

# A Critical Examination of Honor Cultures and Herding Societies in Africa

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**Abstract.** African pastoralists have historically used aggression strategically to restock after major losses. On the basis of anthropological studies of African pastoral societies, cultural psychologists have linked the psychological roots of pastoral aggression to the cultural complex of honor. This article is a critical examination of this link. It argues, first, that honor cultures are likely to be found among peasant pastoralists, but not among tribal pastoralists. It also argues that honor psychology and the pastoral personality are two analytically distinct psychological profiles, each of which is acquired through participation in different routines.

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## Introduction

Violence and aggression have long been considered central features of African pastoral societies, used to expand or defend territories or to restock from losses. Recently scholars (e.g., Galaty 2005) have argued that pastoralists' incorporation in the market economy and the nation-state in the twentieth century has transformed this strategic use of violence and aggression, as can be seen in the shift from redistributive raiding to predatory raiding in East Africa (Fleisher 2000), the increase in interethnic warfare in the Greater Horn of Africa (Markakis 1993), and the escalation of herder-farmer conflicts across West Africa (Moritz 2006). In this radical transformation of raiding in the twentieth century, violence and aggression, though less

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significant in terms of territorial motives, remain important for the identity and prestige of young herders (McCabe 2004:97–98; Bollig 1990).

The cultural psychologists Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen (1996) have linked the psychological roots of pastoral aggression to a cultural complex of honor, which, they state, is common in herding economies. Nisbett and Cohen claim, for example, that violence in the U.S. South has its roots in such a culture of honor, a remnant of the social values characteristic of Irish and Scottish pastoralist herding economies that were brought to the South by early immigrants. Because herding economies are generally operative in marginal areas where there is no strong state, herders run the constant risk, they argue, of losing their livelihood in raids from other herders or neighboring farmers. In such an environment, a stance of aggressiveness and willingness to kill is useful in announcing a herder's determination to defend his animals. Herders will adopt a posture of extreme vigilance toward any action, such as an insult, that might imply that they are incapable of defending their herd; subsequently a herder's reputation or honor is equated with his ability to defend his herd.

There are two problems with the functionalist link that Nisbett and Cohen make between honor and herding societies. First, their argument rests on the assumption that an individual's reputation is widely known. This is likely when the primary threat to herds comes from within the community (McElreath 2003), but not when the main threat comes from outsiders (e.g., pastoralists from other ethnic groups), which is the case in most pastoral societies in Africa. Second, Nisbett and Cohen connect their notion of honor psychology to the idea of a "pastoral personality," a psychological profile that emerged from anthropological studies of herder societies (Edgerton 1971; Bolton et al. 1976). But in doing so they may have conflated two somewhat different concepts. I argue that honor psychology and pastoral personality are two analytically distinct entities: specifically that aggressive behavior in social interactions may be the result of participating in the everyday routines of herding (see Lott & Hart 1977) rather than socialization into a culture of honor. This article thus critically examines Nisbett and Cohen's claims about the psychological roots of aggression in pastoral societies, with specific reference to FulBe Mare'en pastoralists from northern Cameroon.

## Honor Cultures

Many varieties of the cultural complex of honor can be identified in the Mediterranean (Campbell 1964; Boehm 1984), the Middle East (Stewart 1994), and Central Asia (Keiser 1991), but they all have one element in common: the individual is prepared to protect his honor.<sup>1</sup> *Honor* usually refers to an individual's personal honesty or integrity; however, in honor cultures it refers also to a man's social status, precedence, or right to respect (Stewart 1994). The most widely cited definition of honor comes from Pitt-

Rivers (1968): “The notion of honor... is a sentiment, a manifestation of the sentiment in conduct, and the evaluation of this conduct by others, that is to say, reputation. It is both internal to the individual and external to him—a matter of his feelings, his behavior, and the treatment that he receives” (1968:503). Stewart (1994) disagrees with Pitt-Rivers and views honor as a right to respect or recognition within a particular society rather than as a sentiment. These views are not necessarily incompatible, however, since the sentiment of honor can be regarded as the reaction to that right to respect (see Lund 1999). Here I consider as honor cultures those cultures that have what Stewart calls a code of *reflexive honor*: that is, a culture that demands a counterattack on the part of a man whose honor has been impugned and in which a failure to do so results in the loss of honor (1994:145–47).

