8 Living in Limbo

Hangin’ ................................................................. 2
Creating Warriors......................................................... 7
Sexuality ............................................................... 11
Coming of Age.......................................................... 15
Adolescence and Social Change in Traditional Societies........ 22
Estrangement from Traditional Culture ....................... 26
Adolescents as Students and Consumers ....................... 29
Hangin’


“Individual hamlet groups practiced swidden horticulture, frequently moving their hamlets when they moved their gardens.” (p. 16)

“Adolescents described by the Baining as “big,” although already productive workers, are not yet responsible for their own family or household. They are called upon to contribute to collective work parties, where a big job is done in one day.” (Fajans 1997:93)

“At this period of their life, youths do not want to marry and assume the responsibilities of a spouse and parent. “As for me, I say I don’t want to marry. I want to roam. I want to work on a plantation. I want to stay like this [as I am now]. I will work on a plantation: I will work, I will find money and I will wander. I will work, then later I will marry [adolescent male] [or] I do not want to get married I am still small. Later! Our parents speak, but we do not want to. They talk in vain. I do not like men. I still do not want to. I still do not know about gardens. I do not know how to work yet [adolescent female].” (p. 94)

“We began our study of [18] neighborhoods, teen parents, and multigeneration families in the summer of 1989 in a medium sized, predominately African American northeastern city.” (p. 9)

“As the six o’clock hour approached, small-drug transactions heightened, and the local “audience” of unsupervised children and teen observers grew. Eric, a fourteen-year-old middle school student remarked:

You ought to be out right now. This is when all the peeps [people] is hangin’. You learn about the streets now…It’s good for a young brother to know the streets. You see everybody, styling and profiling. All the peeps see you. If you want to be seen, this is the time to be out.” (p. 16)


“According to Santillán, ages sixteen to twenty were collectively called coca harvester; he tells us that the youth of this category were expected to reap the state-owned coca crop.” (Dean 2002:43)

“To the Andean, “age’ was not so much the sum of years as an evaluation of physical attributes, that “age was not counted in
years as an evaluation of physical attributes, abilities, and dexterity. Cobo 1983 [1653]:194) confirms this, saying that “age was not counted in years, nor did any of them know how many years old they were. [For the census] they were accounted for on the basis of duty an aptitude of each person.” The two major ceremonies for Andean children marked weaning and puberty—the two most important stages of growth that, significantly, commemorated the increasing independence of the young individual. Weaning, celebrated by the haircutting and first naming ceremony, marked the first stage of the child’s physical independence. The puberty rites and second naming ceremony celebrated the age at which the child became a significant contributor to the local economy. The giving of a new name signaled an important reclassification of the individual and his or her significance to society.” (Dean 2002:44)

Shaughnessy, Larry 2008. Marine motorcycle deaths top their Iraq combat fatalities. CNN.COM 10/30/08

Twenty-five Marines have died in motorcycle crashes since November -- all but one of them involving sport bikes that can reach speeds of well over 100 mph, according to Marine officials. In that same period, 20 Marines have been killed in action in Iraq.

“It thus appears that the brain system that regulates the processing of rewards, social information, and emotions is becoming more sensitive and more easily aroused around the time of puberty. What about its sibling, the cognitive-control system? Regions making up the cognitive-control network, especially prefrontal regions, continue to exhibit gradual changes in structure and function during adolescence and early adulthood.” (p 57)

“In one recent study, when asked whether some obviously dangerous activities (e.g., setting one’s hair on fire) were ‘‘good ideas,’’ adolescents took significantly longer than adults to respond to the questions and activated a less narrowly distributed set of cognitive-control regions” (Baird, Fugelsang, & Bennett, 2005). (p. 58)


“Ireland suffered from the activities of gangs of lawless young warriors, operating outside the boundaries of the community (the *tuath*). Fosterage for freeborn males in Ireland would finish at fourteen years old, but thereafter the boys were in social limbo. They lacked the wealth to establish their own families, so they joined the *fian*, ‘an independent organization of predominantly landless, unmarried, unsettle, and young men given to haunting, warfare, and sexual license outside the *tuath*.’ At around twenty
years of age, often on the acquisition of an inheritance through the death of older male relatives, a young man would finally join the group of married property owners.” (p. 162)


