Interview with Bonnie and Barry Hewlett

Encountering children in the field

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Introduction

Jing Xu conducted this interview with Barry Hewlett and Bonnie Hewlett in April 2023, with a focus on studying childhood in cultural contexts.

Barry Hewlett is Professor of Anthropology at Washington State University, Vancouver. He received his PhD from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1987. He has held positions at Tulane University (US), Kyoto University (Japan) and Hawassa University and Arba Minch University (Ethiopia). He has conducted research in Africa since 1973 in the Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Gabon, Ethiopia and Cameroon. He has authored or edited seven books, for example: *Intimate fathers: the nature and context of Aka Pygmy paternal infant care*; *Ebola, culture, politics: the anthropology of an emerging disease* (with Bonnie Hewlett); and *Social learning and innovation in contemporary hunter-gatherers* (with Hideaki Terashima). He has also published over 100 journal articles and book chapters in a wide range of disciplines including biology, sociology, developmental psychology, public health, tropical medicine and genetics.

Hunter Gatherer Research 8.1–2 (2024 [for 2022])
ISSN 2056-3256 (Print)
ISSN 2056-3264 (Online)

https://doi.org/10.3828/hgr.2024.20

Bonnie Hewlett, formerly a registered nurse, obtained her PhD in anthropology from Washington State University. She has conducted research in Gabon, the Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and more recently, Ethiopia, where she served as a Fulbright scholar in 2010–2011. Her research pursuits encompass the bio-cultural contexts of infectious diseases, hunter-gatherers, adolescent development, the health and experiences of Ethiopian orphans, and the factors underlying relinquishment and abandonment by birthmothers and fathers. She is the author of '*Listen, here is a story: ethnographic life narratives from Aka and Ngandu women of the Congo Basin*', editor of *Secret lives of anthropologists: lessons from the field* and *Adolescent identity: evolutionary, developmental and cultural perspectives*, and co-author with Barry Hewlett of *Ebola, culture, politics: the anthropology of an emerging disease*.

Interview

How did you start your research career? How did you become interested in studying children?

Barry: My trajectory in research is very nontraditional. Before I went to graduate school, I was working in Head Start as a 'health and handicap' coordinator.[1] I was working with children, and I just like to be around children. I always enjoyed children, intrinsically. I love their creativity, their joy of life. That's why I went into Head Start. When I finished my bachelor's degree, I just took a one-way trip to Amsterdam, and then hitchhiked across Europe and ended up in East Africa. I went up the Nile. I just loved Africa. After that I would work for six or nine months to save money and then go back to Africa. I hitchhiked across the Sahara twice to get to the place where the Aka ethnic group lived. That's how I ended up in central Africa. One of my very first studies was to look at the diversity of cannabis use among hunter-gatherers, and the other part was to look at ethnozoology in terms of the names of what local people have for their animals. That's how I got started in research.

My fatherhood study with the Aka (BS Hewlett 1993) was linked to Stanford scholars. Working in central Africa at the time in the late 1970s, everybody used the term 'pygmies'. Aka is a hunter-gatherer group and one of the only

1. Head Start is a programme of the United States Department of Health and Human Services that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to low-income children and families.

people working with pygmies was Luca Cavalli Sforza at Stanford. So I made an arrangement to see Luca. He was an exceptionally kind and welcoming person. He's a geneticist, not a cultural anthropologist at all. When I went to see him, it just happened that he was working on his theories of cultural transmission with Mark Feldman. Luca introduced me to those scholars who studied cultural transmission. I thought it would be cool to test those theories in a small-scale society. Also, Luca took me to the faculty club where he introduced me to this psychiatrist named Herbert Leiderman. Herbert had gone to the Central African Republic, and I had already been to Central African Republic three times, working with the Aka. Herbert said: 'Did you notice about the dads? Did you think the dads were involved?' I didn't have any children at the time, and I thought I could go check that out, so I went back to the Aka and eventually did

Figure 1 Central African Aka dad with kids in a hut
Photo by Barry Hewlett, shared with permission

the fatherhood study, as part of my dissertation work. By 'nontraditional' route to research, I mean that I had already been to the field four times by the time I decided to do my PhD, and I didn't go to my professor's field site.