A feature of many honor cultures is that men are prepared to use violence and even die to defend their reputation as honorable men. Moreover, aggression in these specific contexts is institutionalized, regarded as legitimate and necessary by the society at large. Other features associated with many, but not all, honor cultures include a concern with the chastity of women, extreme vigilance about one’s reputation and a sensitivity to insults, male autonomy, patrilineal kin groups, and assertive and often violent relations outside of the kin groups.<sup>2</sup>

Honor cultures have generally been associated with societies in which the individual is at economic risk from his fellows and the state is too weak to protect the individual’s property (or is perhaps nonexistent) (Blok 1981; Campbell 1964; Schneider 1971). These conditions generally describe herding societies where herders risk losing their livelihoods overnight to raids from fellow herders and others. Under these conditions herders must always be prepared to defend their herd, advertise this readiness, and respond to any suggestion that implies they are too weak to do so. Insults, especially those directed at the female members of a man’s family, challenge a herder’s strength and honor and must therefore be responded to aggressively.<sup>3</sup>

## Honor Psychology

While anthropologists have relied primarily on ethnographic approaches to describe and analyze honor cultures, Nisbett and Cohen were the first to use psychological experiments to study the culture of honor and specifically its associated psychology. Their laboratory studies show that when white southern college students in the U.S. are insulted, they manifest a range of physiological, cognitive, and behavioral reactions (1996:82). The authors argue that many southern males have internalized the cultural model of honor to such an extent that it affects their psychology and physiology; for them, says Richard Nisbett (personal communication), the need to defend one’s honor is just as natural as drinking water. According to the psycho-

logical profile of honor that emerges from the experiments, when Southerners are insulted they become agitated (as indicated by higher cortisol levels and emotional display of anger), they are cognitively primed, and they show physiological preparedness for dominant and aggressive behavior (as indicated by a higher testosterone levels). In other words, the insults produce effects that go far beyond merely cognitive changes. The insulted Southerner feels his reputation threatened, he becomes angry, and he is cognitively and physiologically prepared for aggression (1996:50–51).

Recent studies have lent support for some of the findings of Nisbett and Cohen (e.g., Hayes & Lee 2005; Figueredo et al. 2004). But some have argued that it remains unclear what an honor culture is: whether one exists in the U.S. South at all, and whether an honor culture or some other variable is responsible for the physiological and cognitive responses of Southerners in the experiments (D'Andrade 2002; Hayes & Lee 2005).<sup>4</sup> My critique focuses on Nisbett and Cohen's assumptions about aggression and violence in pastoral societies.

### **Peasant and Tribal Pastoralists**

Although pastoral societies vary widely in their sociopolitical organization because of variations in their ecologies, economies, and the larger political fields in which pastoralists operate, Salzman (1996; 2004) argues that one can distinguish two general types of political organization among pastoralists: tribal pastoralists and peasant pastoralists.<sup>5</sup> These types represent two ends on a continuum of political status from ruling over others, to political independence, to subordination by others (2004:106). The difference between tribal pastoralists and peasant pastoralists lies in the crystallization of functions, or “the degree to which basic social functions—production, reproduction, social control—are fulfilled by one organizational structure” (Salzman 1996:29). Because pastoralists with a greater crystallization of functions are basically self-governing, they have greater political autonomy than pastoralists who are “encapsulated, integrated or assimilated into larger complex polities” (29). When tribal populations are incorporated and assimilated within state structures, they lose their political power. Today most pastoralists have lost their political independence, and thus tribal pastoralists can be considered more accurately as “encapsulated” tribes; they are partially and varyingly under the control of the state, but “because of their own organizational and coercive resources” they are able to defend their interests more successfully than peasant pastoralists” who do not have the autonomy, “internal political structure, political leaders, or... sense of political unity” and are “totally dependent upon the... mercies of state agents” (Salzman 2004:64–65). The distinction between tribal and peasant pastoralists is marked by a number of interrelated sociocultural factors in the latter group: “Lacking the unity of group political action and of collective ownership of major resources such as land, social relations are fragmented,

with people having similar interests but few common ones. Competition for the limited good is not balanced by the solidarity of cooperation, sharing, and support, leaving each to weigh his or her separate interests" (Salzman 2004:123). In this situation aggression is redirected to other households instead of to other tribes or diffused by moving away.

