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# THE VALUE OF GRANDCHILDREN: CHANGING RELATIONS BETWEEN GENERATIONS IN BOTSWANA

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The relationship between the generations, and in particular that between grandparents and grandchildren, has been changing in Botswana as a result of developments since Independence in 1966. In this article I will argue that in order to understand these changes one cannot look at grandparents–grandchildren as one unified type of relationship. We must distinguish between grandmothers and grandfathers and their relationships to various categories of grandchildren.

Following this argument I will discuss these relationships according to Charles Taylor's definition of *moral space* (1989) and see how the grandchildren may (or may not) contribute to the axes of *respect*, *meaning* and *dignity* for their grandparents. According to Taylor, personal and social identities are developed and sustained in a relationship to others, and through a common understanding, which is embedded in practices of the society (Taylor 1985a, 1985b). Thus the way people are seen and treated by others will also affect the way they see themselves. A culturally rooted perception of the older person as someone to be respected and cared for can only be sustained in the long run if younger people actually are willing to behave in ways that confirm this picture. *Moral space* is not only concerned with rights and duties as such, but with what is considered the right behaviour. Taylor claims that the three moral axes may be found in all societies, with a varying relationship to each other and with varying emphases. *Respect* has mainly to do with rights and duties: what we are expected to give to others, but also what we expect to receive from people around us. *Meaning* has to do with what makes life worth living. *Dignity* consists of the honour we expect as persons, our power to dominate public space or our self sufficiency (Taylor 1985a: 15). These are not independent dimensions. What happens along one influences the others. According to Taylor these axes are to be found in all societies. What varies from culture to culture is the content given to them and how they are evaluated in relation to each other. According to Taylor, modern society is characterised by placing more emphasis on respect (for instance individual human rights) and less on dignity. By studying moral space, and how the emphasis on these values vary, Taylor claims that we can do an historical analysis of developments in

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one single society, as well as a cross-cultural comparison of different societies (Fossland and Grimen 2001).

The aim of this article is to study the development of moral space over time, in relation to a particular topic (the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren) and in one specific country (Botswana). There have been structural and social changes over the years that clearly have an impact on the relationship between the young and the old. However, the emphasis in this article will be more on changes as experienced by the elderly people themselves in their *moral space* than on what may be considered 'historical facts'. Elderly people everywhere seem to have a tendency to idealise the past when it comes to describing the relationship between the young and the old. While this picture may be lacking in historical accuracy it has important bearings on their perception of their present life situation.

## BACKGROUND

Botswana today is in many ways a modern society but also one with many contrasts: between the poor and the rich, the urban and the rural as well as between hope and despair. At the time of Independence (1966) ranked among the poorest countries in the world, Botswana has in many ways become a success story among the developing nations. It has seen an average 9% economic growth annually, one of the highest in the world, and is now considered a middle-income country. It has close to universal primary school attendance and a well-developed junior secondary school system, which aims to give every child the option of a minimum of ten years education. It also has a well-developed primary health care system with the intention to serve all citizens within walking distance of their homes. These remarkable developments have taken place mainly due to findings of rich diamond ores and wise administration of capital by a democratic and uncorrupted government. A growing cattle industry and generous foreign aid in the form of grants, loans and expertise have also made important contributions.

However, while modern high-rise buildings are sprouting up like mushrooms in the capital Gaborone and other urban centres, and while Mercedes, Jaguars and Landcruisers are rapidly replacing the donkey carts, life in the villages and rural areas has gone largely unchanged. Certainly, there are schools and clinics and perhaps a paved road and a bus route nearby. But few rural people have electricity, which is considered too expensive even if the power lines have been extended to the village, and most of them have to carry water from a central tap, which may often run dry. Houses in the middle-sized and smaller villages are still largely of the round type with clay walls and thatched roofs, occasionally neighboured by fancier brick houses, which indicate that a family member has a well-paid job somewhere else. Although transportation facilities have improved considerably, the main movements (if any) of elderly people still go between village, cattlepost and 'lands' (agricultural fields) and quite a few have never

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been to one of the urban centres. Thus life in Botswana may be said to take place in two different 'worlds' between which mainly the younger people are moving.

