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CHILDREN'S CHILDREN: TIME AND RELATEDNESS IN EASTERN UGANDA

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In the evenings Rosa's kitchen was filled with more grandchildren than usual. The flickering light of the hearth played on their faces as they sat quietly watching her and the other women prepare the evening meal. The young wife of her son's son was there with her new baby. So was her daughter Maria who had left her husband to move home years ago, and whose four children were regulars among the pot watchers. The kitchen crowd had increased because Rosa's other daughter Veria had come to stay, bringing her six children, her cow and her goats. The talk was of Veria's irresponsible husband. Veria's house had fallen down completely, overwhelming evidence of her husband's neglect, and an irrefutable reason for leaving him. The husband had not returned from his last fish-trading journey to the lake months ago and Veria had heard that he was living with another woman there. Some were worried not that he was away, but that he might come home, exposing Veria to all the dangers of lakeshore sexuality. However, a few months later Veria returned to her husband's place with all but one of her children. There were whisperings that she left because of quarrels with her sister or sister-in-law. But Veria herself said that her husband's family had come to fetch them back. His parents did not want their grandchildren living 'outside'.

There are many situations like this in eastern Uganda. They raise anew old themes in the study of African kinship—lineality and relationships to children's children—themes that seem to have fresh relevance in a time of AIDS, poverty, and gender consciousness. Children's children are timely in another sense, because grandparenthood invites us to consider the temporal aspects of relatedness.

In this article we bring two analytic perspectives to bear on the 'timeliness' of grandparents and grandchildren. The first, which we call *processual time*, is the long-term, 'experience-distant', view of household developmental cycles over a historical period. Beginning with this approach, we describe the arrangements of family and marriage in Bunyole that provide the framework for people's relations to the children of their sons and of their daughters. We present material collected over thirty years that shows continuities and changes in patterns of living with grandchildren. Next we turn to the qualities and practice of relatedness, the 'experience-near' perspective that focuses on the lifeworlds of social actors. The temporality we examine here is that of

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the *intersubjective time* of shared biographies and common experience. We take the term *intersubjective* seriously, for we want to explore the ways that relations to children's children are mediated and meaningful through relations to children. From this angle, we can explore the ways in which people enact and reflect upon relatedness—producing grandparents and grandchildren through their practices.

Our interest in processual time arises in part because of our long acquaintance with Bunyole County, in eastern Uganda. We did ethnographic fieldwork there for two years starting in 1969, and have made regular return visits since 1989. Demographic material was constructed through a series of three household surveys in one neighbourhood, the last one from March 2002. Through the years we have followed changes in political economy and the consequences of the AIDS epidemic, giving us a sense of overarching historical transformations. The interest in intersubjective time comes from engagement with families we have known well enough and long enough to share memories of people and relationships. Participant observation over many years has provided one source of data for this paper. But in order to deepen our understanding of grandparenthood, we carried out a set of interviews in 2002 in our survey neighbourhood and other parts of western Bunyole with a focus on children's children. Staying with families during that month, we sharpened our senses as those relationships were played out around us.

'KINSHIP IS LIKE YOUR BUTTOCKS . . .

. . . you can't cut it off,' is the proverbial Nyole acknowledgement of the intrinsic nature of kinship. In Bunyole County, as in the rest of rural eastern Uganda, much of social and economic life is cast in the idiom of kinship. Patrilineal access to land is fundamental for agriculture, fathers are the 'owners of children' (*abeene b'abaana*) and women move to their husbands' homes at marriage. The obligation to pay bridewealth is widely recognised if not always realised promptly and fully. People position themselves in a kind of geometry of kinship, clanship and affinity as they interact with one another. When someone is introduced, his clan is mentioned. To place someone properly, you must also know the clan of his mother, his father's mother and his mother's mother. (Clans are exogamous and one should not marry into the clan of any of one's four grandparents.) The 'report' read at a burial always starts with this basic positioning of the deceased by mentioning the clans of all four grandparents. In the 2002 District Council elections, even campaign speeches at the 'rallies' began by thus properly placing the candidates. In a sense identification is placement in relation to grandparents.

A few demographic points are relevant to the practice of grandparenting. Fertility is high and birth intervals are close: on average women bear 7.4 children in the course of their lifetimes (Kaharuza 2001). Age of marriage is lower for women than for men, especially polygynous men. So most grandparents have many grandchildren. And

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a woman may easily be a grandmother at the age of forty. There is a tendency for women to have a longer relationship with grandchildren than men, because they start getting children's children at a younger age.

Grandparenting is inflected by polygyny, a high divorce rate, and adult mortality. A son or daughter has children by different spouses. Grandparents split up and sometimes remarry. Grandparents and adult children are widowed and may find another mate. When a woman leaves her husband, or when he dies, or when she is sick, she often goes home to her parents or to her brothers, who usually live on their father's land (Whyte, forthcoming). She may well take her young children with her, even though there is general agreement that those children belong to their father and his family. All of these complications are part of the variety of residence arrangements that actually exists despite the widespread agreement on how people ideally should live and belong.