“The daily life of adolescent boys is marked by an unfamiliar (by Bonerate standards) amount of leisure and a remarkably high level of passivity. They sit around chatting in the village.” (Broch 1990:145)

“Some days the boys of this age complain that there is little for them to do in the village. They become restless and want to get off to sea. They share daydreams about how they will return to the village rich in money and goods.” (Broch 1990:46)
Moritz, Mark (ND) Disentangling honor psychology and pastoral personality: An ecocultural analysis of herding outlines of FulBe children in West Africa, unpublished paper. The Ohio State University.

Pastoral society, N. Cameroon.

Peer-peer aggression is frequent during herding. FulBe fight with sticks, knives, and/or bow and arrow. Boys are taught and encouraged from a very early age to fight with sticks and they practice the art regularly among themselves; they challenge each other with insults and spar with their herding sticks. When they encounter other young herders during herding, they will challenge them and engage in stick fights...Young boys who are insulted but fail to retaliate may be beat by older family members. Most FulBe men of twenty-five have been in at least one serious fight and everybody has scars from stick fights. Blows are directed at the head and can be fatal. Men continue to engage regularly in fights until age 30. These practices have given FulBe men a reputation for unrestrained and easily provoked aggression of which they are very proud. This socialization in stick fights is institutionalized in a rite of passage called soro...that marks their subsequent transition to manhood. Twice a year, at the onset and the end of the rainy season, some nomadic FulBe clans come together for celebrations such as name giving festivals, dances, and the soro. The soro is a test of manhood, courage, and resistance to pain in which a
candidate has to show no reaction whatsoever while he is severely beaten with a stick by a tester. (p. 23)

Through repeated participation over a period of a couple years in the soro a young FulBe becomes a man. FulBe men cannot marry unless they have successfully participated in the soro [which] takes place in the afternoon when FulBe gather around the candidates. Girls of marriageable age form the inner ring of the audience circled around the young men, and the rest of the clan in the outer circle. When young candidates come forward they stand motionless, either with their hands clasped over their heads or with a mirror in their hand. The tester, armed with a tough branch of tamarind, then circles around the candidate, feinting at him, until suddenly he lets a blow come home. The candidate must take these blows without so much as the flicker of an eyelid. “In fact, to assure himself that he has not shown any sign of emotion, the individual being beaten holds a mirror to his face throughout the contest”. The blows can be cruel, leaving great weals, or even open wounds which produce large scars of which the FulBe are very proud. Accidental disembowelment has been known. When candidates fail the test, they are seized by the girls, their kilts torn off and substituted with girls’ kilts, and made to sit with the children. Failure to successfully participate in the contest leads to humiliation by relatives, social disgrace, and a distinct disadvantage in obtaining wives. To pass the soro is to establish a reputation of courage and strength which indicates the ability to defend the family herds, which is essential when men marry and start their own family herd. In fact, men that pass the soro are given cattle by their patrilineal kin. (p. 24)

“The age at which a child reached theoretical adult status was still twelve years old.” (p. 42)

“Turning to the semantic evidence, far from drawing distinctions between ‘child’ and ‘warrior’, the difficulty lies in disentangling these concepts. Although *cild* was frequently used to mean ‘child’, it also had the connotation of ‘young warrior’, a confusion of terms that can hardly be coincidental…Here, there can be no equivocation about the meaning of *cniht* – he is a boy, specifically stated as not being fully grown to adulthood even by Anglo-Saxon terms, yet the writer has no doubt that his audience will accept his presence in the thick of battle, fighting by the side of the war leader. Wulfmaer may be a boy, but he is no novice. He is a seasoned warrior.” (p. 160)


“The drinking of blood apparently functioned as an initiation rite. Euardo, a seventeen-year-old from Kuito, recalled: “I drank blood on the day I finished my military training, in the swearing-in ceremony. We all had to drink two spoons of blood each. They told us that this was important to prevent us from being haunted by the spirits of the people we might kill…Echoes of traditional
religious beliefs and practices are audible in these testimonies. Militia commanders deliberately used features of local peacetime initiation rituals in the initiation of recruits into violence in order to make boys soldiers fearless and to mystify the taking of life. Herbal medicines were sometimes given to recruits in order to enable them to fight courageously and protect them from death during combat.” (p. 62)