Salzman (2004) argues that peasant and tribal pastoralists have different strategies for protecting their capital (livestock and grazing lands). Tribal pastoralists "institutionalize solidarity and common defense," whereas "peasant pastoralists must rely upon codes of vengeance, information from informal networks of friends, and self-help or individual retribution" (14). In both tribal and peasant societies cattle theft and/or raids are common occurrences, but the raids and the defense against raids take very different forms. Among peasant pastoralists like the Sarakatsani of Greece (Campbell 1964:206–9), each individual herder has to advertise his ability and readiness to defend his herd by responding violently to insults. Among encapsulated tribal pastoralists like the Turkana, the council of elders effectively punishes livestock thieves from within the tribal section by banishing them from Turkanaland, and the community organizes itself collectively to provide defense against the most lethal threat, the Pokot raiding parties (McCabe 2004). For tribal pastoralists like the Turkana, the safety and survival of both the individual and the group is much more dependent on the group's reputation for aggressiveness than it is on the reputation of any one individual (see also Bollig 1990). One could argue as well that among tribal pastoralists the honor of the collective, as a cohesive force that strengthens the group identity by defining its boundaries and providing defense against competing groups, is more important than individual (reflexive) honor.<sup>6</sup>

### **Cattle Theft among the FulBe Mare'en**

FulBe Mare'en pastoralists in northern Cameroon do not fit neatly into the category of either peasant pastoralist or encapsulated tribal pastoralists. Although, like peasant pastoralists, they are (in principle) dependent on the state for security and resolution of major internal conflicts, they continue, like tribal pastoralists, to rely on their own sociopolitical organization and on group solidarity to resolve most internal and external affairs.

Because of the absence of the state in pastoral areas, cattle theft, as well as the general insecurity in the greater Chad Basin, are major concerns for FulBe. Aggressive defense of herds is critical, and herders collaborate when possible. Threats to cattle range in severity from deadly cattle raids by Musgum fishermen to extortion by heavily armed robbers, theft by former Tupuri herder employees, theft by FulBe herders from subsistence herds, and theft by FulBe herders from herds of absentee owners. Raids by Musgum fishermen result in the most casualties and extortion by armed robbers results in the greatest livestock losses (see Moritz 2005). The various possible responses of FulBe Mare'en to a threat depend upon a number

of factors, including the social distance and/or perceived power of the thieves. Violence is used to fight off Musgum thieves. Flight (if possible) is used to escape armed robbers. Former employees are caught and brought to the police. Social sanctions are used against FulBe who steal from other FulBe, while theft from absentee owners is tolerated. The responses are always measured. In general, though, group identity as being aggressive is more important among the FulBe than an individual's reputation, especially because different subethnic groups of FulBe suffer more cattle loss than others. Nevertheless, aggressiveness also manifests itself in individual FulBe herders and is encouraged and nurtured in FulBe children as part of their developmental experience. As we will see below, while I argue that honor psychology cannot be conflated with pastoral personality, it is the case that children's participation in the everyday activities of herding produces a personality that manifests itself as aggressive in social situations.

### **Pastoral Personality**

In Walter Goldschmidt's "Culture and Ecology in East Africa" project, Goldschmidt and his colleagues (1965) examined how cultural adaptation to habitat affects individual psychology. The project involved comparative ethnographic and psychological analyses of farmers and herders in four East African groups: the Pokot, the Sebei, the Hehe, and the Kamba. Goldschmidt's model of cultural adaptation assumed that the institutions of a society are integrated wholes and that changes in one sector require adjustments in other sectors of the social system. In this comparative functional theory the environment is treated as the independent variable; then the patterns of economic activity (e.g., farming or herding) become the intermediate variables, while social institutions, cultural attitudes, behavior patterns, and psychology become the dependent variables (1965:403).

Goldschmidt argues that pastoralism requires that people adjust their lives to the requirements of the animals: pastures and water. This means that people must remain mobile while permanent resources such as water must be protected and shared. Mobility requires flexible and independent households, while protection of resources requires the ability to organize in larger units, either through age-grades or segmentary lineages. The everyday handling of cattle requires masculine freedom from childbearing; the result is highly sex-segregated societies. When herding alone, herders must make independent decisions and act on them. Finally, since cattle can easily be lost, not only to drought and disease but also to raids by other herders, herding requires an aggressive personality. Thus there are two ways in which the economy of herding shapes pastoral personality: through the structural features of the herding economies (e.g., mobility, flexible social organization, defense of herds) and through the everyday activities of herding (e.g., dominance over animals, independent decision making). The personality attributes of the ideal pastoralist are summarized by Gold-

schmidt as “a high degree of independence of action; a willingness to take chances; a readiness to act, and a capacity for action; self-containment and control, especially in the face of danger; bravery, fortitude, and the ability to withstand pain and hardship” (1965:404–5).

Within the “Culture and Ecology” project Robert Edgerton conducted an extensive comparative psychological study of about sixty farmers and sixty herders of both sexes in each of the four groups (1971). Edgerton concluded that herders from all four groups are more like the farmers from their respective groups than they are like the herders from the other three groups; in other words, culture is a better predictor of a subject’s personality than economic mode of life. Surprisingly, the responses of men and women differed little, save for those values, attitudes, and feelings that concern gender relations (1971:148).