Bonnie: I did more of the traditional route to research. I started out as a registered nurse, and I worked in newborn intensive care. Also, because I love children, babies in particular, I decided to go back to school. I was thinking about getting a master's degree, potentially in nursing or at least continuing that education. But then I took an anthropology class and I just fell absolutely in love with anthropology. Actually, it was in one of Barry's classes when I was first introduced to anthropology and studies of children, including his study on fatherhood. I noticed that when we were taking this class on childhoods across cultures, there was this huge lack of materials on teenagers. At that time, I had kids who were going into that phase of life. I wanted to learn more about adolescence particularly in small-scale societies. This is how I began my work initially with adolescence within small-scale societies. Also, in large part because I was fascinated with Barry's work with the Aka.

During the earlier days in anthropology, the cross-cultural comparison of childhood, including adolescence, was a popular topic, with figures like Margaret Mead, etc. Later on, why did anthropological research on teenagers decline?

Bonnie: Research on babies and children has received a lot of attention, but the focus on adolescents has been lacking. Adolescents are in a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood, which may be why researchers haven't paid as much attention to this age group.

Barry: Bonnie had that edited book on adolescence, but really the lack of research on adolescents in anthropology has continued. I think people find adolescents not as interesting because they're so close to adulthood.

Bonnie: I found adolescents to be very, very interesting. They're amazing to work with because they're so full of excitement about this stage in life – branching out to become their own people, taking care of themselves, and finding partners. And, I thought that to truly understand the Aka, it was important to also study the Ngandu, their farming neighbours. These two groups have a very close relationship, and I strongly believe in the value of cross-cultural work. It was a fantastic experience working with both groups of adolescents. They are truly wonderful, and I had a lot of fun working with them.

Figure 2 A photo of an Aka toddler with a small gathering basket being placed on the baby's head by its mother. The basket is held in place with a loop of material around the baby's forehead
Photo by Bonnie Hewlett, shared with permission

Jing: They (adolescents) are also challenging to study, right? I love children, babies and the early childhood part, sharing a similar attitude to Barry. I was interested in children because they are full of joy and wonder and creativity. And I never thought that I would seriously study adolescents until right now. Because I am in the phase of recalibrating my relationship with my son, a teenager now, an American teen, and I want to know more about what's going on in their brains and their social life. For example, why do they get so argumentative? Bonnie, your research found that the Aka youths did not have those sort of tensions with their parents, the desire to break away from the adults.

Bonnie: They don't! They have such a strong sense of self and who they are and they really do not have that sort of tension with their caregivers. But that is definitely what prompted me: what you were talking about, what is happening to you as a mother, I was experiencing that too while I took the anthropology class on childhood across cultures. So, it was an exciting time to study adolescents.

When working with the Aka adolescents, the only relatively difficult time was with the younger adolescent girls and what became very clear was the need to establish trust with them, to provide a very trusting environment where they felt comfortable relating their experiences with me. That took place by going back to the field and talking to the same people and living with them, being with them day-to-day, going with the adolescent, the younger girls when they went on their little journeys in the forest. That was something that I had to work on more than with the other children, the older adolescents and the ones who are not quite as shy. I had to be very careful with that. With the Ngandu, who are more hierarchical, it was the parents who had to trust me as much as the children. I had to be very careful when I was talking to their teenagers, to make sure that the parents trusted me and that I had established a relationship with the parents as much as the children. It's such a strong contrast between Aka and Ngandu.

I study China, a society that has seen profound changes in the past few decades. Did major social change happen to your field sites over the decades?

Barry: We worked in two primary areas, one in the Congo basin and the other one in Ethiopia. For the Congo Basin, it's absolutely right that there are big changes but at the same time there's some continuity. The major changes in the Congo Basin include civil wars and changes in the political economy. A big change for us over time is that the border between the Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic has actually been identified. When you go into the villages and work, things are changing, for example, logging companies are getting closer. On one hand, you have mining and logging kinds of industries, and forest and parks being built and established. They dramatically impacted local people. But in other ways things didn't change much. It's been almost 50 years since I first went to the field. But I'm more impressed by the things that don't change than things that do change.

