

Adolescence in a cross-
cultural perspective:

Age villages, Harvard &
socioeconomic
differences

Lecture 15

THE NYAYKUSA

- Bantu-speaking people in Southern Tanzania

Age Villages

- A village consists of a group of age mates with their wives and young children.
- starts when a # of herd-boys (10-11 yrs) build huts

- live there
- But go to mother's hut for meals - A boy should NOT eat alone.
- moving out of parent's village connected to DECENCY

- when original members are 15/16 close
- 20-30 members age span 5 yrs
- continue to live together all of lives

Women

- diverse ages and experience

3 Age Grades (composed of several age villages)

- Old men
- Ruling generation
- Young boys

“coming out ceremony”

- Once each generation (about every 35 yrs)
- administrative power, military leadership & land handed over to the next generation
- ages - just before - old men = over 65;
ruling gen = 35 - 65
- just after - old men = over 35; ruling gen =
10 - 35

conclusions:

- how other cultures conceptualize the life course often very different from the Western view

The Harvard Adolescent Project:

- Edited by Whiting and Whiting

- 80 yrs after Mead
- 7 societies
- hunter & gatherers to complex modern societies.
- Thailand, Morocco, Nigeria (Brown –Marida Hollos and Phil Leis), Kenya, Romania, the Inuit (Brown – Doug and Wannii Anderson) and Australian Aborigines.

- Research done for study
- Look at “the transitional period between the end of childhood and the attainment of adult status.”

Field manual - Similar methods and questions:

- Methods = Site selection, sampling procedures, genealogical and demographic data collection, psychological testing procedures, methods for making physical measurements.

- Topics to be covered = Parent-child relations, peer group formation, friendship, games and play activities, sexual activity, cognitive development, schooling, rites of passage, work, daily activities and deviance.

Hollis & Leis, *Becoming Nigerian in Ijo Society* (1989)

- how adolescence has changed and why

adolescence?

- Before - NO
- Ijo example of how a population can ignore adolescence (until recently) - no word for adolescence.

- at about 12 girls were expected to move to future husband's compound & marry = woman
- boys married later (when successfully cut down first batch of palm fruit = strong enough to help with communal work projects = man)
- not adolescence (liminal period) - hard & preparation

- now - YES
- Western style schooling - expect delay in age of marriage
- now both sexes possibility of prolonged period between puberty and marriage “adolescence”
- “big schoolgirl” “big schoolboy”

but **less** difficult:

- main task - identity formation (Erikson = separation, independence & autonomy)
- among Ijo - not based on need to establish complete autonomy & sever ties
- ties continue and give “continuous situatedness” throughout life
- independence & autonomy (Western) - vs. independence w/out autonomy (Ijo)

lives of girls vs. boys during
new adolescence

Girls:

- Get home from secondary school at noon
- Immediately (no time for bath) after take charge of small children and do most of household chores as mother goes out to sell fish
- childcare, washing, chopping, pounding

Boys

- arrive home from secondary school at 1:00
- takes a bath
- is served lunch by the girls
- goes to swim
- runs errand with brothers laughing/talking

siblings

- the most important long-term relationship for youth in both towns is siblings
- “brother” “sister” to all parallel cousins (Amakiri = patrilineal; Ebiana = matrilineal)
- help, share resources
- one group of full siblings slightly antagonistic to other groups from same father
- gender and age = power

friendships

- time spent together:
- girls: walking to school
- boys: walking to school, at night playing records, playing cards, “strolling out” = walking the roads

status of women?:

- Who usually initiates divorce?
- women
- What are the resident (where live) and descent patterns (descent & inheritance) ?
- Both patrilocal; Amakiri = patrilineal;
Ebiama = matrilineal
- Which gender can have multiple spouses?
- only males

- Who provides for the family?
- Both: men \$; women - horticulture primary source, used to fish, market and trading (Amakiri only)
- What gender baby parents want?
- Amakiri - males (patrilineage); Ebiama - both but girls because “reliable workers”

- Is there a sexual double-standard?
- not really - parents expect girl (and boy) of 16 to be having sex. often girl who has had at least 1 baby best bride - proves fertility

- Is there genital cutting?
- Amakiri - clitoridectomy
- Ebiama - no clitoridectomy
- clitoridectomy = the partial or entire removal of the clitoris, as well as the scraping off of the labia majora and labia minora

status of women?

- Amakiri =
- patrilineal
- clitoridectomy
- Market
- Ebiama =
- matrilineal
- no clitoridectomy
- no market

gender roles - typical boy and girl:

Becoming Nigerian in Ijo Society
inspiration for *Perfectly Prep*



Socio-economic differences

- differences due to access to resources/
socio-economic conditions
- Cultures and subcultures.

“Why Do Drug Dealers Live with Their Moms?”

- interested in how young people form their identities
- spent 6 years
- met Steven Levitt at Harvard - both misfits
- Venkatesh gave notebooks to the economist

- 100 branches (franchises) with central leadership of 20 men (“board of directors”)
- Board of directors \$500,000 a year (1/3 typically in jail)
- J.T \$8,500 per month - \$100,000 year
- 3 officers - \$7 hour
- 50 foot solders - \$3.30 hour

Most dangerous job in America (if worked 4 years)

- # times arrested 5.9
- # of wounds 2.4
- # deaths 1 in 4

So why?

- dreams of glamor and \$ of the few
- “path to a decent legitimate job practically invisible”
- 56% live below poverty line
- 78% single parent homes
- <5% have college degrees
- less than 1 in 3 men worked
- neighborhood’s annual medium income \$15,000

Assignment:

- Chase, Chapter 5