In a comparative African perspective, it is important to note that women are seldom recognised as household heads in this area. The few exceptions are usually widows, who are keeping the home and the land for their sons. Hardly any women own land in their own right; women are said to own houses within a compound; they are not considered to own homes. Nor is there a high level of labour migration from this district. If people migrate, they tend to buy land elsewhere and move the whole family, rather than leaving older people and children behind. Not far away in western Kenya, where we have also done research, there are many 'children of the bachelor's house', born to young women before marriage, unclaimed by any father, and left behind with maternal grandparents when their mother finally marries (Kilbride and Kilbride 1997; Cattell 1997). Although not unknown in Bunyole, this is not so common. Either the mother marries the father of her child (at least for a while), or she names the father and later sends the child to live with his family, or she takes the child with her into a marriage with someone else.

Eastern Uganda is not as prosperous or 'developed' as the central and western parts of the country. In the pre-Amin times, smallholder cotton production ensured modest cash incomes and helped to maintain what an earlier generation of anthropologists called a 'peasant mode of production'. The collapse of cotton marketing, combined with population growth and decreasing fertility of the land, have contributed to a widespread sense of impoverishment. Everything costs money today, even grass for thatching. With few dependable sources of income, and endless needs for commodities, school fees and medical expenses, Mr. Money is a constant concern. AIDS has touched every family in some way, and every neighbourhood has people with 'this disease of ours'. In this situation, everyday life is very much about mobilising and balancing resources and support, in the idiom of relatedness.

STAYING WITH CHILDREN OF SONS AND DAUGHTERS

In many ways grandparenting is symmetrical for the children of sons and of daughters. There is one word for grandchild (*omwijehulu*)

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and both mother's mother and father's mother are *nguhwa*, while father's father and mother's father are both *sehulu*. (The Luganda word *jaja*, meaning 'grandparent', is an endearing alternative in Bunyole.) Terminologically, there is no distinction of alternate generation relations through male and female, as there is for other kin terms. The reciprocity of intimacy, warmth, care and affection are expected between all grandparents and grandchildren. As Tolofisa, a grandmother many times over, remarked: 'Some people say that the children of your daughter are not yours, but they are all children. The children of children are yours.'

That said, the practice of patriliny and virilocality position these two kinds of grandchildren differently. The children of your married sons live in your compound, or very close by. Their presence is taken for granted. They come to play or eat, sometimes to sleep, but they run back to their parents. Daughters' children are special. They leave their father's home and move in, for shorter or longer periods. The young ones become more attached to their grandparents when their parents are not there. Some grandparents enjoy having such a devoted 'full-time' grandchild. When we asked about his daughter's children who were living with him, a grandfather explained, with a sideways glance at his wife: 'In Bunyole here, women are interested in their daughters' children.' Remembering what it was like to stay with his maternal grandparents, one man said: 'You were a new person there. The other children lived there all the time.'

Living for weeks, months or years with maternal grandparents is an old pattern in Bunyole. Today's grandparents remember it from their own childhood. To stay 'at the uncles' place' (*ebuhoja*) means literally to stay with your mother's brothers, but may actually refer to staying with one or both of your maternal grandparents who are usually living near their sons. The mobility of grandchildren is accepted even though the claims of patriliny are seldom denied. Children may have spent years with their mother's parents, but this is not usually declared a permanent arrangement. 'They might go back anytime; they'll go back when they get older; they have their owners somewhere else.' If they are boys they should go back to claim their father's land. The important difference between children of sons and daughters is that there are choices, contingencies and extenuating circumstances in the presence of daughters' children. Sons' children need no explanation; they are normally at home.

Why do grandparents keep their daughters' children? Some, like Veria's mother, do so because their daughter has left a husband who does not support them. A sick woman may come home with her small children, to be cared for by her parents and brothers. In case of death or divorce and remarriage, children are often left in the care of grandparents rather than stepmothers. Sometimes a family is too poor to support many children, or a mother has children too close together. There are a whole range of problems that explain why children are living with their mothers' parents. But sometimes a grandparent asks for a daughter's child, for help with daily chores and company. Sometimes

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children stay with maternal grandparents because it is closer to a school. Sometimes, people say, the children themselves decide.

Esther Goody (1982) proposed a distinction between voluntary and crisis fostering. Something of that difference is evident in Bunyole, but the distinction is not always sharp. There is a gradation in reasons for keeping a child: from sociability to convenience to alleviating a difficult situation to a dramatic event like death of a parent or being thrown out of the home. If we try to define fostering in Nyole terms, the word that comes closest is *ohuhuuma*, to 'keep or care for'. Fathers and mothers are expected to look after their children. So when we asked whether there were children being cared for in a home, there was no need to name a father's or mother's own children. Nor did sons' children merit mention if they were sleeping there, since they are supposed to live in or near their paternal grandfather's home. 'Those you care for' (*abohuumire*) are those not normally expected to be there, such as sisters' children, daughters' children, or the relatives of a wife. The children of sons or of brothers were only 'cared for' if their fathers were dead or living far away and not supporting their children. Thus one is a caretaker (*omuhuumi*) for the children of daughters, but not for the children of a son, unless he is absent.

This was the definition of fostering we used when we went back to the 'village' of Bubaali to record household composition and try to determine whether more children are being cared for today and by whom.