“Together with strenuous physical exercise, manipulation of weapons, and the imposition of strict discipline, these practices represent a powerful ritualized initiation into a culture of violence and terror. However, while initiation may have transformed some boys into strong and fierce combatants it did not facilitate their social transition into responsible adulthood.” (p. 63)

“It was very hard to kill, and then look at all the dead bodies.” (65)
Sexuality

Yemeni Schoolgirl with Fulla Backpack
Brides-To-Be: Luang Prabang, Laos

At a later stage the young man, not yet with a beard grown, freed from supervision, rejoices in horses and dogs and the grassy, sunny field of the Campus Martius; as impressionable as wax, he is easily influenced to vice, sharp with any who reprimand him, slow to see what will be beneficial, prodigal with money, high-handed, full of desires, and swift to leave aside the objects of his desire.” (p. 137)

“Athletic contests, where competitors performed naked, were deemed unsuitable for women and girls, who were denied access while such contests were in progress. Indeed, there was a body of opinion at Rome that athletics and gymnastic sports had a corrupting effect on participants. They were associated with excessive leisure for young men, and nakedness and close bodily contact were thought to lead to improper relationships (i.e. homosexuality).” (p. 330)


“An early marriage is sought for her especially if she begins to show a marked interest in men, for her parents are concerned that she does not build a reputation for loose morals... In traditional families, the problem was solved by marrying daughters off before puberty, even as young as nine or ten. These little girls would move into their husband’s home, to be brought up by him and the mother-in-law, and it would be her new family’s concern, no longer her parents’, to keep her away from other men.” (p. 56)

Hardenberg, Roland 2006. Hut of the young girls: Transition from childhood to adolescence in a middle Indian tribal society. In

“The years when adolescence visit the dormitory can be considered a transitory period between childhood and adulthood. This transitional period ends with marriage when young people turn into responsible members of the village community.” (p. 73)


Coming of Age


“Spinning, weaving and sewing were the activities that defined the gender. The neutral Old English *man* was given masculine gender by the addition of a weapon to *weampan*, while the female compound was created by the addition of weaving: *wifman*.” (p. 167)


“A girl enters adolescence with her first menstruation, a boy with his circumcision ceremony…Girls—who from childhood have been given serious responsibilities around the home—have a very short adolescence and, by the age of fifteen may already have a child …Circumcision is only a boy’s first step toward maturity, the period of irresponsibility continuing usually until after his twenty. Since he cannot marry until he can support a wife, he continues to live at home even though he is working.” (p. 120)


“This is the first full length account of the Uduk people of the Sudan, who live uneasily between the northern and southern
regions of the country, in the borderland close to the Ethiopian frontier.” (p. preface)

“…subsistence way of life, based today on hoe cultivation of sorghum and maize, hunting and fishing, and the rearing of a few domestic animals. Hunting was probably far more important in the past than it is today.” (p. 4)

“First marriage takes place at an early age, often soon after puberty, and is entered with a sense of spice, adventure, and competition, especially among the young men. Tales are told for years afterwards with great relish, of the hazardous courting expeditions of one’s younger days, when a boy went ‘weasel-crawling” (ya leheny, to go as a weasel, i.e. secretly to steal) to exchange endearments with his sweetheart through a small hole in the wall of her hut…A bold lover may creep into the girl’s hut to continue the flirtation in greater comfort, but all the time there is the danger that her relatives will wake up, and beat the boy or chase him far out of the hamlet. When he eventually arranges to elope with her, they spend a few days in a friend’s hut, as secretly as possible.” (p. 136)

“The boy begins to build the hut, and when it is completed brings his bride to live in it. A beer party is held (this should be, but is not always, at the boy’s father’s hamlet), and there may be dancing; and the central element in the ritual is the anointing of the new couple with red ochre (which often marks the completion of a rite of passage, and the same time suggests health and strength). The wife returns to her own hamlet for the birth of her first child, and after a few weeks a double ceremony is held, with been and
sacrifices at the wife’s and the husband’s hamlets, and the child is conducted in a formal procession from its birthplace to its father’s home.” (p. 137)