There were, however, consistent differences between herders and farmers within each group that could be attributed to ecological variation. Herder attitudes were associated with a number of variables or attributes, including: affection, direct aggression, independence, self-control, sexuality, guilt and shame, respect for authority; and to a lesser extent fear, bravery, and brutality (1971a:275). In general, the picture of herders that emerged from the psychological study confirmed Goldschmidt’s hypothesis (1971b:132–33): in comparison to farmers they were more open emotionally and freer in their expression, more direct in interpersonal relationships, more independent-minded in their behavior, and they had stronger and more sharply defined social values such as independence, self-control, and bravery. Edgerton’s research design could not clarify whether the psychological differences between herders and farmers were due to everyday activities of herding or the structural features of the herding economy, such as the defense of herds against raiders.

In the early seventies, Bolton et al. (1976) replicated Edgerton’s study in two Peruvian Andean villages with eighteen boys and girls ages five to seven. The children were all from Quechua-speaking families that combined agriculture and pastoralism; the only difference was the everyday tasks in which the children were engaged, with nine children engaged primarily in agricultural tasks and the other nine primarily in herding tasks. The authors conducted various psychological experiments in which they measured eight personality dimensions that were associated with the pastoral personality in Edgerton’s study: aggression, self-reliance, cooperation, need for achievement, responsibility, independence, obedience, and decision-making time. The results confirmed Edgerton’s findings and also showed that psychological differences between farmers and herders were already significantly distinct at a very early age. Moreover they concluded that the pastoral personality was the product of the everyday herding activities in which the children were engaged rather than structural features of the herding economy.<sup>7</sup>



## Ecocultural Theory of Development

How is it that young children who belong to the same ethnic group, grow up in the same village, and speak the same language develop such different psychological personalities only because they are engaged in different tasks? In other words, how does the socialization of children in herding societies shape their personality? The ecocultural theory of development provides a holistic and systematic analytical framework for the study of socialization and development of children across cultures.<sup>8</sup>

There are three levels of analysis in the ecocultural theory of development: (1) the ecocultural context (e.g., subsistence, demography, social institutions, household organization); (2) cultural models of development (e.g., the ideas that parents have about development, their goals), and (3) the activity settings (e.g., everyday routines) (Weisner 1997, 1998). The main focus is on the activity settings in which children and others engage in everyday routines and understand these routines in relation to cultural models and the ecocultural context.

Weisner, for example, argues that “the mind and mental processes of the child develop interdependently with ecocultural daily routines along culture-specific pathways” (1998:72). Children are prepared to learn from and respond to their environment, and children’s participation in these everyday activities is the single most important influence on their development. It is through participation in these routines, and in activities and settings that change along with the changing developmental needs, that they become competent members of their community. With the continuing development of cultural competence, increasingly complex and elaborate schemas for organizing cultural knowledge develop in the mind.

Thus through participation in culturally meaningful practices children not only become competent members of their community, but also have their personalities shaped by these everyday routines. In this way they internalize the cultural models of their community, and these models in turn influence their emotions and behavior. Development, in other words, is an ecocultural project in which parents try to achieve cultural goals and well-being for themselves and their children, despite limited resources and social constraints. The ecocultural theory of development provides a useful analytical framework for studying how children in herding societies are socialized and how they internalize a pastoral personality.

## Developmental Pathways to Pastoral Personality

I argue that there are two distinct developmental pathways that lead to two analytically distinct psychological profiles of honor psychology and pastoral personality. One pathway is through socialization into the culture of honor; the other is through socialization as a herder, primarily through participation in everyday herding routines. My first line of reasoning is that chil-



dren in honor societies are socialized to defend their honor and show their toughness primarily through participation in social routines. Through routine fighting with other children and physical punishment by adults if they fail to defend themselves, they internalize the cultural values and scripts of honor and develop an honor psychology. My second line of reasoning is that children who participate in everyday herding routines, are socialized in a herding community, and adapt to the ecology of herding animals (controlling them, being away from adult supervision, making decisions independently and acting on them) develop a pastoral personality.

It is important to remember that not all herding societies have an honor culture and not all honor cultures are based on a herding economy. There are herding societies (e.g., the reindeer herding Saami [Paine 1994]) in which children develop a pastoral personality but are not socialized in a culture of honor and thus do not develop an honor psychology. There are also many non-herding societies (e.g., the inner city of Philadelphia [Anderson 1999]) in which children are socialized in a culture of honor and develop an honor psychology but no pastoral personality. However, there are also herding societies with a culture of honor in which children acquire both an honor psychology and a pastoral personality (Campbell 1964). I argue that the FulBe Mare'en in northern Cameroon do not have a culture of honor and that children develop a pastoral personality but not an honor psychology.