DEMOGRAPHIC TIME IN BUBAALI

Bubaali is a 'village'[1] which we have followed over thirty-two years. Located about fifteen minutes by bicycle from where we have stayed during many years of research, it is a place we have come to know well. In 1970 we carried out a total household survey there, combining the collection of social and demographic information with an interest in genealogy and village reproduction. We repeated the survey twenty-three years later, in 1993, and in 2002 we revisited every house in Bubaali in order to update the 1993 census, and to revisit old friends. Although Bubaali is not representative of Bunyole—much less Uganda—in any statistical sense, we felt that this case was a rare opportunity to trace the developmental cycles of households and to put some numbers on demographic patterns relevant to relations between grandparents and grandchildren.

[1] The term 'village' in Uganda can be ambiguous. The smallest administrative unit, the Local Council One (LC I), is usually referred to as a village. Such an administrative village may in turn be made up of two or more locally recognised villages. In Bunyole, where there is no tradition of chiefly rights over land, one or two dispersed clans commonly predominate; village leaders, called *abataka*, are selected by co-resident clansmen. Often, as in the case of Bubaali, the village name is the locative form of a clan name: BU-baali, the place of the BA-baali. Bubaali contains three groups of Babaali who are patrilineally related.

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More than that, the three decades since we first surveyed Bubaali were times of historical change. Between 1970 and 1993 Uganda experienced war, civil conflict and the gradual re-establishment of civil society. It was a period of economic transformation in Bunyole. The older cotton-based agricultural economy disappeared and rice and other foods became the new cash crops. By comparison, the period 1993 to 2002 was stable. Rural real incomes—at least in eastern Uganda—have yet to reach 1970 levels but, as people say, at least there is peace. There is also AIDS, however; from the early 1990s, it was no longer a sickness of the cities. Given the reports of orphans and overstretched households in Uganda, we wondered what had happened to the pattern of caring for grandchildren in a place where we knew the situation from before.

The 2002 survey revealed population growth, as expected. But, looking at all three surveys together, we see that village household composition has changed as well. As shown in Table 1, there was a large increase in total households from 1970 to 1993; from 1993 to 2002, the number of households remains the same but their average size increases, approaching the figure for 1970. There was a fall and subsequent rise in average household size for Bubaali as a whole. Genealogical records and village history confirm that this pattern is, to a certain extent, a product of the synchronisation of the developmental cycles of households (Goody 1966) in Bubaali. Such demographic 'coordination'—which has been observed in other Nyole villages—is in turn connected to alliances and the local economic and political strategies of male household heads. It is, as Barth (1992) suggests, an 'outcome of action' and not a feature of some deeper structure of Nyole communities.

TABLE 1 *Bubaali 1970–2002: Population change*

	1970	1993	2002
Households present	29	50	50
Average household size	7.7	5.5	6.9
Total population	223	277	344
Adults	102	134	153
Children	121	143	191
Children per 100 adults	118.6	106.7	124.8

In 1970, Bubaali was a 'mature' village; a quarter of all household heads were older men (*abahulu*) with many of their married sons co-resident. By 1993, four of these men had died and their sons had become independent householders. At this point only 8% of households in Bubaali contained married sons—and two-thirds had been established after 1970. In addition, many younger sons took the break-up of the larger paternal homes and consequent division of land as an opportunity to migrate: thirteen went to Busoga where they acquired land while another nine settled elsewhere in Bunyole. Two

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found salaried employment in town while three more became workers (*abapakasi*) elsewhere in Bunyole.

By 2002 the pattern had changed once again. Only 34% of the households in 1993 had existed in 1970; but 74% of those present today were there in 1993. The households established by 1993 have grown both in size (from 5.5 to 6.9 inhabitants) and in complexity. Married sons are now present in 18% of households and these households represent 30.2% of the total population of the village. (At least three of the Babaali emigrants from 1970–92 have also returned and re-established households; there are also four new immigrants, none Babaali.)

What does all this mean for grandparents and grandchildren? As Table 2 shows, there was a decline in the proportion of households containing alternate generations in the 1993 survey during the period when married sons were moving out. But today the percentage has climbed back to the 1970 level. These grandparent households are where most foster-children are staying and the proportion of foster-children living with grandparents has increased noticeably.

TABLE 2 *Bubaali 1970–2002: Households with alternate generations present*

	1970	1993	2002
Alternate generation households	10	13	17
% of total households	34.5%	26.0%	34.0%
Persons living in alt. gen. households	109	93	170
% of total polulation	84.6%	33.6%	49.4%
Average size of alt. gen. households	10.9	7.2	10.0

Throughout the period, the households with fostered children were larger ones. There are no examples in Bubaali of a child sent to assist an ageing relative living alone. (The examples of smaller households with fostered children were cases where a wife's relative had come to help and where no grandparents were present.)

The number and proportion of children who were fostered went up, as shown in Table 3. Almost two thirds of these children were daughters' children. But what Table 3 also shows is that even in 1970, daughters' children comprised over half of all fostered children.

Are we dealing here with historical patterns, with different kinds of temporality, or simply with an artefact of timing? If we had merely compared 1993 to 2003, we would have had the impression of an increase in the number of grandparental households and in household size. The material from 1970, and what we know from the genealogies and family histories, suggest that there is an ebb and flow in the proportion of multi-generational households in villages at any one time. Bubaali's demography over the last thirty years surely reflects macro-events, economy and epidemiology. But it also reflects basic family developmental processes.

