

# ANTHROPOLOGY OF CHILDHOOD INTEREST GROUP



# NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 1

February 2009

## From the Anthropology of Childhood Interest Group Advisory Board

by Kristen Cheney

Greetings from the Anthropology of Childhood Interest Group Advisory Board! The ACIG was formed in 2007. When we began, we didn't actually *have* an advisory board, but given the overwhelming response to the formation of the interest group (700+ members!), we decided we needed one – and fast! Several senior scholars answered the call, and we formed an advisory board in fall, 2008. The members are:

Myra Bluebond-Langner (Rutgers U)  
Kristen Cheney (U Dayton)  
David Lancy (Utah State U)  
Helen Schwartzman (Northwestern U)  
Susan Shepler (American U)  
Tom Weisner (UCLA)

Each newsletter, we will provide an update on any news or announcements from the ACIG Advisory Board. We are pleased to present the first below!

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# 2008 Meetings of the American Anthropological Association

by Kristen Cheney

At the 2008 AAAs, we were very excited to count over 30 sessions dedicated to childhood issues – most arranged by our members. We hope to keep up the momentum and the strong presence in the AAA. To that end, we formed five working groups at the ACIG Business Meeting to carry out some projects for the interest group:

## 1. Development of the Interest Group

Given the ACIG's rapid growth, we formed a working group on **Development** issues to explore possible future directions for the group. The consensus so far is that we should stay an interest group rather than move toward sectionhood, as we don't want to compete with other groups for members' dues, possibly see our numbers decline, and deal with the institutional and other obligations of a section. We can renew that conversation in future years, but in the meantime, it may be best to work on partnerships and collaborations – with other interest groups, sections (including area sections), and organizations to help get proposed panels accepted, or piggyback on other conferences. We were very successful doing just that in 2008.

The working group also encourages our members to run for offices in the AAA and other organizations to help build our institutional presence and partnering ability. They hope to apply for grants to support our own mini-conferences and workshops concerning childhood. Finally, they suggested setting up a voluntary donation fund in lieu of imposing dues to help fund events. Contact Tom Weisner to get involved: [tweisner@ucla.edu](mailto:tweisner@ucla.edu).

## 2. Newsletter

The **Newsletter** you are currently reading is also one of the projects to come out of the meeting. We hope to make it available on a bi-annual basis (February/October) via PDF and/or on our website. Please see the Solicitations feature in this issue of the Newsletter below to see what regular features are planned for the future and how you can contribute. Contact Newsletter editor Rachael Stryker ([rstryker@mills.edu](mailto:rstryker@mills.edu)) with any questions/comments/submissions for the newsletter.

## 3. Website

The **ACIG Website**, <http://aacig.wetpaint.com/>, will play host to a number of other projects underway. The website is still under construction, but the working group hopes to make it very interactive. It currently features announcements, recommended reading, children in the news, and much more. Editors and web designers needed! Contact David Lancy ([david.lancy@usu.edu](mailto:david.lancy@usu.edu)) to get involved.



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#### 4. Resource Collections

The **Resource Collection** working group will be compiling bibliographies, filmographies, and IRB/methods/ethics information for posting on the website. Volunteers curate certain topics and hope to develop a wiki and/or searchable database to go on the website. Members may also write columns discussing literature in a particular sub-area, including a top-five list generated through SurveyMonkey. Contact volunteer coordinator Krisjon Olson ([kolson@mail.colgate.edu](mailto:kolson@mail.colgate.edu)) to inquire about a topic you'd like to curate.