I did this film with the BBC, *A caterpillar moon*. When the BBC contacted me, they said they wanted to do this film on pygmies. They thought that the pygmies were disappearing, due to logging and all these things, so they said they wanted to come to see to Central African Republic and do this film. The first thing I had to explain was that the pygmies were not disappearing, their fertility rates were relatively high, six children per woman. Mortality was also high, but their population is growing, not declining. When I took the BBC producer out, she thought that they were going to do a film about an Aka person driving a tractor cutting down trees, on the topic of modernisation. After we

Figure 3 A photo of an Aka adolescent weaving a basket while an adult Aka woman leans in and uses her hands to demonstrate the correct way to weave the strands of the basket
Photo by Bonnie Hewlett, shared with permission

went out to those places, in the end, she decided to follow a family that I knew very well. She wanted to do that more intimate type of film rather than on the social changes.

Ethiopia, in contrast, is changing very rapidly, perhaps much closer to what you talked about in terms of China. There was a lot of infrastructural development. They're building 32 new universities within the last five years. They are building roads, airports, and those changes happen much more rapidly than in the Congo Basin. In the Congo Basin, the logging company comes in, then they disappear. The mining company comes in for gold or diamonds and then they disappear for five years. They build a new road but then that development stops, the roads get bad, and the areas break down. Development has been very, very slow and that's probably why groups like the Aka have continued to live in the hunting-gathering way of life. You need to maintain your knowledge about hunting and gathering or basic farming, whereas in Ethiopia everything seems to be moving towards a market economy.

Bonnie: Yes, many changes in Ethiopia. For example, we switched our work to Ethiopia in 2010 and I started doing work at an orphanage, and at that time

children were being adopted out at a rate that was just astonishingly high. The government in 2017 or 2018 made the policy so that children cannot be adopted out of Ethiopia. Just a simple change like that has huge impacts on our field work.

What struck you most, the pleasant surprise or the challenge, when you first entered the field?

Barry: The first time of going to see the Aka, I had to rely upon the Ngandu, the farmers, to take me into the forest. I walked into the village and found somebody and he took us to the edge of the forest, and he said: 'OK, that's far enough. That's as far as I'm going to go'. I said: 'Well how do we get to the Aka?' He said: 'Just follow this trail into the forest and just stay to the right, stay to the right'. After around eight hours walking on the trail, my British companions (backpackers) were exhausted. They could no longer go any further. They stopped, they turned around and went back. I went down the trail and I stayed to the right. I slept in the middle of the forest by myself and then I finally made it to an Aka camp. But they ran away from me, and they ran because they were so afraid, because among the Aka, white things, things that have white spots and white stripes, are seen as supernatural and powerful. They ran and I walked into the camp. Eventually some of the men came out at first. I didn't speak Aka and they didn't speak French. I knew a few words in Sango and they knew a little bit of Sango. They made a house for me, so I just set up a house.

But the most difficult thing was the bed bugs. I had a very small house. The locals thought I would get cold, so they brought the fire in the house. The fire in the house made it hot, so I took off my sheet and clothes. Then I just got bitten to pieces by these bed bugs. That was the most difficult part, and I was so uncomfortable. Eventually I learned not to put the fire in my house. That's one of the biggest messages in terms of working with remote groups. You have to find ways to make yourself feel comfortable.

Bonnie: The biggest challenge for me was being away from my family, being away from my kids. I'd never been away from my kids before and that was very, very hard and still is hard today, even though they're all adults. My youngest would have been about seven years old and they were well taken care of by grandparents. At that time I was away from them for almost three months, for the first time in my life. They missed me but they did fine. It kind of annoyed me knowing they did so well without me, but I was having a horrible time without them.

Jing: I understand what you mean. I'm a mother too. What did you learn from that experience because you were surrounded by kids and you were studying children, and how does that experience help you gain a new perspective looking at yourself as a mother?

Bonnie: It made me realise how resilient children are and, particularly with the Aka, that children don't need their parents to direct their lives or be the overseers of their lives. Again, with the Aka in particular, I learned how much children can learn on their own. That is, to see these Aka parents let their children play with matches. They don't supervise them in the way that American parents would for sure. It made me realise that we need to trust our children and let them learn about their world more independently than what we do here. I think that was a big take-away when I first went into the field.

You had to overcome a lot of challenges to conduct the research. But what made you go back, and for so many times, over the decades?