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TABLE 3 *Bubaali 1970–2002: Foster-children*

	1970	1993	2002
Children in fosterage	19	35	52
as a % of total children	15.7%	24.5%	27.2%
Foster-children in alt. gen. households	13	23	44
as a % of foster-children	68.4%	65.7%	84.6%
Daughters' children	10	17	34
as a % of foster-children	52.6%	48.6%	65.4%
Sisters' children	3	6	2
as a % of foster-children	15.8%	17.1%	3.8%

Is there a historical transformation? The rising proportion of children being fostered, and the higher percentage of daughters' children among these, suggest that something is happening. From everything else we know, we believe that AIDS has an influence here. But fragility of marriage/partnerships, perhaps partly due to poverty, also plays a role. Looking back to 1970, we want to emphasise that, even before AIDS, people in this part of Uganda supported daughters in difficulty and cared for their children.

GRANDPARENTS AND QUALITIES OF RELATEDNESS

So far we have described forms and patterns: both the 'cultural rules' of residence and succession that Nyole people themselves emphasise, and patterns of domestic group cycles that we have registered through our household surveys. We turn now to the ways in which relatedness is talked about and enacted in daily life in order to understand the dispositions and practices that produce the patterns and processes we have been characterising.

Recent attempts to open new approaches to the study of kinship use the term relatedness as a reminder to look at a range of idioms and practices rather than taking biological connections as the most important characteristic. As Carsten (2000) summarises these approaches, emphasis is on the work of creating and re-creating relationships through everyday interactions, care and affection, cooking and eating. Relations to children's children in eastern Uganda are certainly about these kinds of practices, as we shall see. But the focus on grandchildren brings to the fore two concerns in particular: one is the linkage through another person, the mediated quality of relating to the child of a child; the other is the experience and memory of intersubjective time, time of intimacy with a grandchild and time of interlinked biographies of children, affines, and children's children. The social phenomenology of Alfred Schütz has offered general inspiration here. Although we do not employ his terminology and typologies, we appreciate his attention to the varying degrees of concreteness, directness, intimacy and intensity in relations with others, and to the

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temporal aspects of relations in the everyday lifeworld (Schütz 1972; Schütz and Luckmann 1973).

The mediated nature of relations to grandchildren is evident in the way people speak of connections and extensions through an intervening generation and also in the ways they contrast relations to children and to children's children. The idioms and practices we describe here are not to be understood as contingent upon relationships; not everyone talks and acts like this just because they are grandparents. Rather people give weight to these qualities when they characterise relations to grandchildren; these ways of feeling, these emphases, these kinds of practices make relationships to children's children.

Corporal connections

Kinship in eastern Uganda is not simply about biology. But careful listening reveals that Nyole people themselves invoke metaphors of bodies and biological processes when they talk about parents' parents and children's children. The word for 'parent', *omusaaye*, has its root in *ohusaala* ('to give birth to'/'to produce a child'), something both men and women do. One way of construing relatedness in everyday life is to appeal to images of concrete organs and fluids: a man 'gives a woman a pregnancy', children suck from the same breast, brothers share one blood. The 'mother who delivered me', or 'the father who produced me' is a way of describing that specific parent, among many 'parents', who provided the very womb or impregnation.[2] One man explained the difference between children and grandchildren in this corporal way: 'There is the real child who came from your body. There is also the child who came from the child you produced' (Whyte 1997: 67).

Such bodily images do not invariably carry decisive weight many years after a birth when all kinds of other qualities of relatedness have coloured interactions between people. But they are one kind of argument, as we heard in the account of the quarrel about where Perusi should be buried. She had left her husband and children many years before her death, and her father had returned the bridewealth. He wanted to bury her at his home, since she was not married and did not belong to any husband. But her sons came to beg the corpse.

> We want to bury her in our courtyard, so that some day when our children are playing and climbing on her grave, we can tell them: 'That is the grave of your grandmother Perusi, the one who gave birth to us.'

The concreteness of the grave is made to mark a physiological connection. That is one way of construing relatedness, and it worked in that case. The sons carried off the corpse for her future grandchildren. On ritual occasions they will remember her by speaking at her grave,

[2] In Lunyole, to make a woman pregnant is *ohumung'a ehida*, literally 'to give her a womb/stomach'.

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or perhaps sprinkling beer or the blood of a chicken or goat. But the grandchildren had no direct experience of her: their interaction is with their fathers who want them to remember some*body* from whom they came into the world.

Contrasting property and affection

Where access to resources is framed in terms of patrilineal kinship, there is a discursive practice about property distribution and inheritance that invokes relatedness between father and son, brother and brother. It is not simply the case that 'rules' determine fathers' obligations and sons' rights. From a practice perspective, giving land and providing bridewealth enacts fatherhood, while receiving it gratefully shows sonship. In conflicts about resources, people invoke rules and principles as arguments to make claims convincing or to imply moral discredit. They point to the disposition of resources as the practice of relatedness. But that kind of concern characterises interactions within a generation or between fathers and sons, as Fortes (1949: 236–40) long ago pointed out. By contrast relatedness with children's children is about care, mutual help, enjoyable company, and emotional commitment. Even though most boys get a share of their paternal grandfather's land, they get it from their fathers. It is with fathers and brothers that they have property issues.