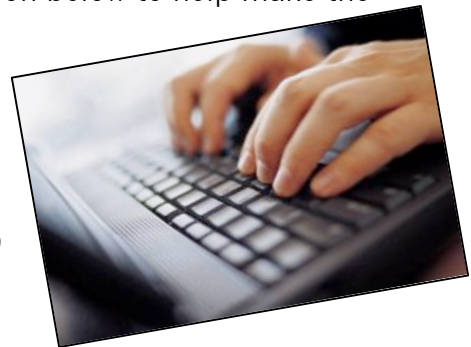
#### 5. Planning Committee

Finally, we formed a **Planning Committee** (Myra and Helen) to get started on this year's AAA meeting. We hope members continue to use the listserv to organize panels. We hope to block more time for our organizational meeting so that we can incorporate a social event. Specifically, the committee is planning a book event to showcase the range of books on the anthropology of children. If you've a book you'd like to include, contact Helen Schwartzman at [hsjsls@northwestern.edu](mailto:hsjsls@northwestern.edu) for details. The meetings will take place in Philadelphia this year, and Myra Bluebond-Langner will coordinate a local committee to make food for the social event. Philly-area members please contact her at [bluebond@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:bluebond@camden.rutgers.edu) to sign up.

## Get involved!

If any of the projects described above have piqued your interest, we'd sure love your help. Please inquire with the appropriate contact person below to help make the ACIG interest group a success!

- **Development**  
(grants/partnership/collaboration): Tom Wiesner ([tweisner@ucla.edu](mailto:tweisner@ucla.edu))
- **Newsletter:** Rachael Stryker ([rstryker@mills.edu](mailto:rstryker@mills.edu))
- **Website:** David Lancy ([david.lancy@usu.edu](mailto:david.lancy@usu.edu))
- **Resource Collection:** Krisjon Olson ([kolson@mail.colgate.edu](mailto:kolson@mail.colgate.edu))
- **Planning** (AAA 2009): Myra Bluebond-Langner ([bluebond@camden.rutgers.edu](mailto:bluebond@camden.rutgers.edu)) and Helen Schwartzman ([hsjsls@northwestern.edu](mailto:hsjsls@northwestern.edu))



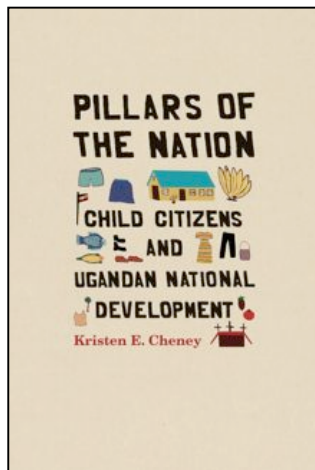
While there has been increasing recognition of the need for more child-centered scholarship in anthropology – stressing children as social actors rather than as mere objects of socialization – childhood scholars understand that this must be accompanied by a shift in methodological practices to accommodate the development of scholarship that accurately interprets children’s social worlds and their connection to broader social structures. Accordingly, the Anthropology of Children & Childhood Interest Group organized two panels at the 2008 AAA meetings on theoretical and methodological issues in the study of childhood.

The first, a roundtable called **Working with Children**, consisted of Helen Schwartzman, Myra Bluebond-Langner, Jane Baxter, and Paul Garrett. Together with a lively audience, they spent nearly two hours exploring the methodological and ethical issues involved in research with children, from cultural, archaeological, and linguistic perspectives. Of particular interest in that conversation was the topic of internal review boards (IRBs) and the disjunctures researchers encounter when trying to get research clearance to work with children. Participants expressed some skepticism about IRBs’ understanding of the work we do. Many often found IRBs more of a hindrance in navigating the ethical landscape of childhood research than a help.

“ Both panels were very successful, indicating how attention to childhood may actually transform anthropological practice as well. ”

The second, a double panel called **Theorizing Childhood: Including the Child's Perspective in the Anthropology of Childhood**, chaired by Ignasi Clemente and David Rosen, brought together an interdisciplinary group of innovative researchers and highly distinguished scholars who have pioneered the study of children’s worlds for more three decades to reflect on the last 50 years of children's studies, as well as to define a theoretical basis for a study of childhood that is increasingly more inclusive of children's own perspectives and understandings. These presentations reflected on the place of childhood studies in anthropology, collaborative and participatory research with children, the legal and ethical implications of relating to children as participants in our research, and potential contributions to social policy.

