



McGill

Department of
Epidemiology, Biostatistics
and Occupational Health

Population and Public Health Special Seminar Winter 2019



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Early-life Influences on Cognitive Aging from a Global Perspective

Monday, February 18, 2019
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Purvis Hall - Room 24

[ALL ARE WELCOME](#)

Abstract:

Rapid population aging is changing the face of population health worldwide. Very little research has investigated the early-life drivers of cognitive aging in lower- and middle-income countries, such as South Africa, despite projections that over 70% of dementia cases over the next four decades will occur in these regions. This talk will present findings on the relationships between childhood socioeconomic deprivation, the mediating role of Apartheid-era education, and later-life cognitive function in a population-based study of Black adults aged 40+ in rural South Africa. Data are from the baseline wave of “Health and Aging in Africa: A Longitudinal Study of an INDEPTH Community in South Africa” (HAALSI), a new population-based study harmonized with the US Health and Retirement Study (HRS). Findings indicate that receipt of even extremely poor-quality education may improve cognitive health during aging, and that height, as a marker of early-life net nutrition, is positively associated with later-life cognitive function independently of life course covariates. However, the height disparity in cognitive function is completely negated in older adults who had any level of education. An innovation of this work is the application of latent psychometric methods to analyze cognitive function data; these methods improve the quality of cognitive outcome assessment and are under-utilized in social epidemiology. Future research directions include the statistical harmonization of HAALSI data with those from the HRS and other longitudinal studies of aging in countries at varying levels of economic development, to allow for cross-national comparability of cognitive impairment and dementia estimates and comparative life course research.

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In summary, this seminar presents a growing social epidemiologic research program that aims to understand life course risk and resilience factors for cognitive health outcomes during aging across a range of global settings.

Bio:

Lindsay Kobayashi, PhD, is a social epidemiologist who studies life course influences on cognitive health during aging. Dr. Kobayashi's research spans several countries, including the United States, Canada, England, and South Africa. Her research considers life course mechanisms of social inequalities in aging outcomes, particularly those involving education and literacy. She holds a PhD in Epidemiology and Public Health from University College London, UK, where she was the recipient of a Doctoral Foreign Study Award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, and an MSc in Epidemiology from Queen's University, Canada. Dr. Kobayashi completed a David E. Bell Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies at the Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health in 2017. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the Population Sciences Division at the Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center at Georgetown University. Her research has been published in several peer-reviewed journals including *European Journal of Epidemiology*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Journals of Gerontology: Series B: Psychological Sciences & Social Sciences*, and the *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*.