This supervision intensified as a girl approached puberty. Although she may have enjoyed some liberties roaming about the village as a young child, with the approach of puberty a girl was required to stay close to home and was barred from going out at all in the evening. For girls attending school, such restrictions sometimes meant and end to her education, especially where continuing might require traveling long distances…An extreme example of the sheltering of girls was the traditional practice called *coul plup*, or “entering the shade.” *Coul plup* occurred at first menses and involved seclusion of the young girls in a darkened room. This period of seclusion usually lasted from three weeks to three months, but in some cases it was longer.” (p. 145)

“The longer a girl stayed in seclusion, the more desirable she became and the greater the bride price she could demand.” (p. 146)…A family’s name has been sullied because of a daughter’s misbehavior; the family may be obliged to forgo receipt of a bride price. Since bride price among Khmer in the United States typically averages between $3000 and $6000, the economic consequences of such a disaster are painfully real.” (p. 149)

“In Angola, among the *Tchokwe*, children are identified through the roles they assume; they are even named according to their occupation (p. 41) and roles. For example, *tchitutas* are girls and boys around the age of five to seven, whose role is to fetch water and tobacco for the elders and take messages to neighbors. *Kambumbu* are children (especially girls), seven to thirteen years of age, who participate active in household chores and help parents in the field or with fishing and hunting. *Mukwenge wa lunga* (boys) and the *mwana pwo* (girls), around the age of thirteen, have to pass the rites of initiation. In Mozambique, young girls become wives as early as thirteen or fourteen years of age and become mothers soon after; they are introduced to the roles and responsibilities of married life and motherhood.” (p. 42)


Amish grant freedom to adolescents to stray from strict lifestyle. They do this so that the adolescents may freely choose between joining the world or withdrawing for eternity into the closed Amish society. For example, adolescent permitted cell phone until they begin instruction to permanently join the church. Then they pass it on to someone younger. 95% elect to join the church.
This is a reversal of the prevailing pattern where societies typically impose restrictions on male adolescents, often via painful initiation rites.


“Circumcision was arranged for three or four boys at the same time. Their age would range from six to fifteen years.” (Broch 1990:110)

“Girls are usually “circumcised some years earlier than boys, that is, at from six to twelve years or an approximate average of eight years. … Arranging the ceremonies is expensive. This is another factor that affects the parents’ decision about when their daughters should be circumcised. Food has to be provided. The rituals last for two days, during which all villagers are fed three times. Special costumes are rented, and a ritual leader is hired.” (Broch 1990:130)

“The novices have to control their emotional expression at least during the public parts of the ritual. …Children are not responsible for most violations of social rules and norms, and they are not thought able to control their emotions. Adults are by definition capable of not getting carried away by emotional display. …during circumcision rituals the novices are (Broch 1990:137) formally introduced to the ideal standards of conduct to which adults should conform. … An aspect of malu behavior involves shame and respect for others in interaction. Individuals therefore must know their social position. After circumcision boys and girls are supposed to gradually pay more attention to these matters.” (Broch 1990:138)
“Also the context of task assignments to the initiated girl and boy involve new dimensions. They are now given more assignments and after a while they are supposed to contribute more to the needs of their households. The actual tasks may not differ from those they previously were involved with.” (Broch 1990:138)


Social change and agency

“The initiation system that traditionally cultivated the Bikhet aspects of men is no longer in place.” (Leavitt 1998:177)

“The most significant event of the revival was the revelation of the men’s cult secrets during church services. Many said that men had been so shamed by the public airing of their cult activities that it was utterly impossible to conduct initiations. The Tambaran, they said, was dead.” (Leavitt 1998:178)