Unemployment in the rural areas is high (21% in the country as a whole) and most young people have to migrate to the urban centres in order to find work, which is often low-paid. This migration is different from the labour migration to South Africa, which was of importance up until the 1980s, in that it equally involves young men and women. The migrating women often get pregnant and end up leaving children with their grandparents in order to continue working. Thus the villages tend to be accumulating elderly people, small children, disabled persons, unemployed and 'working failures' (people with alcohol or other kinds of problems).

One of the most important changes that has taken place in family life in Botswana is the increasing number of households with a female head (Ingstad and Saugestad 1984). This is not a recent phenomenon; we find households today that are second and even third generation female-headed. But with the advent of HIV/AIDS this is becoming more a matter of choice than before. Previously this household form was a result of widowhood (men working in dangerous occupations in mines) or of young women getting pregnant and not succeeding in securing a marriage, which they most often desired. Today more and more women, after taking the risk of having one or two children, choose to remain unmarried because they do not trust a man to be faithful and feel they will lose control of their own body and the use of condoms if they marry.

Botswana was one of the first countries in Africa to recognise publicly the danger of HIV/AIDS and to take precautions in the form of public awareness campaigns, distribution of condoms, etc. For a while they were lagging behind the countries further north in prevalence and there was hope that they might succeed in holding off the epidemic. Today, however, Botswana is one of the hardest hit countries in the world with 43% of women attending antenatal care being HIV positive and an estimate of 290,000 (out of a total population of 1.6 million) living with HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS 2002). The number of orphans is estimated at 66,000 and we may assume that most of them are being taken care of by grandparents. Today Botswana is at the beginning of a demographic transition due to the longevity of the elderly caused by improved healthcare, and a smaller number of children born to each woman. This transition is increasingly being influenced by the fact that a large proportion of the middle generation is actually dying. While the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s brought optimism and the hope of 'development', the time since then has increasingly brought sorrow and despair to many families.

## METHODOLOGY

The data on which this article is based have been gathered over a period of eighteen years. The first fieldwork took place in Kweneng district

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(1984–85) and was a study of family care for persons with a disability, a task in which elderly people play an important role (Ingstad 1997). The methods used were a combination of participant observation and semi-structured and informal interviews. The second fieldwork (1991–92) took place in a medium-sized village, 60 km from the capital Gaborone and focused on elderly people, both as care givers and persons in need of care, in the household (Ingstad 1997; Ingstad *et al.* 1992; Clausen *et al.* 2000). This was a multi-disciplinary teamwork combining medical examinations with semi-structured household interviews and participant observation. The team examined/interviewed all (337) people above the age of sixty in Mmankgodi. The village has been followed up with regular visits once or twice annually (the latest one in October 2002). The third study is a national survey using a structured questionnaire in combination with medical examinations (1998). This study is based on the experiences and result of the village study, intending to validate the in-depth data against data from a larger and representative sample of the population. The survey data are still under preparation and thus will only briefly be touched upon in this article.[1]

## THE CHANGING VALUE OF GRANDCHILDREN[2]

When elderly Batswana talk about their children and grandchildren, they tend to do so against a background of an idealised past, a 'golden age' in which elderly people were well cared for by their well-behaved children and grandchildren. 'There are no good children nowadays' and 'there is no respect' are frequently encountered comments. However, this 'golden age'—if it ever existed—must have been placed in time well before their own generation if we are to judge from Schapera's observations from the 1930s:

> Nowadays in fact, complaints about the behaviour of the children have become very common. It is said that they are cheeky and ill mannered, showing little respect for their parents and still less for other elderly people; except when compelled, they seldom do as they are told; they take little interest in domestic work, and do not support or help their parents as they should; they have no morals in matters of sex, and their promiscuity is ruining the tribe, and filling it with bastards; they have lost all discipline and think only of their own pleasure. [Schapera 1940: 265–266]

Although we may speculate if this 'golden age' of tradition and submissive (grand)children ever existed outside the minds of elderly people, it still becomes important as a standard against which they

[1] I am grateful to Thomas Clausen a Ph.D. student at the University of Oslo, for giving me access to some of his yet unpublished data.