Barry: In terms of doing research there are extrinsic rewards and then there are intrinsic rewards. Intrinsically what keeps me going back is two things: enjoying the kids, enjoying the people. One of the intrinsic rewards is working with children. I intrinsically enjoyed them. Also, I intrinsically enjoyed working with the Aka, in terms of learning new ways to think, because the people are exceptionally, exceptionally kind and generous. The Aka people are just incredibly lovely to be around, and I love going hunting and gathering with them. Also the humour. They're very playful. Hunting and gathering may sound like the Aka are on the edge of existence, but the Aka they do well and have fun. I also enjoy the Aka slower pace of life where people pay more attention to each other, talk to each other and that's another intrinsic value to get me back to the field.

Bonnie: It really is the people. It's really working with the Aka. I have never been around a group of people who are so accepting and kind and generous. The whole idea of sharing that is there. A cultural foundation of sharing. It's not just sharing material things. It's sharing their lives. It's sharing so much of their time, their lives and being generous of spirit. To be around people like that who are accepting and generous and kind, how could you not go back?

What pulls both of us back are things you just don't see here (in the US). Another thing you don't see here is the intimacy of their lives: How accepting they were of the strangers that we were coming into their camps but then how

generous they were in sharing their lives, which also was about this intimate kind of living. When I first went there, they didn't know me at all, but I'd walk into camp and the kids were right there, the people right there, skin-to-skin. Just to have that, be around people like that, was such a privilege.

One thing that disturbs their intimate social life is high child mortality in the Aka community. How do people cope with those tragedies and keep going about their lives?

Bonnie: It's terribly hard. It's terribly hard and that's actually why I did that study on death and loss, because I didn't understand it. When the kids talked about all the death and loss that they experienced in their young lives, I did not understand how they could cope with it. I think two things in particular really helped them to cope. Just the sense of both the physical closeness of people they loved around them and also the support, emotional support from the wider range of people, within the camp. It really was because of these intimate lives that they live with their families, with each other, in giving comfort and sharing this kind of intimate life that they drew strength. Also their strong sense of themselves and their identity as Aka.

When I spoke to adult women, even about miscarriages, they would often say, 'I feel a lot of grief.' But in America, there seems to be a pervasive bias that women with multiple children may not grieve as much. This is one of the reasons why I wanted to include these women's stories about losing their babies.

Barry: Just to follow up, just to give numbers. The average number of babies that a woman has is six, and around 40% of them, almost half of them die before the age of 15. You hear people here say, 'well you never should experience the death of your child'. That seems totally unexpected here and the parents are always supposed to die before their children. But that is not the way it is for most people of the world.

The other thing is that if you watch *A caterpillar moon*, you saw the grief that was experienced by the loss of that one Aka guy who lost a son. There was a guy who was crying but it was his brother's child. When I talked to my students about this they said: 'Well people just don't get attached to their children (since they have so many, and they are used to seeing death)'. It's absolutely not true. The Aka people are attached to every one of them [the children]. Even when children are born with congenital issues, deformities and such, they try to do what they can to take care of them.

Figure 4 A group of six Aka people, two younger children, one older and one middle-aged adult gathered closely together, with a young mother in the foreground. The mother has a toddler sitting on her lap and the child is playing with a large machete, digging a hole in the ground while the mother looks on
Photo by Barry and Bonnie Hewlett, shared with permission

How do you deal with the tension in anthropology, when we study people in other cultural communities, especially hunter-gatherer communities, that is, understanding differences without exoticising other people?

Barry: One way is to emphasise the commonalities, to show how we are all similar. Some of these commonalities are love, attachment, etc, human universals. You don't exoticise them because we share the same humanity.
Jing: I appreciate this point. When I came to the United States to study, I didn't realise that there were so many entrenched stereotypes, simplified thoughts about Chinese people, Chinese childrearing or Chinese childhood, for example, tiger moms. Over the years I realised that I have a responsibility as a scholar travelling and communicating across borders: how do I not reinforce those biases and stereotypes?

Barry: Right, all parents want the best for your kids. To me the shared common humanity is the foundation. The other way is to understand differences in context. Of course, social groups have differences. To do what you did in your book (Xu 2017), to provide the rich context in terms of how it takes place, to place it in rich ethnographic context.