The distinction between relatedness of property and of affection/care is recognised in the appointment of two kinds of successor for a deceased man. The *omusika* ('heir') inherits the land, cattle, and wealth, as well as the obligation to pay debts and provide for sons when they grow up. An *omusika* also inherits a wife in the legal sense of taking over the rights for which the deceased paid bridewealth. The *omuhuusa* ('one who keeps/cares for') assumes the support and affection for his children, wives and other relations and the protection of their interests. When a woman dies, another woman is chosen as *omuhuusa* to replace her in relation to those who depended on her. An *omusika* is always a brother or son, but an *omuhuusa* can be a mother who takes on the care of a grandchild. The transmission of property and the extension of sympathy and care are two different ways of enacting kinship that may or may not be congruent. It is that quality of affection, free from the potential conflicts about property, that people expect and mark in relations to grandchildren.

The contrast between the tensions of property and the affection of sympathetic relations was clear on an occasion we walked into by chance one afternoon in 2002. Members of the Local Council (LC) and clan elders had been called to witness the planting of *oluhowa* bushes to mark the boundary between the land of a father and his son. This was considered shameful. Such a marked boundary should not be necessary between father and son, but there had been continual conflicts between the two even though the father had allocated land to his middle-aged son. Feelings were so strained that the son had told his children not to play in the next-door compound of their grandfather. Blame fell on the

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son, who was publicly reprimanded in the summing up speech of the LC chairman.

> Your father has given you land worth millions[3] ... he gave birth to you and raised you ... and also he paid bridewealth for the wife who has borne you many children... Your father has shown the heart of parenthood... Now you must accept that your children are his grandchildren. Let them come visit their grandfather and help with work and fetch water. Let them play with him and get different kinds of advice from him.

The older man had demonstrated 'the heart of parenthood' by providing for his son; in allocating resources he had performed fatherhood. Yet the son would deprive him of the company and assistance of his grandchildren, and them of the counsel he had to offer, thus inhibiting the enactment of grandfatherhood.

Intimacy and familiarity

Children are named after their grandparents, a practice that reinforces the principle of the equivalence of alternate generations. Grandparents and grandchildren playfully refer to each other as husbands and wives, co-wives or *abasang'i* ('men who have married from the same clan'). Within a family, calling a baby or an old person my husband or my wife is an expression of affection that often evokes a smile. This kind of playfulness takes place in other situations too, for the relationship of grandparent is categorical. Members of your father's mother's and your mother's mother's clans are all grandparents; teasing and joking about marriage relationships (*ohuduha enganda*) is good sport. Cleverly done, it is the source of much amusement when 'grandparents' and 'grandchildren' meet on the path or at a gathering.

The intimacy and ease with grandparents contrasts with the correctness and modesty that people express in relations to parents (a category that includes aunts and uncles) and parents-in-law (especially those of the opposite sex). Sexual modesty (*obuhwe*) discourages adult 'parents' and 'children' from touching, sharing clothes, entering one another's sleeping space, or talking about matters construed as sexual. But children of all ages sleep with their grandparents. As girls get older they unroll a papyrus mat in the house or kitchen of a grandmother at night. Boys build a bachelor's house (*esiimba*) close to the house of their grandparents, so that when they bring girls, they can do so discreetly in relation to their parents.

Parents of both sexes show affection to small children, holding them and carrying them. But grandparents are especially close physically; 'to lean on granny' (*ohwediha hujaja*) is a habit of grandchildren. Sitting talking to grandmothers and grandfathers, we often noticed their children's children hanging onto them, sitting on their laps, being patted affectionately. 'A good grandmother or grandfather carries you like an

[3] In 2002, one US dollar was worth about 1,800 Uganda shillings.

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egg,' explained Flora. 'They reserve special treats for you, like dry meat, smoked mushrooms and white ants.' Many people say that grandparents are too affectionate. They do not discipline their grandchildren; they spoil them. At your grandparents, you enjoy freedom (*eryana*). Some grandparents agreed: 'How can I beat my husband?' 'Let their parents discipline them.' Others proudly said that they insisted on rules and proper behaviour, and were ready to use the stick. Several remarked that modern educated parents did not want their children to live with grandparents because they would get spoiled and stupid.

INTERSUBJECTIVE TIME AND CHILDREN'S CHILDREN

Historical time, even the developmental cycles of homes and villages experienced over a lifetime, is not of immediate concern to people in Bunyole. Most of our interlocutors did not generalise about a radical transformation in family life brought about by AIDS, for example. If asked whether life has changed, most older people say yes, but the abstract view of history and family is not very relevant to the practicalities of their everyday lives and relationships. Rather they are concerned about particular persons in configurations of people with whom they have shared time and experience, and with (or without) whom they imagine possible futures. This intersubjective time is sometimes recounted as a story that gives meaning to the present situation. Sometimes it is evident in the way people seem to be considering who will assist whom in the future. Attending to this sense of time with other people can help us to understand the motivations, feel for options, and actions that produce overall patterns of continuity and change. The quality of 'time together' was evident in the way effort and familiarity were assumed to lend depth and intensity to relationships with children's children. The best examples were the dyadic face-to-face (body-to-body) interaction of grandmothers with their small grandchildren over months and years. Intersubjective time has another aspect, however, when parents invoke the biographies of their children in relating to their grandchildren. Here they are not relating dyadically to individuals, but to social persons in a web of interlinked histories of partly overlapping experiences.

