



Seewiesen Colloquia

Speaker invited by: Simone Pika, *Comparative Gestural Signalling (CGS)*

Thursday, 10.11.2011 13:00 h, in House 7, Lecture Room

Cultures of Infancy

Heidi Keller

University of Osnabrück

Lower Saxonian Institute of Early Childhood Education and Development

Infancy is a life stage that was considered as a “blooming buzzing confusion” (William James) for a long time. Ethological longterm observations of infants in their natural environment have revealed that infants have a multitude of behavioural predispositions that enable them to participate in social interactions from the beginning. The era of the “competent infant” started during the 1970ies with a still ongoing documentation of inborn capacities as well as abilities to process environmental information. Most of the research is aimed at documenting universality. From an evolutionary as well as a cultural perspective, however, development has to be adapted to contextual demands, so that cultural variation in developmental pathways has to be expected. With our cross-cultural longitudinal research program we are exactly addressing this question with a multimethod approach. Based in an ecocultural model, we assess children’s learning environments (i.e. socialization goals of their families, ethnotheories and the infant’s social experiences). We follow the infants’ mastery of universal developmental tasks over the next years. With the example of two very different ecosocial contexts, Western middle-class families and subsistence-based farmer families, two diverging views on infancy will be presented. Developmental consequences in terms of different developmental trajectories will be highlighted.

Who is Heidi Keller

- 1975 PhD University of Mainz
- 1984 Habilitation at the Technical University Darmstadt
- 1984 Professor at the University of Osnabrück
- 2007 Head of the Research Unit “Culture, learning and Development” at the Lower Saxonian Institute of Early Childhood Education and Development
- 2002 Fellow in Residence at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Selected publications:

- Keller, H. (2007). *Cultures of infancy*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum (greek translation 2010; spanish translation in preparation).
- Keller, H. (Ed.) (2011). *Handbuch der Kleinkindforschung*. Bern: Huber Verlag.
- Keller, H. (2011). *Kinderalltag. Kulturen der Kindheit und ihre Bedeutung für Bindung, Bildung und Erziehung*. Heidelberg: Springer.
- Keller, H., Yovsi, R. D., Borke, J., Kärtner, J., Jensen, H., & Papaligoura, Z. (2004). Developmental consequences of early parenting experiences: Self regulation and self recognition in three cultural communities. *Child Development*, 75(6), 1745-1760.
- Kärtner, J., Keller, H., Chaudhary, N., & Yovsi, R. (in press). The development of mirror self-recognition in different socio-cultural contexts. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*.