One example is childhood autonomy. There is a lot of attention right now on hunter-gatherer people having this respect for autonomy. People are trying to institute it in schools in the US. But for me it is very important to understand childhood autonomy in context: autonomy takes place in the context of egalitarianism where every day people are reminded that you're no different than anybody else. Whereas in our culture every day we are reminded that there are people who are above you there are people who are below you, at work, at school, etc. This egalitarianism in Aka is all linked to sharing. You have this respect for autonomy so that everybody every day shares whatever you bring in with everybody else. If some people thought they were better than somebody else then the sharing pattern would not persist, and then the person who thought they were better than others would get more than the others. Also, everybody is equal, and you respect everybody, young or old. So that's where you get this high respect for children just as much as you do for adults.

What's really unique about hunter-gatherers is it's sharing outside of the household. Such sharing, respect for autonomy and this egalitarianism, they all go together. They don't favour their own kids while sharing. When you come back on the day that each family has particular plates and there's a plate that's made for all the other houses. It's actually complex, the work out in the forest before you get there, get the food, but then when you get back you cook it up and then you make plates for each of the other households. If you saw *A caterpillar moon* you saw those young kids. One kid started to put more in one plate than another and she said: 'You know you can't do that you know certain things had to be equal in each plate'. Because each of those plates were going to different households. It wouldn't surprise me if there's a little bit of bias towards one's own kids but it's amazing in general that they can maintain that system within their context. Our studies have shown that 80% of what they bring in goes out; 80% of what comes into one nuclear household goes to other households.

Using standardised method in cross-cultural fieldwork has become increasingly popular today. What challenges did you encounter in running experiments in the field and what aspects of such research do you think need to improve in the future?

Barry: I think the increase in growth in this community of cross-cultural childhood learning and between all these different disciplines has something to do with evolutionary theory. Evolutionary theory provides a commonality, a general framework, even though concrete theoretical orientations are a little bit different from each other, and there are different revolutionary approaches in cognitive science. But at least evolutionary theories make it easier for people to communicate across fields.

I did the experiments of over-imitation among the Aka children. Over-imitation seems like a human universal in early childhood up to the age of five to seven years old. The thing is, Aka children do not over-imitate and it has to do with the experimental context. Because the demonstrator in the experiment is generally an adult and because of the egalitarian culture in Aka, children saw the adult experimenter as an equal, rather than in hierarchical terms. So, the Aka children skipped all these irrelevant steps, then go straight for the piece of candy in this opaque box, so they do not over-imitate. In certain sort of standardised task, eg over-imitation, what you might be measuring is their schema of adults (eg the experiment), rather than natural pedagogy, or some other universal psychological mechanisms.

Jing: Right, I can immediately relate to that. I did experiments with Chinese children in my research, and the Chinese children always tried to figure out what you (the adult experimenter) wanted, because there's a very hierarchical culture in Chinese education and society, and children are developing very sophisticated understanding of social relations in some specific ways. Children have to figure out what their teacher wants, to infer what adults or other authority figures want, and they bring that habit to interpret the experiment. About doing experiments across cultures, the question that I'm always curious is what do we know, or what exactly do we get from the experiment, and how do we interpret the behaviour or the result? Also, as Bonnie said, establishing trust is important when working with children. I did experiments here in Seattle with American infants. Sometimes they cried when they entered an experimental room and what can you do about it? Even in experimental studies, there is always the interpersonal, intersubjective component.

Barry: I always feel like there's no ethnographic component in many cross-cultural field experiments today. By ethnography I mean the really close interpretation of behaviour in its context, which is so important and perhaps needs more attention. For example, I tried the Meltzoff experiment on imitation, with the lamp, in which infants and young children copied the action, using their heads to turn on the lamp. I tried to set that up but in real life these children don't have encounters with lights, so this became totally ridiculous, and I gave that one up. I also worked with infants. Everybody said: 'Well you need to try this strange situation in order to measure attachment of the kids'. I tried my best. I tried to set it up in terms of the Mary Ainsworth type of scenarios. I did two or three of them and it would just become too stressful for me and too stressful for the family. If you just think about the Aka infants, there's always physical touch and proximity with their caregivers. And then you ask the mother to leave? It was just too traumatic, and I had to give up on those kind of studies.

