICEF Headquarters
New York, New York

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State University of New York
at Stony Brook

Edward Zigler

Sterling Professor of Psychology
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Yale Center in Child Development
and Social Policy
Yale University

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Children's Studies Faculty Committee

Gertrud Lenzer	Children's Studies and Sociology	(718) 951-3192
Margaret-Ellen Pipe	Children's Studies and Psychology	(718) 951-3192
Yael Orbach	Children's Studies	(718) 951-3192
Gail B. Gurland	Speech Communication Arts and Sciences	(718) 951-5186
Louise Hainline	Dean of Research and Graduate Studies	(718) 951-5252
Lindley P. Hanlon	Film	(718) 951-5664
Margaret L. King	History	(718) 951-5303
Carol Korn-Bursztyn	Education	(718) 951-5431
Régine Latortue	Africana Studies	(718) 951-5597
Betty Wolder Levin	Health and Nutrition Sciences	(718) 951-5026
Roni L. Natov	English	(718) 951-5195
María E. Pérez y González	Puerto Rican and Latino Studies	(718) 951-5561

Children's Studies Program and Center Staff

Professor Gertrud Lenzer, Director

glenzer@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Professor Margaret-Ellen Pipe

mepipe@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Loretta Chin

Research Coordinator

Loretta@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Elise Goldberg

Coordinator/Higher Education Assistant

Eliseg@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Jane Muller

College Assistant

Janem@brooklyn.cuny.edu



Children's Studies Program and Center

Brooklyn College
The City University of New York
2900 Bedford Avenue
3602 William James Hall
Brooklyn, New York 11210
Telephone: (718) 951-3192
Facsimile: (718) 677-6154

<http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/childrensstudies>

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