Grandparents struggle for their grandchildren. A grandfather should go to divine the sickness of his grandchild, a grandmother should nurse the patient. Both should use every means to mobilise resources when their grandchild is in need. A neighbour woman came to beg money to buy medicine for her son's child. She had spent long nights in vigil over him at the hospital, but his life was hanging on a thread. 'I wouldn't ask for myself,' she said, 'but it's my grandchild.' When the mama in the family where we stay went to mourn her in-law, she wanted to spend the night there, but decided to come home the same day because her malnourished great-grandson would cry all night without her. Although not all grandparents invest such effort and sacrifice in their grandchildren, doing it or remarking on having done it creates a sense of a particular kind of relatedness.

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Nawire felt it would be hard to take her first son away from his grandmother where he was staying. 'He really disturbed (*ohusumbuha*) her, when I got pregnant with the next one.' The history of having been bothered, of going through difficulties, was part of their bond. One woman explained that women love children more than men because they suffer (*ohubonabona*) with them. It is not simply that you struggle because you love, but you love because you have struggled. Many grandparents spoke of how they had worried and exerted themselves when their grandchildren were sick, as if that explained why they were so close to them. Why should Sunday's grandmother feed and sleep with his child, when he was living right next door with his wife and another child? Because she had stayed with that child in hospital and nursed him through a terrible illness. (Several people remarked that she had done the same for Sunday when he was a child and that was why she loved him so much.)

A history of having spent time together is an important quality of a relationship. People remarked about this especially in connection with children and their grandmothers. The Lunyole verb *ohunala* means 'to become accustomed to', 'to be familiar with'. When children 'overstay' with their grandparents, they get used to them and do not want to leave. When we asked further about the child Nawire left with her mother-in-law, she said that the child had grown accustomed. The grandmother had cared for him from early in his life, because the next baby arrived very soon, and now the child was used to his *jaja*. 'His heart is for his grandmother' (*Gali n'omwoyo gwa nguhwawe*).

Children extend relationships to their parents. That is to say, there is a sense in which they represent their parents—the past, present and future with them. In Lunyole, a child is sometimes referred to as the branch (*olusaga*) of the parents. Caring for someone's child has implications for relations to that someone. This is the point of much literature about fosterage, of course; ties are strengthened through the exchange of children—caring for a child shows you care about its parent. One grandmother in Bubaali explained that she had taken a child from each of her daughters, so as not to favour one more than the other. It is also the point, in an interesting twist, of Bledsoe's work (1990, 1995) on children of previous unions in Sierra Leone. She shows that the treatment of stepchildren depends on relations between a couple; because children are identified with their parents (including the ex-spouse), they become tokens in the relationship with a new spouse. For that reason, children of previous unions are often sent to stay with a grandparent, rather than expose them to mistreatment by a step-parent.

In relation to grandparents and intersubjective time, this point helps us to understand two recurring interrelated themes in the stories people told about why they were caring for their daughters' children. The first was sympathy with their daughter; the second was criticism of her husband and in-laws. There were many examples of daughters like Veria, who were neglected by their husbands, or widowed and pushed out by their in-laws. Often grandparents told about how they had lived through the difficulties of their daughter's marital problems from their

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own position and were bitter about the in-laws' behaviour. The tone of indignation was unmistakable as they told why they were caring for their grandchildren.

Salimati Kadondi interrupted cutting her grandchild's hair to tell us about the three daughter's children who were staying with her.

> My daughter's husband deceived her saying they should work together to grow rice and get money to build a house. Instead he used the money to bring another wife. That woman used medicine to change his mind. He lost interest in my daughter and her children. For four years, my daughter would come home here and then go back, always hoping that her husband would change. Finally she gave up. The last child was born here [she nods at the three year old sitting on her lap and snuggling cosily against her]. I myself took the grandchildren to their father's home to mourn when their paternal grandfather died. But their father, my son-in-law, didn't bother to help his children, even when he saw them. He's just there with his other wife.

This story could as well have come from 1970 as from 2002. As we saw in the survey material from Bubaali, people have been taking in their daughters and daughters' children for a long time. The grounds given for doing so, then as now, are often the failings of in-laws. The evidence is taken from past experience, your own and that of your daughter. Expectations about the future are based on these experiences. If they did not treat your daughter well, they are not likely to treat her children well, especially if there is a new wife in the picture.

Accounts of experiences are of course told in relation to given situations in the present. When Veria came to her mama's with all her children, the talk was about the failings of her husband who allowed her house to fall down. But when his family came to take them back, people spoke of their good heartedness, their affection for Veria, and the future land prospects of her sons, a point to which we shall return in a moment.