[2] Earlier versions of some of the arguments presented in this article have previously been published in Adepoju and Oppong (1994), in Ingstad and Saugestad (1984) and in Ingstad *et al.* (1992).

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measure their present life situation.[3] In this idealised picture, one's own children are seen as a source of economic security and practical support. Since relatively few people in the old days lived to see their grandchildren as working adults, their role was mainly seen as the continuation of the lineage, emotional fulfilment and help with smaller daily tasks. Today things are different. Elderly people may live longer due to better health care and at the same time their responsibility for the grandchildren has increased dramatically as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which is about to wipe out a large part of the middle generation. In the national survey, 64% of the sample of elderly had grandchildren living with them.[4] In order to understand fully the changes that have taken place in the value of grandchildren we have to distinguish between the role of grandmothers and grandfathers and various categories of grandchildren respectively. As the roles of the grandmother and grandfather are very different so also are the roles of maternal and paternal grandparents.

## THE VALUE OF SONS' CHILDREN

In the (idealised) traditional society, based on a patrilineal kinship system, newly married couples would settle in, or near, the compound of the groom's parents. Thus it was left to his parents to allocate according to need the money sent home from his work as migrant labourer. Several informants stated that it was often his mother who was entrusted with the money so the father would not use it on beer. One elderly lady living alone under very poor conditions with four working and married sons residing elsewhere complained bitterly: 'Before the daughter-in-law listened more to the mother-in-law than to the husband, but now she wants all the money for herself.' It seems quite possible that the desire of young wives to escape this type of control plays an important part in the decision to settle elsewhere, which is more common today. The obligation of the son to help his parents still remains, but is often not fulfilled, and the stigma of neglect seems to be fading as it becomes more common.

These changes also affect the grandparent–grandchildren relationship. Because of the traditional settlement pattern the children of sons were previously the main source of emotional and practical support for their grandparents. They would interact on a daily basis. The boys herded the family's goats and cattle, the girls helped the grandmother with the cooking, besides looking after smaller siblings, and both girls and boys helped to fetch firewood and water for the paternal grandparents. If the grandmother was widowed or unmarried the same practices would usually apply. For the first grandchild the daughter-in-law would usually go to her own mother for birth and confinement; for the following children the mother-in-law would be in charge.

[3] Elderly people above sixty-five years of age today receive an old age pension of 120 Pula (around £10) a month and also some support if they take care of orphans.

[4] Data from Thomas Clausen.

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Through his son's children the paternal grandfather would see the continuation of the lineage and family wealth, as well as a confirmation of his own status as a soon-to-be ancestor. This too has changed, as shown by a ninety-one-year-old man, who in spite of considerable wealth was still herding his goats near the village. He had quite successfully invested money from labour migration in a grain mill and beer brewing, and used the profits for educating his sons and buying goats and cattle. However, the sons had gotten good jobs and settled in towns far away, and the grandsons were all in school. No one was interested in looking after the family's traditional capital. The man was worried about what would happen to his widow and his goats when he died and viewed his life at least partly as a failure (Bruun 2000).

We see from this case that modern education plays an important role in the changes that have taken place between the generations. This was clearly evident when we asked schoolchildren in the village to write compositions about 'How is it to be an old person in your village today?' and 'What do you think your life will be like when you grow old?' Several of the compositions portrayed old people of today as 'knowing nothing' (about modern society), and few youngsters seemed to value the wisdom of age. While the knowledge of the grandmothers concerning housekeeping, childcare, and the gathering of wild fruits and vegetables may still to some extent be valid for the grandchildren, the grandfather's expertise in keeping livestock the traditional way is becoming irrelevant.

If the paternal grandfather never married the grandmother, his relationship to the grandchildren (from both sons and daughters) would previously as well as today most often be peripheral—sometimes non-existent. This may seriously affect his chances of respect and of being taken care of in his old age, as well as of being considered one of the ancestors (*badimo*) after his death. One old man, who was quite poor, had been divorced by his wife after a short marriage and had long ago lost contact with his children and never seen the grandchildren. He was nicknamed 'Boy' by the villagers, indicating that he never really reached the status of a respected elder (Bruun 2000).

