# 16<sup>th</sup> KUASS (Kyoto University African Studies Seminar)

## Culture, Childhood, and Cognition

Date: Jul 5, 2013 (Fri.), 15:00 – 18:30

Venue: Medium Seminar Room, 3F Inamori Bldg.,

Kawabata Campus, Kyoto University

## **Program**

15:00-15:10

1. Introduction

Akira Takada (Kyoto University)

15:10-16:40

The context of early childhood: Family, culture, and policy – family decision making Marguerite (Peg) Barratt (The George Washington University & Kyoto University)

16:50-18:20

Culture and attention: Implications for developmental research Takahiko Masuda (University of Alberta)

18:30-20:00

Reception

Each slot includes talk and discussion. All talks are given in English without translation. Admission free for attending the symposium. For the reception, contribution of \$1000-2000 a person will be required.

#### Co-hosted with

6th Seminar of anthropology of education and learning (financially supported by JSPS Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (A) "Cultural and ecological foundations of education and learning: An anthropological study on rhythm, imitation, and exchange (Primary Investigator: Akira Takada)"

# Title 1: The context of early childhood: Family, culture, and policy – family decision making

Speaker 1: Dr. Marguerite (Peg) Barratt, Dean and Professor of Psychology, Fulbright Research Scholar, The George Washington University & Kyoto University

The multiple influences on children, as conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979), provide a useful framework for understanding early childhood in various cultures. With a focus on the family (microsystem), institutions (mesosystem), policies (exosystem), and culture (macrosystem), this project will examine the context of early childhood in Japan, and make cross-cultural comparisons with the United States. The proposed research will use my earlier work in the US (Barratt & Fener, 2010) as the empirical foundation for a careful and systematic consideration of policy and practice related to early childhood in Japan.

This policy framework will serve as the foundation for the second part of this research, an empirical study that focuses on the factors that influences parent choices for their young children. A Japan/US/France comparative study on breastfeeding that I have been involved with provides an additional foundation (Negayama, Norimatsu, Barratt & Bouville, 2012). Conversations with families, and those who work with them, may lead to a questionnaire study will assess the influences on parental decision-making. Areas of interest include, for example, breastfeeding, weaning, sleep practices, inoculations, and reading to children.

Why is it important? Understanding the factors that influence parent choices to follow recommendations can inform efforts to optimize children's development. Deeper understanding of cross-cultural influences will emerge.

### Title 2: Culture and attention: Implications for developmental research

Speaker 2: Dr. Takahiko Masuda, University of Alberta, Canada

Issues of ethnicity and culture are some of the most controversial topics in the field of social science and humanities in the 21st century. Previously, psychologists have investigated the presumably universal aspects of psychological mechanisms and have paid little attention to the socio-cultural contexts in which these mechanisms take place. In the last three decades, however, cultural psychologists have investigated systematic cultural variations in psychological processes. These findings suggest that culture and human psychology mutually influence each other. In this talk, I will introduce cultural variation in attention and memory within the frameworks of holistic vs. analytic thought (Nisbett, 2003; Nisbett and Masuda, 2003; Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001; Nisbett & Masuda, 2003), and of "cultural products"—public, shared, tangible representations of culture available in a given society (Morling & Lamoreaux, 2008). I will begin by introducing studies which examined cultural variations in attention and memory (e.g. Masuda & Nisbett, 2001), and in aesthetic expression and design (Masuda, Gonzalez, Kwan, & Nisbett, 2008; Wang, Masuda, Ito, & Rashid, 2012). I will then report recent findings of two developmental studies which investigated (1) when cultural variation in aesthetic expressions emerges and (2) how much caregivers' patterns of narratives influence children's development of culturally unique narratives (Senzaki & Masuda, 2013; Senzaki, Masuda, & Ishii, 2013). Implications will be discussed in relation to the development of culturally unique perspectives.