“There was also a sense among youths that they, as villagers “from the bush,” would never really be able to make significant contributions to the new social world. No one from the village of Bumbita had ever done well enough in school to be admitted into high school, and that situation seemed unlikely to change.” (Leavitt 1998:178)
“The term for adolescent males in Bumbita Arapesh is *ounohi*. It applies to the period of time from the development of secondary sexual characteristics to the time when a young man marries, usually in his twenties. While the term itself no longer applies after marriage, people felt that a man is not fully mature until he has children. Thus for the Bumbita male, adolescence begins as a category of physical development and ends with a change in social status.” (Leavitt 1998:186)

“His spiritual development is radically incomplete…the Bumbita do not hold that a boy’s physical development will be hampered if he is not initiated into the Tambaran; rather, the primary effect will be on his ability to produce thriving and abundant crop of yams, an ability intimately connected with spiritual, and masculine power.” (Leavitt 1998:186)

“Dangers of men to women, by contrast, come almost entirely from the powers created in them traditionally through their Tambaran initiations or through their involvement with the magical arts (Leavitt 1998:186) of curing or sorcery.” (Leavitt 1998:187)

“A primary tool that men use is magic—to enhance the growth of their crops, to lure pigs into their nets, to practice sorcery, to attract women, and more recently, to insure success in gambling games with playing cards. Performing magic lies almost exclusively within the domain of men, and it is intimately associated with the Bumbita conception of what men are.” (Leavitt 1998:188)
Adolescence and Social Change in Traditional Societies


“In Paraiba, despite efforts by community members encouraging youth to connect to their “African” ancestry, young people wanted to leave the mountains, learn to use computers, learn foreign languages, and travel. They did not see “traditional” activities, such as making clay pots to sell, as economically viable or desirable. Despite stereotypes of being “rooted to the land,” these contemporary youth covet jobs in the city and leave with no intention of returning.” (p. 113)

Child soldiers…


Mozambique.

“Male labor migration to the diamond and gold mines of Witwatersrand and Kimberly in South Africa began in the mid-nineteenth century. For generation after generation, young men left home to find work and earn money to marry. According to local tradition, “You become a man after having been in South Africa.” Men remained away from home for long periods, generally for eighteen months at a time. Some migrants eventually returned
permanently. Others created second families in South Africa while sending remittances home.’ (p. 81)

“Many adults in Mozambique and Angola mentioned that communities in the aftermath of war are still dealing with the serious disruptions the wars caused in the life course of young people. Beyond the massive killings and material destruction, beyond even the transformation of particular children into merciless killers, the wars left a deep moral crisis. Because children were abducted from their homes and school to fight, the initiation rituals and systematic preparation of young people to become responsible adults ceased. A whole generation was seriously affected.” (p. 43)

“Although nine-year-old Paulo was less likely than seventeen-year-old Pitango to have been involved in combat, his family took measures to prevent his being involved in combat, his family took measures to prevent his being afflicted by spirits of the dead. Perhaps his age made him more vulnerable, even though it had delayed his military training. Traditional chiefs (sobas), healers, and diviners (kimbandas), and elders (seculos) in Angola described and explained the rituals used in their regions to purify and reintegrate returning soldiers. A kimbanda in Uige, Angola, explained the procedure for welcoming home a former boy soldier.” (p. 112)


“Sri Lankan industrialists and managers share these assumptions about women and men with their counterparts around the world. In conversations with me they invoked all three of these concepts (nimble fingers, patience, and obedience).” (p. 26)

“A significant reason that the garment industry in the 1990s was targeted toward women employees was because the government needed men to enlist to fight in the war…The Sinhala expression *gāni* (the ‘a’ needs a line between it and the dots) *juki, pirimi tuwakku* sums it up: “Juki for women, guns for men.” I heard this point, in different words (“women work in garment factories, men work in the army).” (p. 27)

“Colombo is perceived by many Sri Lankans to be a corrupt, morally degrading space, and this perception is symbolized by the position of Juki girls. Of the thousands of factory workers in Colombo, by far the most work in the garment industry. These women generally have migrated from their villages, and so they live in boarding houses away from their parents. They are frequently seen walking in the streets, going to movie theaters and shopping, and socializing with men…In illustration of the usage and negative connotation of the word, when prospective grooms advertise for spouses in Sinhala newspaper marriage proposals, they sometimes disqualify garment factory workers with the phrase “no garment girls” or “no Juki girls.” (Lynch 2007:107)
“Village factory women are assumed to be “good” because they are living in their villages.” (p. 155)
Estrangement from Traditional Culture