If the son was unmarried but had been living in a stable relationship, he might claim the right to his illegitimate children and let them grow up in his parents' compound. But in most cases, if the bride wealth or compensation for loss of virginity has not been paid, the son would have no rights to his children, and they would be of very little (practical) 'value' to his parents. As we shall see below, this is largely the case in current times.

Paternal grandmothers also experience changes. With daughters-in-law and their children settled elsewhere they not only lose control of the son's income, but also of the labour capacity of his family members. A paternal grandmother may no longer count on the after-school help from her sons' children in fetching water and firewood. Neither will the daughter-in-law be cooking for her unless she happens to live nearby. The important role of the paternal grandmother in caring for the newborn children of sons and their mothers while in confinement

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has also been weakened by the increasing number of children born out of wedlock, and the fact that an increasing number of women prefer to spend all their confinement periods with their own mother or grandmother and not with their mother-in-law—if they go into confinement at all.

## THE VALUE OF DAUGHTERS' CHILDREN

Since married daughters in the old days often settled quite far away from their parents, distance could limit the contact between children and maternal grandparents. On the other hand, ties between mothers and daughters were expected to remain strong after marriage, with frequent visits by the daughter and her children to the parents' home. The daughter usually came home for delivery of the first child to stay through the three to six month confinement period. It has also been quite common for this first child, especially if it is a girl, to return to the maternal grandparents at an early age to stay and help them with daily tasks. Thus both maternal grandmother and grandfather (if married) would benefit, and the emotional tie to this child would usually be very close. Neo, a young nurse, had grown up with her maternal grandparents and felt that her grandmother was much closer to her than her own mother. When she herself bore a son out of wedlock she sent him to be fostered by her grandmother (who was by then a widow) because this was where she visited most frequently. This way she was also able to send money to her grandmother without her parents being jealous.

The present pattern of households providing for the children of unmarried daughters may be seen as an extension of the traditional practice of sending children to maternal grandmothers for fostering. The number of children living with maternal grandmothers seems to be increasing rapidly, with a maximum of fourteen in one of the households in the Mmankgodi village study, and the number may be expected to increase even more as a result of the AIDS epidemic. Many of the care-giving maternal grandmothers are themselves widows or even first or second generation unmarried mothers. For these children the grandmother usually becomes the main female figure, as in the case of Neo, the one who organises the daily life of the household, the one who makes the decisions (if there is no male head), the one to be looked up to and respected. Unmarried women living with their mothers or parents never really have the status of grown-up independent people. If they go away to work they have more autonomy, but they are still subordinate to their mother/parents when they are home visiting. With this type of relationship the grandmother/grandparents may have reason to hope that one or more of the children of unmarried daughters will eventually succeed in life and come to support them. Thus an investment in care for these grandchildren, besides being an expression of love for their daughter and her children, also becomes an investment in future security for themselves.

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In this perspective it is understandable that the stigma of being an unwed mother has been fading and that some grandmothers encountered during my different fieldworks have actually been discouraging their daughters from marrying or receiving money for 'damaged' virginity or child support. Such payments could imply that rights to the child would be transferred from the family of the mother to the father and his kin. 'I love children more than money' was the answer of one unmarried mother when asked about why she had not claimed child support from the father. The meaning behind this statement is that if such support were to be given she would be afraid that the man's mother/parents and sisters would kill the child by witchcraft in order to keep him as a provider for them and the sister's children born out of wedlock.

In a previous article (Ingstad and Saugestad 1984) I have argued that we are seeing change from patrilineal and patrilocal to matrilineal and matrifocal kinship and marriage patterns in Botswana. While the patrilineal model still exists, legally and in people's minds, what we see in practice is quite different. Men have to a large extent become rather elusive characters who take more responsibility (if any) for their parents and unmarried sisters' children than for the results of their own sexual encounters. Thus their children are more likely to inherit from their mother and maternal grandmother than to get anything from the family of their father.