The discussion below is based on participant observation of FulBe Mare'en in northern Cameroon in 1994, 1996, 1999, and 2000–2001 as well as ethnographic descriptions of other pastoral FulBe populations (Hopen 1958; Stenning 1959; Dupire 1962, 1970, 1973; Lott & Hart 1977; Riesman 1977, 1992; Bocquené & Ndudi 2002) and other herding societies (Whiting & Whiting 1971; Whiting, Whiting, & Longabaugh 1975; Whiting & Edwards 1988). Although there is considerable cultural variation across different herding societies, it appears that the everyday routines of herding pose challenges that are resolved in remarkably similar ways.

### **The Ecocultural Context of FulBe Mare'en**

The life of FulBe Mare'en revolves around livestock, which provides both subsistence and social meaning (see Moritz 2003). The most important animals, the cattle, provide milk, some of which is traded for sorghum and millet, while sheep and goats are kept for small expenses and meat. Horses and donkeys are used for transport only. There is strong sex segregation and division of labor in that men take care of the animals and women take care of domestic tasks of the household. This segregation also extends to the spatial arrangements within the homestead. Mobility of individual households and flexibility in social organization are key adaptations to the drylands of the West African savannas. FulBe Mare'en move camp about twenty-five times a year, and camps, which range in size from a few to about twenty households, frequently change composition over the course of a year. Camps are loosely

organized around one or more patrilineages. Postmarital residential patterns are patrilocal and male patrilineal kin generally camp together. A household ranges in size from three to fifteen, with an average of nine people, and consists of a man and one or more wives who each have their own tent. The child care model is best described as pediatric, as the main goal of parents is the survival of their infants (LeVine et al. 1994).

### Cultural Models of Herding and *Pulaaku*

There are two main themes in the cultural model of development of FulBe Mare'en parents: competence as a herder (*ngaynaaka*) and appropriate social behavior (*pulaaku*). Like most parents, FulBe Mare'en parents want their children to become competent members of the cultural community who actively and innovatively participate in the activities deemed important. In the case of FulBe Mare'en these activities are concerned with herding and growth of the family herd. From an early age children have to participate in sex-appropriate household and subsistence tasks. Parents give boys explicit instruction and training in herding—a task that requires great skill, perseverance, and courage—but they also believe that boys learn *ngaynaaka*, which refers both to mastery of skills and knowledge of herding, primarily through experience.

FulBe Mare'en parents also want their children to learn how to behave appropriately in public and how to control and master their emotional and physical needs in different social contexts: with close kin and in public. Riesman has described the ideal FulBe behavior in public, referred to as *pulaaku*, as that of a person without needs, capable of living without eating, drinking, or defecating—a being entirely cultural and independent of nature whose actions are never involuntary (1977:129).<sup>9</sup> Young FulBe boys still in the care of their mother (until about age five) are not held up to this standard, but once they are mature enough (i.e., in possession of *hakkillo*, or sense), they begin assisting their father in herder tasks and are expected to follow the code of *pulaaku*. Similarly, at age four to six girls are taught the essential rules of the social-moral code of *pulaaku* and learn which circumstances demand modest behavior (Dupire 1973:299).

Eguchi (1974) argued that in northern Cameroon *pulaaku* prescribes reprisals for many insults that would be minor in other cultures. Insults involving parents and genitalia (e.g., *mbasu bammaa* [your father's penis] or *kuttu yaa maa* [your mother's genitals]) are the most intense and humiliating and cause, as the FulBe describe it, "soreness in the heart" (120–21). Such obscenities require an uncompromising defense of the parent's honor and one's own, often with a weapon; Eguchi notes that one-third of the prison population in Maroua, the provincial capital of the Far North Province in Cameroon, are in prison for stabbing to death someone who insulted their mother (1974:116–17).

In my own research with FulBe pastoralists in the Far North Province

of Cameroon, however, I did not come across evidence of an honor code demanding such a reflexive response, and neither have I come across any references to reflexive honor in other sources on FulBe populations in the Far North Province of Cameroon. On the contrary, it seems that for the FulBe loss of honor is associated with losing one's temper and resorting to violence; greater honor inheres in ignoring the other party and acting above the fray (and perhaps finding other, more honorable, ways to retaliate, often much later). Among the FulBe Mare'en, therefore, the cultural code of *pulaaku* is generally one of reserve and self-control, with one exception: the fierce and immediate defense of cattle. I argue, for this reason, that while the FulBe Mare'en live by a general moral code of *pulaaku* that guides social behavior in public, they cannot be said to have an honor culture.