There are also trade-offs with doing cross-cultural work. The observational studies that we did with Aka infants and my observational study of Aka fathers is very nice because we were using the same codes, so we could make hypothetically direct comparisons using those standardised codes. Obviously, that is an advantage in doing that. Aka fathers were voted the best fathers in the world in popular media (Moorhead 2005) but the reason that kind of claim could be made is because our quantitative data on Aka fathers can be used in comparison with fathers from other cultures. So that kind of quantitative work across cultures allowed comparison to take place. But on the other hand, obviously you're missing the complete context. For example, with these hunter-gatherer groups, the research sample sizes are small, but people really don't understand how hard it is to get to these different number of camps. There are a lot of people in psychology thinking: 'Oh let's have a sample size of at least 50'. But then to us, a sample size of 50 means we'd be walking for days to get 50 middle-aged kids. So that's a different context.

In cross-cultural psychology today there is a greater sensitivity to qualitative research, especially in-depth interviews. But what I don't see so much is the participant observation component, the in-depth immersion and participation on a daily basis in these particular communities.

Could you talk about your experience mentoring scholars, for example, scholars in Ethiopia?

Barry: Something I always wanted to do was to train African scholars, and I started in Ethiopia. It was something I wanted to do all my life working in

central Africa but it just didn't work in Central African Republic, and it was just not going to happen there. I wish I could have done more for Central African Republic but that was difficult because they didn't have the infrastructure. Also, the language there is French so they would have had to learn English, whereas in Ethiopia the students learned English.

In 2010, Bonnie and I applied for Fulbright's scholarship and both of us got it. And we went to southern Ethiopia as part of that. The infrastructure in Ethiopia was growing so quickly and the university that we were at had 30,000 students and an active anthropology programme but none of the faculty had a doctoral degree. So, I wanted to help train PhDs. After that I had my first PhD student from Ethiopia coming to Washington State University. I was committed and our department became committed to training more Ethiopians. I've trained several PhD students from Ethiopia and they've gone back teaching and are doing very well. At Washington State University we train more students from Ethiopia than any other US higher-ed institution.

The other important thing for me was teaching in Ethiopia. I go to Ethiopia and teach a graduate class and then generally I mentor MA students in Ethiopia. It is both ways: I'm bringing them to the US to train them in a PhD programme in the US but then also to train them in in Ethiopia, which is much more fun actually. Ethiopia's higher education system is growing so rapidly, and it was something that I always had wanted to do and it was meant to be.

Within the past decades, how has fieldwork experience changed over time and across generations?

Barry: I think there are fewer people going into the field. In particular, there are fewer people going into the field and starting their own field sites. Today I see so many people who go into the field where their mentor has been, so you have all these studies coming out of one site. I'm personally responsible for that in the Central African Republic. I tried to get my students to go elsewhere, because there are many other hunter-gatherer groups in the area and nobody has written about them. But because of the logistics, because we have good field assistants, we have houses in the village where people can stay, and things like that, it's my impression that you have fewer people starting their own field sites. Also in anthropology, people don't go back to their field site very much anymore. Once you get a job, you've done the part, get publications and you never go back to the field.

The other thing that's obviously changed is the political economy. When I first went to Africa, I hitchhiked across the Sahara twice. The thing is that you

simply can't do that today. The kinds of things that I was able to do cannot be done, because of changes in capitalism, the market economy, inequality, civil wars, etc. It really is a much more politically and economically sensitive time than in my generation. Now students really have to navigate all these complex political economic situations these days.

Bonnie: There has been a shift, a greater awareness of that need for doing comparative research in our own communities. For many years there was a thought that doing anthropological or ethnographic work means that it would be cross-cultural and the culture would be, in Africa, in a rainforest, or a small village somewhere else. But we can also do good work here in our neighbourhoods, in our communities and we also need to stress that with our students.

What advice would you give to young scholars today?

Barry: You follow your intrinsic interest and just go with it, and that to me is what's going to get you through graduate school. That's what's going to get you through your professional life. You follow that passion. I love the field and so I just wanted to go back all the time. Once you follow your passion, the other advice is that, whatever topic you may be interested in, go directly to the top authorities on your particular area of research. Go talk to them. A lot of people are shy or intimidated, which makes sense, but consulting the top scholars is how you're going to get the best information about the topic you are going to spend years of your life on. So don't hesitate to go see these people. I've been very lucky I've met these key people who've made a huge influence on my life.