There is, however, a class component in this pattern. The educated, urban elite is abandoning the traditional family model for a different one in which the modern nuclear and independently living family becomes the ideal, and the relationships between grandchildren and grandparents on both sides are more equalised. Since the urban grandparents are often themselves busy workers, the mutual care and support gets tuned down and the grandparent–grandchild relationship comes to be based on love and affection alone.

The increasing importance of the maternal grandmother and the matrifocal household becomes even clearer in these days of AIDS when some women actively choose not to marry:

> Mary is trained as a Family Welfare Educator.[5] She works in a clinic in one of the urban centres. Some years back she had a steady relationship with a man working in the Defence Force, with whom she had two daughters. Their plan was to get married and she had been introduced to his family. Slowly however, she realised that this man could not be trusted to 'stick to one partner'.[6] Since they were working in different towns she started to insist that he go for HIV testing before they met, but as she was starting to see AIDS patients and AIDS deaths in her job she got more and more terrified and decided to end the relationship. She did not want to marry him because she felt that by doing so she would not be able to insist on the use of condoms, and she would be even less able to control his sidesteps. For a while she would bring the children regularly to visit their paternal

[5] Lower-level health worker, equal to 'Village Health Worker' in many other countries.

[6] One of the slogans of the AIDS poster campaigns.

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grandparents, but as the father rarely paid any support and hardly ever came to see them she stopped doing so.

Mary's mother lives in a village a few hours away by bus. She divorced her husband some years back because he also was 'running around' and 'could not be trusted'. She never sees him, nor does he give her any economic support. When Mary was having her first child she went to her mother's compound for confinement. After a few weeks, when she had to return to work, her mother insisted on keeping the baby and Mary reluctantly gave in. She could not really see how she could manage on her own with the baby and her work. When the second child was born she too remained with the maternal grandmother who is also taking care of five other grandchildren (three of them orphaned), only helped by an unmarried and unemployed daughter (the mother of the two other children). Mary would like to be with her children daily as a (modern) family and have the children feel closer to her than to her mother, but she realises the difficulties, not to mention the costs involved (paying for babysitter/maid, etc.). She is now, with her small salary, the sole provider for the large village family, a responsibility that weighs very heavily on her shoulders. Her mother asks her again and again to 'please be careful' (meaning do not take any chances with HIV/AIDS). She has a new boyfriend who comes and goes, but she insists on using condoms, does not want to marry him and does not want to take the risk of having another child (not using condoms).

The case of Mary shows clearly the shift in emphasis from the paternal grandmother/grandparents to the maternal grandmother that is taking place. This shift is accelerated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We see that her children are of value for her mother, not only for their love and affection, but also for the guarantee they represent for Mary's continued provisions to the household. Mary is lucky. She has a job and is able to fulfil these expectations. Many women in similar circumstances are unemployed and have to do like Mary's sister, go home with the children and work as an unpaid helper in the mother's compound. Even if they have a job they may be paid so little (for instance as maids) that there is hardly anything to bring home when the costs of living in the city have been covered. In such cases their children become an economic burden on their mother's/parents' household, more mouths to be fed and school uniforms and shoes to be bought, in addition to the costs of orphans of dying children that also have to be taken care of. The national survey shows that only 27% of the elderly who were taking care of grandchildren received any support from the parents of these children.[7]

## BATSWANA GRANDPARENTS IN MORAL SPACE

Taylor is concerned with the experience of change as reflecting normative issues, not with changes in living conditions as such. In

[7] Data from Thomas Clausen.

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Botswana, however, such a distinction is hard to make since important, and quite rapid, social changes (for instance in settlement patterns and labour migration) are closely linked to changes in what people consider moral matters (such as children born out of wedlock, and lack of support to the elderly). Thus the web of values that the elderly people find themselves in, no longer (or only partly) corresponds to that of the younger generations. One need only go back twenty to thirty years to find a situation where migrant labourers to South Africa secured their future by investing their earnings in livestock and good relations in the home village. This also contributed to a moral space for the elderly in which they were being respected and thus could experience the sense of dignity that gave meaning to their life, in spite of occasional complaints. Today the situation has changed drastically due to what is usually called 'development', and in particular the educational emphasis on individual achievement as a source of success in modern society. Thus the moral spaces of the younger generations differ in many ways drastically from that of the elderly. And even when they seek to reciprocate in ways that will please their (grand)parents there are structural hindrances (for instance unemployment and the need for rural–urban migration) which make it difficult.