“The exaggerated discipline of the guerrilla camps left little room for male adolescents to develop concepts of autonomy and control. They were not given a chance to practice and learn how to be campesino adults, dedicated to subsistence agriculture. They were also not given a chance to learn socially acceptable use of alcohol or tobacco, as these were prohibited. They had not learned how to be adults in peace time, yet they were also not prepared to return to the role of the child, as they had assumed adult responsibilities during the war.” (p. 344)

Additionally, government forces labeled all campesinos, and especially adolescent campesinos, as violent "subversives" who would destroy the Salvadoran family and state, a negative label given more weight by the government's genocidal campaign against campesinos. The stigmatized role of guerrilla soldier and the lack of preparation for a new, adult peacetime identity has led many youth to choose the negative identity of the "irresponsible" and "violent" marero (delinquent/ gang member). This is in sharp contrast to the role of "protector" of the family assumed in earlier years. (p. 345)

In the West children are often viewed as innocents in need of nurturing guidance and protection, but “soldiers, in contrast, are associated with strength, aggression, and the responsible maturity of adulthood. The paradoxical combination of child and soldier is unsettling (p. 3)…Are they then victims to be rehabilitated or agents of their own futures as a result of their experience?...Children affected by conflict—both girls and boys—do not constitute a homogenous group of helpless victims but exercise an agency of their own finding themselves in an unsanctioned position between childhood and adulthood.” (p. 4)


“She contends that since children were accustomed to agricultural work, white farmers could buy children’s labor from their fathers. Secondly, older children took migrant labor as an opportunity to leave rural homesteads where seniors had rights over their work. Thirdly, she suggests that when African farmers lost boys to colonial capitalists, girls’ participation in labor-related activities increased.” (p. 481)

“At the start of colonial rule, the wage labor of young Africans in the settler economy was perceived by African seniors as [a] potential source of accumulation. For African youth, Grier claims, wage labor became (Grier 2006: 418) an opportunity to gain some independence from patriarchal control. She also speculates that the introduction of a Head Tax payable by every African man over eighteen-years-old was received by African youth as an alternative route to senior status, and more generally that children “used
towns, mines, and even mission schools as avenues though which to work out alternative constructions of African childhood.” (p. 482)


“The traditional culture of the Inuit did not recognize adolescence as a special period of maturation. So far as I have been able to determine, there is no work for it in the Inuit language…Inuit society was devoid of anything resembling an initiation ceremony for either sex, other than social recognition of a boy’s first kill, or of any other special way of marking the transition. A boy became a man, and a girl a woman. Little note was taken of the transition.” (72)

“The intrusion of Euro-Canadian agencies into the lives and world of the Inuit has changed all this (72)…Children whose parents at the same age were already hunters or wives now continue to carry their books to school daily, awaiting the time when they can step into the “real” world of adulthood.” (p. 73)

“One of the more serious aspects of this discontinuity from land life to hostel living has been…a discontinuity in the use of discipline as a socializing technique.” (p. 76)
Adolescents as Students and Consumers

The prolongation of childhood

Di, Zhu Xiao, Yang, Yi and Liu, Xiaodong  2002. Young American Adults living in parental homes. Joint Center for Housing Studies

Harvard University Report W02-3, May.

2.3 million men and 1.5 million women in the United States between 25 and 34 years old still lived in their parents’ houses. That is 12.5 percent of men and 7.9 percent of women of this age group…an interesting phenomenon is children’s changing expectations for successful independent living.

Authors interviewed co-resident adult children and asked if they were living at home because they could not afford to establish their own households or because they did not want to forego their parents’ standard of living. They found that the adult children they interviewed were willing to forego some independence and tolerate some restrictions in order to have more luxuries. As the luxuries of the older generation have become necessities of the younger, the minimum level of earnings necessary for independent living may have risen. Our model results demonstrate strongly that young adults’ personal income is the major factor that constrains them from independent living.