

Adolescence in a cross-cultural perspective:

Freedman, age grades & age sets

Lecture 14

Cross-cultural data about:

- The existence of this stage?
- The psychic experiences that individuals undergo?

Not much!

so let's look at:

- 1. What other cultures DO with these growing and maturing individuals
- 2. How other cultures **conceptualize** the life course often **very different** than child-adolescent-adult

“Youth culture” vs. short
period between childhood and
adult status

adolescence due to isolation?

- some adolescents COMPLETE seclusion

Girls:

- usually short time between childhood and marriage
- Age of menarche varies world wide

Boys:

- In some simpler societies extended adolescence similarly long to what is found in contemporary industrial society
- Creating warriors

EXAMPLES

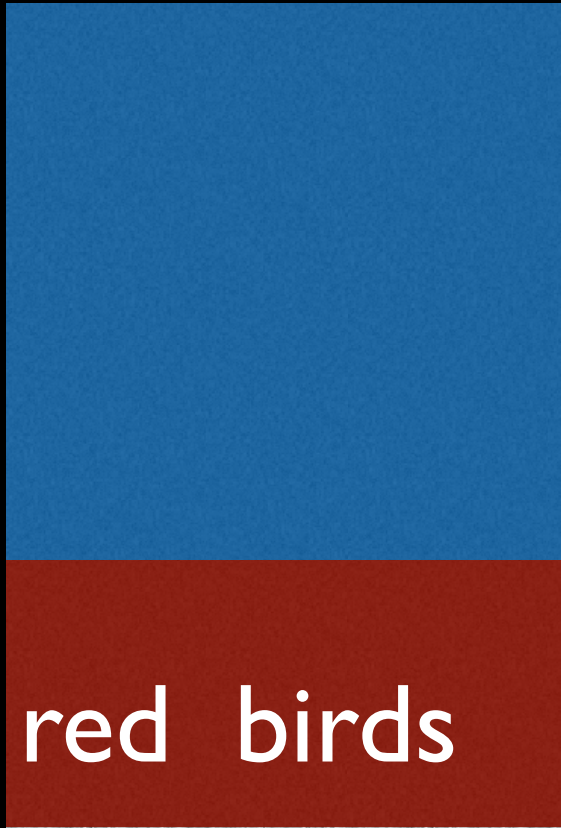
- Spartans
- Inca
- Masaai

How do other cultures
conceptualize the life course
differently than **child-**
adolescent-adult?

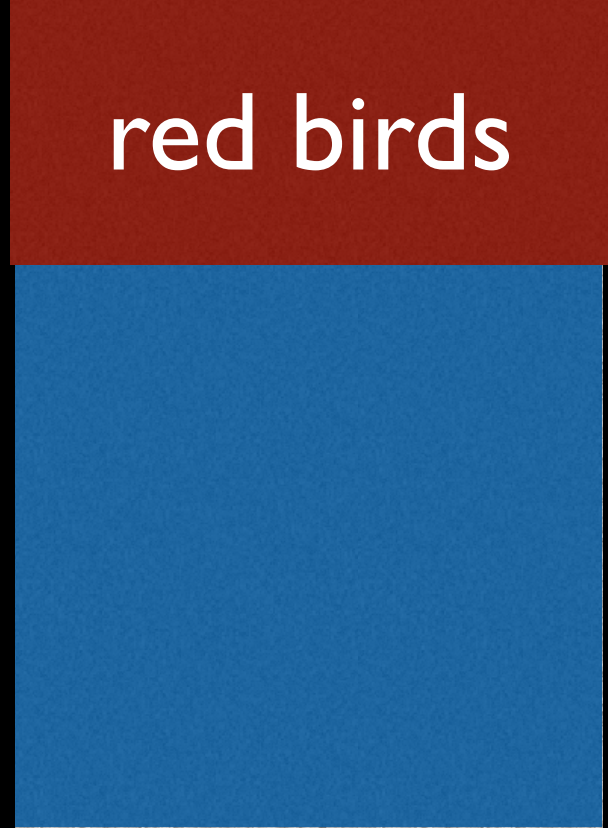
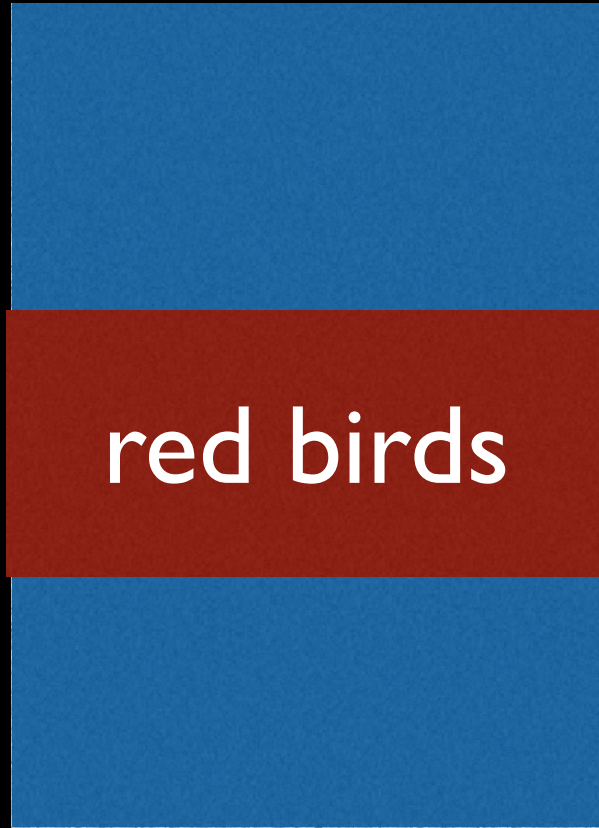
Principles **other** than kinship that link groups:

- complex = political party, sorority, union
- tribe = “associations” or “sodalities”
- (age/gender - more male than female)

- **age set** = a social category consisting of people of similar age, who have a common identity, maintain close ties over a prolonged period, and together pass through a series of age-related statuses (class of 2013). (common in Africa & North Am.)



a
↑
b



- **age grade** = a social category through which people pass individually over time (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior)

Maasai age grades

OI Ngesher
(senior elder)

(junior elder)

moran - botor
(senior warriors - 15 years)

moran - barnot
(junior warriors 5-7 yrs)

sipolio
(newly circumcised boys)

laiyok
(uncircumcised boys)

maasai

- Age grades apply primarily to men - women become age grade of husband
- Age sets formed 5+- years
- move up the hierarchy of age grades (+- 15 years)

Moran (warrior)

- protect people and cattle from predators and other tribes
- take & guard cattle when grazing
- search for new pasture (and fight off people who live there)
- raid cattle from neighboring tribes

sipolio (newly circumcised)

- strict ritual prohibitions/other initiates
- not drink milk in parent's hut
- not eat meat in village
- instruction warfare & tactics

morani - barnot (junior warriors)

- live together in a circle of huts
- grow hair embellish with red ochre
- not allowed to start families (no prolonged contact w/ women)
- “military base”
- learn survival, cattle raiding & warfare
- 5 - 12 years

morán - botor

- return home
- elders decide when and whom can marry
- marry & start families
- home guard

OI Ngesher (elder)

- both men and women leaders
- have no headman or chief
- decisions by consensus of elders

NANDI

- A pastoral tribe in Kenya.
- Every male belongs to an age-set from birth.
- Nandi males have 7 age grades
- Nandi age set is cyclical

Purpose:

- Provide a source of manpower for military purposes
- Regulating behavior

Women:

- Nandi women have no age-sets.
- Go through the culturally recognized age grades of tipick (girls) and osotik (married women).

THE PLAINS INDIANS

- age sets of increasing rank.
- each distinctive dance, song, possessions & privileges
- pool wealth to buy admissions to next level

EX: HIDATSA

- Stone hammers (10 -11)
- Lumpwoods (14-15)
- Youths (17-18) ...
- Raven club (oldest men)

Women:

- smaller but parallel series of age grades.
- mode of purchase was the same.
- direct affiliation with the male series.



GOD GREW TIRED OF US



"A moving documentary that informs, entertains and inspires..."

Claudia Ping, USA Today



What to look for:

- Cultural differences
- Our own ethnocentricity
- Individual v.s. group

Assignment:

- Chase, Chapter 3

What to look for:

- Ethnographic method
- How socio-economic class/access to resources effects adolescence for upper class?
- Class, ethnic and gender differences
- What is the status of women?