This is not to say that the concept of honor itself is unknown to the FulBe, but rather that reflexive honor is not an individual virtue. However, there is a sense of collective honor that is associated specifically with knowing and owning cattle. Without cattle one cannot live as a FulBe. As Riesman argues, the FulBe must not only defend their cattle against threats by outsiders, but also, implicitly, their right to own cattle (1975:62). A man's defense of his cattle, therefore, is the same as the defense of his own honor; to lose cattle in a raid is to lose one's honor as a *Pullo*. But this is not a case of individual reflexive honor, but rather a matter of collective honor or cultural identity (see also Gray et al. 2003).

### Everyday Herding Routines from Early Childhood to Adolescence

At different stages along FulBe boys' developmental and cultural pathway parts of these cultural models of herding and *pulaaku* are internalized through everyday herding routines and practices. I focus my analysis primarily on the everyday routines of boys rather than girls, since the former mostly take care of the animals. (Note that whenever I refer to *children* I am discussing both boys and girls.) I will focus on three developmental periods: early to middle childhood (ages three to five—*Bingel yaakel*); middle to late childhood (ages five to eleven—*Biddo*); and adolescence (ages eleven to eighteen—*sukaaBe*). In the context of these developmental phases I will focus on the following activities: role playing, calf handling, herding instruction, dominating animals, and herding alone. Through everyday participation in herding routines at each stage in their development, I argue, children develop a pastoral personality.

#### *Early to Middle Childhood*

During early to middle childhood FulBe Mare'en children learn culturally appropriate behavior through observation, imitation, role playing, and peripheral participation in adult tasks. Children of both sexes often play and

work together, always in the vicinity of the camps and under the supervision of mothers and older female siblings. At this age both boys and girls sleep with their mother. During the day FulBe children observe their parents and other adults in the camp engaged in activities such as milking, childcare, fetching water, cooking, and other domestic tasks. Boys start playing with clay cattle and corrals when they are about age three, and can be observed hitting their clay cattle with small sticks, just as they will do later in life with real cattle. Girls can be seen making miniature houses, calabashes, and little clay figurines representing the members of their household. Lancy has argued that make-believe play provides opportunities for children to imitate, practice adult work skills and habits as well as learn the associated sex-role differentiation, social skills, and cultural meaning (1996:74, 90). At a young age children become increasingly involved in the daily subsistence activities of the family, and imitation of same-sex adult activities makes the shift from play to work rather seamless.

In early childhood FulBe children also play “herding” with the calves that remain in the camp after the mature animals have left for daily grazing in the bush. At first children chase the calves all over camp without a clear sense of direction or purpose, but play gradually becomes work when the day-to-day management of the calves becomes their responsibility. Even at a young age FulBe children have internalized the cultural models to some extent and are eager, through practice, to minimize the discrepancy between the idealized model and their actual competency (Lancy 1996:27). Although both boys and girls are entrusted with the task, for example, of tethering and untethering calves (once in the morning when they are nursed, and once in the evening when the cattle return from grazing and the calves are nursed again), boys in particular are highly motivated, knowing that they are being prepared for their adult roles. Just as calves, as Lott and Hart (1977) point out, have to be socialized in dominance-subordination relationships from the moment they are born, Fulani boys are trained in these same relationships, learning, of course, how to exercise the dominant role. “At times,” they say, “the boys assigned to the duty of releasing and bringing the calves back to the rope find themselves vigorously struggling against the calves who are at least equal in weight and strength. The boys do not give in before they prevail and although the calves grow steadily larger and stronger, they become easier to manage” (1977:181).

### *Middle to Late Childhood*

According to the Thomas Weisner, the developmental transition that takes place during middle childhood involves changes in internal states and competencies of the child, including “the emergence of increasing capacities for strategic and controlled self-regulation, skills at inhibition, the ability to maintain attention and focus on a complex problem, and planfulness and reflection” (1998:76). In middle to late childhood children from herd-

ing cultures become more aware of gender roles and their tasks become more sex typed (Whiting & Edwards 1988:68). FulBe Mare'en children of this age continue to learn culturally appropriate behavior, though now this learning occurs through participation in adult tasks and in work essential to family survival. Boys and girls still play, but their play takes place separately and mostly in the context of work. Girls remain in the vicinity of the camp, where they take on domestic tasks and responsibilities, including caring for younger siblings, under the supervision of their mothers (Dupire 1973:299). Girls are sometimes assigned herding tasks (e.g., when a household or family has no boys of suitable age) but herding is mostly regarded as a male activity. Boys therefore play in the bush while they are herding cattle, which involves being away from the camp for the greater part of the day and away from supervision of mothers and other female caretakers.