What has changed since 1970 is the frequency with which daughters come home because they are ill. It has long been the case that women with chronic conditions, mental illness for example, often went back to their parents and brothers for care. With the advent of AIDS many daughters come home sick bringing their children, sometimes after their husbands have died. The pattern of criticising the in-laws for heartlessness and neglect is common in these cases. It is not only the illness that is the problem; it is the way the husband's family acted.

Alupakusadi has two daughters at home with their children. One is a widow, who is ill herself; she has five children with her. The other left three children with her former husband, and brought two with her. (She has 'the sickness of not eating salt' so she cooks in her own kitchen.) 'It's all on my head [to care for them],' he says. His eldest daughter Sabesi sits outside plaiting mat strips and tending her sick baby, while he chats with us and family members in his son's house.

> When Sabesi's husband died, his family did not suggest an heir to be her new husband, because of the sickness. In fact, they didn't care. They have

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> bad hearts. Two and a half weeks after the funeral, they brought her and the children here in a car. There was no help there. One child remained behind at her dead father's home. She was just wearing a rag. She was pulling grass to get money for a dress, but her stepmother took the money. Finally I went and got that grandchild too; I bought her a dress to put on before bringing her here.

Alupakusadi's account is about his bad-hearted in-laws as much as his grandchildren. We do not know their side of the story. Maybe they thought Sabesi would be best cared for by her own mother; maybe coming home was Sabesi's own choice. Perhaps the children wanted to come with their mother. But Alupakusadi's story put the blame on them, and justified that his daughter's children were with him rather than with 'their owners', their father's people.

One of the things that strikes us from following Bubaali over three decades is the persistence of patrilineal rights to land. How does that fit with all those daughter's children taking refuge from bad-hearted in-laws? In spite of the hard words about in-laws, most grandparents said that their grandsons would go back to their father's home to claim their land when they grew up. 'The children of owners cannot remain,' remarked one grandmother, even as she expressed hope that her sick daughter's two sons would come to stay with her. By pointing out that their patrilineal connection was elsewhere, she was asserting their future claims to land. 'I am just a keeper (*omuhuumi*),' said another, implying a distinction between affectionate caring and property relations. There is a delicate balance between criticising the in-laws and supporting a grandson's possibilities for the future.

These considerations about the future probably explain something else that came out of the Bubaali survey. Of the children being cared for, there were half again as many girls as boys. There seems to be a tendency to leave daughters' sons in their fathers' homes if possible. Alupakusadi's other daughter had brought two daughters home, and left two sons and another daughter. And he asserted firmly that Sabesi's son would go to his father's people when he got a little older. It is because of the future that sons' sons and daughters' sons are different. Granddaughters are expected to marry and move to their husbands, so they are more similar. For boys, links of patrifiliation are paramount.

There is one more point from the survey material that bears exemplification in connection with intersubjective experience. It was evident that the households with grandparents caring for daughters' children were large ones. Although this was not invariably the case, it seems that homes with more social resources may attract foster-children. Instead of seeing grandparents as a passive 'dumping ground' overwhelmed by burdens of care, we had the impression of many as active and resourceful. They were nodes in networks, participants in family arenas, rather than individual older people alone with their burdens. The following notes from a visit to a neighbour illustrate the way that daughters' children fit into a family history and a set of social resources.

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When Lucy explained about the orphans (*abalehwa*) of her daughter living with her, she told about their father who never came to see his baby when it was sick: 'I got tired of writing letters to him about his child's illness. Those many worries are what gave me [high blood] pressure.' The baby died and so did Lucy's daughter. Lucy brings a big brown envelope with X-rays of her daughter's lungs (tuberculosis was reported), receipts for medicine, and slips with lab results, together with photos of various family members, a copy of Lucy's son's driving licence, and her husband's voter registration. In this 'family archive' is the evidence of how she managed to get her daughter to Mulago Hospital with help from a grandson who works for an Indian in Kampala. 'But after all that,' she sighs, 'they said this isn't the type of sickness that can be operated.' Lucy's daughter Esuka joins the conversation. She had helped to care for her sister and now shares a house next to her parents with the two orphans and three of her own children. (The other two are with their father, or rather in a room he rented for them at the trading centre, since his new wife did not want to care for them.) It is a large and orderly compound. Lucy and her husband had nine children. Besides the house of Esuka and those grandchildren, there are those of a son and his two wives and children. At lunchtime, all these children flock to Lucy's kitchen in their school uniforms. Two children of her brother are among them; they live too far from school to go home for lunch. We offer Lucy a little money as mourning (*esiho*) for her daughter (we had not been there since her death five months earlier) and Esuka takes us to see the new grave at the edge of the compound. We notice that it is the only one that is cemented.

Depending on how we interpret 'the sickness that cannot be operated', Lucy may be a grandmother caring for AIDS orphans. But she is not a hapless victim of historical forces. Like other grandparents who have lost their married daughters, she was most concerned about the immediate history of her relations with her neglectful son-in-law and with others from whom she might mobilise help. Her efforts and their assistance had secured X-rays and a cement grave. Her daughter's children were not just living with their grandmother, but with their grandmother's people. In fact Lucy was one of the few who did not envision sending her daughter's son back to his father. 'If God helps us, we'll buy him a plot. When he grows up, we'll help him,' she said.

