



The University of Reading

**1<sup>ST</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GEOGRAPHIES OF  
CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES  
Department of Geography,  
University of Reading, UK.**

**17-18 September 2007**

**Call for papers**

**Theme: 'Disentangling the socio-spatial contexts of young people and/or their families'**

SPONSORED BY:

Geographies of Children, Youth and Families Working Group of the Royal Geographical Society/Institute of British Geographers

University of Reading Norma Wilkinson Bequest

*Children's Geographies*: a Taylor and Francis Journal

CONFIRMED KEYNOTE SPEAKERS, include:

Professor Stuart Aitken (University of San Diego, USA)

Dr Sarah Holloway (Loughborough University, UK)

Dr Lia Karsten (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Professor Cindi Katz (City University of New York, USA)

Professor Chris Philo (University of Glasgow, UK)

Professor Sue Ruddick (University of Toronto, Canada)

Professor Gill Valentine (University of Leeds, UK)

The conference is the first of a bi-annual international conference series\* that has been prompted by the current international vitality of geographies of children, young people and families (Aitken, 2007). The aim of the conference is to provide a forum for the exchange of different knowledges, ideas and experiences from researchers and practitioners working in variety of international contexts and disciplinary fields, who are interested in exploring and advancing any aspect of geographies of children, youth and families.

The unifying conference theme is 'disentangling the socio-spatial contexts of young people and/or their families'.

The development of children's geographies has been underpinned by the adoption of the concept of the 'sociological child' (James et al., 1998), which has destabilised dominant, 'commonsense' assumptions about children. Researchers investigating the geographies of children and young people now widely accept that children have social agency. Within critical accounts, children and young people are no longer viewed as adults-in waiting, whose development proceeds along a series of pre-defined steps.

Despite the many achievements of critical understandings of childhood, it is becoming increasingly apparent that such an approach also constrains and frames conceptual and theoretical debates. For instance, there has been a tendency to focus upon children in isolation from their families (Punch, 2007). Further, focusing upon agency can underplay the role of 'structures' which constrain and facilitate young people's experiences. Finally, Ruddick (2006) suggests that narrow, dominant, concepts of agency and agents, as self-cohesive and independent, are often reproduced in such accounts. Ultimately such a view of agency 'others' those viewed as 'dependent'.

This conference provides a collaborative attempt to enhance sociological / geographical conceptualisations of childhood and youth by more fully establishing children and young people in their socio-spatial context. It is hoped that the advances facilitated by critical understandings of childhood and youth will be taken forward. At the same time, the conference provides a forum to begin to collectively address some of the critiques recently levelled at geographies of children and youth, drawing upon stimulating current research. Themes to be explored could include, without being limited to:

- Children and young people in their families and households.
- Inter-subjective relationships and the construction of child/youthful subjects.

- The experiences of children and young people who are particularly 'othered' via dominant assumptions of agency, such as those with disabilities, mental ill-health and socio-emotional differences.
- How children and young people are variously socio-spatially positioned in relation to a variety of axes of power and broader material socio-spatial processes.
- Children and young people's social networks and relationships.
- Children's and young people's differentiated experience of 'risk'.
- Examining the methodological and ethical implications of re-examining the sociological child.
- Children and young people's emotional geographies/geographies of affect.

More broadly, the conference is designed to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and networking between researchers interested in any field of geographies of children, young people and families. With this in mind, the key theme is designed as a starting point to stimulate debate and discussion; papers therefore are invited that detail any aspect of geographies of children, youth and families.

Abstracts (maximum of 200 words) for paper or poster presentations should be sent to Louise Holt (L.Holt@Reading.ac.uk) by 15th August 2007.

There will be an early bird registration discount of £30 for delegates who register before 15th August.

\* Future events are scheduled to take place in Barcelona, Spain and Melbourne, Australia

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