Both panels were very successful, indicating how attention to childhood may actually transform anthropological practice as well. But they are still just a start: we’d like to see the dialogue continue. To that end, we are initiating a newsletter column on methods and ethics in the anthropology of childhood. If any of the issues mentioned above are of interest to you, we welcome you to share your thoughts by writing a column for our newsletter. Please contact editor Rachael Stryker ([rstryker@mills.edu](mailto:rstryker@mills.edu)) for more details.



Kristen E. Cheney

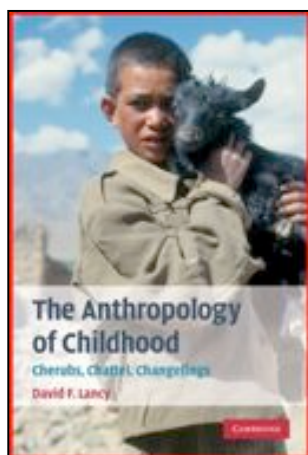
## *Pillars of the Nation: Child Citizens and Ugandan National Development*

(2007, Chicago)

How can children simultaneously be the most important and least powerful people in a nation? In her innovative ethnography of Ugandan children — the pillars of tomorrow’s Uganda, according to the national youth anthem — Kristen E. Cheney answers this question by exploring the daily contradictions children face as they try to find their places amid the country’s rapidly changing social conditions. Drawing on the detailed life histories of several children, Cheney shows that children and childhood are being redefined by the desires of a young country struggling to position itself in the international community. She moves between urban schools, music festivals, and war zones to reveal how Ugandans are constructing childhood as an empowering identity for the development of the nation. Moreover, through her analysis of children’s rights ideology, national government strategy, and children’s everyday concerns, Cheney also shows how these young citizens are vitally linked to the global political economy as they navigate the pitfalls and possibilities for a brighter tomorrow.

For more information or to purchase:

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/presssite/metadata.epl?mode=synopsis&bookkey=227459>



David F. Lancy

## *The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings*

(2008, Cambridge)

Childrearing, children’s roles in society, and the degree to which family and community is structured around children, varies quite significantly around the world. *The Anthropology of Childhood* provides the first comprehensive review of the literature on children from a distinctly anthropological perspective. Bringing together key evidence from cultural anthropology, history, and primate studies, it argues that our common understandings about children are narrowly culture-bound. Whereas the dominant society views children as precious, innocent and preternaturally cute “cherubs,” Lancy introduces the reader to societies where children are viewed as unwanted, inconvenient “changelings,” or as desired but

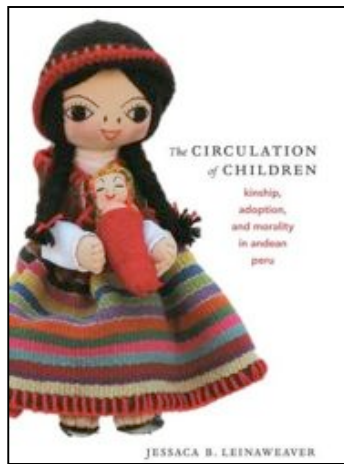
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pragmatically commodified “chattel.” Looking in particular at family structure and reproduction, profiles of children’s caretakers, children’s treatment at different ages, their play, work, schooling, and transition to adulthood, this volume provides a rich, interesting, and original portrait of children in past and contemporary cultures. Jargon-free and politically balanced, this is a must-read for anyone interested in childhood.