When FulBe Mare'en boys start herding at age five or six, older male relatives become responsible for their socialization and also, significantly, for their discipline; since cattle are essential to a family's survival any negligence must be punished, and the adult disciplinarians are commensurately powerful figures in the boys' lives (Whiting & Whiting 1971:35). When they are old enough to herd, boys no longer sleep with their mother but next to the corral in order to control, if necessary, cattle frightened by prowling hyenas and lions. At this stage of life they also no longer eat with their mother and sisters but with the men (Stenning 1959:156). Through explicit instruction, listening to conversations, and observation they learn about the general dietary needs of cattle, which types of grasses appeal most to cattle, the characteristics of each animal, the dominance hierarchy in the herd, and the genealogy of the herd (Hopen 1958:25).

At the same time, early contact with their father and other male role models allows boys to form a realistic image of the appropriate male behavior at a relatively young age (Whiting & Edwards 1988:276). From their male role models FulBe Mare'en boys also become more socialized into a hierarchical social structure of dominance and submission. Just as the social structure of cattle herds is such that the dominant animals have significant advantages over subordinate animals, there is a clear authority hierarchy in herding communities. Parents have to be respected by children; older children in turn have to be respected by the younger ones but also be prepared, when necessary, to protect younger siblings from outsiders. The consequence of disrespect or neglect of one's duties is often some form of physical punishment.

Thus through instruction and example boys learn to respond to commands and to be obedient, but also to be responsible and capable of dominating others—both humans and cattle (Whiting & Whiting 1971). By the time they reach adulthood, in fact, FulBe herders, according to Lott and Hart (1977), have such effective control over their cattle that they do not use ropes or other restraints and they will respond to threats from a bull “with an upraised and flourished herding stick and a yell, often in com-

bination with a brisk charge towards the bull. If the bull does not signal submission or retreat, he [is] hit with the stick" (1977:180). Lott and Hart's discussion of the socialization of Fulani boys describes well the patterns that I observed in the Far North Province of Cameroon: "Initially the boys are often afraid of the bulls, ... [but] after they become accustomed to disciplining cattle, boys often initiate beating without encouragement. Several times at the beginning of a herding day we observed such young herders approaching the dominant bull or ox and hitting him several hard blows with a herding stick" (1977:181–82). Boys also learn to exercise dominance over other people. They 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 (Lott & Hart 1977:183; see also Dupire 1962:83).

By age seven to nine, when a young FulBe has become a skilled herder, he is allowed to herd alone or with other age-mates. Bolton et al. (1976) argue that the pastoral personality of their young subjects in the Andes is not so much the result of dominating and controlling the animals (since sheep and lamoids are quite docile), but rather of the free time spent alone while herding without supervision from adults (1976). Freedom from adult monitoring may also be an important factor in the socialization of young FulBe boys since they have the opportunity to explore, follow their own impulses, and satisfy their curiosity (Whiting & Edwards 1988:57). In comparison with youths from agricultural populations, for example, boys in herding societies have relatively more same-sex contact with peers (Whiting & Edwards 1988). Cross-cultural research has shown that these peer dyads are characterized by a high proportion of both sociability and aggression (Whiting, Whiting, & Longabaugh 1975:158). When FulBe boys are alone in the bush dominance struggles and peer assaults are a recurrent event (see also Bocquené & Ndudi 2002) and appear to be motivated partly by a strong need to prove their masculinity (Whiting & Edwards 1988:261).

### *Adolescence*

Young FulBe (*sukaaBe*) continue herding through adolescence and are given increasing responsibility for the family herds. Herding is extremely arduous work, requiring considerable skill, agility, and physical endurance; young herders have to learn to tolerate hunger, thirst, and fatigue, to eat only two meals a day, and to be restricted to the water in their gourd or whatever they can find in the bush (see also Dupire 1962:83). When young FulBe Mare'en go on transhumance for several months to dry season pastures (*luci*), often in unknown territory, their work becomes even more physically demanding. The young herders must lead their animals to good grass and water; protect them (often with weapons) from hyenas, lions, and thieves; live on milk and ground peanuts for months at a time; and sleep next to the animals in order to awaken immediately when the cattle are

frightened or wander off to pasture at night.

When they encounter other young herders during herding, they will challenge them and, making use of the skills they learned at an early age, engage in fights (see also Bocquené & Ndudi 2002). The FulBe expect that the social behavior of young FulBe boys among themselves will manifest the same level of courage that is revealed in interactions with cattle (Lott & Hart 1977:182). The fights prepare young FulBe Mare'en to respond to threats from outsiders to their cattle. Many herders are quite successful in fending off thieves with bow and poisoned arrow and their herder stick, and although many FulBe Mare'en have died defending their herd, they nearly always manage to kill several thieves before they do (Moritz, Scholte, & Kari 2002). But young FulBe Mare'en also learn how to control fights and when not to fight but use other means to reduce the threats to their herds.