In the moral space as seen by Batswana grandparents today, grandchildren may influence the three axes of moral space in different ways:

*Respect*

Respect in Taylor's terms has to do with what can be expected in terms of rights and duties—what the elderly as grandparents give to their grandchildren, and what they expect to receive from them. Grandparents are, as we have seen in the case of Mary, important caregivers and also a source of emotional closeness as in the case of Neo. However, seen from the grandparents' point of view, respect can mainly be measured along two dimensions: behaviour and support. As far as behaviour is concerned they would transfer the comments (above) made by Schapera about their own generation to that of their grandchildren (and children) any time. They feel that the modern school system has failed in teaching the children the manners and reverence for elderly people that formerly were taught, and even beaten into the children (especially the boys), through the old initiation rituals *bogwera* (boys) and *bojale* (girls). In the old days the grandfather would go to the cattlepost and beat the herdboys if he found them sleeping (Bruun 2000). Now, as we have seen, he cannot even get his grandsons to look after the goats because they are far away at school, and a child help-line has been put in place for children to phone if they are physically abused. The fact that some schoolchildren write in their compositions that elderly people know nothing about modern society, gives some substance to a claim of lack of respect by the elderly. On the other hand, many a schoolgirl has been ordered to move to her grandparents in the village to help them in their old age, and has done so with love and affection, although she might have found city-life a lot more

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exciting. This type of support is another measure of respect as seen from the grandparents' point of view, preferably combined with the material support of the child's parent(s). When asked the question 'What is a good daughter?', one elderly lady answered, 'One that thinks about me when she eats.' This statement shows an important point; respect is not only measured by behaviour and practical help, but even more so by having a secure old age and knowing that there will be milk for the tea, flour for the porridge and perhaps some meat in the days to come.

The indications of a change from patrilineality and patrilocality to matrilineality and matrilocality that have been described here also touch upon the issue of respect. The 'disappearance' of fathers and grandfathers from daily life in many households reduces their chances of being respected by their offspring (as in the case of Mary), and the maternal granduncles cannot fill their place since they too are often elusive figures. Increased responsibility for grandchildren and household matters may increase the respect for the maternal grandmothers, but too much responsibility clearly works the other way.

*Meaning*

Meaning in Taylor's terms has to do with what makes a good life. Meaningful ageing is in gerontological literature often portrayed as the ability to do as many daily-life activities as possible, to take care of oneself in one's own home, play golf, travel, dance and perhaps even marry again. Batswana grandparents see this differently. Truly they appreciate being active and able to walk around in the village, to visit friends and beer-parties and participate in funerals and village meetings. But too much activity is seen as a sign of lack of help and respect from the children and grandchildren. In the study of care for disabled people in the household an elderly blind lady was being taken care of by her granddaughter in her twenties. When I tried to suggest that the lady should be taught to walk independently around the village with a cane they protested vigorously saying that this would bring shame on both her and the family. Thus we see that a meaningful life for an elderly Motswana is to be active but not too active. The grandmother should be surrounded by grandchildren, but not too many and so young that they become a burden. They should do most of the practical chores for her and she should be able to sit down and supervise it all. For the grandfather a meaningful old age is to know that he has invested his capital well, in livestock, education for children and comfortable housing. He wants to know that his sons and grandsons appreciate this and will manage the capital well when he dies. A grandfather who loses contact with his grandsons and sees his sons die from AIDS is also losing the meaning of his own life.

*Dignity*

Dignity in Taylor's terms has to do with honour. What are the grounds for people's claim to being honoured? From what has been said so far we see that a sense of dignity depends both on respect and on having

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succeeded in creating a meaningful life for oneself and the family. A man like the one called 'Boy' who has lost contact with his offspring and has no cattle or money to secure his old age, may not leave enough money behind for a proper funeral, and will not even be counted as anyone's ancestor when he dies. Thus he may socially be said to be a non-existing person, even while still alive.