The other thing, as Bonnie talks about in her book (BL Hewlett 2012) quite a bit, is listening. A key part of being an anthropologist is just listening. Many of our projects have been inductive, based upon what people said around the campfire, campfire stories. This is different from deductive research coming from the top, from theory. But these campfire stories come from the bottom, the spontaneous things. That is the insight. That is the contribution of anthropology. Even for people like Evans Pritchard: He made this distinction between sorcery and witchcraft. Did he invent those terms or that distinction? No, it was the Azande that did that, and he was just being a good ethnographer, so he sort of 'plagiarised' with the Azande. These are insights from the bottom up, from the ethnography.

Bonnie: I think there are two important things that we need to be talking about to our students. One challenge for students today is losing sight of the

intrinsic value of being in the field and being a part of the lives of the people and conducting research. Because there is so much emphasis placed upon 'publish or perish', get a job, etc. Those are important things. But it's easy to lose sight of just simply the intrinsic value of being in the field with other people. It is important for us as those who have degrees and who are mentoring students to emphasise the passion of the work that students have to have. If you lose that passion, if you lose that value, that curiosity, it's easy to get burned out. I've seen that with several students that I've been on their committees with. They're choosing topics and areas that are more easily accessible. These topics and areas may not have been what they truly were interested in or passionate about, but they felt this need that they had to produce, get a degree and get a job.

The other important thing we can do, because of the decrease in enrollments, is really talking to the students about what jobs they can get, about the value of anthropological research, the value of having a degree, BA, MA, PhD, where they can go, what they can do with this degree. We need to advocate for the role of anthropologists in many different jobs and how students can get jobs.

What do you think anthropologists' responsibility is, in terms of the ethical dimensions of fieldwork?

Bonnie: Certainly, we have very specific guidelines in terms of what we can and cannot do, but I think what it means by ethics is more nuanced than that. We really need to be more aware of what I call compassionate research, compassionate studies. At some point in my research, I certainly would have gotten deeper richer material, but we have to be guided by compassion. We are working with living beings, and we need to be aware of our shared humanity. And part of being aware of our shared humanity is being aware of those experiences that are hard and difficult and of those times when we need to step back, and to be aware of when to go forward is detrimental to our research subjects, detrimental to the people we're working with. Particularly because we go into and continue to go back to these communities and talk to these people, so it's not a one-shot deal or one-shot, short-term relationship. This is a long-term relationship that we're building with these people. And part of building a relationship is building it on trust and on an awareness of ethical treatment and compassionate research toward those that we're working with. That for me sums up what the responsibility of what scholarship is.

Barry: Regarding ethical issues and the capacity building, everybody has different ways of doing that, in terms of helping the communities we work

Figure 5 Young Chabu girl and mother with baskets for gathering
Photo by Barry and Bonnie Hewlett, shared with permission

with. For me the applied side of research is important, doing something for the communities. For example, in Central African Republic we built a school, we helped to build a market in the village. We helped to do all these things. In other words, we used applied anthropology with the people we're working with. Another part is advocacy, in the sense that you're advocating for the communities. It may be land rights. It may be recognition for an ethnic group that is not recognised by the national government. For example, we have spent a good amount of time trying to get the paperwork and the negotiations with the national legislature to get the Chabo recognised as an ethnic group within the country of Ethiopia. So that's advocating for things that are important to the communities we work with.

What is your vision for the future study of cross-cultural childhood learning? What do you think needs to happen to the field? Envisioning the future, what is the one thing that this field needs to improve?

Bonnie: I think interdisciplinary work is very important. Scholarship is advanced when we're working with other scholars outside of our own discipline, reading their material, talking with them, collaborating with them.

Barry: Also, better communication across these disciplines. Things are published in so many different places. Some are published in psychology journals, some are published in anthropology journals, and some are published in evolutionary journals. I'm just trying to think of some ways to increase communication across fields, because there is a considerable amount of diversity in terms of the types of studies that are being conducted. The field is really fragmented so it's hard to keep up with what's happening.

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