## Discussion

Honor cultures have been associated with herding societies in which herders risk losing their livelihood overnight to raids from fellow herders and others. As Nisbett and Cohen have pointed out, pastoralists can lose their livelihood overnight and pastoralists must be ready to defend their herds. However, there is a great variation in threats to herds across pastoral societies, ranging from theft by neighbors to violent raids by other ethnic groups. Moreover, these threats are changing as pastoralists are incorporated into the market economy and the nation-state. Similarly, there is great variation, depending on the threat, in how pastoral groups respond to the threats against their herds.

Aggression and aggressive personalities are valued among pastoralists, but the psychocultural forms of aggression vary across pastoral societies and are not necessarily the same as the honor psychology described by Nisbett and Cohen (1996). As I have argued, honor psychology and pastoral personality are two analytically distinct psychological profiles that are acquired through participation in different routines. Pastoral personality emerges in early childhood among children and arises as a function of the specific tasks and conditions of herding activities. The predictable and repetitive herding routines that pastoral children are assigned at a young age form the pastoral personality configuration in ways predicted by the studies of Edgerton (1971) and Bolton et al. (1976). The routines are part of the cultural complex that is adapted to the ecology of herding animals, and a child's training is a product of the child's participation in the adult economy. Through participation in everyday herding routines FulBe children develop the personality that is required for the job. Furthermore, there is the cultural expectation that a similar personality will manifest itself in social behavior. When expressed in social contexts, the pastoral personality may appear very similar to honor psychology, but the distinctions need to



be recognized. I argue that pastoral personality and honor psychology are analytically distinct and caution against labeling herding societies as honor societies, and vice versa.

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## Notes

1. I leave for now the question of whether there are honor societies in East Africa; one could argue, for example, that the Nuer and the Baggara Arabs have some form of honor culture (Evans-Pritchard 1940; Cunnison 1966).
2. See Boehm (1984); Campbell (1964); Fiske et al. (1998); Gilmore (1987); Keiser (1991); Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers (1992); Pitt-Rivers (1968).
3. The problem with this line of reasoning is the tenuous link between reputation and raids—i.e., the question of whether an individual's reputation within society is known by outside raiders. It thus remains an empirical question whether “honor” reduces the risks of raids.
4. D’Andrade (2002) acknowledges that Nisbett and Cohen (1996) measured real psychological differences between “southern” and “northern” students at Michigan University, but he argues that other cultural models, like Elster’s (1989) “tough guy” or “wise guy” may be responsible for the differences they measured.
5. Salzman (2004) defines a *tribe* as an independent political entity consisting of a number of structurally similar groups of primary producers, and *peasantry* as a number of local groups of primary producers that have been incorporated into an agrarian regime controlled by a ruling class with political, military, and ritual power.
6. Among tribal pastoralists the cultural identity of the group is the most salient; among peasant pastoralists it is family honor. But there is some evidence of reflexive honor among tribal pastoralists. In his discussion of Nuer feuds, Evans-Pritchard does not mention honor. However, he describes what could be labeled an honor culture: “A Nuer will at once fight if he considers that he has been insulted, and they are very sensitive and easily take offence....The Nuer has a keen sense of personal dignity and rights. The notion of right, *cuong*, is strong. It is recognized that a man ought to obtain redress for certain wrongs” (Evans-Pritchard 1940:151,171). The Nuer may be an exception among tribal pastoralists (see Salzman 2004:128–29).
7. Only in three categories were “pastoral children” significantly different from “agricultural children”: independence, self-reliance, and responsibility. However, these categories represent important key pastoral traits. Furthermore, the directional predictions were all confirmed except for one, obedience—which in itself confirms the hypothesis, according to the authors (Bolton et al. 1976). However, the authors do not make clear how children were assigned to different tasks. It may be that they were already predisposed to a certain personality and therefore were chosen, or the birth order of these children may have played a role (Barbara Rogoff, personal communication).
8. See Super and Harkness (1980); Weisner (1997; 1998); Whiting and Edwards (1988); Whiting, Whiting, and Longabaugh (1975)
9. The concept of *pulaaku* is widespread among FulBe across West and Central Africa, although the meaning differs by geographical area and by clan (Breedveld & Bruin 1996). Some FulBe groups do not use the concept of *pulaaku*, but descriptions of norms that prescribe proper behavior are very similar to those associated with *pulaaku* in other societies.