For more information: <http://www.anthropologyofchildhood.usu.edu/>

To purchase:

<http://www.cambridge.org/catalogue/catalogue.asp?isbn=9780521716031&ss=cop>



Jessaca B. Leinaweaver

## The Circulation of Children: Kinship, Adoption, and Morality in Andean Peru

(2008, Duke)

In this vivid ethnography, Jessaca B. Leinaweaver explores “child circulation,” informal arrangements in which indigenous Andean children are sent by their parents to live in other households. At first glance, child circulation appears tantamount to child abandonment. When seen in that light, the practice is a violation of international norms regarding

children’s rights, guidelines that the Peruvian state relies on in regulating legal adoptions. Leinaweaver demonstrates that such an understanding of the practice is simplistic and misleading. Her in-depth ethnographic analysis reveals child circulation to be a meaningful, pragmatic social practice for poor and indigenous Peruvians, a flexible system of kinship that has likely been part of Andean lives for centuries. Child circulation may be initiated because parents cannot care for their children, because a childless elder wants company, or because it gives a young person the opportunity to gain needed skills. Leinaweaver relates child circulation to international laws and norms regarding children’s rights, adoptions, and orphans, and to Peru’s history of racial conflict and violence. Given that history, Leinaweaver maintains that it is not surprising that child circulation, a practice associated with Peru’s impoverished indigenous community, is alternately ignored, tolerated, or condemned by the state.

For more information or to purchase: <http://www.dukeupress.edu/books.php3?isbn=8223-4197-0>

“New Books from Our Members” is compiled by Jessaca Leinaweaver. Suggestions for books to be featured in upcoming newsletters may be sent to [Jessaca\\_Leinaweaver@brown.edu](mailto:Jessaca_Leinaweaver@brown.edu).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### CONFERENCES ON CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD

#### Including Children: Celebrating 10 Years of the Institute for the African Child

Ohio University

12-14 March 2009

The Call for Papers deadline has passed. The deadline for registration is 12 February 2009. For more information, or to register, go to:

<http://www.afrchild.ohio.edu/Conferences/index.html>



#### “Pedagogies of Hope”: Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education Conference

Bethlehem City, Palestine

22-25 June 2009

The deadline for submission of abstracts has already passed. However, online registration to attend the conference opens on 10 February 2009. To register for the conference, go to: <http://rece09.com>



#### Children and the Law International Conference

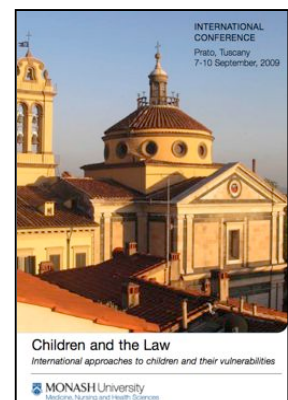
Monash University

Prato, Tuscany, Italy

7-10 September 2009

The deadline for submission of abstracts is: 30 April 2009. For more information, or to submit an abstract, go to:

<http://www.med.monash.edu.au/socialwork/conference09>



## CONTRIBUTE

# Solicitations for the October 2009 Newsletter

We are soliciting the following Columns/Features from ACIG members for the October 2009 Newsletter:

## COLUMNS (800 words maximum)

- \* **“Methods & Ethics in the Anthropology of Childhood,”** in which members explore the methods and ethics associated with doing research on, or with, children
- \* A **“Childhood & \_\_\_\_\_”** column (you fill in the blank!), in which members discuss a topic of interest to their research
- \* **“My Favorite Ethnography of Childhood,”** in which members discuss their favorite classic or contemporary ethnography of children or childhood and why
- \* **“My Experiences/Intersections with Interdisciplinary Research on Children,”** in which members investigate the value, pitfalls, and lessons associated with combining anthropological research with that of other disciplines to study children

## FEATURES

### Professional Opportunities & Upcoming Events

- \* Job announcements
- \* Research Opportunities
- \* Grants/Prizes Available
- \* Calls for Papers
- \* Conference Announcements

### Member News/Professional Updates

- \* Recent Appointments
- \* Grants Received
- \* Prizes Awarded
- \* Any other achievements that members would like to announce

### Personals

- \* **“A Cry in the Dark,”** in which members solicit research or other forms of assistance from other members
- \* Photos from fieldwork (with caption of 30 words or less)



To contribute any of the above items to the Newsletter, contact editor Rachael Stryker at [rstryker@mills.edu](mailto:rstryker@mills.edu). September 15, 2009 is the deadline for all submissions.