A grandmother will feel that her dignity is threatened if she is locked in a never-ending carousel of caring for grandchildren and even great-grandchildren without the necessary material security and a chance someday to sit down and be cared for by others. While grandchildren previously were a source of support for the grandparents, they are becoming a burden in the time of AIDS.

On the other hand, care for grandchildren may also be a source of honour and dignity as we can see in the case of Mamodise:

> Mamodise is an elderly lady, widowed a long time back and sick for many years with diabetes. Her vision has been reduced, her legs are painful and she spends most of her days lying on a mattress in the shade outside the house. Mamodise has many children, but for years she has been staying with her youngest daughter Ana. Ana is a prosperous lady. She had very little education but managed to get a steady job, although with low pay, and is involved in most issues of importance in the village. She has built a very nice house for herself and her mother, and has sent all her five children (born out of wedlock) to secondary school. She treats her mother very respectfully and always makes sure that any visitor sees her mother first. She is clearly very fond of her mother, but she is also very emphatic that she would not have been able to achieve what she has done if it had not been for the fact that her mother had cared for her children when they were babies—even to the point of letting them suckle her breast for comfort until Ana came home from work. One day, to everyone's surprise, Ana announces that she is going to get married to the father of two of her children. On being asked why, after all these years of managing so well on her own, she gives two reasons. First, she wants to honour her mother by becoming a married woman before she dies, and secondly that without being married to the father of her only daughter they will not be able to claim brideprice (*lobola*) when the daughter gets married.

Mamodise's successful claim to honour and dignity has several sources, one being the fact that she comes from a family of chiefs, another being love and affection from her children. But the fact that she has been indispensable to her daughter in building up her career as a successful village woman is probably of major importance. The daughter and grandchildren see it as their cherished duty to make sure that old granny has a life which is as good as possible, even if this means giving up some of their own individual advantages such as the free use of one's own money or the freedom of being a modern, independent woman.

Modern values in Botswana as elsewhere, tend to emphasise individual rights to self-realisation, independent living and control over one's own children and salary. This is clearly threatening for the old values on which the 'moral space' of the grandparents is founded. Ana has succeeded in making a 'career' in the village and thus was able to

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pursue modern and traditional values simultaneously. Thus she could keep control over her children and her income (at least up until she married) and honour her mother without her being overburdened. Mary has had no choice but to move away to find a job which she hopes is only the beginning of further training and a career within the health sector. For this she has paid the price of being distanced from her children, who consider the grandmother their main source of emotional support. At the same time her mother is in danger of being overburdened by added responsibility for orphaned and fatherless grandchildren for whom Mary is the only source of economic support. Survival has always been hard for the people living on the fringes of the Kalahari desert, but today it is hard in a new and different way, for which the elderly people are even less prepared than the younger generations. The full consequences of the combined forces of modernisation and the AIDS epidemic for the moral space of the elderly Batswana remains to be seen.

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ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren in changing Tswana society. It argues that, in order to understand this relationship and how this has been changing, we have to look at different sets of relationships separately. The relationships between grandfathers/grandmothers and grandsons/granddaughters have quite different qualities depending upon whether their sons/daughters are married or unmarried. Moreover, these qualities are influenced in different ways by changes taking place in society. The data are analysed using Charles Taylor's concept of *moral space* and discussed in terms of ideals of *respect, meaning* and *dignity*.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article traite de la relation entre grands-parents et petits-enfants dans la société tswana en mutation. Il affirme qu'il faut, pour comprendre cette relation et son évolution, étudier séparément différents groupes de relations. Les relations entre grands-pères/grands-mères et petits-fils/petites-filles ont des qualités très différentes selon que les fils/filles sont mariés ou non-mariés. De plus, ces qualités sont influencées de différentes manières par les changements qui s'opèrent dans la société. Les données sont analysées d'après le concept d'*espace moral* de Charles Taylor et débattues en termes d'idéaux de *respect*, de *sens* et de *dignité*.

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