In a sense, our examples of invoking interlinked biographies and shared experiences complement Carsten's analysis (1995) of the politics of forgetting on the Malaysian island of Langkawi. She argues that forgetting details about the lives of grandparents who immigrated to the island from many different backgrounds allows the construction of a common present. 'The enormous emphasis on the production of children in marriage and the image of the community as one of shared grandchildren are both aspects of this forward projection' (*op. cit.*: 326). Instead of 'looking downward' towards shared grandchildren who will create ties in the future, the Nyole grandparents who spoke to us of their daughters' children were remembering events in the past that divided them from their daughters' affines. But our point is that 'micro-politics' can be glimpsed here as well: there is a situational pragmatics in remembering and forgetting. Grandparents who in one context remember ill-treatment of their daughter at the hands of her

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husband's family may still put that memory aside in another when their daughter's son goes back to his paternal home to claim land from his father.

CONCLUSION

Analytical assumptions about time have very different implications for understanding relations between grandparents and grandchildren. Structural processes of generations succeeding one another and developmental cycles based on the bio-time of fertility, growth and ageing have the virtue of reminding us that not all processes are unidirectional and progressive; there are cycles and repetitions. Historical time in the sense of a narrative of processes of change can easily become hegemonic with its focus and plot. It can oversimplify and ignore both continuity and variation. In the concern with the social consequences of AIDS, for example, it is easy to overlook all the other reasons why children may be staying with their grandparents. Still, our research would be myopic and less interesting without tying it to some larger story about what is happening in the world.

Intersubjective time is our term for the experience of time with other people, typically acknowledged in the recounting of who did what, and how that relates to where I am now. These are not 'life stories' but remarks or reminders about shared experience and connections to other people. They are situated in a more immediate way than dominant historical narratives. While history 'unfolds', intersubjective time is contextual and contingent, relative to purposes, positions and strategies in a field of other subjects. It is socially creative, placing events (divorce, illness) within a weft of remembering that can guide action and affection, justify a situation, or keep future possibilities open. For relations between alternate generations, this kind of temporal perspective is important because it makes us see individual grandparents as subjects interacting with other subjects, not only grandchildren, but also adult children and in-laws. These interactions produce the patterns that we as ethnographers describe in more distant or abstract terms as processes.

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ABSTRACT

This article brings two analytic perspectives to bear on temporal aspects of relations to children's children. The first, which we call *processual time*, is the

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long-term, 'experience-distant', view of household developmental cycles over a historical period. Beginning with this approach, we describe the arrangements of family and marriage that provide the framework for people's relations to the children of their sons and of their daughters in Bunyole County, eastern Uganda. Household survey material collected over thirty years in one village shows an increase in the number of grandchildren being cared for, as expected in an era when parents are dying of AIDS. However, it also qualifies the hegemonic historical narrative of AIDS by showing that other factors have been and still are at work in influencing the patterns of caring for grandchildren. The second analytical perspective is that of the *intersubjective time* of shared biographies and common experience. The emphasis here is on the 'experience-near' qualities and practice of relatedness as they are lived and talked about in the lifeworlds of social actors. They are evident in the dyadic relations between grandparents and grandchildren and also in the ways that these relations are embedded in other connections to children and in-laws. When grandparents take on the care of a daughter's children, they are mindful of the past, present and future of her relation to her husband and his family. The concept of 'intersubjective time' points to the intertwining of the lives of three generations and provides a rich complement to the more abstract concern with developmental cycles and historical processes.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article se sert de deux perspectives analytiques pour étudier les aspects temporels des relations avec les enfants d'enfants. La première, appelée *temps processuel*, est la perspective à long terme, «éloignée de l'expérience», des cycles de développement des ménages sur une période historique. Cette première approche décrit l'organisation familiale et conjugale qui forme le cadre des relations entre les personnes et les enfants de leurs fils et de leurs filles dans le comté de Bunyole, dans l'est de l'Ouganda. Les données collectées pendant trente ans dans un village dans le cadre d'une étude sur les ménages montrent une augmentation du nombre de petits-enfants pris en charge par leurs grands-parents, comme on peut s'y attendre à une époque où les parents meurent du SIDA. Cependant, elles tempèrent également le narratif historique hégémonique du SIDA en montrant que d'autres facteurs ont joué et jouent toujours un rôle d'influence sur les schémas de prise en charge des petits-enfants. La seconde perspective analytique est celle du *temps intersubjectif* des biographies partagées et de l'expérience commune. L'accent est mis ici sur les qualités et la pratique de la parenté «proches de l'expérience» telles qu'elles sont vécues et discutées dans l'univers de vie des acteurs sociaux. Elles se manifestent dans les relations dyadiques entre grands-parents et petits-enfants, ainsi que dans la façon dont ces relations s'inscrivent dans d'autres rapports aux enfants et à la belle-famille. Lorsque les grands-parents prennent en charge les enfants de leur fille, ils ont à l'esprit le passé, le présent et le futur de la relation de leur fille avec son époux et la famille de celui-ci. Le concept de «temps intersubjectif» désigne l'entrelacement des vies de trois générations et fournit un riche complément à la question plus abstraite des cycles de développement et processus historiques.

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